

**NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

PUBLIC AUDIT REPORT

**ORGANISATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND
ASSESSMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES**

1 October 2012, No. VA-P-50-1-12
Vilnius

SUMMARY

Audit started 16 January 2012
Audit completed 1 October 2012

Full audit report in Lithuanian is available on the website
of the National Audit Office: www.vkontrole.lt

There are 23 university-type higher schools in Lithuania: 14 state and 9 non-state ones. In 2012, they have been implementing 1 194 study programmes (data of 15 June 2012). Higher schools have autonomy in developing and approving study programmes in conformity with the requirements established by law. Higher schools offer only accredited study programmes, which are subject to accreditation at least once in six years. In 2009–2011, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CQAHE) accredited 822 study programmes developed and presented by higher schools, 424 of which are planned to be implemented. The purpose of the accreditation of study programmes is to assess their compliance with requirements of relevant legislation.

LTL 85 million were allocated for the revision of old study programmes and the development of new ones as part of the implementation of measures under the National Study Programme and the Common National Integrated Programme in 2007–2012.

A large number of articles available in the public arena claim that study programmes offered by higher schools insufficiently meet the demands of the sectors of economy; the role of social partners in the activities of higher schools is also insufficient; there are a number of overlapping study programmes which require large financial and material resources, the quality of some programmes fails to meet the quality requirements of students and the European Higher Education Area.

The audit aimed at assessing the manner in which the development (revision) and assessment of study programmes is organised and addressed the following questions:

- ▶ Do university-type higher schools (universities) plan the development and revision of study programmes in an appropriate manner?
- ▶ Are students' and employees' expectations taken into account when developing and revising study programmes?
- ▶ Do the actual resources conform to the ones specified in the study programmes?
- ▶ Is the development (revision) of study programmes in universities subject to monitoring?
- ▶ Is public information of universities on study programmes easily accessible and sufficient?
- ▶ Does the CQAHE organise the assessment and accreditation of study programmes and publication of the results in an adequate manner?

The audit conclusions were formulated upon performance of audit procedures in the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC), which shapes the national education and study policy and organises, coordinates and controls the implementation of this policy, approves general and special requirements (subject benchmark statements) for the 1st and 2nd cycle and integrated study programmes; in the CQAHE, which assesses and accredits study programmes at a proposal of higher schools; in selected thirteen state universities, which develop and have to approve study programmes in conformity with legal requirements, organise and run studies and are responsible for the quality of education

(art) activities, studies and other activities. These thirteen universities cover about 70 per cent of all programmes run by university-type and college-type higher schools and about 60 per cent of all students in Lithuania.

The public auditors provided proposals to the universities taking into account their autonomy which covers their academic, administrative, economic and finance management activities based on the self-management principle and academic freedom. Recommendations were given to other entities, the implementation of these recommendations will be subject to monitoring.

Audit conclusions

1. Development, revision and assessment of study programme has not always been conducted in the required manner because:

- monitoring and control of the development and revision of study programmes covers only part of all programmes, therefore some of the study programmes have been developed without sufficient justification of their demand and without necessary resources for the attainment of the programme goals. When such programmes are run, student's expectations to receive quality education are not met;

- the universities have not drawn up study programme development and revision plans which would provide for all necessary resources and funding sources. The absence of study programme development and revision planning at the university (institutional) level causes difficulties in providing a timely response to changes in the labour market, identifying necessary investments into the study process, and ensuring necessary resources;

- students and other social partners (employers) have not been sufficiently involved in the development and assessment of study programmes, which results in failure to develop study programmes in line with market demands and students' expectations;

2. Since July 2011, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education has been accrediting the majority of the intended programmes without performing external assessment, i.e. without following relevant legislation.

3. The same study programmes may be submitted for repeat accreditation for an unlimited number of times, which may result in inefficient use of the resources allocated

for the assessment of study programmes and provides conditions for running programmes with certain shortcoming.

4. Public information on study programmes fails to meet the requirements set thereto in relevant legislation, such as the requirement to publish accurate qualitative and quantitative information on study programmes, self-assessment results, students', graduates' and other interested parties' opinion about the study quality, assessments of the activities of higher schools performed by acknowledged institutions, and career rates of graduate students, which results in failure to provide conditions to all interested parties to objectively assess the quality of study programmes and to compare similar programmes offered by different universities.

Recommendations

To the Ministry of Education and Science:

1. To coordinate the provisions of the legislation which regulates the assessment and accreditation of study programmes in order to achieve legal certainty and comprehensibility.

2. To provide legal presumptions for the CQAHE to perform monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations on the improvement of the quality of study programmes given to the universities and to inform the general public on the implementation process.

To the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education:

3. To initiate coordination of the legislation which regulates the assessment and accreditation of study programmes in order to ensure the quality of study programmes

4. To ensure more active involvement of social partners (employers) in expert groups in the study programmes assessment process.

Proposals

To universities:

It is proposed to continuously publish accurate qualitative and quantitative information on study programmes, higher education qualifications, science (art) activities, self-assessment results, students', graduates' and other interested parties'

opinion about the study quality, assessments of the activities of higher schools performed by acknowledged institutions, and career rates of graduate students,

It is proposed to improve planning, monitoring and control of the study programme development and revisions process in accordance with the quality requirements of the European Higher Education Area with a view to ensure adequate development of new and revision of old study programmes. It is also proposed to encourage involvement of students and social partners (employers) in the entire study programme development process in order to receive relevant feedback.