

PEER REVIEW

**Evaluations of the Alignment of Academic Programmes
and their Quality Assurance at 10 Ukrainian universities**

Public summaries

2020

1. Background

Journalism Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity and Professionalism (DESTIN) aims to facilitate the transformation of journalism education in Ukraine by raising the quality of BA and MA programmes to EU standards, improving students' employability and international mobility, and promoting 'media literacy' within the society. These aims reflect the urgent need to improve Journalism education, as articulated in many independent studies.

There are 20 partners

- 4 EU Higher Education Institutions with Journalism/Media programmes
- 2 independent professional organisations
- 1 Quality Assurance organisation
- 10 Ukrainian universities representing the journalism educators across the country (see below)
- 1 national employer of journalism graduates
- 2 national bodies: the Ministry and Association of Students

The 10 Ukrainian university teams will review and reform their current BA and MA programmes to ensure that their new/revised programmes align with EU standards for course design and quality assurance, and with the knowledge, skills, cultural awareness, work-based learning and professional training that would be expected within a EU university. This will entail study trips to learn about European models of Journalism education; training in the utilisation of EQF; self and international peer-review of new/revised curriculum; and staff, student and employer evaluation of programmes. Project findings will lead to the production of National Guideline Statements for BA and MA Journalism programmes.

In alliance with the processes of curriculum reform, DESTIN will undertake activities to increase public understanding of the role of journalists and citizens within a multicultural society. These will include opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the development and sustainability of the project (e.g. through Open Days at Ukrainian universities, responses to needs-surveys, and an online discussion forum); and opportunities to learn from a suite of online 'media literacy' courses, targeted to the needs of secondary schools, university students, and the wider public.

The Ukrainian universities involved are:

- Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy (BKNUC)
- Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities (IEUH)
- Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (IFNUL)
- Mariupol State University (MSU)
- Sumy State University (SSU)
- Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK)
- Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU)
- Uzhhorod National University (UzhNU)
- Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University (CHNU)
- Zaporizhzhia National University (ZNU)

The project requires a team at each Ukrainian university to review and reform their current BA and MA programmes to ensure that their new/revised programmes align with EU standards for course design and quality assurance, and with the knowledge, skills, cultural awareness, work-based learning and

professional training that would be expected within a EU university. This has entailed study trips to learn about European models of Journalism education; training in the utilisation of EQF; self and international peer-review of new/revised curriculum; and staff, student and employer evaluation of programmes. Project findings will also lead to the production of National Guideline Statements for BA and MA Journalism programmes.

2. The Peer-Review Process

The aim of the peer review process was to review two academic programmes (BA and MA) and the quality assurance principles and processes that relate to the approval/validation, review and enhancement of academic programmes at each of the ten universities. Three panels were convened, each consisting of representatives drawn from other project partners.

Panel 1

Chair: **David Quin**, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design + Technology, Ireland
Deputy Chair: **Tomasz Branka**, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland
World University Service representative: **Veronika Nitsche**
Ukrainian Association of Students representative: **Lidiia Fesenko**
Hromadske Radio representative: **Kyrylo Loukerenko**
To review: *Chernivtsi National University; Ivan Franko National University of Lviv; Ukrainian Catholic University; Uzhhorod National University*

Panel 2

Chair: **Nico Drok**, European Journalism Training Association, Netherlands
Deputy Chair: **Veronika Menjoun**, Linnaeus University, Sweden
World University Service representative: **Marc Schwärzli**
Ukrainian Association of Students representative: **Kostiantyn Kovalishyn**
Hromadske Radio representative: **Iryna Kondratenko**
To review: *Mariupol State University; Sumy State University; Zaporizhzhia National University*

Panel 3

Chair: **Ian Gadd**, Bath Spa University, UK
Deputy Chair: **Caitriona Kirby**, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design + Technology, Ireland
World University Service representative: **Marc Schwärzli**
Ukrainian Association of Students representative: **Lidiia Fesenko**
Hromadske Radio representative: **Tetyana Troshchynska**
To review: *Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities; Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy; Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv*

The panels were due to visit the Ukrainian universities in March 2020. However, due to the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, only Panel 2 was able to travel in person to Ukraine.

The peer review process was entirely advisory and had no formal role in any external approval process. The goal was to help the 'Course Development Team' (CDT) at each university as they prepared their programmes for formal approval by their university. The panels sought to advise each CDT on the nature and extent to which:

- (a) the two selected academic programmes aligned with European (EHEA) standards and national qualification frameworks;
- (b) the HEI's quality assurance processes aligned with European and national requirements and expectations

and to provide recommendations that may help the university to further the alignment of its academic programmes and quality assurance processes with European and national standards.

