

Part IX - One Working Day with...

Covid-19 pandemic has totally changed working days of the Academy teachers. Classrooms are closed, teachers stay at their computers. It is a strange world. Let's spend Thursday 26 November with a teacher Capt. Dagmar Roztočilová.

6:20. Dagmar enters the school. She has been working for the Prison Service since 1996. Her husband and his father also have long experience with working in this field. In 2018, when Dagmar was a head of penitentiary department at Stráž pod Ralskem Prison, she decided to apply for the present job. She also cooperates with the Probation and Mediation Service and with NGOs.

At the beginning of this week, Dagmar was a member of examination committees. On Monday, 25 uniformed officers serving in prisons for three years took their professional exam. Only then they can get the permanent contract. On Tuesday, Dagmar joined the Academy Director and her colleague Capt. Renata Hečková to examine the graduates of the complementary course on pedagogy for educators who have not completed university pedagogy education. All exams are organized via skype in the times of pandemic.

Dagmar's main activity for today is an on-line lecture. She also needs to go through unit assignments students of all initial courses are sending to her.

Dagmar checks her e-mail box and explains.

"I teach penology and prison administration (paper work) to new uniformed staff – prison and judicial guards; and penitentiariatics to new civilian treatment staff – educators, special pedagogues, psychologists or social workers. They all have to attend initial courses to acquire the most important skills they need not only for the final exam, but also for their professional practice.

Today, I am going to pay my attention mostly to civilian treatment attendants of the current initial courses.

Last summer, when a decision came that the face-to-face training must be changed into the distance form, my colleague Capt. Lukáš Kozaczka and me prepared a range of e-learning material resources on penitentiariatics. At the same time, we developed standardized didactic tests. Two classes/groups containing 60 attendants who started their initial training on 26 October and graduate on 18 December, have to complete the didactic test in a certain time – between 18 November and 12 December. Successful completion of the test is one of the obligations before the students are accepted to the final exam.

Penitentiariatics is a fundamental subject. In the face-to-face form, it covers 66 hours (33 lessons). During the pandemic, I can offer my students only on-line lectures and consultations. I also administer unit assignments, which helps them acquire the subject matter."

Dagmar reads an email of an attendant asking for the today's lecture link. The current system states, that all students receive preliminary information at the beginning of their term. The lecture plan including the link is sent to prison HR officers prior each lecture. This must be a single case of poor communication transition. Dagmar immediately sends the link to the new educator.

8:00 Dagmar prepares for her lecture. The list of participants is used both for formal and informal purposes. Dagmar keeps records of each participant's activities and development. She gets ready material that is sent to the lecture participants via skype. On the basis of her previous experience, Dagmar does not believe that the participants will be very active. She guesses that the ratio between the questions put during a face-to-face lecture and an on-line lecture may be about 30:1.

8:45 Dagmar is on-line. Five minutes later the first participant logs in and the rest follow him. Dagmar puts their names to respective prisons. She checks if they understand the penitentiary study material and possibly need some explanations. Some new treatment employees work in shifts, they may work with up to 120 prisoners. They have little time to study at work and they have to study at home no matter their tiredness or home duties or care for children. Some would prefer to spend six weeks at the Academy and devote themselves to their studies only. Most of them say they are satisfied with the study material and with the communication with teachers. One participant assures he will send two assignments he has not completed yet in time. A few participants ask for "study days" at their prisons, but this is not in the competence of the Academy. This depends on the conditions different prisons can offer to their new staff training. It is not always possible for every employee to attend an online lecture even though they wish so.

9:02 An IT officer appears at the door and informs that one prison is solving technical problems and will be connected soon. And here they are on the screen. The last to log is the attendant who asked for the link in the morning.

9:09 Dagmar welcomes the participants. Today she delivers a lesson to 19 treatment staff members from ten Czech prisons.

The participants ask for more information about conditional release, the criteria for employment of prisoners and annulment of disciplinary sanctions imposed during imprisonment. Dagmar sends short paragraphs about the chosen topics, explains, uses examples from her experience, and refers to previous lectures and to further contexts. She does her best to keep a dialogue with the participants, but the interaction is not easy mainly due to technical reasons.

11:00 Dagmar asks if the lecture was clear and briefly replies to the last question about extramural activities. She encourages the attendants to send their questions via email. She reminds of the study material access and informs about the next lecture. Finally she explains the procedure of final examination. She wishes all the participants good health and success in their new work and logs off at 11:05.

She takes a few minutes to take notes about lecture and its results. Then she gets class registers from the staffroom to put a record about the lecture in them. Before noon, it is time to have lunch she brings from home.

Dagmar selects the most urgent task to do. Three classes/groups of new uniformed staff complete their initial course on 4 December. Dagmar needs to evaluate them and write the marks in the central database. A form teacher Capt. Michal Čechoň calls to find out why the final marks/grades for prison administration/paper work have not been administered for the class he is in charge of yet. Dagmar has repeatedly asked one of the students to send her three unit assignments or he will not be allowed to take the final examination. Fortunately, the student has presented his work a few

minutes ago. Dagmar evaluates this homework and decides what the final mark/grade the student gets.

12:15 When Dagmar is to record the grades for prison administration in the central database, the computer does not work. Dagmar calls an IT officer for help. He advises restarting the computer.

In the meantime, Dagmar gets an inventory for the approaching stock taking as she is a chair of one of the inventory commissions of the Academy. There are a huge number of items she has to check and Dagmar considers her plan. When she gets back to her office, the computer is OK and the marks are immediately registered.

A few days ago, Dagmar studied e-learning material on information security within the Ministry of Justice. Now she sits the compulsory test. She submits it and gets “full points”. Dagmar is happy and she continues working on her remaining tasks.

On her office desk, she keeps lists of students according to their classes/groups and subjects she teaches. There are 148 lines with names, records and evaluation notes. Currently, she teaches 103 students of initial courses, but she has never met them.

All the students send her their homework assignments for the subjects Dagmar teaches. It takes a lot of time to assess all the papers and give written feedback including recommendations for improvement to each individual.

A part of Dagmar’s job duties is to be a form teacher. During a non-covid year, Dagmar is in charge of three initial training classes/groups of 24 new uniformed staff each. This year she has also been a form teacher for three times. Her current group involves 15 new guards.

She finds pedagogical documentation the most demanding. To administer days off, leaves and other permits is time consuming. During the pandemic, this part of form class work is not so big. The way of communication with the students she is in charge of differs a lot. A significant part of this responsibility takes place at the end of each course when the final assessment is conducted and certificates are printed.

Dagmar does not like the activities connected to her form-class duties, but she would accept them if only the students could be back in their classrooms. However, she is proud for her current group that complete their initial course on 21 January 2021. She does not know them personally but she keeps a live and effective on-line communication with them. Thanks to her efforts and care for her new prison colleagues, the group shows good study results.

Before she leaves the Academy today, Dagmar goes to the staffroom to check the pedagogical documents of her class. She also prints tests in penitentiaries sent by new civilian attendants. She has no time to read them today, so she will definitely focus on them tomorrow.

15:00 Dagmar locks her office door and leaves.

**On Monday 23 November, 25 prison uniformed officers completed their professional exam.*

*** Complementary pedagogy education is compulsory for all civilian treatment staff (so called treatment specialists) who have not completed university pedagogy education. On 24 and 25 November, 20 treatment specialists completed their complementary pedagogy course.*