



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Aleksandro Stulginskio universiteto

**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS**

***MIESTŲ IR REKREACINĖ MIŠKININKYSTĖ (621D56001)***

**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

***OF URBAN AND RECREATIONAL FORESTRY (621D56001)***

**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Aleksandras Stulginskis University

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
Report language - English

## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Miestų ir rekreacinė miškininkystė</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621D56001
Studijų sritis	Biomedicinos mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Miškininkystė
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antra
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2), iššęstinė (3)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės magistro laipsnis
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2013-05-31

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## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Urban and Recreational Forestry</i>
State code	621D56001
Study area	Biomedical sciences
Study field	Forestry
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (2), Part time (3)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master's Degree in Urban and Recreational Forestry
Date of registration of the study programme	31 May, 2013

## CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Background of the evaluation process .....	4
1.2. General.....	4
1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information.....	5
1.4. The Review Team.....	6
<b>II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	6
2.2. Curriculum design .....	8
2.3. Teaching staff .....	11
2.4. Facilities and learning resources .....	13
2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment.....	14
2.6. Programme management .....	17
2.7. Examples of excellence * .....	<b>Klaida! Žymelė neapibrėžta.</b>
<b>III. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>IV. SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>23</b>

## **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

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

The Aleksandras Stulginskis University (Hereinafter referred to as ASU) is the only Lithuanian University awarding all the academic degrees, namely PhD, MSc and BSc levels in the fields of food security, agriculture and forestry, food sciences, water and land resources and their management, bioenergy and mechanical engineering, climate change and alternative biological energy. The academic offer of the ASU meets the requirements of the European Higher Education Area covering other areas of knowledge such as biomedicine, technologies and social sciences.

The mission of the University (approved in 2011, when the Lithuanian University of Agriculture was granted the name of Aleksandras Stulginskis University) is to create and disseminate scientific knowledge, striving for safe and healthy food and full-fledged living environment for every citizen of Lithuania. At the end of 2016, over 4717 students were enrolled in ASU, while the teaching staff and research staff were 348 and 51 persons respectively.

The Programme Urban and Recreational Forestry (Master of Science-Second cycle programme), had been accredited to start in 2013, with the first students enrolling in 2014. The administration corresponds to the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Forest Sciences and Ecology and coordinated by the Institute of Forest Biology and Silviculture, the Institute of Forest Management and Wood Science, and the Institute of Environment and Ecology, being also involved in teaching other institutes and faculties.

The Master of Urban and Recreational Forestry is the only one specialized second cycle study programme already implemented in Lithuania. The offer of this programme responds to the general trend of the European Universities in offering specialized masters, rather than generalist masters that may contribute to face the main challenges at global scale. The fact that the world is becoming more and more urban, assuming a scenario of 80% of the European population living in urban areas by 2020 (European Environment Agency, 2010) will represent a change of paradigm in the planning and management of such areas. The improvement of the life quality in the urban areas need the consideration of the green areas as contributors to the mitigation of climate change, water provision, alleviation of extreme temperatures or as a providers of human welfare among others. In this scenario of new demands for the urban forestry, specialists that may be able to handle the complexity of multifunctional management under a holistic vision in a changing conditions frame will be

needed. The Aleksandras Stulginskis University takes up the challenge and started the Programme that will be analysed for the first time by an international review team.

The Lithuanian Quality Agency SKVC has organized the external evaluation of the Master of Science in Urban and Recreational Forestry. Based on their rules, a Self-Assessment report was conducted by a Self-Evaluation Team of ten persons who are directly involved in the programme. The SKVC invites an international panel of experts to be part of the process of evaluation of the programme, formulating the current evaluation report.

#### ***1.4. The Review Team***

The review team was completed according to *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 25/10/2016.

- 1. Dr. José-Antonio Bonet (team leader)** Assistant professor at the Department of Crop Science and Forest Science- University of Lleida (Spain);
- 2. Dr. Tapani Tasanen**, Senior lecturer and researcher at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. Retired since 1st of August 2016 (Finland);
- 3. Dr. Algis Gaižutis**, Chairman of Forest Owners Association of Lithuania (Lithuania);
- 4. Ms. Aiste Bikmanaite**, Student in Biology at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (Lithuania).

## **II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

### ***2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes***

The Master of Science in Urban and Recreational Forestry aims to prepare professionals that face the problem of global challenges and research of urbanisation and adaptation of forest and green areas for the needs of urban societies. The students who complete the programme may continue their studies onto a third cycle (Doctoral studies) or they may decide to enter the labour force working for private or public companies (forest enterprises, protected areas, municipalities, environmental agencies or other forestry-related jobs). The programme aims and learning outcomes wishing to fulfil this objective are well defined, clearly explained, and are publicly accessible at the ASU's website.

The Study Programme Committee is in charge of the permanent revision of the course contents and learning outcomes. The Committee, that is composed of research staff, representative of the employees and by a student representative, meets annually. The Committee is responsible for updating the programme. The current Programme aims and learning outcomes are based on a good review of similar programmes offered by other Universities abroad as well as by the results of a survey carried out with potential employers prior to the start of the Programme. This combination seems appropriate for balancing the professional requirements, public needs and labour market needs. Currently the general learning outcomes focus on knowledge and its application, research skills, special abilities, social abilities and personal abilities. This is a good approach, and developed in ten different learning outcomes of the Programme. The study subjects of the Master Programme, both compulsory and optional, links the Study Programme and the Study Subjects Learning Outcomes. However, since the programme is quite new and there is no feed-back yet from the labour market about the acquired competences of the Programme Graduates, fine monitoring could be appropriate during the coming years to be sure that the learning outcomes are in line with the expectations of the employers.

The Programme aims, contents and learning outcomes are similar to those offered by other Universities abroad. Since the Programme is very new and there are no references of similar programmes in the country, the required knowledge and required skills have been defined on the basis of similar programmes offered in other countries and with the contribution of forest employers (a survey was conducted in spring 2013). The MSc in Urban and Recreational Forestry also benefits from the long tradition and recognition of the Forestry studies offered by ASU in Lithuania. It is a solid basis for the start of the programme and implies a success of the graduates that will be employed as managers in public and private forest sectors, at municipality departments, landscape enterprises as well as environmental protection institutions. Nonetheless, in order to work at leading positions in the forest sector, they would also need to acquire soft skills and competences such as leadership and entrepreneurship that seems not being fully covered by the current Programme.

