



## KAUNO MEDICINOS UNIVERSITETO

visuomenės sveikatos krypties  
*visuomenės sveikatos ir visuomenės sveikatos vadybos studijų*  
programų  
išorinio išsamiojo

### VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

Kaunas University of Medicine

study field of public health  
external assessment of  
*public health and management of public health study programmes*

Final Report

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Profile of Public Health Study Programmes

<b>Title of study program</b>	<i><b>Public Health</b></i>	<i><b>Public Health</b></i>	<i><b>Management of Public Health (full-time and part-time programs)</b></i>
<b>State code</b>	61210B102	62110B102	62110B103
<b>Kind of study<sup>1</sup></b>	U	M	M
<b>Mode of study<sup>2</sup> (duration in years)</b>	F (4)	F (2)	F (2); PX (3)
<b>Volume of study program in credits</b>	160	80	80
<b>Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded</b>	Bachelor of Public Health	Master of Public Health	Master of Public Health
<b>Program registration date, order No.</b>	2002-06-14, No. 1093	2002-06-14, No. 1093	2002-06-14, No. 1093

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Membership**

Members of the group were invited by the Studiju Kokybes Vertinimo Centras to review the Public Health training programmes in Lithuania:

- Professor Ulrich Laaser – head of the Section of International Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Bielefeld, principal investigator of the Stability Pact programme on the reconstruction of Public Health teaching and research in South Eastern Europe and visiting professor at the School of Public Health, Belgrade, Serbia
- professor Roza Adany – Dean of the Faculty of Public Health, Health of the Department of Preventive Medicine, Medical and Health Science Centre, University of Debrecen, Hungary
- professor Anita Villerusa – Dean of The Faculty of Public Health, Riga Stradins University, Latvia
- Jonas Bartlingas, Head of the Health Care Resources Management Division, Ministry of Health, Vilnius, Lithuania

## **1.2 Provision**

The team recognized prior to the visit to the institutions, providing public health training, that the public health provision for the country was one of priorities for health care development.

## **1.3 First Impressions**

All members of the team were very positive about the information provided. Universities and College provided detailed and helpful information, which had been reviewed at the time of preparation of the Self Assessment Documentation. The documentation clearly identified the focus of the public health programmes.

## **1.4 General Observations**

Public health field in Lithuania is defined quite broad including professional training for different health care related specialties at non-university and university level. Working out professional standards for different specialties is in process and supported by Ministry of health. The providers of training have to be clearly identified by Government Departments and have to fulfill some international standards.

The mission of Faculty of Public Health of Kaunas medical University emphasises active participation in the process of improvement of health and quality of life of Lithuanian population by training and continuing education of public health professionals, by providing knowledge and professional skills, as well as formulating the stand points and system of values

## **2. Aims and goals of study programme**

The history of the development of public health training in Kaunas Medical University is a long and successful story. The aim of the program is to educate qualified specialists in public health having good theoretical knowledge and also skills to work on various public health problems and directions. The aim is also to educate public health specialists, being able to realize and implement Lithuanian National Health Concept and different specific national and international health programs. It was obvious that at this stage of development, programs have attained its goals.

The documentation clearly identified that the focus of the public health programs at Kaunas University was International.

In the introductory presentation of the dean professor R. Kalediene was clear that Faculty had many international projects ongoing and had several quality reviews of these projects. The Faculty clearly has identified as a priority the importance of an international portfolio. Several changes have been accomplished in study programs according to the recommendations of both international reviews since 2004. The strategy and action plans for the improvement were presented and approved by the Rectorate in 2004. Evidence provided in the self analysis documentation indicated that the goals of the programs related to the aims of the programs. However it would have been useful to have had an identification of the clear expected learning outcomes for all different programs running by the faculty.

## **3. Analysis of programmes**

### **3.1. Programme *Bachelor of Public Health***

#### **3.1.1. Structure, contents and study methods**

The bachelor program started in 1994 as four year full time studies. Volume of the Study Program is 160 credits (6400 hours). Compulsory study subjects comprise 120 credits (4800 hours), elective study subjects – 32 credits (1280 hours), and free-chosen study subjects - 8 credits (320 hours). Auditorium work makes 75% (4800 hours), self-dependent work - 25% (1600 hours). This proportion should be considered in the future in favor self-dependent study work, which is general guideline of Bologna declaration.

