

ACADEMIC STANDARD

FOR AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

(CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLINE)

1. Purpose of teaching the discipline

The set of objectives of the disciplines and elements of the curriculum must cover the purpose of the specialty. The way in which the objective is set and defined is one of the indicators for the assessment of the academic discipline and the lecturer. The objective must correspond to:

- the mission and concept of the university,
- the scope and credit rating of the discipline (according to the ECTS system), as specified in the curriculum.
- the qualification characteristics of the major.
- the educational degree (bachelor's or master's).

The objective must also take into consideration the place of the discipline in the major in terms of importance and chronology in the curriculum. If it is fundamental from the early stage of student training, it must predominantly serve the subsequent learning process. If it is general education, or from the final stage of student training, it should focus on the upcoming practice in the specialty.

2. Curriculum content of the discipline

The topics and hours of lectures, exercises, course assignments and projects, and other elements related to the discipline should be specified. The content should be arranged chronologically so that each subsequent lecture and related exercises build on previously learned material and concepts. There should be no unnecessary overlap or "white spot" between courses that are "neighboring" in the curriculum.

The priority goals of the university are: Developing students' personal qualities, encouraging their initiative, creating habits of permanent self-education and the ability to learn on their own, acquiring "transferable" knowledge, key competencies, and skills.

This should be reflected in the course content.

3. Prerequisites

This section briefly outlines the knowledge and skills that students must possess to begin and successfully complete their studies in the respective discipline.

4. Academic resources

The characteristics/profiles of the teachers of the discipline should be provided without personalizing them. The following questions should be answered: What type of teacher does the university need for the specific discipline? What training and what scientific, creative, and professional achievements should they have?

5. Material resources

The basic parameters and characteristics of the technical means, apparatus, and laboratory equipment required under point 2, including specialized software, for conducting laboratory exercises and practical classes at the university should be provided.

6. Lecture-based learning

Presentations are prepared and provided to students in advance by electronic means so that they can prepare for each class.

7. Laboratory exercises

These are conducted in small groups. Methodological guidelines, manuals, and tests are provided for the laboratory exercises. Individual and team tasks are set. Tests are used to check:

- o the student's preparation.
- o the results (knowledge and skills acquired) from the specific exercise.

As an exception, instead of a test, students may be required to prepare a report or essay and defend it in the next class as an assignment for independent work outside the classroom.

8. Seminar exercises:

For seminar exercises, which are conducted with the whole group, it is recommended to provide literature on the topic to be discussed in advance. Teamwork, team discussions, and role-playing are preferred as teaching methods. Students may be assigned tasks to prepare and defend their thesis (presentation) on a topic determined by the instructor in the previous class.

This is followed by a discussion with groups of students, before whom the student presenter defends their position on the topic. If necessary and at the suggestion of the course instructor, seminars may also be held with subgroups.

The applicability of the various forms is determined for each course.

The exercises conducted in the courses taught at DESO may include classes for acquiring new knowledge (in the absence of lecture forms), which do not require prior preparation by the students.

9. Information resources. Main literature. Websites

The lecturer is required to develop lectures and exercises for the course and to provide them in electronic form.

The lecturer should develop a list of recommended literature for the discipline, for each of its components (lectures, exercises, projects), giving priority to accessible sources (to be designated as "basic literature"). Several websites should also be cited where suitable materials for student preparation can be found.

10. Assignments

Students should be dynamically and intensively engaged throughout the semester. It is assumed that the way in which knowledge and skills are acquired is an important factor for their depth, durability, and applicability. Teachers should monitor student progress at least twice per semester. Ongoing assessment can be conducted through tests or assignments. Students are provided with timely information and explanations of the results of the monitoring to assist their further preparation. The results of these checks are included as a component in the final grade for the semester.

11. Independent work and student engagement

Independent work should be guided by the lecturer (assistant), who should guide the student both in the literary sources and in the methods of their assimilation. It is recommended that training tests, including online tests, be provided for independent work and exercises for students.

