



THE OMBUDSMAN FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS AND PROCEDURES OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

DECISION REGARDING THE PROCEDURES FOR THE ADMISSION TO THE SECOND CYCLE STUDIES OF PSYCHOLOGY AT THE VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

29 November 2016 No SP-26
Vilnius

The Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Ombudsman), in accordance with Paragraph 1 of Article 18 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and with the Resolution No XI-1583 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 15 September 2011 “Regarding the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania and the approval of the provisions of the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania“ (hereinafter - the Provisions), by Subparagraph 13.1, and after examination of the complaint of A.A. (hereinafter - the applicant¹) received in the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the Office) on 19 September 2016 regarding the additional scores for admission to the second cycle (Master’s) study program “Clinical Psychology” of the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University (hereinafter - VU FP);

determined:

In his complaint, the applicant stated that during the entry to second cycle (Master’s) study program “Clinical Psychology” of the VU FP, the competition score was constituted based on the formula:

$$“0.4D + 0.4SD + 0.2VS + P$$

where D is a mark for final thesis and/or final exam (the average of grades) or the average of grades for final examinations,

SD is the arithmetic mean of study program subjects (or some of them),

VS is a weighted average of the grades of diploma supplement (annex), excluding the grade of final thesis and/or final examination(s),

P is additional points (to the study programs “Clinical Psychology”, “Organizational Psychology”, “Law Psychology”, “Health Psychology”, “Educational and Child Psychology”: two additional points are added for the heard subject “Psychology research methods”, the scope of which comprises least 10 credits).

¹ Applicant in the text of the Ombudsmen’s decision is given as a noun of masculine gender without linking it to the sex of the student, applicant

The applicant stated that “only the students of Vilnius University can receive additional points. Students from other Lithuanian universities do not have any chance to get them.”

The complaint sought “to investigate the reasonableness and fairness of the structure of the competitive score when entering the study program “Clinical Psychology” of second cycle at Vilnius University.”

On 27 September 2016 (letter No S-326), the Ombudsman addressed to the Vilnius University (hereinafter referred to as the VU) requesting to submit “1) the structure of the competitive score when entering the study program “Clinical Psychology” of second cycle at Vilnius University; 2) the list of subjects of the Bachelor’s degree program in psychology and their credits”.

Considering the fact that the applicant stated in his complaint that “neither psychology graduates from VMU nor LHSU have any chance to receive the scores because less than 10 credits for the “Psychology research methods” are given”, the Ombudsman addressed to Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter - VMU) and to the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (hereinafter - LHSU) on 27 September 2016 (letter No S-327) requesting to submit the list of subjects of the Bachelor’s degree program in psychology and their credits.

The VMU submitted a list of subjects and their credits for the Bachelor’s degree program in psychology to the Office on 28 September 2016 (letter No G-477), which indicated that the subject “Psychology research methods” is assessed at six credits.

On 30 September 2016 (letter No G-486), a list of subjects and their credits for the Bachelor’s degree program in psychology was received from the LHSU, in which the subject “Psychology research methods” was not specified.

On 5 October 2016 (letter No G-490), the VU indicated the structure of the competition score and submitted a plan for the study program in psychology, in which the study subject “Psychology research methods” is assessed at ten credits.

On 10 October 2016 (letter No S-340), the Ombudsman addressed to the VMU requesting “to submit a description of the subject ”Psychology research methods” and indicate the procedure for calculating the credits thereof.

On 11 October 2016 (letter No G-494), the VMU provided a response and sent a description of the subject ”Psychology research methods” for the Bachelor’s degree program in psychology.

On 10 October 2016 (letter No S-345), the Ombudsman addressed to the VU, asking “1) to indicate the legal act regulating the crediting of the subject “Psychology research methods” of the subject of Psychology studies; 2) to submit the competitive score and the legislation regulating the allocation of additional points (for entrants to the second cycle study program “Clinical Psychology”); 3) to specify the arguments for reasoning the uniqueness of the study subject “Psychology research methods” as a criterion for entering the second cycle study programs “Clinical psychology”, “Organizational psychology”, “Law psychology”, “Health psychology”, “Educational and child psychology”; to indicate why additional points for entering the second cycle study programs “Clinical psychology”, “Organizational psychology”, “Law psychology”, “Health psychology”, “Educational and child psychology” are allocated only for the subject “Psychology research Methods” taught at Vilnius University.