Curriculum design is organized in subjects of three-component-parts: general university subjects and basic study field subjects running mostly in the first two study years, and special or professional oriented subjects offered for the third and fourth study year students. The content of the curriculum covers all major areas of public health.

Besides lectures, class time (seminars and practical work) is based on interactive and creative learning methods: student presentations, case studies, distance learning and class discussions. Final examination before graduation may be thesis or final exam, in order of student's choice. Expert team suggested considering common way of final examination for all students in the future. Also practice in 12 credits is too short for obtaining good practical skills for undergraduate students. This problem appears during discussion with the students as well. Further prolonging of the practice is recommended beyond the 15 ECTS introduced January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

### **3.1.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

In discussion with the students they indicate good distribution of the workload, progressive teaching methods, competent lecturers and shortage in the practice. Motivation of the students was very high.

Since 2004 the accumulative grade system was applied in KMU. It enables to evaluate results of studies during the whole study process and motivates students to seek for better results.

FPH supplied study process with modern informational educational technologies and technical means which corresponds to modern requirements and stimulates the self-study process and initiative of the students. The feedback on the PH curriculum and the quality of studies has been collected from the surveys of the graduates on an every year basis.

### **3.1.3. Variation in the number of students**

The number of students in the Undergraduate Study Program of Public Health is very much entailed with government funded seats. The number of students accepted to the Bachelor program in 2001-2005 was the same - 40 students.

The number of participants in the general admission by the first-sixth priority from year 2002 to 2004 increased fractionally, but in the year 2005, some decrease was observed. Similar tendency was noted in the numbers of participants in the general admission by any priority. Majority or 82.5% - 92.5% on entrants were women. At the moment there were 164 students in the bachelor program of public health.

### **3.1.4. Teaching staff**

Both the review team and the students have stressed the commitment of the teaching staff to the bachelor program and the students perceive their teachers as having a high level of competence.

The structure of the staff corresponds to the objectives of study program. There are 18 professors, 28 associated professors (docents) and 77 lecturers employed in the program. Almost all of them except 5 persons are staff members of the Kaunas Medical University and ~70% belong directly to the Faculty of Public health.

Professional development of the faculty is carried out in different ways, according to the officially accepted Plan for Development of the FPH for 2002-2006. The majority of the faculty has improved their qualification by taking training courses at public health schools around the Europe. Many faculty members have had possibility to work as experts in regional, national and international projects. Every year new Doctoral students are accepted and actively involved in teaching process.

### **3.1.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme**

Advantages

- good intellectual and technical capacity
- evidence of European Public Health perspective
- the excessive number of staff involved in the programme
- large number of the contact hours in connection with self studies
- a good bound with the Master level training

#### Disadvantages

- limited time devoted to practice
- the excessive number of staff involved in the programme
- large number of the contact hours in connection with self studies
- usage of the confusing terminology ( health educology, health ecology etc)
- dual principle of the final examination

### 3.2. Programme *Master of Public Health*

#### 3.2.1. Structure, contents and study methods

Master in Public Health started in year 1998. The aim of the Master program in Public Health (MPH) is to educate qualified public health specialists capable to provide practical activities, implement the teaching and training, to plan and realize projects and conduct research. The expected competencies are: evaluation of health of population, planning, managing health policy, and health promotion programs. The curriculum of MPH is designed for 2 years. It covers 80 academic credits (120 ECTS credits). The proportion of contact hours and self-study was 70%: 30% and equals to 2240 contact work and 960 self-study hours. This proportion could be considered in the future to increase self studies till 50%.

The MPH has the main components anyone would want to see in place. The content covers the major areas of public health: public health and health care, epidemiology, health policy, health promotion, health economics and management etc. For research work and defense of Master thesis were devoted 48 ECTS, what seems unbalanced in relation with the theoretical background offered in the curriculum.

Since 2004 MPH program was started for foreign students in English with minor variation of the selection in the block of elective courses. From the documentation was seen and students did indicate that a variety of teaching methods were used, as lectures, seminars and tutorials, presentations, distance learning etc. However students did indicate that they can access lecture materials on-line, which is not distance learning.

