



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Europos humanitarinio universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *MEDIJOS IR KOMUNIKACIJA*
(valstybinis kodas - 612P90004)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION* (state code - 612P90004)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at European Humanities University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Medijos ir komunikacija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	612P90004
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Komunikacija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (4), iššęstinė (5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Komunikacijos bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2012

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Media and Communication</i>
State code	612P90004
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Communication
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (4), part-time (5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Communication
Date of registration of the study programme	2012

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *visit of the review team at the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Regulation on internships of students of the European Humanities University
2.	Outline of the practice component of the Media and Communication programme
3.	Form of practice plan
4.	Bachelor study programme
5.	List of lecturers with PhD within the Media department and other departments
6.	EHU student numbers on October 1 st 2015
7.	The system of evaluation of academic achievements of students of the European Humanities University

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

As documented in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER, p. 3 & 4), the European Humanities University is an originally Minsk-based Belarusian university in exile in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was originally founded in Minsk in 1992. It was later re-founded in Lithuania in 2005 and operates with the political and financial support of different stakeholders. As such, it now operates in Vilnius as a non-state, private university. Due to its specific history (coming from Belarus, being in Lithuania), the sponsoring stakeholders (both EU and USA), and their goal to continue their focus on the Belarusian society, the management team talked about the difficult task to balance the interests of these stakeholders. The commission understands that this is a

difficult exercise. Nevertheless, the local regulations are not open to interpretation and the Review Team (hereafter, RT) had a number of questions about legal requirements for which it only received enough feedback during the site visit (proportion of staff with academic degrees, the volume of practical training in the programme, and the volume of subjects pertaining to the study field). Moreover, the management team talked about how the relocation to Lithuania impacted the financial planning of EHU (due to wage scale differences between Belarus and Lithuania that were not matched by their sponsors) and how this is a dominant policy issue to solve for the university's governing body, the Senate.

Despite its relocation to Lithuania, EHU still has a strong focus on Belarus. Most of the teaching staff are Belarusian. Many of them reside in Belarus and come to Vilnius for their teaching. About 95% - 100% of students in the different programs are Belarusian as well. Currently, the university's management would like to increase the enrolment of non-Belarusian students. Enrolling more Lithuanian, but also Russian, students would certainly be beneficial for the university and its international scope, but these students have to pay the full price whereas the EHU donors now secure lower enrolment fees for Belarusian students. Attracting such students would of course depend on the future perspectives of EHU. For instance, the management team RT spoke to mentioned that at some point, EHU might as well move back to Minsk.

The Bachelor programme "Media and Communication" was founded ten years ago and registered in Lithuania— in April 2007. This particular program has been entirely new in the structure of EHU, when it has been founded in 2005, already in Vilnius. The programme was registered at SKVC in July 2012 (SER). This has been the second, updated registration of the program. The SER working group was appointed by the EHU Senate in February 2014, but the actual work from this group seems to have been performed between January 2015 and May 2015 (SER, p. 4). Although RT appreciates the efforts for compiling all the necessary documents and information in the SER and the annexes, these documents clearly show some hiatus and inconsistencies that made it harder for the RT to understand the programme and to assess its qualities. For instance, on p. 15 the SER mentions "The language of instruction of all the modules is Lithuanian." Apparently, however, the majority of courses are taught in Russian, but some are taught in Lithuanian, Belarusian or English.

The bachelor programme has two options, among which students have to choose from the start: a journalism oriented "new media" option and a cultural studies oriented "Visual culture and creative industries" option. Next to this bachelor programme, EHU also has another bachelor programme that, by its title, seems to potentially overlap to some extent: the bachelor in "Visual Media and Design." However, this programme pertains to the subject of audio-visual culture and also the students RT spoke with clearly saw a difference between the two programmes although some students expressed they would have liked to have some of these more practical courses in their own curriculum (or an easier access to these courses that now seem to require capabilities the communication students lack). The Media department also organises a Master in Cultural Studies, but this programme does not seem to be the preferential next step for fresh alumni of the bachelor programme.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *30th October, 2015*.

1. **Prof. Dr. Peter Neijens (team leader)**, *Professor of Persuasive Communication, Department of Communication, The Amsterdam School of Communication Research, ASCoR, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.*
2. **Dr. Kathleen Virginia Donnelly**, *Senior Lecturer, Birmingham City Business School and School of Media, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom.*
3. **Dr. Viktors Freibergs**, *Head of Communication Studies Department, University of Latvia, Latvia.*
4. **Dr. Tim Smits**, *Lecturer and researcher, KU Leuven, Lessius University College, Belgium.*
5. **Mr. Mindaugas Grajauskas**, *Consultant and manager of gamified products, OVC Consulting, Lithuania.*
6. **Mr. Giedrius Žilinskas**, *graduate of Groningen university study programme International Business and Management, Lithuania.*

Evaluation coordinator – Ms. Dovilė Stonkutė.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes are described in the SER (p. 6). Four programme aims are listed and these should map on seven learning outcomes. It is not further specified in the SER how this mapping is done. Moreover, the learning outcomes are formulated as processes at the programme side rather than testable outcomes at the student side (e.g., “students receive ... training”). It is advisable to reformulate programme aims such that the student evaluation can be used directly to test whether the aimed-for outcomes are indeed attained by students (e.g., “student can..., students demonstrate..., students understand...”). Furthermore, the mapping between these learning outcomes and the subjects, as presented in the SER’s Table 1 is unclear. That table only has 5 learning outcomes, and different outcomes than those mentioned in the text. Also, it is unclear why some of the subjects indeed pertain to the suggested learning outcomes (e.g., for the research orientation, subjects such as “creative writing” are listed). Despite these formal comments, the RT believes that the actual programme aims and learning outcomes are state-of-the-art, academic, and relevant. Moreover, they are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered.