Each CDT was asked to submit full descriptors for two degree programmes and a self-evaluation document (SED) that should include an account of the national, institutional and professional contexts, the development of the academic programmes, key changes that were made, and information about the students; the panel also recommended the inclusion of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

The timetable for submission of these documents did not always align with the university's own internal programme development timetable, making it difficult for CDTs to submit sufficiently full documentation. In addition, some CDTs were finalising their submissions as the pandemic closed their university campuses. Consequently, there was considerable variance in the scope and detail of the documentation provided.

The panel assessed the submitted documentation according to the '10 Criteria of good practice' for assessment of academic programmes developed by Ukraine's National Agency for Quality Assurance, and provided detailed feedback.

Panel 2 was able to spend a day meeting with each CDT, followed by the Programme team, a group of students, and a group of employers from the region. At the end of the day the panel gave first impressions and feedback to the CDT. In person visits enabled this panel to have a proper sense of the department's strengths and resources, and to get a fuller understanding of each programme's aims, scope, and contents.

Panel 1 and Panel 3 however had to conduct 'desk reviews' based solely on the documentation provided by each university, in the expectation that a follow up visit would be possible once the pandemic restrictions eased. The panels recognised the significant limitations of this approach as a key part of the standard peer review are the on-site visits, interviews and discussions meaning that it was impossible, for example, to assess the quality of equipment and facilities or to discuss with students their experience of teaching.

It was agreed that the full reports would be shared only with the relevant CDTs to ensure that the panels could be more open in their assessment and comments. It was subsequently agreed that edited summaries of each report be published publicly on the website; however, in editing the original style and approach of each panel's report has been retained and, as would be expected, the in-person reports were more extensive in their findings.

3. Summaries

Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy

Panel 3 (desk review)

The panel is broadly assured that both the BA and MA programmes meet the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The CDT have clearly worked, and thought, hard about how to improve their existing programme, and have consulted widely with relevant stakeholders. They have also maintained an active and meaningful relationship with local employers. We are delighted by the commitment to internationalisation at all levels of the university, and we encourage the university to support international mobility opportunities for faculty and students.

We would have liked more information in the documents about the faculty: their qualities, experiences, and needs. We note the pressures on time, the dependence on student numbers, and the limited opportunities and resources for professional development and/or research. DESTIN obviously provides a great opportunity to improve your programmes but it also has involved more commitment and effort, and we are very impressed by what you have been able to accomplish under these circumstances. We hope that the university will recognise this achievement and will support you and your colleagues in the continuing improvement of your programmes by providing more opportunities for professional development and research. We recommend too that the university invest more in the equipment and facilities required to ensure that your journalism programmes are both competitive and meet the expectations of employers.

There are some documentation gaps relating to university-wide procedures (recruitment, appeals, support, complaints, quality assurance and so on): it is likely that some, if not all, of these exist but they need to be much more visible in the documentation for European-style BA and MA programmes. We note too that there are different working practices relating to programme structure, contact hours, and workloads, and advise that these will need attention to ensure maximum alignment with European practices.

Finally, we suggest that the balance of general and specialised components at the BA level is regularly reviewed to ensure that the journalism graduates are as well prepared as possible for the 21st-century workplace, and that the learning outcomes are always properly 'observable' and 'measurable'.

Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities***Panel 3 (desk review)***

The panel is confident that the BA and MA programmes meet the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The CDT consulted widely and have thought carefully and critically about the content and structure of the new programme. The CDT are to be commended for their work, ensuring genuine representation from, and extensive consultation with, all the stakeholders. The documentation gives a very clear sense of the BA and MA programmes, both of which are distinctive, innovative, and strong. The planning process was excellent, and we were particularly impressed by the structure of the MA programme. There was, though, more scope for engagement with internationalisation at the MA level, and we recommend the preparation of a SWOT analysis to help with future planning.

The panel had some questions about how the programme structure, contact hours, and workloads might differ from European Higher Education working practices of our own Higher Education systems; some of these may need attention to ensure full alignment with European practices. We wanted to learn more about the faculty's strengths, the challenges they face, their position within the university, and their relationship with the local media. There are also informational gaps relating to university-wide procedures (recruitment, appeals, support, complaints, quality assurance and so on): it is likely that some, if not all, of these exist but they need to be more visible in the documentation.

Finally, we commend the CDT's achievement to your university and request that they support you and your colleagues by providing more opportunities for professional development and research. We recommend too greater investment in the equipment and facilities required to ensure that your journalism programmes remain competitive and meet the expectations of employers.