The Master of Urban and Recreational Forestry is unique in Lithuania and relatively new abroad. The necessity of specialists in Urban and Recreational Forestry was confirmed by the potential employers in a questionnaire filled by 125 persons in winter 2012. 83% of the respondents agreed on the need for training specialists in the area. However, the first editions of the Master shows that there is a low number of enrolled students in the programme. The master programme mainly consists of students coming from the first degree in forestry (also offered by ASU), but is also opened to other disciplines. Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College (KMAIK) offer a Professional Bachelor in Forestry (180 ECTS for full time students) that are

also potential attendants to the Master Programme. In order to face the problem of the low number of applicants that may compromise the future of the Programme, the review team suggests to increase the internationalization efforts. The review team notes the good international links of the University with other universities abroad. It is important that the educational programmes are compatible in different countries developing international standards for the Study Programme. It is a prerequisite for international cooperation and a possibility for increased harmonisation of learning outcomes in this field. Therefore the international arena must be taken into consideration as expressed in the Self-Evaluation Report performed by the development team. The fact that currently the Programme is only offered as Extended Studies, doesn't help the outgoing international mobility of Lithuanian students. However, since student exchange between programmes in Europe is one of the aims of the Bologna process, the evaluation team encourages the University to prospect ways for increasing the international activity, including the possibility of starting stable cooperation with other target Universities through double diplomas.

In summary the review team is satisfied with the programme aims and learning outcomes and they are generally appropriate for studies in a master programme in urban and recreational forestry. The aims reflect and are in line with professional demands. The programme name, aim and learning outcomes and content of the programme are all compatible. The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on academic and scientific as well as on professional requirements. The learning outcomes are generally well integrated in the programme content. The Programme benefits from the experience and recognition of the Forestry Studies developed by the ASU in Lithuania. The learning outcomes of the programme are modern and harmonise with the Bologna process, and provide a good opportunity for internationalisation. The low number of enrolled students during the first editions of the Programme should encourage the University to prospect ways to increase the international activities, including permanent cooperation with other foreign Universities. There are still no graduates of the Programme and therefore, not feedback from the labour market on the learning outcomes and competences. Therefore, is impossible to evaluate whether the outcome meets HEI and stakeholders expectations. The review team is satisfied with the aims and learning outcomes of the programme. The aims and learning outcomes are clear, well formulated and represent a very good balance between scientific knowledge in core subject areas and generic and methodological skills. However, more weight on other soft skills highly demanded by the labour market such as entrepreneurship, leadership, team organization or creativeness should be considered.

## ***2.2. Curriculum design***

The curriculum design meets the legal requirements. The present curriculum adopt the General Requirements for Master Degree Study Programmes established in 2010 by the Republic of Lithuania and the following Rector's mandate, which establishes a total of 120 ECTS credit systems for the Second degree programmes. Currently the structure of the Programme is:

- Compulsory Study subjects – 60 credits (50% of the total program)
- Optional study subjects of the Programme- 24 credits (20% of the total program). The optional study subjects are divided in 3 groups of subjects: *Environmental quality*, *Landscape formation* and *Economic Assessment*.
- Optional study subject for preparation for doctoral studies or professional activity- 6 credits (5% of the total program). The students need to choose one of the three subjects offered in both orientations.
- Researches and Final Thesis- 30 credits (25% of the total program).

The duration of the full-time studies is two years – four semesters. The extended studies has the same structure as the full-time studies, but differ in their duration (6 semesters) and the number of credits per semester (18 credits for the first, second, fourth and fifth semester and 24 credits for the third and sixth semester). At the moment, only extended studies have been implemented.

The studies begin with the teaching of compulsory subjects (the first two semesters for the full-time programme and the four first semesters for the extended studies), continuing with the optional study subjects during the third semester (Full-Time studies) and during the fourth and fifth semester (Extended studies). The optional study subjects are taught during the fourth and sixth semester for the full-time and extended studies respectively. The Final Thesis starts during the second-third semester.

The academic itinerary of the Programme is sensible. The subjects are spread evenly over semesters with each semester accounting for 30 credits in full-time mode and for 18-24 credits in extended studies. The curriculum structure is correct and no overlapping between Programme courses has been noticed. However, since the students have different backgrounds (University, College), the discussion of the review team with the students confirmed that some repetition from college and bridging courses occurs. It is expected that some repetitions might occur considering that the subjects are studied more deeply at master level. In any case, communication between teachers in different subjects that cover the same problem areas can always be improved. The review team therefore recommends teachers to meet before the start of the semester and discuss programme content.

There are five study subjects during a semester. In other faculties there are other models, block studies or fewer subject areas or practise and subject areas mixed during the semester. There are advantages and disadvantages with all models. The trend is perhaps to read subjects more concentrated (block studies). This has the advantage that students can take a course together with students that are not studying full time. This will then allow for more students in the class at the same time. It also has the advantage that it simplifies cooperation between universities in different countries, allowing the students to complete international short stages. The fact that the Programme has been opened exclusively in its extended studies version is an argument for analysing in depth the type of strategy.

The mandatory subjects are deepening the knowledge acquired in the Bachelor degree. The study subjects are spread evenly and all correspond to 6 credits. However, the students remark that more specific urban-related subjects should be taught at the beginning of the course rather towards the end is correct. From the meetings during on site visit, review team got information that the programme is too closely related with the forestry programme. Thus, we recommend that the curriculum should be streamlined to reflect the urban specialisation (i.e: more weight on urban planning, modelling, landscape ecology...). Development of skills enabling graduates to tackle new complex problems has generally been missing. Generic skills and methodological competences have been given in some courses, which is a step in the right direction. Sometimes the special and general abilities have the same formulations and sometimes the special abilities are formulated in very general terms and in practise very difficult to reach. The employability of the graduates should be favoured if more weight were given to business education, marketing or entrepreneurship gains relevance, even as optional in the Programme.

Nonetheless, the current curriculum of the Programme responds very well to the demand of the employee's survey carried out in spring 2013 that specified the required knowledge and skills for this specialist profiles. It also matches with the general standards of similar studies in other

countries. The subject content in general is well described. The contents for full-time and for extended studies modes are similar. The globalisation, altering expectations from stakeholders and society, the lower attraction from the forest sector and the change from teaching to learning must eventually also influence the curriculum and the curriculum assessment. In the case of the current Programme, there are no feed-back of both graduates and job market yet. It will be something to monitor in the coming future.

In general, the content and methods are clearly outlined and are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The forms of individual work of the student are prioritized but the practical activities seem scarce. This has been recognized by the self-evaluation report team who states the lack of contact hours for assimilating specialised computer software. Generally the content and methods correspond with intended learning outcomes. The courses have been taught before and the content, form and methods suit most students very well. Generic skills and methodological competences such as training on abilities to plan, coordinate and organise, is perhaps not the focus area for the instructor and is therefore more difficult to plan. Ability to communicate with people, both orally and in written form and/or in “electronic forms” (smart phone, twitter, facebook etc.) should of course be object of training during the programme (this does not mean that all courses should have the same type of training).

