QUATREC 2 – Comparing qualifications for reliable recognition 2

Country chapter

The aim of the country chapters is to collect information about the use of learning outcomes in higher education. Information from country chapters will be used to develop methodology for writing and comparing learning outcomes in terms of recognition.

Please provide detailed information about each aspect regarding learning outcomes:

Country: **Lithuania**

Chapter 1. General information about the use of learning outcomes

In Lithuania, all higher education qualifications are based on learning outcomes. Some of the learning outcome descriptors are regulated at state level specifically level descriptors at the National Qualifications Framework, which is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework; Study Cycle Descriptors; Study Field Descriptors. Each study programme has its own description of intended learning outcomes, aligned with learning and teaching methods, and assessment. Programme learning outcomes and their alignment with teaching and learning as well as assessment are considered during external quality assurance procedures.

The descriptors in the Lithuanian Qualification Framework provide descriptors for the 8 Lithuanian qualification levels.

Study Cycle Descriptors[1] define the learning outcomes for each study cycle. The learning outcomes required for the study cycles are expressed in knowledge and its application, research skills, special skills, personal skills and social skills. The Study Cycle Descriptors is based on the framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the descriptors of higher education cycles, which are harmonised with the EAME framework descriptors (Dublin descriptors).

Since 2012 The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education supervises the preparation of Study Field Descriptors, which are approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. 53 of them were created until 2021. They are all going to be updated.

[1] Pirmą kartą patvirtintas 2011-11-21 ŠMSM įsakymu Nr. V-2212; 2016-11-16 išleistas naujas įsakymas Nr. V-1012 (dėl trumposios pakopos studijų įvedimo), aktualus tekstas skelbiamas https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/775fbb90ac0711e6b844f0f29024f5ac

The field descriptors are key documents used by higher education institutions when developing or updating programmes in a certain field of study. It provides basic guidelines on how to formulate learning outcomes and provides general requirements for programmes in a specific field of study. Higher education institutions formulate programme objectives and intended learning outcomes for individual programmes based on the Study Field Descriptors.

1.1. Legal framework for learning outcomes in higher education (if applicable). *Please provide links, if available.*

Legal framework for learning outcomes consists of the following legal documents:

- *National Qualifications Framework*, the system of qualification levels based on learning outcomes adopted in May of 2010 by the Governmental order No 535[2]. NQF is referenced to European Qualifications Framework.
- *Study Cycle Descriptors* regulates learning outcomes associated with all three study cycles. Where several types of qualifications are offered at the same level, the learning outcomes specific to those types shall be provided. In this way, as example, the description provides learning outcomes for professional Bachelor's and bachelor's type qualifications provided in the first cycle of studies. The Descriptor was adopted in 2016 by the order No V-1012 of the Ministry of Education and Science[3].
- *Study Field Descriptors* regulates general and specific learning outcomes by the study fields. Currently 53 Descriptors have been prepared. Descriptors are approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and are open publicly at the website of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education[4].
- *Law on Science and Higher Education* (11 part of article 53)[5] regulates that higher education institutions forms learning outcomes for study programmes and the outcomes have to correspond to ones foreseen for the respective level in Study Field Descriptors.

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[2] https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.BC967702800C/asr (LT version only)

[3] https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/775fbb90ac0711e6b844f0f29024f5ac (LT version) and https://www.skvc.lt/default/en/lawacts (EN version).

[4] https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/kokybes-uztikrinimas/krypciu-aprasai (LT version).

[5] https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.C595FF45F869/asr (LT version).

1.2. Categories/ dimensions in which learning outcomes are expressed (e.g. knowledge, skills, competences) and how are they defined?

At the national level learning outcomes are expressed in terms of knowledge and its application and following skills: research skills, special skills, personal skills and social skills. They are defined at the NQF, Study Cycle Descriptors and Study Field Descriptors.

In general, higher education institutions also formulate learning outcomes according to the aforementioned categories.