In discussing the above comments with the SER team and the teaching staff, the RT learned that some of these interpretation issues are due to the programme being more of a cultural studies programme compared to the communication/management programmes that other universities in Lithuania offer under the same type of programme title. Such cultural studies perspectives indeed imply differences, for instance in what is considered a methodological course or a research course. It could be advisable to make this particular perspective more clear to others.

Similarly, the programme aims are not publicly available, at least not to the extent that the RT was able to find them. The SER refers to the EHU website but at that website, there is only a description of the programme (in English and in Russian). On that website, one can read that the “goal of the Media and Communication Program with a concentration on Mass Media and Journalism is to prepare students to become print and electronic media journalists as well as experts in media planning and management. The program equips graduates with an understanding of contemporary concepts related to culture and society, competencies in diverse models of communication strategies and visual text analysis, and ability to create and market

contemporary mass media products. The program's interdisciplinary approach includes a thorough study of contemporary social, cultural, and political theory; history and theory of visual arts and philosophy; specific knowledge in the fields of information and communication science; and the entrepreneurial skills necessary to succeed in today's media market." This description differs from the programme aims and learning outcomes as described in the SER. The RT therefore advises to rethink and redesign the communication flow about the programme and to make sure that it is readily available in languages suitable to all relevant stakeholders.

At page 11 of the SER, the defining essence of the programme is mentioned and this boils down to two characteristics that also differentiate this programme from others. On the one hand, the programme "pursues strategic goals of including Belarusian media and creative industries in the European and global space." It is clear for the RT that the programme indeed fulfils this implicit aim with regard to the Belarusian perspective. Whether or not the European and global space is indeed covered is less clear. For instance, while the students who met with the RT were very fluent in talking English, some of the staff RT met were not, which could pose questions as to what part of the European and global space they relate to. Along the same lines, the local integration of the high-residence students in Vilnius seems to depend too much on the students' own predispositions. Although some events are organised in Vilnius, a lot of students who met with the RT did not feel there were enough incentives to integrate in Vilnius/Lithuania. Still, the RT believes that the students reflect both the Belarusian focus and the European/global focus. On the other hand, the programme also stresses a "conceptual approach to contemporary culture as a media and visual culture *par excellence*." While this is a very vague statement, the site visit interviews helped the RT interpret this sentence correctly: the programme indeed is a much more theoretical one and provides a cultural studies approach to the topic that is not encountered in similar programmes. Despite the strength of such an approach, it could also be a drawback and this was attested by students and social partners who expressed a need for more hands-on skills or approaches. Although one should not follow such requests blindly, it is true that compared to other programmes this programme does only have limited skills-training. Given that most students intend to start working after this bachelor programme, it is advisable to include more practical training and a business perspective without necessarily limiting the conceptual approach. In all, the RT has the opinion that the conceptual focus and the Belarusian-versus-European perspective is very worthwhile, but that the inclusion of some more practical projects, e.g. with internships in courses with social partners would be a good addition to the programme.

The first aim of the programme is to "train specialists for contemporary media", but what roles should these specialists have in these media? Management? Production? Strategy? Accounting? Creative? When the RT asked the students how they perceived their future specialist role, they too were unsure how to interpret this. Even the more senior students were not sure what their disciplinary future self could be. This was not due to them having different ideas but rather being unsure how their studies would link with a certain job profile. The RT believes that this relates to the previous point (concerning the relative absence of practical perspectives) and is something the programme should follow-up in the near future.

The programme has a clear internal differentiation between a journalism oriented option ("new media") and a cultural studies option ("visual culture and creative industries"). Students have to choose between these two options from the start. There is a rather significant difference between these two options and moving from one option to the other seems to be difficult. In the meeting with the SER staff, RT also learned that the learning outcomes between these two options differ, with the cultural studies being more focused on knowledge and concepts and the journalism option being more focused on producing. This differentiation is not communicated in the SER or other documents. So, although these options evidently share a common core, the differentiation in learning outcomes suggests that the options can be conceived of as separate programmes.

The two options in the programme are consistently referred to by the staff and the students (and even at some points in the Annex documents) as the “journalism” option and the “cultural studies” option. However, the first is actually labelled “new media” and the latter “visual culture and creative industries.” Of course, these labels attract more interest from students and stakeholders (as also suggested by the staff), but they do not fully match the contents of the options. Students and stakeholders claimed that there is little new media in the journalism option. When conceiving this option as a “new media journalism” track, it still lacks new media contents. Stakeholders aligned with this observation and made a plea for more multimedia journalism in the programme. Even with more attention to new media in that programme, it still seems to be more of a journalism programme, including new media, whereas a “new media” programme suggests to focus on things such as web design, marketing communications, entrepreneurship, etc. Students from the cultural studies programme also testified that they lacked specific skills and insights that directly relate to the now booming creative industries: for instance course subjects from the field of business studies and some more marketing communications would be suitable to amend this option with. Because the RT only met one social partner that represented the creative industries and because this partner was also involved in the programme-related Artes Liberales event, there is no evidence to falsify this claim. In all, the labelling of the two options does not seem to match their scope, so changes to either the label (such as to match the scope) or the content (such as to match the label) are deemed highly appropriate. Although the name of these two options does not seem compatible the learning outcomes, the name of the programme itself does match with the learning outcomes and the qualifications.

Contrary to the SER, the RT also learned in the meetings that there is in fact a differentiation between the two options with regard to the programme aims and the learning outcomes. This poses the question whether EHU should actually decide to either have two separate programmes or to decide for one truly common programme that only later on branches into two options. At the very least, it seems to be necessary to have a more easy and formalized pathway to change from one option to the other since it cannot be expected from a young first-year student to know before the start of his or her academic life whether the journalism or the visual culture branch of communication has the most personal appeal.