The low number of enrolled students means that normally less than 6 students select an optional module. In this case, the lectures, seminars and practical activities for the study subject are replaced with consultations, resulting in the amount of contact work being reduced by 50%. The self-evaluation team suggested that an acceleration of the implementation of remote learning methods should be one of the ways to overcome this challenge. The review team fully agrees with this conclusion, encouraging the faculty to accelerate innovative teaching methods such as e-learning (Moodle electronic platform is in common use in ASU). Lectures, study material, problem solving materials, information etc. can easily be produced. This will eventually benefit both students and teachers. It will also be beneficial for international exchange since the material is easy to present with translation. The review team observed that the e-learning techniques are expected to become more important in the future and strongly recommends the Programme to develop a strategy increase the use of this type of methodologies.

The final thesis is a highly relevant part of the Programme that demonstrates how the students have acquired specific knowledge related with the Master programme, but also how they have assimilated key skills and competences. There is no completed master thesis in the Programme yet. The review panel during the visit identified that there is a lack of variety in the final work topics. This is something that needs to be urgently addressed by the Faculty. More efforts need to be devoted to strengthen the cooperation with municipalities, enterprises or protected forest areas as a way to increase the involvement of students in relevant topics. The annual meetings of the Forestry Study Programme Committee seem an appropriate forum for this discussion.

The review team concludes that the master programme content is up-to-date and even though it is impossible for review team to judge if the programme offers the latest achievements in science, art, and technologies, it seems that it reflects the latest achievements in the area. Nevertheless, it seems that several competences and subjects need to have more weight in the curriculum (but this is a perception, because is not based in any feed-back from graduates, employers and/or labour market). More related subjects on urban specialisation are requested by the students. Other subjects as forest sociology, forest economics, marketing or social abilities related to business administration (e.g: management, organisation and leadership) and economy have not enough weight in the curriculum.

In summary the curriculum design meets the legal requirements. The distribution of the subjects is in line with required knowledge in Urban and Recreational Forestry. The curriculum design generally meets expected demands for generic and methodological skills. The content of the programme subjects is consistent with the type and level of studies internationally. The academic structure is logical, combining mandatory and elective subjects based on specializations. The programme needs to refine the contents and approaches of the courses, avoiding potential repetitions within the courses. The scope of the programme is met with a curriculum that offers a broad knowledge in forestry subjects. However, the curriculum should be streamlined to reflect the urban specialisation. It is recommended to increase the cooperation with municipalities, state forest enterprises, business companies, etc... helping the students in the process of thesis topic selection. It is recommended that the faculty implement more e-learning courses on the net both for Lithuanian students but also for English speaking persons. It's recommended to put the focus in surveying the graduates, employers and other relevant partners in order to confirm and/or correct the curriculum of the Programme.

### ***2.3. Teaching staff***

The teaching staff of the programme meets the legal requirements. Of the total of 26 lecturers that are engaged in the programme, 26.9% of them are professors whilst 23.1% are associate professors, 38.5% PhDs and 11.5% lecturers. During the last reported academic year (2015-16), 11 faculty members have been involved in the Programme (2 professors, 5 associate professors, 3 doctors of science and 1 lecturer).

The scientists teaches 83.3-92.3% of total study field subjects. The average length of teaching experience of Programme teachers is 12.3 years, while 13.7 years is the average of scientific work experience and 16.5 years the period of practical work experience of the academic staff. This represents a good balance for the implementation of the Programme.

All candidates seeking a five-year term teaching position are under certification in scientific, methodological, pedagogical and organisational activities. The teachers of the Programme enhance permanently their qualifications in the special courses and seminars offered by the University including methodological, educational, pedagogical or technical topics. The academic staff upgraded their qualification in special courses abroad and every 1-2 years, groups of Programme teachers visit Universities of other countries. The academic staff is highly qualified and 92.3% of the lecturers that participated in the last academic year have PhD degree. In addition, there are invited lecturers coming for other countries that participate in the Programme. This exchange was also positively received by the students. The recommendation from the review team is to continue and increase the number of invitations of professors and teachers from abroad. It should be specifically relevant in the case of foreign lecturers that should mainly cover urban-related topics of the Programme, filling the current gap of knowledge detected by the students. This exchange has several advantages. Experienced persons with background from other areas provide new information, insights and experience of problem. International teachers in most cases introduce new aspects, knowledge and literature. An active exchange programme will allow Lithuanian teachers to visit other universities abroad. The review team interviewed Lithuanian lecturers that recently enjoyed short visits abroad giving them possibilities to come across new ideas, methods and concepts both in research and teaching. Professors should be offered one year sabbatical after ten years, or half a year after five years. The University could also consider establishing teaching posts to be filled by professors from abroad. With an increasing international cooperation it is also necessary that ASU creates conditions for the staff to start to develop courses also in foreign languages.

The Programme is very new and the number of students are still limited (11 students were participating in the Master during the academic year 2015-2016). The teacher to student ratio was on average 9.2 students per one full-staff teacher of the Programme in the last academic year. This is an excellent ratio to ensure the learning outcomes. The more experienced teachers are certified and some professors and senior lecturers also act as coordinators. The qualifications of the teachers comply with requirements for master degree programme teachers.

The novelty of the Programme prevents an analysis in depth of the teaching staff turnover. Only two academic years were included in the analysis and it seems that there were no changes in teaching staff within the two years. The average age of the academic staff is 45.0 years old (year 2015-2016), with no teachers younger than 31 or older than 60. It represents a stable structure of teachers that would assure the regular continuity of the Programme in the future. The challenge is to ensure that new teachers can be given good prospects for the future and possibilities to develop as teachers and scientists.

The scientific workload of the teaching staff varies among positions (from 29.6% of time in the case of lecturers to 31.8% and 39.9% of the time in the case of associate professors and professors respectively). The workload is based on an internal regulation approved by the ASU Senate with a possibility to correct 10% of the total workload. During the academic year 2014-15, Programme teachers presented 10 contributions to scientific reports, conferences and scientific meetings, being involved in different national and international research projects. Since the academic staff of the Programme is largely composed by researchers coming from the Forestry Institute and therefore, with long tradition in doing research in Forestry related topics, the impression of the review team is that the research weight in urban related issues is more scarce. This represent also a difficulty for students who wish to develop their theses in more urban subjects, namely land planning or modelling to name a few, or just start with a research career in this area of knowledge. The review team recommends analysing the research outcomes in the Urban and Recreational Forestry Programme, defining a strategy to fill in the detected gaps of knowledge through new staff contracts and/or external collaborations. The analysis needs to be also based on future surveys to graduates, labour market and other relevant stakeholders.