1.3. Are learning outcomes subject to Quality Assurance? Who assesses and how?

Learning outcomes are incorporated into internal and external quality assurance.

External quality assurance

Learning outcomes is one of the seven areas considered during external programme accreditation procedures. During programme assessments, experts are asked to evaluate whether the learning outcomes are well formulated and constructively aligned with learning and assessment methods.

Internal quality assurance

HEIs indicated that they have processes for development of new study programmes and regular review of existing study programmes.

According to the received information from HEIs, the quality of each study programme is supervised by Study Programme Committees (Study Field Committees) which reviews and assess learning outcomes on a regular base. Labour market representatives, graduates are also involved in this process through the Committee. When creating a new or improving study programme, it is assessed whether the planned learning outcomes of the programme are in accordance with the legal regulation and meet the formal requirements set in the Study Cycle Descriptors, Study Field Descriptors, as well as special requirements for certain qualifications, e.g. teachers.

Following the answers from HEIs, the learning outcomes are being analysed and reviewed during the process of internal quality assurance. In order to ensure the quality of study programmes, the Study Programme Committee (or Study Field Committee) of HEI annually reviews the learning outcomes of the study programmes, considering feedback results, evaluating market trends, evaluating the higher education institution's strategic directions. Changes in the study programmes can be initiated by Departments and/or the Committees after assessing proposals and needs of social partners, teachers, students and other social stakeholders, the requirements of the

documents regulating studies in Lithuania, and the conclusions of external programme evaluation experts.

One of the universities-respondents provided more in detail how learning outcomes are being analysed and reviewed during the process of internal quality assurance: Description of the Study Quality Assurance Procedure of this university helps to prepare, proceed and develop quality assurance processes. When preparing a new study programme, according to the university, it is necessary to reveal the main parameters in its description. One of them is the relationship between the goal of the programme, the expected learning outcomes of the programme and the study subjects required to achieve them. The developers of the new study programme must substantiate and demonstrate the purpose of the programme, the learning outcomes of the study cycle (knowledge, research skills, special skills, social skills, personal skills) according to the Study Cycle Descriptors as well as the expected learning outcomes and study subjects (or modules) mutual coherence. The Study Programme Committees annually carry out the analysis of the university study programmes, the aim of which is to respond in a timely manner to the problems of study organisation, implement innovations and improve the quality of studies. Various areas are reviewed and evaluated in the development of study programmes, for example: analysis of the consistency of study programmes with study subjects, evaluation of employer survey results and their application in updating learning outcomes and content, analysis of material and methodological resources to achieve intended outcomes; etc. After the internal analysis of the study programme implementation and identification of the areas to be improved, the study programme improvement plan is prepared and submitted to the University Study Quality Department.

Responding to the question of how the learning outcomes of study programmes are evaluated, most HEIs also focused on how the learning outcomes are assessed. The most common assessment methods listed by higher education institutions are test, discussions in seminars, open and closed questions, preparation of presentations, project preparation, essay writing, laboratory work, etc.

One of the respondents emphasised that the learning outcomes of the subject (module) of the programme are assessed during and after the implementation of the subject (module). Various study methods are chosen to achieve the learning outcomes. Appropriate assessment methods are combined with study methods, which allow to assess whether students demonstrate the intended knowledge and skills. At the same time, when assessing the accessibility of the study subject (module) outcomes, the accessibility of the learning outcomes at the programme level is also monitored.