Ivan Franko National University of Lviv***Panel 1 (desk review)***

The panel is broadly assured that the BA and MA programme meets the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The programme team have taken the opportunities presented by the DESTIN project to make some bold changes to their existing programme, despite the fact that they face financial, human resource and stakeholder challenges. The programme team have based these changes solidly on information gathered from students, alumni and from stakeholders in the local media marketplace. Though the regional media industry is relatively small and 'demotivated' in terms of engagement with the programme, the CDT maintains commendable working linkages with local enterprises, especially with alumni working in local media enterprises.

The revisions of both programmes are already impressive. The linkages with the local media industry are strong and the online survey mechanisms seem to have gathered an impressive stream of up to date suggestions for programme development and improvement. The revised Masters programme in particular has strong potential, and the panel recommend that CDT focuses on defining the 'Editor' specialism in educational terms. Skills acquisition is important for immediate employability, but broader, deeper, more research-oriented, interdisciplinary learning, risk-taking and the creation of new knowledge must always be the ambitions of a European-style Master education.

There are some (fixable) inconsistencies in the programme documentation, and the panel recommends that procedures and policies around applications and academic support in particular are clearly signposted to students as this kind of documentation is vital for 21st-century 'student-centred' study programme.

Mariupol State University

Panel 2 (in person visit in Zaporizhzhia)

The panel's expectations that the BA and MA programmes would meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements were largely met.

The panel is aware that Mariupol State University still finds itself in a difficult situation, being so close to a war-zone. Nonetheless, they were impressed by the changes the MSU team has made since the start of the DESTIN project. These changes are well documented in the SED and comprise of actions such as the development of a mechanism for surveying students and employers, introducing/expanding student-centred learning, involving students and alumni in the progress of updating programs, defining clearer learning outcomes, combining small modules into larger units with clearer names, avoiding duplications within and between BA and MA programmes. The changes are well-thought-through: they meet the changing expectations of students, of employers, of society as a whole, and they match developments elsewhere in the international community of journalism education institutes. They have extensive and good relations with the local and regional news media and they work together on different levels, personally as well as institutionally and it is clear that employers are satisfied with the students of MSU.

The panel's recommendations included lengthening internship opportunities to allow students to work elsewhere in Ukraine, more opportunity for students to combine skills and knowledge from different modules, increased international engagement, and greater student involvement in curriculum development. Overall, the panel is positive about the journalism programmes, the staff and the students of MSU and is confident in the department's ability, with the support of the university, to continue to build on their achievements.

Sumy State University***Panel 2 (in person visit to Sumy)***

The panel's expectations that the BA and MA programmes would meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements were largely met.

The panel is impressed by the changes the SSU team has made since the start of the DESTIN project which are well documented in the Self-Evaluation Report; they include introducing/expanding student-centred learning, a focus on multimedia journalism, involving students and employers in the process of updating programmes, defining clearer learning outcomes, combining small modules into larger units, avoid duplications within and between BA and MA programmes, expanding the practical modules while reducing the number of obligatory general courses. The proposed changes meet the changing expectations of students, of employers, of society as a whole, and they match developments elsewhere in the international community of journalism education institutes. The SSU team is well informed about the various laws, regulations and frameworks concerning journalism education on the academic level and at the same time they know how to use their freedom to make decisions and choices of their own.

The SSU team has developed good Bachelor and Master Programmes. Students and employers are involved in the process of developing the curriculum. The panel has observed that the SSU team and the majority of stakeholders had a shared vision of quality journalism which makes for an indispensable foundation for building academic programmes. SSU has a strong position in the region, in the university and in the country: it has been able to acquire good technical facilities, to hire good teachers who update their skills and knowledge on a regular base, to introduce a rather advanced system of quality assurance in which stakeholders also have a role.

The panel's recommendations included reviewing evaluation processes to ensure a better student achievement, encouraging students to take up internships elsewhere in Ukraine, and improving the international opportunities for students, including through English language support. Overall, the panel is very positive about the journalism programmes, the staff and the students of SSU. The self-evaluation document was reflective and – where necessary – self-critical. The SSU team has shown its ability to see shortcomings and to repair them, giving it the potential to become a leading journalism department.

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv***Panel 3 (desk review)***

The panel is in principle confident that the BA and MA programmes meet the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The CDT have clearly thought carefully and critically about the content and structure of the new programme. There were occasional gaps in the original documentation (as the programme had not been fully finalised as part of TSNUK's own internal procedures): these would have helped the panel get a fuller sense of how the MA experience (for staff, students and other stakeholders) differs from the much larger BA programme as well as learn about the university-wide procedures (recruitment, appeals, support, complaints, and so on) that should be more visible in the documentation for modern European-style BA and MA programmes. We also suggest a more data-driven approach to evaluating student characteristics and trends, and the preparation of a SWOT analysis to aid future planning.