The review team was pleased to see that ASU started to adopt a good system for motivation of staff and development of teachers (i.e: shorter visits abroad were used and encouraged by the faculty). However, more incentives are needed for stimulating staff performance in key areas. One area that in general would need more attention is the use of modern Information Technologies. When e-learning becomes more frequent all teachers need to get familiar with new e-learning techniques. The recommendation from the review team is thus to find programmes that stimulate teachers to improve their pedagogical - and IT skills and at the same time create incentives to get teachers to participate and upgrade their competences. The increase of the percentage of subjects taught in English is another challenge for the Programme. It should be achievable using e-learning techniques. The development of incentive schemes for academic staff that prepares lectures in English, use Moodle system, etc... seems to be the right way to transform the strategy into the reality.

In summary, the programme has in general a qualified staff and meets all legal requirements. The teaching staff is very well balanced in terms of academic positions, age and research, teaching and professional experience. It may guarantee the stability and success of the Programme in the future. The teaching staff benefit from their experience in teaching in the consolidated Master Programme of Forestry in the same University. This strength that guarantees the quality of the Programme needs to be completed with more teachers and/or collaborators with specific

qualification in urban forestry. The review team recommends the University to start a Programme of incentives that motivates the academic staff for moving forward in strategic actions such as the wide use of e-learning techniques, or the lectures in English. The review team encourages the Faculty to be internationally active, expanding the exchange programme with foreign universities. Both shorter and longer visits, for visiting teachers and for teachers to go abroad, should be continued and even increased. The staff should be encouraged and helped to be able to participate in European research programmes such as H2020 projects or Erasmus+ projects.

#### ***2.4. Facilities and learning resources***

The Programme is mainly taught in the premises of the Central Building of the University and Buildings of the Institute of Forest Management and Wood Sciences, but also other facilities such as laboratories are available depending of the type and content of the course. The library includes two reading rooms with enough capacity for hosting 237 students. Library is equipped with 30 computerised workstations (20 for public access and 10 for searching in the catalogue). The facilities have been renovated recently. Some of them are still not completed and in some cases the access for disabled people represents a problem. The Faculty confirmed that the process of renovation will be concluded in the coming years. The students can also choose to live in the residences of the University. This is of importance for students who, like many forestry students, come from rural areas and not from the city.

All the classrooms for the programme are well equipped, having internet access, modern computers and projectors. Wireless internet connection is also available in other common facilities (reading room for students and teachers, Library and in several rooms of the Central Building of the ASU). The students of the Programme may use the library that includes about 4,000 electronic books and access to scientific publications through the access to 23 databases, 20 of them international. The SER pointed out that there are not enough specialized textbooks, neither teaching materials of the Programme of Urban and Recreational Forestry, although they plan to increase the acquisition of such materials. This was also confirmed in some meetings. ASU shares electronic database of thesis and dissertations (EDT) which also includes doctoral dissertations and documents with other Lithuanian institutions. This Lithuanian Virtual Library (LVL) is accessible to all the students. The Master courses have a demand for more international literature, which is natural and sought for. Still there are also material in other languages and forms, but most of it is available in the library or elsewhere, if planned in time. English literature should be increased. Nowadays literature is electronic and the ASU must guarantee that the library has access to literature in other languages (English, Russian,...) and journals and databases.

There are also some classrooms that are designated for special purposes and also e.g. computer labs which is very good for students. There were adequate rooms for group studies and reading rooms where students could study undisturbed. Since the Programme is offered for part-time students, e-learning material (loaded through the Moodle Systems) acquires extreme relevance. However, the Self-Evaluation Report shows that only a small percentage of the study subjects are completely adapted for e-learning. This is a weakness that needs to be corrected in the future. Besides this, the fact that the Programme is only offered in its version of extended studies, hampers the assimilation of several specialised software programmes which can be used only in ASU premises by the part-time students. The review team suggests purchasing or renting software licenses for the self-student of the Programme.

The University has 2 Arboretums (64 ha), 1 botanical garden and a dendrological collection. Moreover, there is a good cooperation with the Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry that allow both teachers and students carry on scientific research and prepare their final theses respectively. The ASU has good cooperation with state forest enterprises and protected areas (associated with the other Programmes on Forestry also offered by ASU). However, the SER recognizes not having enough cooperation with municipalities, and there is no mention to the agreements with private companies. Review team after discussion with different target groups also reached the same conclusion. This is relevant because the problem with practice for a Master student is coupled to the work with the thesis and it is of importance that the students get started in time. In addition, enlarging the frame of cooperation would be a way for the dissemination of the Programme and for increasing the potential employability of the Master Graduates too.

The evaluation group did not meet any students or teachers that express big concerns about facilities, equipment, laboratories or learning resources. The premises for studies seem to be good for the Programme development, both in size and quality.

In summary ASU offer good facilities and learning resources for students. New or newly renovated buildings with modern class-rooms and rooms for special activities are well designed for studies. Students have possibilities to use modern equipment and have good access to computers and internet in all the classrooms and common facilities. Students have very good access to Arboretum, Botanical Garden and Dendrological Collection, but more field practices will be needed when more students enrol the programme. The best way is to establish a frame of cooperation with municipalities, protected areas and/or other institutions enlarging the possibilities for field studies. Students have access to well-equipped and modern laboratories and specialized software but may need more technical assistance to handle the advanced equipment, especially if the students are part-time students. The library offers good possibilities for studies, but lacks specialised references in urban and recreational forestry, also international literature. Since the process of renovating the facilities will be ended in the coming future, the review team suggest that ASU should pay attention to access for disabled persons.

### ***2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment***

The rules for Programme admission are common to all the Lithuanian HEIs. The Senate of Aleksandras Stulginskis University approves annually the admission procedure based on the sum of competitive scores of the students. Similar procedure applies for both full-time and part-time students. This represents an objective, clear and evaluable system for the student admittance. Currently, the programme admits persons that have completed the first degree studies on Forestry or Bachelor in the field of Biomedicine sciences and other sciences completing additional credits such as professional bachelors coming from the KMAIK College. The bridging courses that allow the student access to the Programme are established depending of their first degree origin.