As well, one of the universities-respondents has provided a detailed explanation how learning outcomes are evaluated: in order to ensure systematic and active participation of students during studies, the university applies a cumulative system for the evaluation of learning outcomes, the final evaluation of the module consists of the marks of intermediate assessments and final assessment. The additional formative evaluation is applied in the module; based on this evaluation, the student's achievements are not evaluated with a mark. The formative evaluation includes constant constructive feedback (both written and oral) on the learning achievements and achieved progress provided to students by the lecturer. Each evaluation method has evaluation criteria. Teachers usually use assessment rubrics to assess learning outcomes. The assessment rubric is an assessment tool that helps to reveal the teacher's expectations and students' work requirements, defines what will be assessed, as well as describes the criteria according to which the assessment will be made. The following principles are applied for the evaluation of learning outcomes at the university: validity (evaluation is aligned with the study programme (module) objectives; it measures the learning outcomes in the light of the achievement of these objectives); Reliability (the obtained information on the evaluation and the evaluation results are objective and do not change under a different assessor); Clarity (the evaluation system is informative, understandable to lecturers and students); Usefulness (the implemented evaluation is constructive and contributes to the achievement of the study programme objectives); Impartiality (the same evaluation methods are applied for the evaluation of all students, except for the students with special needs). The learning outcomes are assessed following the Regulations on the assessment of study modules at the university. 10-point grading scale is used: 5 and above is a passing grade, 4 and below is a failing grade. Detailed descriptions of student’s knowledge, understanding and abilities in relation to each grade are provided, for example, the grade 9 (very good) is described as follows: at least 90% of the learning outcomes are achieved. Solid, good, comprehensive knowledge and its application in solving complex practical problems. Individual learning of additional material. Excellent understanding of studied material, appropriate use of concepts. Original and independent thinking. Very good analytical, assessment and synthesis skills. Very good preparation for further studies. Very good application of theoretical knowledge. Easy performance of complex standard tasks. Very good performance quality. Very good skills of expression and presentation. Understanding what type of methods and/or techniques are applied and why.

1.4. Are learning outcomes of the study programme indicated in Diploma Supplement (if there is one)?

Yes, they are identified in the chapter 4 of the Diploma Supplement (DS). The recommendation for filling in the DS has been approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports adopted in 2017[6].

Chapter 2. Good practice for writing learning outcomes in terms of recognition

1.5. Recommendations, guidelines, set procedures for writing learning outcomes (if applicable)

An important for good practice is the Guide for Study Programmes (*Studijų programų vadovas*)[7] prepared in 2011. The Guide was prepared in the framework of project "Development of the National Concept of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS): Harmonization of Credits Development and Implementation of the Methodology of Study Programmes Based on Learning Achievements". This project was coordinated by Vilnius University within the framework of Tuning Educational Structures in Europe project.

The Guide is a methodological instrument addressed to developers of study programmes and teachers at higher education institutions aiming to explain and illustrate with practical examples how to create and/or develop study programmes following the concept of ECTS. Practical examples how to formulate learning outcomes related to general and specific competencies are presented at the Guide too.

The Guide is available at https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/02_Studiju_programu_vadovas.pdf (pdf version in LT, part of this Guide is in intranet of Vilnius University).

In the survey, higher education institutions emphasised that NQF, Study Field Descriptors, and the ESG as guidelines followed for writing of learning outcomes. In addition, higher education institutions indicated that they have internal documents and procedures for formulating and updating learning outcomes. Several HEIs indicated that they have established internal processes specifically aimed at formulating and updating learning outcomes. When designing a programme (including

[6] https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/2863764039aa11e79f4996496b137f39/asr (LT version only).

[7] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/02_Studiju_programu_vadovas.pdf (pdf version in LT).

formulating its goals and learning outcomes) HEIs also take into consideration outcomes of labour market analyses, the strategic goals and directions of the state and the university, the description of the study field in which the programme is intended to be implemented, and other normative documents regulating studies.

Higher education institutions have also indicated that they have Study Field and Study Programme Committees (or Study Programme Committees) that periodically (annually) review those programmes (perform study programme analysis), including learning outcomes, and recommend update / improve them. In one of the universities, the Study Programme Committee has approved internal recommendations (they are published on the intranet and are not publicly available) on how to improve study programmes, subject descriptions and write learning outcomes. This university has also approved a document for the improvement of study programmes, which provides general principles for the development of study programmes and the structure of learning outcomes. Those general principles shall be reviewed every two years.