#### 3.2.2. Execution of studies and support for students

The self assessment documentation identifies different methods used for training, as lecturing, practicum, tests, projects discussions, group work, application of the different research methods, models and theories and distance learning. Since 2004 the accumulative grade system was applied in KMU. 50% of final evaluation composes examination grade, other 50% is based on evaluation of group works, individual presentations, projects, and course work. It enables

to evaluate results of studies during the whole study process and motivates students to seek for better results.

During discussion with the students was proved that Master students are active participants of University Students Research Association and research conferences.

FPH supplied study process with modern informational educational technologies and technical means which corresponds to modern requirements and stimulates the self-study process and initiative of the students.

### **3.2.3. Variation in the number of students**

Dominance in the Master student population was graduates from Bachelor program, however there are some of Masters, having other than Public Health Bachelor education. The entrants had strong motivation to study this program, while majority of them indicate MPH program as the first priority. The total number of students depends on State funded places and it varies around 25. Presently there are 44 students in the MPH program.

The feedback on the opinion of students about their studies, curriculum, teaching methods, and teachers is collected regularly after finishing each teaching subject and results discussed at the Departments of the Faculty. The final evaluation of MPH program is carried out by providing the final questionnaire survey after the defense of the MPH theses.

### **3.2.4. Teaching staff**

There are 12 professors, 10 associated professors (docents) and 18 lecturers employed in MPH studies. All of them are permanent staff, and have participated in the MPH program from very beginning. Also they have wide research interests, which help to strengthen research component for Master thesis preparation. Teachers were exposed to fellowship studies abroad in European public health teaching institutions. The students perceive their teachers as having a high level of competence.

### **3.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme**

#### Advantages

- continuous curricular improvement
- evidence of European and International Public Health perspective
- well developed student participation in the research activities
- broad spectrum of training methods

#### Disadvantages

- large number of the contact hours in connection with self studies

### 3.3. Master Programme *Management of Public Health*

#### **3.3.1. Structure, contents and study methods**

Full time Master Program in Management of Public Health was started in 1997, but part-time study program was developed in 2000. The aim of the program is to train specialists for public health management activities and research, and also for pedagogical work. The aim is also to give knowledge and skills in assessment of health status of population, planning and implementing health promotion measures, evaluation of health systems and health reforms, assessment of the activities of health services and matching modern management principles in organization development and activities

Full time MMPH program is delivered over two year period, but part-time over three-years. The total number of credits is 80 (120 ECTS), and the total number of hours – 3200. In the program, first three semesters are devoted to studies, but the last one is fully dedicated for Master's thesis writing and defence. The curriculum of the program is very similar with MPH, only more credits are allocated to the subjects related to management as economics, financing, and law. Also students have Health care organization practice- 3 credits, but for research work and defence of Master thesis 52.5 ECTS were given.

#### **3.3.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

In the program particular emphasis is given to individual work, group work and e-learning. Free access to computers and Internet is available daily during working hours of the University. The materials of lectures and additional readings are distributed by e-mail to all Master students prior most of the courses.

The practical health care managers' work is served in various levels as national, primary health care centers and hospitals levels. Each course ends with the written exam. Final grade is given taking into account theoretical knowledge and individual activities during the course. Master theses are supervised from the 1<sup>st</sup> semester by appointed and fixed supervisor. The opinion of students about the MMPH program is continuously evaluated.

#### **3.3.3. Variation in the number of students**

Separate entering flows are organized for graduate of the Bachelors program and for health professionals with practical experience in health management.

Majority of the students have had substantial professional experience prior to admission. They come from very different professional background, which satisfies the aim of the MMPH - to be multi professional. Up to now there have been at least twice as many applicants as students admitted, which has made it possible to exert effective selection.

The number of entrants remained rather stable between 20 and 25 persons. Total numbers of all years and last year students are 46.

#### **3.3.4. Teaching staff**

Totally 9 professors, 7 docents and 6 other lecturers are involved in the teaching process, and performing a wide range of research activities in public health management area. 10 of them are from Kaunas Medical University and up to 12 are from other institutions such as Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuanian Health Information Center, and Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education.