All the students that submitted an application for the Programme have been admitted during the first editions (7 students the year 2014 and 5 applications the year 2015). Thus, the current number of students in the programme is 12, with 7 of them expecting to complete the programme during the year 2017. There are average of 4 students funded by the State. Therefore, some students enrolled in the Programme pay themselves the tuition fees, being one of the reasons for the low number of enrolled students during the first two editions. The first students of the Programme will be graduated during the year 2017. Thus, there are not data for the full

achievement of all the learning outcomes. At the moment, only one student dropped-out the programme, being transferred to the Second degree studies in Forestry.

The organisation of the study process seems efficient and not an obstacle for part time students. The students are in general pleased with the organisation of the studies and also expressed that teachers were very helpful, but several complaints were raised during their interviews with the review team. The students complained about the lack of contact with teachers and also find difficult to manage the office hours. The fact that all the students are part-time students that combines their work with the study demands, as well as the novelty of the programme with still some uncertainties (thesis, low number of students per specialization, etc...) recommend the fine monitoring of all the process by the Programme Committee. The ASU has a system for the fine monitoring of the student's progress. Midterm assessment is performed for all courses. Internal meetings evaluate the results and personal interviews with the less advanced students are the next step. Measures for correcting the detected problems are established as a final step in the process.

The students can also get some economic support from the system with scholarships, memorial scholarships and social grants provided by the University. However, students of the Programme complained about the lack of social support, recognizing that they are not aware of this type of scholarships, and thus no one ask for economic support. The review team is convinced that the monitoring of the student interests, jointly with a bigger effort in information and spreading information will contribute to the better improvement of the Programme.

Concerning the basic and applied research activities, the students at the Master level are supposed to be persons that are interested in deeper knowledge in a subject area. This interest includes a willingness to do research. Therefore the students are generally easy to encourage participating in applied or basic research. However, currently in the Programme there are only part-time students who have probably more difficulties in participating in research activities. The easiest way for the student's involvement is through the final theses. The programme is constructed based on comprehensive research which shows the need of such specialists, but there are no final theses now and no graduates and it is unclear whether the programme outcome is the same as the research would suggest it is needed. During the interviews students expressed the concern that they have problems finding theses supervisors in specific urban related topics. This is probably due to the fact that most academic staff comes from forestry fields. Surprisingly, students and supervisors must get permission to write the full thesis in English. It would be good to analyse how it might affect the research part (or future if students proceed to PhD). In this case, the review team strongly encourage the Programme Committee to support the idea of writing the thesis in English without creating too many obstacles.

Concerning the artistic and cultural activities, ASU has a folk dance group, folk music group and theatre, coordinated by the Department of Public Relations and Marketing. Students may also use the sport facilities of the campus. The review team found that ASU ensures a good level of social support for students.

Another example of University support to the students is the opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes. The International Department as well as the Faculty is involved in international exchange programmes such as ERASMUS that help funding students. Currently, the University has bilateral exchange agreements with several European Universities and participates in the Erasmus Programme EUROFORESTER organized together with Universities of the Northern European Countries. The University regulates transfer of courses attended in foreign Universities. Since the Programme is at the very beginning of his life, the participation of

students in mobility programs is still very low, with only one student participating in the EUROFORESTER programme in SLU (Sweden). The fact that the programme is currently only attended by part-time students doesn't help their mobility. The review team encourages continuing efforts to stimulate international exchange and also courses in English. The economic barriers cannot be ignored but the students should be encouraged to seek European mobility programme support. It is concluded that ASU and the Faculty must continue with its active internationalisation.

The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. The University has established a monitoring system of the student progress that affects all the Programmes of the University. Mid-term assessment is performed for all the courses. Internal meetings evaluating the results and personal interviews with the less advanced students are the next steps of this process. Measures for correcting the detected problems are established as the final step of this process.

The grading system (0-10 points) is similar in all the study subjects, publishing the results in the University website. The final grade of the subject is fixed with the weighted average of the interim assessment, completion of independent works (both criteria represents between 10 to 50% of the mark) and final exam mark (representing at least 50% of the final mark). The casuistic of the individual courses is specified in the description of the course. The students are informed of the evaluation system and the dead-lines for such an individual work and exams in the introductory lecture.

The exam schedules (exam season) are also approved by the Faculty Dean, scheduling exams with at least 2 days of difference. The exams are taken in an oral or written form. The student who fails an exam has a second opportunity no later than three weeks after the exam season. The exam assessment procedure is very well documented including the procedure of the teacher in the exam correction and the student revision. Student's appeals against the examination procedure are also regulated. During the interviews students did not express any unclarity in such procedures and were able to describe them in detail. Final thesis is expected to be defended by the student in front of a Committee headed by a scientist of another institution and with the participation of teachers from the programme and social stakeholders (no thesis has been completed at the moment). There are not graduates yet. Thus, there is not feed-back about the level of satisfaction of the market concerning the competences and skills of the graduates and thus the potential employability of the graduates remains unknown. Relevant stakeholders and potential employers actively participated in the definition of the Programme. However, their current role during the Programme development remains unclear. The active and supportive participation of stakeholders needs to be a clear strength of the programme that should be activated by the University.

In summary the admission requirements are very well-founded, ASU uses the common rules and procedures for HEI's in Lithuania. There is still low student demand for the programme mainly due to the novelty of the programme in the country as well as by the lack of state funded places. The review team recommends increasing the dissemination of the programme and increasing the cooperation with the potential labour market as a way to increase the attractiveness of the Programme. Admission to the programme requires completion of bachelor studies or completion of college (professional bachelor) completing bridging courses in the field of forestry. This is an excellent solution for increasing the number of students. The organisation of the study process is good. However there are several students who complain of the lack of contact hours and consultation hours with the teachers. In addition several advantages provided by the University, namely access to economic resources-scholarships are not very well known by the students.

There are still no finished theses, preventing the evaluation of how the outcome fulfils the learning outcomes. Several students reported difficulties in finding thesis supervisors in specific urban planning field. The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. The review team suggests that the students of the Programme organise themselves in an Urban Recreational Forestry Student Union.

## ***2.6. Programme management***

The Urban and Recreational Forestry Programme benefits from the very well-structured organization of the University. The Programme is managed according with the regulations provided by the University and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The responsibilities are clearly divided between the Programme Committee, the directors of institutes/centres, the Faculty Dean, the Faculty Board, the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations, the Department of International Relations, the Career Centre and the Senate of the University.