In sum, the RT wants to congratulate the programme for a well-founded and focused design. The two main points of attention are: 1) to bridge this academic programme to a more practical perspective and 2) to decide on the internal structure regarding the two options.

2.2. Curriculum design

The curriculum design meets the legal requirements although the RT found it difficult to assess this based on the SER and its Annexes. The site visit and the additional information given were necessary to make sure the legal requirements were indeed met.

There are two types of students for this programme. First, there are the so-called “high residence” students. These are full-time students who have to follow courses in Vilnius. Second, there are the so-called “low residence” students. These are part-time students who have only a limited amount of on-campus required activities (mainly exams) and these follow courses over the internet (Moodle). Most of them are from Belarus and many of them have a job.

The programme is a truly academic programme with a strong focus on theory and visual culture. As such, the RT believes it clearly differentiates and stands out from other seemingly similar

Media & Communication programmes in the region. At first sight, the RT had the impression that the programme lacked methodological courses that are typically expected in creative industries and new media programme, but this was due to the misinterpretation caused by these labels. While the RT expected some quantitative and evidence-based methodology, the programme should be situated in another academic tradition for which it does provide the necessary methodological background to students. Within that academic tradition, the content of the modules is certainly consistent with the type and level of the studies and appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The students also appreciate this programme for its academic focus, its quality, the European perspective it offers to Belarusian students, and its attention to languages. These languages indeed play an important role in the programme, which seems to be a good decision, certainly when catering for Belarusian students. However, the language courses play a very central role in the first year of the programme and it could be questioned whether this should be redistributed. The attention given to languages in the first year could also distract students from the actual study field and could even demotivate them in a very difficult first year (for most students, in a new environment, a different country). This point also extends to other courses in the programme where more general (distal?) courses seem to be programmed earlier on with the more specific Communication and Media content being more present in the later years. Also with regard to developing a professional future-self perspective as communication specialists, it could be interesting to have some more communication courses earlier in the programme. As such, there could also be a stronger cross-fertilization between the students' prior communication expertise and the internships and workshops later on in the programme.

Despite these remarks, the internal structure of the programme and its constituent modules is logical. Modules are spread evenly. The RT did not have an indication that there was too much overlap in the programme. If anything, the RT would advise to have some more overlap such that academic topics get more integrated into more practical courses or course work where these topics are applied. The scope of the planned modules is diverse and academic, though still essential or at least relevant to the subject field. Hence, these modules should be considered adequate in attaining the desired learning outcomes among students.

Students enrolling in the EHU Media & Communication programme have to choose between two options: a journalism-oriented “new media” option or a “visual culture and creative industries” option. Although it is straightforward to have a built-in specialization in a more general communication programme, the RT believes that the current formalization of these options is not so straightforward. Students have to choose between the two options even before courses start in the first year. Hence, there is a clear division from the onset between the two options that only share a *truncus communis*. This gives the impression of two different programmes rather than one programme with two options. This was further testified by numerous anecdotes. Students and teachers seemed to show a divide between the two options as well. The strong division between the two options also results in the perception of two different programmes such that it becomes difficult to assess whether the programmes in fact offer a state-of-the-art overview of the scientific body of knowledge. From the perspective of the general programme title (Media & Communication), the programme indeed offers such content. From a journalism and a visual culture perspective, the two options with the programme also seem to offer this content. However, the content provided does not reflect the latest achievements with regard to a communication sciences approach to “new media” or “creative industries”.

With regard to the practice component, the RT found it curious that this was split up in different smaller ECTS subjects rather than having a larger practice module late in the curriculum. Students also said that these small practice subjects were sometimes pleasant but little related to

the programme. Social partners also expressed the idea that a more extended internship later in the curriculum would be a better option, both for the social partners (because they could train these students more and also benefit from such training), and for the students (due to a more integrated and in-depth opportunity to demonstrate and develop programme-related competencies).

The place of the practice components in the programme is not prominent and the RT also believes that these practice components are not well formalized and integrated into the programme. First, the 28 ECTS credits devoted to practice are distributed over the bachelor programme rather than having a longer period of continued work. This could hamper the learning potential of such practice, but it also limits their potential to establish a link between the programme and its external stakeholders. In the meeting with the RT, students also testified that they did not see a specific link between their practice and the programme. The RT suggests therefore to improve this link in a number of ways. First, students have to write an evaluation of their practice, but it could be made more explicit that they also have to reflect on how it related to the programme. This could have two consequences: some practice positions can be evaluated by the programme management as inappropriate, but due to the imposed reflection students could also be motivated to apply more of their specific knowledge to the practice. Second, professionalize the practice positions offered. RT heard some students say that they consecutively participated in organizing an event and that this accounted for two of their practice positions. Although event management is a valuable skill, it seems that an organization of an internal event at the university can hardly be considered to be full internship training. The RT therefore suggests to transform the practice positions in real internships. This also relates to the third suggestion: transform the practice blocks to a real long-term internship with a relevant partner organization and schedule this later in the programme. One student from the first year told the RT (in October, so just weeks after starting the programme) that she was already involved in a practice training. This seems to be little more than a participatory internship rather than full internship where learning outcomes of the programme are tested against the backdrop of a real organization.

In sum, the RT believes that the curriculum design is satisfactory but that there are some points that call for attention and, probably, action from the programme administrators such as to solve these issues.

2.3. Teaching staff

The study programme is provided by competent staff meeting legal requirements. Additional information provided to the RT during the site visit showed that the programme is taught for 168 ECTS by teachers from the EHU Media Department holding a PhD. Lecturers with a PhD from other departments also teach a number of courses in this programme. The number of teachers is adequate to ensure learning outcomes.