On 19 October 2016 (letter No G-508), the VU submitted a response stating that “the study programs in the field of psychology are compiled in accordance with the “Description of the field of study of psychology” approved by Order No V-923 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 27 August 2015”. <...> The allocation of the competitive score and

additional points to the second cycle program “Clinical Psychology” for the entrants is regulated by the legislation approved by the Order No R-217 of the Vice-rector of studies of 16 May 2016 <...> the second cycle study programs in the field of psychology focus on research methods and methodology. It is also worth mentioning that the knowledge of research methodology in the programs of the second cycle studies in the field of psychology at Vilnius University is distinguished as an important competence to be acquired by postgraduates. Thus, additional points are allocated to the persons, who have heard a study subject “Psychology research methods” of at least 10 credits in the second cycle study programs in the field of psychology. <...> We would like to note that, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the admission rules, all entrants to the second cycle study programs in the field of psychology, who have submitted a certificate for obtaining additional scores, regardless of at which university the course was heard, were allocated additional points” (underlined by us). The letter is accompanied by the description of the structure of the competitive score for entrants to the second cycle and non-degree (pedagogical) studies as well as the grades required for entering into certain second cycle and non-degree (pedagogy) study programs in 2016.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the possibility for a non-VU student to hear a 10-credit study subject “Psychology research methods” is not provided for in the internal legal acts of the Vilnius University.

Sub-clause 7, paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Law) stipulates that studies shall be based on the principle of “fair competition of higher education institutions and students”.

Sub-clause 1 of clause 13 of the Statutes of the Office states that in fulfilling the assigned tasks, the Ombudsman shall “consider the complaints of the applicants and at own initiative carry out the investigations of the actions of natural and legal entities (acts and omissions), which violate or are suspected to violate the academic ethics and procedures, first of all, the principles of academic integrity, academic freedom, impartiality in assessing research, equal rights to participate in competitions, and ethical relations” (underlined by us).

Understanding the importance of the quality of knowledge and studies, the Ombudsman points out that the assessment of the entrants to the second cycle study program “Clinical Psychology” according to the subject “Psychology research methods”, ignoring the result of the assessment (score) of the subject, is false.

After analysing and evaluating the legal regulation and the factual circumstances, the conclusion that the entrants to the VS FP second cycle study programs “Clinical Psychology”, “Organizational Psychology”, “Law Psychology”, “Health Psychology” and “Educational and Child Psychology” can obtain additional two points only after studying the subject “Psychology research methods” the scope of which is at least 10 credits can be made. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the VMU psychology program includes a study subject “Psychological research methods”, but it is evaluated a six credits; the LSMU does not have such subject or the one with a similar title, and the “Psychology research methods” in the description of psychology program of the VU is evaluated at 10 credits.

In this case, the entrants to the above mentioned second cycle study program at VU FP can received additional two score only if they are the students of the VU, who are subject to uneven, i.e. more favourable admission conditions in respect of the VMU and LHSU students.

In view of the foregoing, it can be stated that such procedure for admission to the second cycle study programs “Clinical Psychology”, “Organizational Psychology”, “Law Psychology”, “Health Psychology” and “Educational and Child Psychology” established at the VU by allocating additional two points for the study subject “Psychology research methods” covering at least 10 credits, which is taught only at the VU FP and is evaluated by 10 credits, is in conflict with the principle of fair competition of higher education institutions and students stipulated in sub-clause 7, paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the Law and the principle of equal right to participate in competitions, the implementation of which must be ensured by the Ombudsman in accordance with sub-clause 1 of clause 13 of the Statutes.

After the evaluation of the information provided by the applicant, the VU, the VMU and the LSUU, as well as the documents confirming it and legal regulation, in accordance with sub-clause 1, Paragraph 12 of Article 18 of the Law on Higher Education and Research, the Ombudsman:

decided:

To inform the Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and the Ministry of Education and Science about the Ombudsman’s decision.

The Ombudsman’s decision may be appealed in the order set by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures

Vigilijus Sadauskas