### **3.3.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme**

#### Advantages

- the content of the program is of good international standard
- organisation and promotion of international conferences and projects with involvement of students
- well qualified human, technical and library capacity
- the process of learning for the students is well in line with the practical needs of health care in the Lithuania

#### Disadvantages

- the recruitment of male students is very low

## **4. Material conditions**

In Kaunas Medical University there are large university library with easy access to scientific literature. Public health reference libraries are available in the Faculty of Public Health environments including books and journal. At FPH there is free access to computers. All students have access to a series of currently updated computer programmes and study materials on the web. Classrooms are fully equipped with audio-visual and presentation technique. There are also printing and photocopying facilities available for students. Classrooms and office rooms are new renowned and furnished but there are need for betterment of corridors and toilets in the future.

## **5. External relations**

Faculty of Public health have established wide ranging relationships and collaboration with the national and international organizations, such as Lithuanian Health Care Management Association, Lithuanian Public Health Association, Association of Lithuanian Physicians) as well as with ASPHER, European Public health Association (EUPHA), European Health Management Association (EHMA).

For many years FPH as well as KMU was traditionally working in close collaboration with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environmental Protection. Representatives from Ministry of Health are in the External Advisory Council of the FPH. Also

other practical public health institutions and research agencies are partners in different projects and training activities of FPH. Since many years members of the faculty are involved in various international research projects. In framework of EU Socrates/Erasmus project the exchange of students and lecturers is going on between many European universities. Information about the FPH is presented within the KMU Website. Studies at the FPH are also advertised at the Radio, TV, medical and public health journals, national newspapers of newspapers of medical community.

## **6. Feedback**

The alumni interview, were very positive about their experience in the respective programmes. Also employers expressed high appreciation of the professional profile of the graduates; the degrees issued are fully recognized.

A great asset for the programmes is reflected in a successful employment of the graduates. During discussions with graduates and employers were discovered that some of them were current master or doctoral students and two were current lecturers.

## **7. Internal assurance of study quality**

Internal quality assurance has been ensured in five levels 1) teaching staff level; 2) training course/discipline level; 2) Department/Faculty level; 3) University level; 4) National level 5) International level and three steps: after separate study subject, after completing the program and 1-2 years after graduating.

Once or twice per year, general meetings of all staff of the FPH are organized, with students' representatives. The aim of such meetings is to discuss main problems of the Faculty life, to present results of evaluations, peer reviews, and major activities of the FPH. Two external bodies are also involved in the process of evaluation and improvement of public health training at FPH. They are Alumni Organization and External Advisory Council (EAC) of the FPH.

There was the Center for Educational Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff established at KMU in 2003 (KMU Rectorate Order No 20-4, June 23, 2003). The aim of the Center is to provide continuous assurance of educational competence of teaching staff and to guarantee International level of educational competencies.

## **8. General assessment of the programmes within the study field**

The Faculty of Public Health is part of Kaunas Medical University and has a leading role in national and international Public Health training and research. The staff is serving the undergraduate medical curriculum as well as the 3 Public Health training programmes offered. All information requested by the international expert group was provided with a very cooperative attitude.

### **8.1. Recommendations to the higher education institution**

Since the first evaluation a number of steps have been taken to follow the recommendations made. A certain lack of precision in the self-assessment has been cleared during the site visit. The faculty of lecturers is well developed and can rely on a wide international network.

#### **8.1.1. Further development**

The Faculty is encouraged to continue the transition of the present training towards increasing exposure to practice in health institutions, to lift the percentage of self study especially in the Bachelor programme to 50%, to standardize thesis requirements and to use the standard European terminology in the curriculum design.

#### **8.1.2. Use of the web**

All relevant training materials obligatorily have to be placed at the study website. The bilateral communication between student and teacher via the Internet can be improved and presence phases be introduced for the part time study programme.

#### **8.1.3. Material conditions**

The faculty has excellent resources within buildings which are partially in a deplorable state. The university should take care of adequate renovation.

## 8. 2. Proposal for accreditation

### Study programmes at Kaunas University of Medicine:

Undergraduate study programme *Public Health* (state registration code 61210B102) is given **full accreditation**;

Master study programme *Public Health* (state registration code 62110B102) is given **full accreditation**;

Master study programme *Management of Public Health* (state registration code 62110B103) is given **full accreditation**.

Head of the group	Ulrich Laaser	.....
Members	Roza Adany	.....
	Anita Villerusa	.....
	Jonas Bartlingas	.....