Also, the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. The university has brought together a competent team of professionals and researchers. The RT also met with motivated teachers who demonstrated clear ideas about their discipline, what they wanted to contribute to the programme and what they wanted to attain with the students. The RT thus has the impression that the teaching staff quantity, quality, expertise and motivation is certainly good. Given this qualification, there are still some points of attention.

The academic expertise of the teachers is evidenced by their willingness to contribute to the scientific discipline. In doing so, the RT feels that for a Europe/globally focused programme, teachers should be further motivated to translate their international mobility/experience at least

partially in more English language output pertaining to the discipline they lecture on. The RT also has the impression that with regard to the more practice-oriented expertise, the teachers in general could invest more to strengthen the ties with the students' future employers and other stakeholders. The teachers agreed that there are only few courses that explicitly bridge the academic and the practical perspective, e.g. with guest lecturers being involved. Moreover, the practice lecturers in the programme typically have a more peripheral position in the programme and are not as much involved in the design of the programme. As such, there is a danger of having these practical courses as rather isolated cases which might leave students even more unsure about how their academic programme links up with their projected future professional self.

With regard to the journalism oriented "new media" option, these teachers' ties with the practice component seem to be stronger than with regard to the "visual culture and creative industries" option. Moreover, the internal cohesion between the teachers of the two options seems to be modest as well, with a substantial part of the teachers feeling "at home" particularly in one of these two options rather than in the programme as a whole.

EHU management seems to actively encourage outgoing teacher mobility and the attainment of PhD degrees. This is of course a good cause. At the same time, the management also explained that the financial resources currently are missing to further stimulate research. The teachers attested that they would like to have more facilities to dedicate time or other resources to research. For instance, they complained about the fact that they cannot leave the university for a longer period than two months at a time, thus effectively limiting the contribution of such mobility to their own career and, eventually, their research-based teaching.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

The facilities are fine in general, with a number of rooms available for lectures and for students' group work. The programme also has a facility in Vilnius to produce radio and TV. Although this other facility is not nearby, student activity at that facility is scheduled such that it is certainly manageable for students. These facilities have contemporary equipment and skilled staff to supervise and train students (due to a project together with IREX EUROPE and BBC BBC Media Action, formerly known as the BBC World Service Trust). Students are allowed to use materials from these facilities and as was apparent from the reservation list, this equipment was indeed used often by students.

Although the general impression by the RT is good, the RT pressed students to express possible remarks about the facilities and then students complained that they often lack space for group work such that most of this group work is done in the students' own rooms or a public place like a coffee shop. Students also complained about the lack of cameras at the main campus. Contrary to the journalistic materials available at the remote facility, they expressed a desire to have access to such materials and preferably at the main campus.

The library is small given the size of the university. Students and the available library staff confirmed that during opening hours, the library is indeed used often by the students (which is good of course) and that space to work there is rather limited. The library, though small, is well equipped with a fair collection of relevant books that seem to be well-read by students. Importantly, the library also offers access to a wide collection of online resources (and a more relevant selection of resources than that specified in the SER). Based on the frequently used search terms in those resources, students also seem to be looking for specific and state-of-the-art

information in these online resources. The programme's teachers also testified that the remote access to these resources needs to be further improved, both for the teachers and for the students.

Study materials and course contents seem to be appropriate for the programme and its aims. This is not only testified by the materials mentioned in the ECTS documentation of the courses, but also by the books and resources available in the library. Furthermore, and even more important, students also use these sources as reference materials for their own paper assignments, as evidenced by the papers the RT saw as sample materials produced by the students. With regard to the mandatory and recommended course materials, it is supposed to be an EHU directive for each course to have three mandatory materials and then a list of supplementary materials (as explained during the site visit). However, a lot of courses do not have these materials listed in the ECTS description in the annexes of the SER. Moreover, there seems to be an imbalance between courses where some have three books for instance as required/mandatory materials and others only have one book and two articles. The RT thinks one could be more lenient in the guidelines of how many references should be included as required and supplementary materials and that more attention should be devoted to balance the workload per credit.

The RT believes that EHU, due to its specific situation of attracting Belarusian students to study in Vilnius, should focus more on the integration of its high-residence students. These students come to live in a country that is not their own, where people speak a different language. Combined with the typical milestone of a bachelor student going to university for the first time and living apart from his/her parents this surely can be a difficult time for those students. The psychological well-being as well as a general feeling of being integrated and part of community should be taken care of and the RT thinks that EHU could do more for this. Therefore, the RT proposes to install an "integration office" with a dedicated "integration officer." This office should have at least two tasks. The first is to provide all necessary information to newcomers about living in Lithuania. For instance, the students who met with the RT expressed their concern about medical care. Still, the RT believes that under Lithuanian law all students are insured, so students should not worry about this. Hence, their worries express the fact that they actually lack basic information. The second task of an integration office should be to increase the well-being of students with dedicated activities (both within and outside the EHU community) and a go-to place should students feel distressed.

With regard to the practice component, the RT has the opinion that improvements can be made to how this is incorporated into the programme (see supra: curriculum design). For the low-residence students, it is unclear how the practice component is managed.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

The RT only met with the so-called "high residence" students, thus limiting the scope of this chapter of the report in particular. Unless specified otherwise, the RT assumes that its analysis applies to both types of students. As also explained by the teachers, these two types of students are clearly different, nonetheless, with the low-residence students being more difficult to manage in terms of the long-term follow-up.

Admission requirements are clear. Students are clearly expected to form a community and to participate in regular classes, but also in other activities. However, there seems to be a strong division between the students from the two options, so it could be interesting to initiate more common ground between those two groups before separating them (cf. supra).