The Programme Committee is in charge of the coordination; assessment and monitoring of the master programme and carries out its evaluations. As described in SER and witnessed during the visit the Committee is the central body responsible for the collection and analysis of the data provided by the surveys and other sources of information. In the committee, teachers, students, graduates and social stakeholders participate in the submission to the Council of Faculty for final consideration and the Senate for approval. The committee makes decisions as a collegiate body, and work in liaison with the academic community members. The Institute approves reorganisation and descriptions of study subjects. It is responsible for quality of teaching. To secure the quality of teaching a pre-review system exists. Textbooks and students books are approved by the central commission of the University. The faculty council is responsible for the composition of studies, and for obtaining the opinion of the academic community. The Faculty holds meeting with target groups of teachers involved in the programme. The Dean's Office organise the study process and administration of the work. The sociological surveys, and e.g. students' surveys are standardised and the Centre for Quality and Innovations is responsible. The department of International Relations is in charge for study exchange. The Career centre is in charge for students' preparation for the labour market The Senate is the highest body of the University.

There is a systematic collection of data that has been established in the University for the different Programmes. The analysis and monitoring of the programme will feed from several databases: student admission, student mobility and student learning outcomes. It is expected that other sources of information such as graduate employment monitoring and contacting data of the graduates will be also collected in the future. Other sources of information are the annual reports of the departments and faculties. Other data are also used for programme analysis. The review team acknowledges the very well-structured organization of the University, however recommend revising the management system, because the structure sounds very heavy and time consuming for both staff and students.

The self-evaluation reports reflect the involvement of all the teachers in all the process of collecting information, analysing the data and enhancing the programme solutions. The Committee is the central body responsible for the collection and analysis of the data providing information to directors of institutes/centres, Faculty Dean or Faculty Board.

Based on the SER, the Committee organized 7 meetings during the meeting period. Since the Programme has not any graduates yet, there has been no possibility to carry out a full analysis of the evaluations and consequently, no options for the programme improvements. One difficulty with the current procedure (regular meeting for programme analysis every year), should be that one year is a too short a period to know with certainty how to improve the program. Student groups are different each year, special circumstances can occur, etc. That is why a change in a program must be based on solid information analytical capability and experience.

The role of the stakeholders seems to be very limited at the moment. There is a stakeholder feedback system that includes surveys, target group discussions and other ways of cooperation. The stakeholders also participate in several teaching activities including practices. It is expected that the stakeholders who were actively involved during the Programme definition will have more weight on decisions when the Programme will be more mature and when the first master students will be incorporated into the labour market. Based on the meetings that the review team had at the University the consultations with the stakeholders seems to be more personal and casual than systematic. This is especially relevant if considered that the Programme is relatively new and thus, it doesn't already exist a guarantee of the full accomplishment of the entire learning outcomes of the Programme by the students. Further involvement of stakeholders and potential employers seems to be needed during the critical period of time between the design of the programme and the feed-back received by the graduates and the labour market about the acquired competences of the students.

The programme quality is guaranteed by the Vice Rector for Studies and the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations (hereinafter the Centre). The assurance of the quality focuses both on the teaching and the learning materials, which are peer-reviewed and approved by the Institute. The Committee of Disputes is the body that mediates between the University Administration and the Students in the case of Student's appeal. In the case of the current Programme, this system has not been activated, representing a good indicator of the Programme Management Health. The Centre has also introduced a systemic system of sociological surveys aiming to collect the opinions and evaluations of teachers, students and employers.

The internal monitoring of the programme and of the students is very good. The programme is reviewed at least once a year and sometimes twice a year. The students are also supervised regularly, sometimes twice a year. The programme analysis feeds from several databases and surveys. Other sources of information are annual reports of the departments and faculties and other data. Hence the monitoring of the programme seems to be very rigorous. During the meetings with students the review team concluded that the students considered that the management and administration of the programme was functioning very well.

In summary the programme management runs on a systematic basis and is on a good level. Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated. Information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed. The quality is monitored regularly and the data are analysed and used for improvements of the programme. The review team recommend to revise management system in the future, because the rules and structures sounds very heavy and time consuming for both staff and students. The students are generally satisfied with the management of the study process and its rules, and are satisfied with the assessments. They do not report significant complaints. The process of programme improvement involves all important partners but the stakeholders should be involved on a more systematic basis not only during the programme design, but also during its updating and evaluation. The complexity of the system requires an extra effort in information and dissemination. The evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders; however

the review team recommends that the relations to social partners be organised on a more systematic basis. The internal quality assurance system exists but more systematic feedback for programme improvement is needed.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The aims and learning outcomes of the Programme are clear, well formulated and maintain a very good balance between scientific knowledge in core subject areas and generic and methodological skills. However, the review team recommends more weight on other soft skills highly demanded by the labour market such as entrepreneurship, leadership, team organization or creativeness.
2. The review team stated that the scope of the programme is met with a curriculum that offers a broad knowledge in forestry subjects. However, the curriculum should be streamlined to reflect the urban specialisation.
3. The teaching staff benefit from their experience in teaching in the consolidated Master Programme of Forestry in the same University. This strength that guarantees the quality of the Programme needs to be completed with more teachers and/or collaborators with specific qualification in urban forestry.
4. The review team recommends to increase the dissemination of the Programme as a way to increase the number of registered students. Among the potential measures, the review team strongly encourages the Programme to establish a frame of cooperation with municipalities, state forest enterprises, protected areas and/or other institutions also enlarging the possibilities to carry on practices, field studies and also for helping the students in the process of thesis topic selection.
5. The review team recommends teachers to meet before the start of the semester with the purpose of discussing the contents of the subjects and the methodology, to avoid potential redundancy.
6. The review team strongly recommends more emphasis on teaching in English and on a wider use of e-learning techniques, including materials in English both for local and for international students. It would be helpful if the University starts a programme of incentives that would motivate the academic staff to move forward in such strategic actions.
7. The review team strongly supports continuing efforts to encourage teachers to strengthen their skills and competences in science and teaching in Lithuania and abroad.
8. The internal quality assurance system exists but more systematic feedback for programme improvement is needed. The review team recommends to not only gather information through the different surveys, but also to implement action plans based on the results of the surveys and fine monitoring of the results of those actions.
9. The review team encourages the Faculty to be internationally active, expanding the exchange programme with foreign universities, continuing and even increasing the number of foreign visitors and also promoting the participation of the academic staff in international scientific projects.
10. The recommendation from the review team is to support the part-time students with more technical assistance to handle the advanced equipment of the laboratories and the specialized software.

11. It is recommended to supplement the international literature of the library, especially in English, for students to read. The references in urban and recreational forestry, specially international literature needs to be increased.