According to information from the one university-respondent, a head of the study programmes prepares a matrix of the study programme and the corresponding study modules, which is discussed with the teachers. Feedback from graduates, alumni and employers on the quality of the study programmes are also considered. Based on the results of the feedback, the outcomes of the study programme are reviewed and adjusted if necessary. They also have a process for attesting study modules (Regulations for attestation of first and second cycle study modules). During the attestation of study modules, the learning outcomes and their coherence with the outcomes of the study programme are reviewed.

In HEIs, the accessibility and relevance of learning outcomes is discussed and assessed taking into account the results of student surveys, conducting self-analysis of the study field, reviewing and updating the content of the study programme (s), receiving recommendations from social partners; taking into account the results of the external evaluation of the study field (s). One of the higher education colleges indicated that the learning outcomes are reviewed and updated, taking into account labour market trends, changes in legal acts regulating the study and professional environment, the proposals of the Study Field Committee and the results of surveys.

Few universities have departments which help academic staff (like heads of study programmes) in formulating learning outcomes for study programmes like in Kaunas University of Technology is

Department of Academic Affairs and EDU_lab (Laboratory of Teaching, Learning and Education)[8] and in Lithuanian University of Health Sciences is Innovative Education Department.

1.6. Formulation of learning outcomes (who defines, what methodology is used, who approves, ownership)

For national level please see information provided in sub-chapters 1.1. and 1.2.

Based on the information provided by the higher education institutions, the learning outcomes in HEIs are initially formulated by the study programme development group or a Study Programmes Committee. The programmes are approved in accordance with established procedures, e.g. a new programme in higher education colleges is approved by the Academic Council.

Study programmes developers follow the Study Cycle Descriptors and Study Field Descriptors, based on the NQF (referenced to EQF) levels descriptor. According to higher education institutions, when constructing new and implementing an existing study programme, the outcomes are formulated considering the main goal of the study programme. The learning outcomes also are compatible with the Study Field Descriptors, which include the main blocks (knowledge and skills, ability to conduct research, etc.) to which the learning outcomes are assigned. Study Field Descriptors also provide guidelines, which competencies the study programme should provide considering each block.

One of the universities-respondents explained more in detail how to write the learning outcomes of the study subject in connection with the learning outcomes of the programme as follows. According to the university the outcomes of the study subject are coordinated with the outcomes of the study programme: a) The learning outcome of the study subject includes the same or a narrower object as the outcomes of the programme; b) The learning outcomes of the study subject indicates the ability of the same or lesser (but not higher) complexity as the outcomes of the study programme. The learning outcomes of both the study programme and the study subject express the ability to perform certain actions, activities and the demonstration of abilities based on values and attitudes. The formulation of the learning outcomes begins with a verb describing the ability, describing the action performed by the student, for example, being able to define, classify, and so on. The learning outcomes must be comprehensive, indicating the nature or context of the action, expressed in terms of measurable skills, such as the ability to list, explain and so on.

[8] https://en.ktu.edu/edu_lab/.

As a benchmark the EUR-ACE Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation of Engineering Programmes (EAFSG) are also used at the universities providing engineering programmes.

According to the received information from higher education institutions, number of learning outcomes depends on the study programme and requirements in the Study Field Descriptors. There are recommendations to formulate approximate 13 learning outcomes for each study programme. Actually, in some higher education institutions it can take 10-12 learning outcomes or even 12-17 depending on the programmes.