The RT received documentation on student drop-out and as can be expected for an academic programme, the Media & Communication programme has much more drop-out for the first-year students (20-25% for high-residence students; 40-50% for low-residence students) than in later years (10 and 25%). These figures are reasonable, although one could believe that more attention should be devoted to the drop-out of the low-residence students. This higher drop-out might be reduced by a better system of support and follow-up of these students, but it could also be improved with better recruitment of students such that prospective low-residence students are better informed about the programme (and maybe refrain from an enrollment when such an enrollment is in fact not advisable).

The RT received an extensive document explaining the grade levels for many different forms of evaluations. Students said that there is quite some discrepancy with regard to the feedback teachers provide, but if asked for more feedback most teachers do provide it. Students considered the assessment procedures and the pass/fail rate to be fair. Most courses have an assessment with the final exam only counting for a limited portion of the total grade, with the majority of the grade coming from the evaluation of intermediate papers (2 to 3 intermediate assignments for a 3 ECTS course). If students fail a course, they have one free re-sit opportunity where they have to hand in improved assignments. Should students fail this re-sit, then they have to pay for a third sit. The procedures to check for plagiarism are not formalized, although the teaching staff believes the procedure is good enough. It could be advisable though to have more formal regulations and a formal check such as with a tool like TurnItIn.

The RT is impressed by the idea to have an integrated paper starting from year 2 where students have to integrate their insights from different topics into one overarching paper. This certainly is an interesting exercise that contributes to a wider academic development of the students. For these research activities, they are supported in the form of feedback sessions. Students also have to write a final thesis that is based on academic literature research (as well as on empirical research). As such, students are involved in research activities. Students in the journalism option also participate in investigative journalism assignments that pertain to a form of applied research activity.

Students attested that they regularly (at least formally on a yearly basis) are asked for feedback about the programme. Moreover, the programme management acts upon this feedback. The students elaborated on an example of a professor they had complaints about. This issue was solved by the management such that it did not reoccur the next year. However, students also talked about another complaint where it was not possible to solve the issues for the students currently involved in that course.

The RT spoke with students who testified that the programme is a true full-time programme with many students agreeing that they had to work hard to prepare courses and evaluations. Some students even complained about a too heavy work load. After further questioning their workload, the RT believes that students indeed have a full programme but that the load is not too high. Given that many programmes are in fact somewhat too light, the RT thinks that the EHU Media & Communication actually succeeded in creating a programme that matches what can be expected of a full-time programme. Contrary to other similar programmes the RT knows of, only few of the students had (or could have) some type of a job on the side. In particular with regard to the first year in the programme, students said it was a very stressful and difficult year. The programme management did recently rearrange this first year such that these complaints should be dealt with. The students who met with the RT seemed to agree that this was a recent improvement to the programme's organization.

With regard to the low-residence students, the RT saw a short demonstration of the Moodle contents being developed for distance learning. These seemed appropriate, and well-structured. The RT did not see the facilities with which these online contents are produced but given the availability of the media lab, the technological equipment and expertise can be expected to be well enough. It is a pity the RT did not have the opportunity to meet with the low-residence students in person (or in a video-conferencing format), given that they represent such a substantive proportion of the student population.

Although the SER claims that social partners are involved in the assessment of theses, RT did not meet social partners who can genuinely attest to that. Two of the social partners who met with the RT are also teachers in the programme. The third social partner is involved in the Artes Liberales event in Minsk, but did not (yet) participate in the assessment of theses. The RT believes that a stronger involvement of social partners in the theses could be valuable. Including them in the assessment of theses is one option, but they could also be involved in the design of research questions. Doing as such would immediately render the programme more practice-oriented and effectively bridge the gap between the academic perspective that now seems to be more dominant and the actual business demands.

It is interesting to read that for such a *de facto* international programme, the SER report still points out that the lack of student mobility is an issue. With regard to “internationalization at home” the RT believes that EHU could clearly improve. On the first level, they could focus more on the integration of their Belarusian students in the Lithuanian society. At the second level, they aim to attract more Lithuanian and Russian students (cf. meeting with the staff). One obstacle for these students however, is that they would have to pay the regular fee whereas the Belarusian students can profit from reductions due to the external sponsors EHU has.

As discussed sub 2.4, the RT believes that attention to the social support of students could be increased, certainly considering the special situations of EHU students. The installment of an integration office could help to facilitate student well-being and, as a result, their overall performance.

2.6. Programme management

Not particularly attributable to the programme management *per se*, the RT would like to thank those responsible for drafting the SER and annexes. This is a complex and time-consuming activity. On the other hand, the SER was prepared on very short notice (also evidence by the time schedule (SER, p. 4) and it was clear that the SER could have been more specific, precise and correct if more time would have been invested in it. For instance, the SER is inconsistent with regard to the languages used in the programme. At some point, the SER explains that all courses are in Lithuanian while in fact only one course is in Lithuanian and most are in Russian. It is clear that this is a totally different perspective to understand the context of the programme and such inconsistencies did not help the RT in getting acquainted with the specifics of this programme before the site visit. Related, one of the alleged co-authors of the SER who met with the RT did not know she was a co-author of this SER. Given the value academia attaches to authorship, the RT thinks this is an important issue.

The university’s governing body is the Senate and this Senate initiates several subcommittees to manage specific issues. The programme committee is one such example. The programme committee is said to meet approximately once a month. It decides on course programmes and changes.

The RT presumes that EHU interacts with a large and influential set of stakeholders such as its sponsors. In contrast, the RT only met with three stakeholders, of whom two also taught in the programme and the third was involved in a yearly event. The RT believes that stakeholders could be more involved in the programme, for instance with guest lectures, with actual internships, with discussions about interesting thesis topics, etc. The stakeholders also expressed their agreement with this position.