12. Cooperation between students and the teaching team

This cooperation should be expressed in:

- The teacher's commitment to the student and their preliminary preparation, current difficulties in mastering the material, and opportunities to achieve more with an individual learning program.
- Use of office hours for consultations.
- Conducting study groups.
- Involvement of students in teams for scientific tasks, research, projects, etc.

13. Exams

The current assessments provided for in the curriculum of the specialty are given for:

1. The student's results in laboratory and/or seminar exercises, coursework and independent assignments, the student's work with the teacher on scientific research and projects, etc.:

2. At least two (one in the middle and one at the end of the semester) written tests or student assignments.

14. Assessment standards:

The standards for assessing student achievement must be carefully considered and defined to objectify student assessments, which should not depend decisively on the subjectivity of the teacher. Here is an approximate description of the assessment standards that should be specified in each discipline.

- **Excellent (6)** – for good knowledge of information sources, in-depth mastery of key and additional knowledge and skills, meaningful and correct understanding of the subject matter, ability to solve complex problems, independent thinking, and reasoning behind decisions.
- **Very good (5)** – for very good mastery of key and additional knowledge, meaningful and correct understanding of the subject matter, skills for applying what has been learned in complex case studies and tasks.
- **Good (4)** – for mastery of key and additional knowledge for solving cases and tasks, but without being able to develop them into independent thinking.
- **Average (3)** – for acquired key knowledge and solutions to simple tasks.
- **Poor (2)** – does not meet any of the above requirements.

For each discipline, teachers develop clearly defined assessment standards.

At the beginning of each course, students must be familiar with the assessment standards, the procedures for ongoing assessment, and the opportunities for receiving feedback on their progress during the semester.

15. Formation of the final grade

The final grade determines the extent to which a given student has achieved the learning objective set at the beginning. It is multi-component and includes a grade from a written final exam and at least one of the following components:

- 1. grade(s) from ongoing assessment and independent assignments.
- 2. assessment from an oral final exam.
- 3. assessment from a practical final exam.

Other possible components are:

- assessment from laboratory and/or seminar exercises during the semester.
- assessment from course assignments and independent work during the semester.
- assessment from course projects in the discipline.

- the assessment from current assessments of control checks.
- the assessment from working with the lecturer on the discipline in scientific research and projects.
- the results from competitions and contests, etc.

For each component included in the final assessment, a weighting coefficient (from 0 to 1) is determined, with the total sum of the coefficients always being 1. The final assessment is obtained as the sum of the assessments on a six-point scale from the various components, multiplied by the respective weighting coefficients.

For example:

$$Q_{\text{final assessment examination}} = k_1 Q_{\text{assessment from continual control}} + k_2 Q_{\text{assessment form written exam}} + k_3 Q_{\text{assessment oral examination}}$$

$$k_1 = 0.20; \quad k_2 = 0.50; \quad k_3 = 0.30$$

If one of the components of the final grade is a weak 2, then the final grade must be a weak 2.

The components involved in forming the grade and the weighting coefficients for each discipline are determined by the Academic Council upon adoption of the current academic standard for the discipline.

In semester exams, students' written work is assessed **anonymously**.

The exam materials are stored, and students are given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with them and the grounds for assessment in accordance with the order and procedure announced in advance. The period during which students are provided access to the exam materials and results shall not exceed **5 working days** after the date of the exam.

Each discipline has a description, which is provided to the student in this form at the beginning of the course.

This requirement is in accordance with Art. 56, para. 1 of the Higher Education Act (HEA), "teachers are required to develop and announce in an appropriate manner a description of the lecture course they teach, including the titles and sequence of topics in the curriculum, recommended literature, method of assessment and form of testing of knowledge and skills."

The academic standard for the course is approved by Decision of the Academic Council - Protocol № 9/26.11.2015 and is published on the website of MU - Plovdiv.