The documentation gives a very good sense of the Institute of Journalism's history and strengths, and how ambitious it is being in the revision of its programmes. It is to their credit that the CDT has clearly recognised how DESTIN has provided a crucial opportunity to review and improve programmes, and how fully they have embraced that opportunity. It is clear how careful and thorough the process of review and revision has been (and just how many stakeholders are involved) and we are genuinely impressed by the ambition of both new programmes, especially the MA. We commend your achievement to the university management and ask that they provide you and your colleagues with the support and resources needed to ensure the ongoing quality of the Institute's programmes.

Ukrainian Catholic University***Panel 1 (desk review)***

The programme documentation was incomplete meaning that it was not possible to provide a sufficiently full assessment of both programmes. Based on the programme documentation received, though, there had been impressive work already on module-level descriptors, reflecting a very recognisably modern, student-centred Masters study programme content. The SED also effectively articulated the opportunities and responsibilities of any academic study programme in the present moment. However, as the CDT recognised, fuller documentation was needed to be able to create a truly student-centred quality culture, responsive to the needs and requirements of the rapidly changing media and education sectors.

Uzhhorod National University***Panel 1 (desk review)***

The panel is broadly assured that the BA and MA programme meet the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The programme team have taken this opportunity to make some bold changes to their existing programmes. They've based these changes solidly on information gathered from students, alumni and from stakeholders in the local media marketplace and they've also demonstrated a commendable and determined 'vision' for their study programme, for its place in the world and for its improvement and enhancement. Though the regional media industry is relatively small, the university and the programme team maintain strong working linkages with local enterprises and alumni.

The programme and SED documentation does have some gaps. It is important to note that, to create a student-centred quality culture, students should have access to all the information they need in relation to their programme, assessment, deadlines, academic supports, appeals and dispute resolution.

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University***Panel 1 (desk review)***

The panel is broadly assured that the BA and MA programmes meet the requirements of the various standards and frameworks. The programme team have taken this opportunity to make some bold changes to their existing programmes. They've based these changes solidly on information gathered from students, alumni and from stakeholders in the local media marketplace. The revisions of both programmes are impressive. The linkages with the local media industry are strong and the online survey mechanisms seem to have gathered an impressive stream of up to date suggestions for programme development and improvement.

The panel highlighted the strong potential of the revised MA programme but cautioned against over-emphasising the 'practical training of specialists': although skills acquisition is important for immediate employability, broader, deeper, more research-oriented, interdisciplinary learning, risk-taking and the creation of new knowledge should always be the ambitions of a European-style Master education.

The panel would have liked more information about applicant procedures, the recognition of non-formal learning, the recognition of awards from other institutions and, perhaps most importantly, academic and student supports. Such information may well exist but it is important that for a 21st-century 'student centred' study programme it is easily available to students.

Zaporizhzhia National University***Panel 2 (in person visit in Zaporizhzhia)***

The panel's expectations that the BA and MA programmes would meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements were largely met.

The Self-Evaluation Report documents impressive changes made by the the ZNU team has made since the start of the Destin project: the development of a mechanism for surveying students, introducing/expanding student-centred learning, involving students and alumni in the process of updating programs, defining clearer learning outcomes, combining small modules into larger units, avoid duplications within and between BA and MA programmes, removing all MA modules on Pedagogy and replacing them with modules on journalistic specializations, research and media management. These changes are well thought through and meet the changing expectations of students, of employers, of society as a whole, and they match developments elsewhere in the international community of journalism education institutes: this is certainly the case for the Master, of which the new programme is very much welcomed by the panel. The panel also welcomes the decision to introduce more practice in the programmes, although highlights the need to avoid duplications by constructing a well-structured 'learning line'.

The ZNU team is well informed about the various laws, regulations and frameworks concerning journalism education on the academic level and at the same time they know how to use their freedom to make decisions and choices of their own. The panel has observed that the ZNU team and the majority of stakeholders have a shared view on journalism which is a valuable asset and an indispensable foundation for building academic programmes.

The panel's recommendations include potentially reducing the number of internships to allow for longer placements elsewhere in Ukraine, looking for links with employers beyond the immediate locality, developing more international opportunities, and involving students more closely in curriculum development. Overall, the panel is very positive about the journalism programmes, the staff and the students of ZNU, and believes it has the potential to become a leading journalism department.