Apart from typical councils, the programme also seems to invite other stakeholders as jury members for the evaluation of theses, which of course offers a very direct type of bidirectional feedback about the programme (both feedback towards, e.g., employers about what to expect from graduates, and feedback from such stakeholders about what changes to the programme are deemed necessary). However, the RT did not see any evidence of these claims.

Internal quality assurance procedures exist within the university with different bodies being responsible for specific procedures and the Senate having the ultimate responsibility. It is clear that the university has a longer tradition than its shorter history in Vilnius and this is evidenced by a number of these procedures being highly formalized.

At the same time, that historical perspective and the uncertainty about the future (e.g., financial difficulties related to moving from Belarus to Lithuania) impede effective policy making at the moment. Some of the procedures and choices are still clearly inspired by the Belarusian history (e.g. the focus on Belarus in the practice components) or they evidence a transitional state (balancing the Belarusian requirements, the expectations of the sponsors and the legal setting of Lithuanian HEI's). The RT therefore hopes that there will soon be a clear decision about the near future perspectives of EHU such that it can more firmly transform and adapt its procedures and rationale to that context.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Media & Communication programme at EHU is strongly recommended to reconsider the internal structure of the two options that pertain to this programme. As they are presented now, they actually can be conceived as two separate programmes with a *truncus communis*. The RT believes that this implies that either the programme should decide to actually have two separate programmes or to reconsider the curriculum design such that the differentiation between the two only occurs gradually. Possibly, the latter option is to be preferred since this will contribute to a larger sense of community among all students, a broader scope for students of both options, and possibly a better orientation for students who are unsure at the onset of the programme what their preferential option would be.
2. The labelling of the two options is confusing to external observers and does not cover the actual contents of the programme options. The RT believes that these labels should be more accurate. Again two options exist with either a change of labels or a change of the contents. Again, the second option seems to be preferable. The RT does not imply that the contents should drastically change, but some changes to include more new media and more creative industry content in the respective options would be an improvement both to the labelling issue and to the relevance of both options for the alumni's professional life.
3. The RT wishes to stress that they really perceived a need to install an integration officer for the high-residence students to help new students accommodate to their circumstances and to offer (psycho-) social support (or at least accurate referrals to the support available).
4. Currently, the practice component is ill-integrated in the programme. There certainly is a willingness among students, social partners and at least some of the teachers to remediate this. This report offers some suggestions as to how practice can be more aptly integrated, but the strongest suggestion certainly is to have an actual internship that spans for a substantial number of weeks, rather late in the curriculum. Preferably, students are also more motivated to apply their knowledge and competencies in that internship and to reflect on it (such that the programme administrators also receive feedback about the suitability of the programme itself).

IV. SUMMARY

Despite a very political and non-evident situation as a university *in exile*, EHU manages to provide a qualitative, interesting, academic and focused programme which is offered mainly to Belarusian students. This is really an academic programme, with a lot of attention to theory in particular in the visual culture specialization.

The Media & Communication programme is highly appreciated by the students. They consider it a unique programme in terms of academic freedom, quality, European perspective, and attention to languages. Students are committed and said they were pretty positive about the programme. Nevertheless, this programme is certainly not too light: it requires students to process a substantive set of modules, with a lot of materials students have to study. The students describe the study load (in particular in the first year) as too heavy, but (also due to student feedback) this issue seems to be solved by now. The RT is not negative at all about a heavy study load (as long it is doable) as many programmes tend to be too light rather than too heavy.

The assessment procedures and the success/fail rates look good and are considered fair by the students. They also said that they (can) get feedback all the time. The students said that the teachers are approachable and receptive. Also the programme management responds to complaints and makes the necessary changes quickly.

The teachers have a good academic quality and motivation. The programme also attracted a number of more practice-based scholars who also attain academic standards. Still, the integration of practice and contemporary business perspectives in the programme could be increased.

Of course, the RT also would like to attend to some remarks. These are further documented in the text and the most important ones, according to the RT, also appear in the Recommendations paragraph.

Legal requirements are important. The RT acknowledges that the specific situation of EHU implies that the university has to balance the perspectives of multiple stakeholders coming from different countries, and it also has a clear historical cross-national perspective that influenced their initial procedures before they settled in Vilnius. Still, given that it now resides in Vilnius, it has to comply with the local regulations and from the SER it was not clear to what extent the programme satisfied some of the legal criteria (e.g., “academic degrees” and “attention to practice”). Based on the information provided during the site visit the committee developed a better understanding.

The current practice components in the programme are (too) short and only weakly formalized. The students, the stakeholders and the committee strongly suggest including an internship in the curriculum.

The committee strongly suggests rethinking the current labels of the programme. First, the journalism programme: students, management, teachers, and stakeholders speak about the “journalism” specialism instead of the “new media” specialism. The committee believes that either the label should reflect this orientation, or the programme should be changed so that it reflects the label “new media” better. Second, the Visual Culture & Creative Industry label: students, management, teachers, and stakeholders categorize the programme as (mainly) a visual culture or arts programme. The committee believes that either the programme should pay more attention to other cultural industries (and maybe one or a few courses on the business perspective pertaining to that growing niche of the economy), or the label should be limited to the current focus.

The various representatives of the programme also indicate the journalism specialism as more applied or practical, and the Visual Culture & Creative Industry specialism as more theoretical. If this is what they are, or should be, according to the management, the labelling and description of the programmes should reflect that as well. Moreover, the commonly formulated programme aims and learning outcomes do not match the apparent discrepancy between these two options.

It is not clear to the committee why students have to indicate their preference for the two specialisms before the start of their studies. The committee would prefer a situation in which students make a considered choice for one of the specializations after one or two years of study.