As regards to training provided to the academic staff, All the HEIs-respondents (with exclusion one of them) say that they have such trainings. Following the provided information various forms of trainings can be implemented:

- Internal trainings for academic staff according to the plan for the development of competencies of the staff approved annually for the current year and refreshed as necessary.
- Training for the academic staff with subtopic how to formulate learning outcomes is provided. As well, the respondent providing such the training has noted that it is a fairly common practice there to share good practices. Therefore, if necessary, trainings focused on the writing of learning outcomes are initiated and organised by competent lecturers in the academic units (faculties, academies, institutes).
- Special designed course for the staff on the Study Programme Development including basic training for Development of Didactic Competences.
- Training topics is involved into the subject that is offered for doctoral students at the one of the respondents. Doctoral students are taught how to formulate learning outcomes and how to connect them with the learning outcomes of the subjects they teach. There are also workshops organised for lecturers and for the members of Study programme committees.
- Following another university-respondent, training how to write learning outcomes is carried out for new teachers who have come to work at the university. In some subject trainings, this topic is also touched upon. Teachers are usually provided with methodological material related to the formulation of learning outcomes or the staff working on the study quality and development provides related consultations.

1.7. Good practice example of formulating learning outcomes

As an example, we are providing the following one: Vilnius University, I cycle Bachelor level programme in Asian Studies.

Aims of study programme Asian Studies		
The programme is aimed at educating professionals of several Asian cultures skilled in theory-, practice- and value-oriented understanding of and critical engagement with culture and society of the area studied, possessing ability to communicate efficiently in the language of the area, and capable to identify and resolve basic problems relevant to governmental, NGO and business sectors that require interdisciplinary approach and demonstration of international and intercultural attitudes.		
General competences	**Learning outcomes**	
1. Critical thinking and problem-oriented inquiry.	**1.1**	Read and use materials both incisively and with sensitivity, to compare and contrast ideas and concepts found within different disciplinary surroundings.
	1.2	Identify and resolve problems.
	1.3	Synthesise information, adopt critical appraisals and develop reasoned argument based on such appraisals.
2. Time planning and working under pressure, working independently.	**2.1**	Work independently in a manner of self-directed and self-managed learning; demonstrate initiative both in learning and studying and in time management; and develop critical reflection upon the scope and limitations of what has been ascertained and understood.
	2.2	Work creatively, flexibly and adaptively with others and meet deadlines.
3. Communication of ideas and engagement in discussion.	**3.1**	Present information, ideas and problems to be solved orally in a clear and effective manner, using audio-visual aids, where appropriate, and answering questions from a teacher and an audience.
	3.2	Communicate ideas with clarity, coherence and persuasiveness, and analyse issues in the light of evidence and argument.
4. Intercultural awareness.	**4.1**	Understanding of and commitment to cultural diversity.
	4.2	Exposure to an intercultural environment.
Subject-specific competences	**Learning outcomes**	

5. Understanding of culture and society of the area studied.	**5.1**	In-depth understanding of culture and society of the area studied by integrating knowledge from several disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches.
	5.2	Key methods and concepts of contributory disciplines and interdisciplinary formations of Oriental and Area studies.
	5.3	Knowledge of relevant scholarship on culture and society of the area studied.
6. Applying knowledge and understanding of the area	**6.1**	Skills in a language relevant to the region studied at B2.2 level and an ability to deploy these language skills within a research context.
	6.2	The ability to critically engage with the area studied from a number of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, including cultural anthropology, art history, cultural studies, history, philosophy, religious studies etc.
	6.3	The ability to use and critically interrogate a range of primary and secondary written and/or oral and/or visual sources, in their original language.
	6.4	Library and internet research skills, proficiency in reading and analysis of texts both in Lithuanian and foreign languages (including a language of the area studied), and abilities in the analysis of visual and aural material as a medium for understanding another culture.

1.8. Is the labour market involved in the development and use of the learning outcomes? If yes, then how?

According to the received information from higher education institutions, social partners from labour market are involved into the process of planning new programmes and reviewing the implemented programmes. Social partners are members of the Study Programmes Committees. They can be members of the Groups preparing new study programmes also. Cooperation with the social partners is carried out through research and consulting activities, preparation and implementation of joint projects, round-table discussions too. HEIs also regularly collect feedback from the social partners in labour market, for example after student internships, to evaluate learning outcomes and the competencies acquired by students.