#### IV. SUMMARY

The programme **aims and learning outcomes** are generally appropriate for studies in a master programme in urban and recreational forestry. The aims reflect and are in line with professional demands. The programme name, aim and learning outcomes and content of the programme are all compatible. The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on academic and scientific as well as on professional requirements. The learning outcomes are generally well integrated in the programme contents. The Programme benefits from the experience and recognition of the Forestry Studies developed by the ASU in Lithuania. The review team is satisfied with the aims and learning outcomes of the programme. The aims and learning outcomes are clear, well formulated and represent a very good balance between scientific knowledge in core subject areas and generic and methodological skills. However, more weight on other soft skills highly demanded by the labour market such as entrepreneurship, leadership, team organization or creativeness should be considered.

The **curriculum design** meets the legal requirements. The spread of the subjects is in line with required knowledge in Urban and Recreational Forestry. The curriculum design generally meets expected demands for generic and methodological skills. The programme needs to refine the contents and approaches of the courses, avoiding potential repetitions within the courses. The scope of the programme is met with a curriculum that offers a broad knowledge in forestry subjects. However, the curriculum should be streamlined to reflect the urban specialisation. It is recommended to increase the cooperation with municipalities, state forest enterprises, business companies, etc... helping the students in the process of thesis topic selection.

The programme has in general a qualified **teaching staff** and meets all legal requirements. The teaching staff is very well balanced in terms of academic positions, age and research, teaching and professional experience. It may guarantee the stability and success of the Programme in the future. The teaching staff benefit from their experience in teaching in the consolidated Master Programme of Forestry in the same University. This strength that guarantee the quality of the Programme needs to be completed with more teachers and/or collaborators with specific qualification in urban forestry. The review team encourage the Faculty to be internationally active, expanding the exchange programme with foreign universities. Both shorter and longer visits, for visiting teachers and for teachers to go abroad, should be continued and even increased. The staff should be encouraged and helped to be able to participate in European research programmes such as H2020 projects or Erasmus+ projects.

The University offers very good **facilities and learning resources** for students. New or newly renovated buildings with modern class-rooms and rooms for special activities are well designed for studies. Students have possibilities to use modern equipment and have good access to computers and internet in all the classrooms and common facilities. Students have very good access to Arboretum, Botanical Garden and Dendrological Collection. The library offers good possibilities for studies, but lacks specialised references in urban and recreational forestry, also international literature. Since the process of renovating the facilities will be ended in the coming future, the review team suggest that ASU should pay attention to access for disabled persons.

A review of the **study process and the students' performance** assessment. The admission requirements are very well-founded, ASU uses the common rules and procedures for HEI's in Lithuania. The organisation of the study process is good. However there are several students who complain of the lack of contact hours and consultation hours with the teachers. In addition

several advantages provided by the University, namely access to economic resources-scholarships are not very well known by the students. The activities at ASU also stimulate students to artistic and social activities. The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. The assessment of master theses is based on a sound and factual system. The review team suggests that the students of the Programme organise themselves in an Urban Recreational Forestry Student Union.

The **programme management** runs on a systematic basis and is on a good level. Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated. The review team recommend to revise the management system in the future, because the rules and structures sounds very heavy and time consuming for both staff and students. The students are generally satisfied with the management of the study process and its rules, and are satisfied with the assessments. The process of programme improvement involve all important partners but the stakeholders should be involved on a more systematic basis not only during the programme design, but also during its updating and evaluation.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Urban and Recreational Forestry* (state code – 621D56001) at Aleksandras Stulginskis 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	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>16</b>

\*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.

Grupēs vadovas:

Team leader:

Dr. José-Antonio Bonet (team leader)

Grupēs nariai:

Team members:

Dr. Tapani Tasanen

Dr. Algis Gaižutis

Ms. Aiste Bikmanaite

&lt;...&gt;

**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Aleksandro Stulginskio universiteto studijų programa *Miestų ir rekreacinė miškininkystė* (valstybinis kodas – 621D56001) vertinama **teigiamai**.

<b>Eil. Nr.</b>	<b>Vertinimo sritis</b>	<b>Srities įvertinimas, balais*</b>
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	3
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>16</b>

\* 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)

&lt;...&gt;

**IV. SANTRAUKA**

Programos **tikslai ir studijų rezultatai** iš esmės yra tinkami miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės magistrantūros studijų programai. Tikslai atspindi ir atitinka profesinius poreikius. Programos pavadinimas, tikslas, studijų rezultatai bei programos turinys yra tarpusavyje suderinami. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai yra nustatyti remiantis akademiniais, moksliniais ir profesiniais reikalavimais. Studijų rezultatai iš esmės yra gerai integruoti į programos turinį. Programa sudaryta pasinaudojant patirtimi ir pripažinimu, kurį pelnė ASU Lietuvoje vykdomos miškininkystės studijos. Ekspertų grupę tenkina programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai yra aiškūs, gerai suformuluoti ir atspindi gerą pagrindinių dalykų sričių mokslinių žinių bei bendrųjų ir metodinių įgūdžių pusiausvyrą. Tačiau didesnę dėmesį reikėtų skirti kitiems darbo rinkoje itin paklausiams tarpasmeniniams įgūdžiams, kaip antai verslumas, lyderystė, komandinė organizacija ar kūrybingumas.

**Programos sandara** tenkina teisinius reikalavimus. Dalykai paskirstyti atsižvelgiant į miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės srities žinių poreikį. Programos sandara iš esmės atitinka numatytus

bendrųjų ir metodinių įgūdžių poreikius. Reikia patikslinti programos turinį ir kursų metodus, kad būtų išvengta galimų medžiagos pasikartojimų. Programos apimtis suderinta su studijų turiniu, kuris apima galias miškininkystės dalykų žinias. Tačiau studijų turinį reikėtų supaprastinti taip, kad jame atsispindėtų miestų miškininkystės specializacija. Rekomenduojama didinti bendradarbiavimą su savivaldybėmis, valstybinėmis miškų urėdijomis, verslo bendrovėmis ir pan., padedant studentams baigiamojo darbo temos pasirinkimo procese.

Programą vykdo iš esmės kvalifikuotas **akademiniis personalas**, kuris tenkina visus teisinius reikalavimus. Akademinių pareigų, amžiaus, tyrimų, dėstymo ir profesinės patirties požiūriu akademiniis personalas yra puikiai suderintas. Jis gali ateityje užtikrinti programos stabilumą ir sėkmę. Akademiniis personalas remiasi patirtimi, įgyta dėstant pagal konsoliduotą miškininkystės magistrantūros programą tame pačiame universitete. Ši programos kokybę užtikrinanti pranašumą reikia padidinti į miestų miškininkystės programą įtraukiant daugiau dėstytojų ir (arba) bendradarbių, turinčių konkrečią kvalifikaciją miestų miškininkystės srityje. Ekspertų grupė ragina fakultetą aktyviai veikti tarptautiniu mastu, plečiant mainų programą su užsienio šalių universitetais. Ir toliau turėtų būti rengiami trumpesni ir ilgesni atvykstančių ir į užsienio šalis išvykstančių kviestinių dėstytojų vizitai bei didinamas jų skaičius. Reikėtų skatinti ir įgalinti personalą dalyvauti Europos tyrimų programose, pvz., H2020 arba „Erasmus+“ projektuose.