The students indicate that they miss psychological, mental support. That support is absolutely necessary given the fact that these students are students “in exile.” Also, the appointment of an integration officer who helps the students find their way in Lithuania is highly recommended.

Facilities are good in general, but students expressed some complaints: lack of spaces for group work, the small library and the lack of sufficient photography supplies.

The RT wants to plea for more attention to practical skills relevant for practice. The way this is currently conceived results in a peripheral position of practice in the programme while in fact it could be so much more. It could motivate students to reflect on the meaning of the conceptual competencies they certainly build up in this programme. It could also help the programme in checking some of its learning outcomes more specifically. Moreover, it would increase the relation between the programme and social partners. The internship could even be used to further other objectives such as the integration in Lithuania or Europe (with an internship combined with a mobility program). Social partners also attested their willingness to further contribute to the programme with a stronger perspective on practice in regular subjects and/or a stronger practice component with a true internship.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Media and Communication* (state code – 612P90004) at European Humanitarian University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	2
6.	Programme management	2
	Total:	15

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Dr. Peter Neijens
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Dr. Kathleen Virginia Donnelly
	Dr. Viktors Freibergs
	Dr. Tim Smits
	Mr. Mindaugas Grajauskas
	Mr. Giedrius Žilinskas

**EUROPOS HUMANITARINIO UNIVERSITETO PIRMOSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ
PROGRAMOS *MEDIJOS IR KOMUNIKACIJA* (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 612P90004)
2016-01-04 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-1 IŠRAŠAS**

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Europos humanitarinio universiteto studijų programa *Medijos ir komunikacija* (valstybinis kodas – 612P90004) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	Iš viso:	15

* 1 – Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 – Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 – Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 – Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

<...>

IV. SANTRAUKA

Nepaisant politinės situacijos ir neaiškumo dėl to, kad yra „tremtyje“, EHU sugeba vykdyti kokybišką, įdomią, akademinę ir sutelktą studijų programą, kuri siūloma daugiausia Baltarusijos studentams. Tai tikra akademinė studijų programa, kurioje daug dėmesio skiriama teorijai, ypač vizualinės kultūros specializacijoje.

Studentai labai vertina studijų programą *Medijos ir komunikacija*. Jie mano, kad tai unikali programa, atsižvelgiant į akademinę laisvę, kokybę, Europos perspektyvą ir dėmesį kalboms. Studentai yra atsidavę ir teigia, kad jų nuomonė apie studijų programą yra gana teigiama. Tačiau ši studijų programa tikrai nėra lengva: reikalaujama, kad studentai pasirinktų pakankamą modulių skaičių ir studijuotų nemažai medžiagos. Studentų teigimu, studijų krūvis (ypač pirmaisiais metais) yra per didelis, bet (taip pat dėl studentų grįžtamojo ryšio) šis klausimas, atrodo, jau sprendžiamas. EG neturi neigiamos nuomonės dėl pernelyg didelio studijų krūvio (tol, kol su juo susidorojama), nes gerokai daugiau studijų programų yra per lengvos, o ne per sunkios.

Vertinimo tvarka, išlaikymo ir neišlaikymo lygis, atrodo, yra tinkami ir, studentų manymu, sąžiningi. Jie taip pat teigė, kad nuolat gauna (gali gauti) grįžtamąjį ryšį. Studentai nurodė, kad dėstytojai yra prieinami ir linkę išklausti. Studijų programos vadovybė į nusiskundimus reaguoja ir greitai daro būtinus pakeitimus.

Dėstytojų akademinė kokybė ir motyvacija gera. Studijų programa pritraukė nemažai mokslininkų praktikų, kurie taip pat atitinka akademinį standartus. Vis dėlto praktikos ir šiuolaikinio verslo perspektyvų integracija studijų programoje galėtų būti didesnė.

Žinoma, EG norėtų pateikti ir keletą pastabų. Jos išdėstytos šiame dokumente, o tos, kurios, EG nuomone, yra pačios svarbiausios, pateikiamos ir rekomendacijose.

Svarbu teisiniai reikalavimai. EG pripažįsta, kad dėl savo specifinės situacijos EHU turi subalansuoti daugelio socialinių dalininkų iš įvairių šalių požiūrius. Jis taip pat turi aiškų istorinį tarpvalstybinį požiūrį, kuris turėjo įtakos procedūroms pradžioje, prieš įsikuriant Vilniuje. Tačiau dabar universitetas yra Vilniuje ir turi laikytis vietos taisyklių. Iš savianalizės suvestinės (toliau – SS) nebuvo aišku, koku mastu studijų programa atitinka kai kuriuos teisinius kriterijus (pvz., akademiniai laipsniai ir dėmesys praktikai). Iš per vizitą universitete gautos informacijos ekspertų grupei situacija tapo aiškesnė.

Dabar studijų programoje numatyta praktika yra (per) trumpa ir tik menkai įforminama. Studentai, socialiniai dalininkai ir ekspertų grupė primygtinai rekomenduoja į studijų turinį įtraukti specialiąją praktiką.

Ekspertų grupė ypač siūlo persvarstyti esamus studijų programos specializacijų pavadinimus. Pirmą, žurnalistika: studentai, vadovybė, dėstytojai ir socialiniai dalininkai kalba apie „žurnalistikos“ specializaciją, o ne „naujųjų medijų“ specializaciją. Ekspertų grupės manymu, arba pavadinimas turėtų atspindėti šią kryptį, arba studijų programa turėtų būti pakeista taip, kad geriau atspindėtų naująsias medijas. Antra, Vizualinė kultūra ir kūrybinės industrijos: studentai, vadovybė, dėstytojai ir socialiniai dalininkai studijų programą priskiria (iš esmės) vizualinės kultūros ar menų studijų programų kategorijai. Ekspertų grupė mano, kad arba programoje turėtų būti skiriama dėmesio kitoms kultūros industrijoms (o gal vienas ar keli kursai turėtų būti numatyti verslo perspektyvai, susijusiai su šia augančia ekonomikos niša), arba pavadinimas turi apsiriboti tuo, kas dėstoma dabar.