Universitetas studentams suteikia labai gerą **materialiąją bazę ir metodinius išteklius**. Nauji arba naujai renovuoti pastatai, kuriuose įrengtos modernios auditorijos ir specialios paskirties kabinetai, puikiai tinka studijoms. Studentai turi galimybę naudotis šiuolaikiška įranga, turi prieigą prie kompiuterių ir interneto visose auditorijose ir bendro naudojimo patalpose. Studentai gali netrukdomai naudotis medžių, botanikos sodo ir dendrologine kolekcijomis. Biblioteka siūlo geras galimybes studijuoti, tačiau joje trūksta specializuotos miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės srities bei užsienio literatūros. Kadangi patalpų renovacija bus baigta artimiausiu metu, ekspertų grupė siūlo ASU dėmesį skirti ir neįgalųjų prieigai.

**Studijų proceso ir studentų mokymosi** vertinimo patikrinimas. Priėmimo į aukštąją mokyklą reikalavimai yra tinkamai pagrįsti, ASU taiko bendrąsias Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų taisykles ir procedūras. Studijų procesas organizuojamas gerai. Tačiau keletas studentų skundžiasi kontaktinių valandų ir konsultacinių valandų stygiu. Be to, studentai nelabai žino apie keletą universiteto privalumų, būtent galimybę pasinaudoti ekonominiais ištekliais – stipendijomis. ASU veikla taip pat skatina studentų meninę ir socialinę veiklą. Studentų mokymosi vertinimo sistema yra aiški,

tinkama ir viešai skelbiama. Magistro darbai vertinami taikant patikimą faktinę sistemą. Ekspertų grupė siūlo programos studentams įkurti miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės studentų sąjungą.

**Programos vadyba** yra sisteminga ir tinkama. Atsakomybė už sprendimus ir programos įgyvendinimo stebėseną yra aiškiai paskirstyta. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja ateityje patikslinti vadybos sistemą, kadangi taisyklės ir struktūros ir personalui, ir studentams atrodo labai sudėtingos ir reikalaujančios laiko. Studentai iš esmės yra patenkinti studijų proceso vadyba, jos taisyklėmis ir vertinimu. Programos tobulinimo procesas įtraukia visus svarbius partnerius, tačiau socialiniai dalininkai turėtų sistemingiau dalyvauti ne tik rengiant, bet ir atnaujinant bei vertinant programos sandarą.

<...>

### **III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

1. Programos studijų tikslai ir rezultatai yra aiškūs, gerai suformuluoti ir užtikrina tinkamą pagrindinių dalykų sričių mokslinių žinių ir bendrųjų bei metodinių įgūdžių pusiausvyrą. Tačiau ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja didesnę dėmesį skirti kitiems darbo rinkoje itin paklausiems tarpasmeniniams įgūdžiams, kaip antai verslumas, lyderystė, komandinė organizacija ar kūrybingumas.
2. Ekspertų grupės teigimu, programos apimtis atitinka studijų turinį, kuris apima galias miškininkystės dalykų žinias. Tačiau studijų turinį reikėtų supaprastinti taip, kad jame atsispindėtų miestų miškininkystės specializacija.
3. Akademinis personalas pasinaudoja patirtimi, įgyta dėstant pagal konsoliduotą miškininkystės magistrantūros programą tame pačiame universitete. Ši programos kokybę užtikrinantį pranašumą reikia padidinti į miestų miškininkystės programą įtraukiant daugiau dėstytojų ir (arba) bendradarbių, turinčių konkrečią kvalifikaciją.
4. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja stiprinti programos sklaidą ir tokiu būdu padidinti studijoms užsiregistravusių studentų skaičių. Be kitų galimų priemonių, ekspertų grupė skatina pasinaudojant programa įtvirtinti bendradarbiavimą su savivaldybėmis, valstybinėmis miškų urėdijomis, saugomų teritorijų tarnybomis ir (arba) kitomis institucijomis, kartu plečiant galimybes atlikti praktiką, lauko tyrimus ir padėti studentams baigiamojo darbo temos pasirinkimo procese.
5. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja dėstytojams susitikti prieš semestro pradžią ir aptarti dalykų turinį bei metodiką, kad būtų išvengta galimai nereikalingos mokymo medžiagos.
6. Ekspertų grupė labai rekomenduoja didesnę dėmesį skirti dėstymui anglų kalba bei platesniam e. mokymosi metodų naudojimui, įskaitant medžiagą anglų kalba tiek vietos, tiek užsienio studentams. Būtų naudinga, jeigu universitetas pradėtų įgyvendinti paskatų programą, kuri

motyvuotų akademinį personalą ir toliau imtis tokių strateginių veiksmų.

7. Ekspertų grupė aktyviai remia nuolatinės pastangas skatinti dėstytojus Lietuvoje ir užsienyje tobulinti savo įgūdžius ir kompetencijas mokslo ir dėstytojų srityje.
8. Egzistuoja vidaus kokybės užtikrinimo sistema, tačiau reikia sistemingesnės grįžtamosios informacijos dėl programos tobulinimo. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja ne tik rinkti informaciją atliekant įvairius tyrimus, bet ir įgyvendinti tokių tyrimų rezultatais paremtus veiksmų planus, taip pat vykdyti griežtą šių veiksmų rezultatų stebėseną.
9. Ekspertų grupė ragina fakultetą aktyviai veikti tarptautiniu mastu, plėsti mainų programą su užsienio šalių universitetais, palaikyti ir dar labiau didinti užsienio lankytojų skaičių ir skatinti akademinio personalo dalyvavimą tarptautiniuose mokslo projektuose.
10. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja išstestinių studijų studentams teikti daugiau techninės pagalbos naudojantis pažangia laboratorine įranga ir specializuota programine įranga.
11. Rekomenduojama papildyti biblioteką užsienio literatūra, ypač anglų kalba, kurią galėtų skaityti studentai. Reikia išplėsti miestų ir rekreacinės miškininkystės srities, ypač užsienio bibliografijos, sąrašą.

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