Įvairūs studijų programos atstovai nurodė, kad žurnalistikos specializacija yra daugiau taikomojo, arba praktinio, pobūdžio, o Vizualinė kultūra ir kūrybinės industrijos – daugiau teorinio. Jei taip yra arba turėtų būti pagal vadovybės nuostatas, studijų programų pavadinimai ir aprašai turėtų tai atspindėti. Be to, bendrai suformuluoti studijų programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai akivaizdžiai neatitinka šių dviejų specializacijų.

Ekspertų grupei neaišku, kodėl studentai prieš studijas turi nurodyti, kuriai iš dviejų specializacijų jie teikia pirmenybę. Ekspertų grupės manymu, priimtinau būtų, jei studentai gerai apgalvotų ir sprendimą dėl vienos iš specializacijų priimtų po vieno ar dvejų studijavimo metų.

Studentai nurodo, kad jiems trūksta psichologinės pagalbos. Ši pagalba būtina, turint omenyje, kad šie studentai yra „tremtyje“. Be to, ypač rekomenduojama skirti integracijos pareigūną, kuris padėtų studentams rasti savo kelią Lietuvoje.

Materialieji išteklių apskritai yra geri, tačiau studentai išreiškė tam tikrų nusiskundimų: trūksta patalpų grupės darbui, maža biblioteka, nepakanka fotografijos priemonių.

EG nori pabrėžti, kad daugiau dėmesio reikia skirti praktiniams įgūdžiams, kurie svarbūs praktikoje. Dėl to, kaip praktika suprantama šiuo metu, ji atsiduria studijų programos nuošalyje, o iš tikrųjų jos turėtų būti daug daugiau. Ji gali paskatinti studentus apmąstyti konceptualiųjų kompetencijų prasmę, kurias jie tikrai įgis studijuodami šią studijų programą. Tai padėtų studijų programoje konkrečiau patikrinti kai kuriuos studijų rezultatus. Be to, pagerėtų studijų programos ir socialinių partnerių santykiai. Specialioji praktika gali būti naudojama ir kitais tikslais, pavyzdžiui, integracijai Lietuvoje ar Europoje (praktika, derinama su judumo programa). Socialiniai partneriai taip pat patvirtino norą toliau prisidėti prie programos daugiau dėmesio skiriant praktikai pagal nuolatinius studijų dalykus ir (arba) sustiprinti praktikos komponentą atliekant specialiąją praktiką.

<...>

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Rekomenduojama persvarstyti EHU vykdomos studijų programos Medijos ir komunikacija dviejų specializacijų vidaus struktūrą. Pagal tai, kaip pateikiama dabar, iš tikrųjų šios specializacijos gali būti suprantamos kaip dvi atskiros studijų programos su *truncus communis*. Ekspertų grupės (toliau – EG) manymu, reikia nuspręsti, ar iš tikrųjų turi būti dvi atskiros studijų programos, ar reikėtų persvarstyti studijų programos sandarą, kad šios dvi specializacijos išsiskirtų tik palaipsniui. Galbūt pirmenybė turėtų būti teikiama pastarajam variantui, nes tai padėtų sukurti stipresnį visų studentų bendrumo jausmą, abiejų specializacijų studentams būtų užtikrinama platesnė apimtis ir galbūt taptų lengviau orientuotis tiems, kurie studijų programos pradžioje nėra tikri, kurią specializaciją rinktis.
2. Dviejų specializacijų pavadinimai klaidina išorės stebėtojus ir neapima faktinio studijų programos specializacijų turinio. EG mano, kad šie pavadinimai turi būti tikslesni. Vėlgi, dvi specializacijos gali išlikti, bet reikėtų pakeisti arba jų pavadinimus, arba turinį. Tačiau antrasis variantas, atrodo, yra priimtinesnis. EG nesiūlo turinį keisti drastiškai, tačiau kai kurie pakeitimai būtini ir į atitinkamas specializacijas turėtų būti įtraukta daugiau naujųjų medijų ir kūrybinių industrijų turinio – tai padėtų išspręsti tiek pavadinimų klausimą, tiek abiejų specializacijų tinkamumą alumnų profesiniame gyvenime.
3. EG pabrėžia tikrai mananti, jog yra poreikis skirti Lietuvoje besimokantiems studentams integracijos pareigūną, kuris padėtų naujiems studentams prisitaikyti prie sąlygų, teiktų (psichologinę) socialinę pagalbą (arba bent jau tikslesnę informaciją, kur tokią pagalbą galima gauti).
4. Šiuo metu praktika į studijų programą integruota prastai. Studentai, socialiniai partneriai ir bent jau kai kurie dėstytojai tikrai nori šią padėtį ištaisyti. Šiose vertinimo išvadose pateikiama keletas pasiūlymų, kaip praktiką galima integruoti tinkamiau, bet labiausiai siūloma, be abejo, numatyti faktinę specialiąją praktiką, kuri truktų kelias savaites ir būtų įtraukta į studijų turinį gerokai vėlai. Tikėtina, jog studentai taip pat būtų labiau suinteresuoti taikyti savo žinias ir kompetencijas per tokią praktiką ir apmąstyti ją (pavyzdžiui, kad programą administruojantys asmenys taip pat gautų grįžtamąjį ryšį apie pačios programos tinkamumą).

<...>

Paslaugos teikėjas patvirtina, jog yra susipažinęs su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)