



***LIETUVOS VERSLO KOLEGIJOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS***

***INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
LITHUANIA BUSINESS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES***

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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Lithuania Business
University of Applied Sciences



[signature] Name Surname



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.
2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.
3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#) and included the following members:

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4. As a result of external review Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences is given a **positive evaluation**.
5. Judgment by the area:

Area	Assessment with points
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	2
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	2
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

6. **Six** examples of good practices were found and **twenty three** recommendations given for improvement.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of Lithuanian Business University of Applied Sciences (hereafter referred to as LBUAS or the college of higher education) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in April 2021 by an Expert Panel of international experts (the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Procedure’) on 19 of December 2019 Order [No. V-1529](#) and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 Order [No. V-32](#) (the Methodology).
8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by a higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the a higher education institution; preparation of the external review report and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.
9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received LBUAS Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with 38 annexes. The Panel was also provided with a virtual campus tour. The Panel requested additional information, such as: Staff CVs; a list of academic staff qualifications and work experience; minutes of Academic Board meetings and the Risk Management Strategy. Furthermore, in accordance with the Methodology, chapter No. 26, SKVC provided the Panel with additional performance information about LBUAS, from SKVC, the Research Council of Lithuania, Government Strategic Analysis Centre and the National Agency for Education data.
10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel *visited* the institution between 27th - 29th of April 2021, where it had meetings with internal and external stakeholders. **Due to the worldwide pandemic situation, the review visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool Zoom.** Subsequently, the Panel met to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.
11. Panel received and considered the response from LBUAS on factual errors. The Panel appreciated the response and considered the four points raised around factual accuracy. However, the Panel was unanimous in agreeing that no changes would be made in three of the four areas raised by LBUAS the response provided additional information rather than addressed factual inaccuracies. The Panel maintains that the report reflects the guidance provided by SKVC and the review methodology, in that the Panel could only consider evidence (oral and written) received in advance of or during the review. While the Panel appreciates the views voiced by LBUAS in the response, and notes the extra layer of information may be accurate to LBUAS staff, the findings as presented in this report are accurately based upon the oral and written evidence considered by the Panel. The LBUAS response further reinforces the recurrent theme within this report, that LBUAS needs to have greater transparency and written evidence of its roles, responsibilities and impact. The Panel did however agree to make one change, in relation

to the first item in the LBUAS response, and amended the text in Paragraph 33 accordingly in relation to graduate numbers.

12. In line with the Methodology, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators (and related criteria): **management, quality assurance, studies and research (art) and impact on regional and national development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review conducted in 2012, wherein LBUAS's performance received a positive evaluation by SKVC and was granted accreditation for 6 years.
13. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.
14. The decision on positive evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on negative evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).
15. On the basis of the external review report, SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the accreditation of the higher education institution: to provide accreditation for a period of 7 years if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively; to provide accreditation for a period of 3 years if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively; to provide non accreditation if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

2.2. Background information about the institution

16. As outlined in its Statute, the Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences / *Viešoji įstaiga Lietuvos verslo kolegija* is an autonomous public institution established in 2001. LBUAS has been operating since 1995 under various names including as the School of Further Education for Secretaries; the Lithuanian Business College and the West Lithuanian Business College. As this review has been commissioned by SKVC of the Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences (LBUAS) the institution will be referred to as LBUAS hereafter.
17. The main study programmes delivered at LBUAS are consecutive first-cycle/professional bachelor programmes for full-time and part-time learners. The primary language of instruction is Lithuanian, however, modules within programmes are also delivered in English and Russian.
18. The Self Evaluation Report (SER) prepared by LBUAS states the institution is offering 14 study programmes under 7 study fields, namely: Accounting; Economics; Informatics; Information systems; Law; Management; and Tourism and Leisure. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 979 students were studying in full-time, part-time study mode, could choose distance studies. The main LBUAS campus is based in Klaipėda. A Vilnius branch was established in 2013 and the Šiauliai branch closed in 2015. LBUAS has 99 employees.

19. The vision of LBUAS is stated in various documents to be an: *‘innovative, open, socially active and responsible higher education institution, recognised internationally, flexibly responding to changes in the labour market and satisfying the needs of the society’*. LBUAS aspires: *‘to be a higher education institution open to the society, integrated into the Lithuanian and European education system, meeting the needs of the regions, promptly and flexibly responding to changes in the labour market and striving for satisfying the expectations of students and the needs of the society.*
20. The Panel wishes to thank the LBUAS Director, Founders, managers, staff, students, graduates and partners for their open and constructive contributions across the entire review process. LBUAS were very accommodating to all the needs of the Panel and willingly supplied documentation in a timely manner in English and Lithuanian throughout the process. LBUAS also provided a translator to assist the Panel which was very much appreciated and valued by the Panel.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Compliance of the higher education institution’s strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

- *The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;*
- *The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;*
- *Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.*

21. The Panel received and reviewed two LBUAS strategic plans prepared since the last SKVC institutional review, spanning 2016-2020 and 2020-2025. The strategic plans were both consistent with the mission of the institution and were considered to be appropriate and justified. The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan was noted to have been prepared in response to the 2012 institutional review with its focus aligned to the LBUAS mission: *‘to prepare qualified specialists with higher education awarding a qualification degree of professional bachelor, who are able to socialise in constantly changing environment and engage into various fields of activities, providing conditions for continuous learning, organizing professional development, conducting applied research indispensable for the development of the region’*.
22. The Strategic Action Plan for 2020-2025, presented an evolution of strategic planning priorities, with emphasis placed upon: *‘conformity with the EU Higher Education Area through the development of internationalization in research and studies; a higher education institution strengthening the region and Lithuania focused on the studies meeting the needs of dynamic*

global market; intensification of LBUAS's activity and fostering its teaching staff for a modern institution of higher education; higher education institution motivating the community'.

23. The Panel was supportive of the directions outlined in the two LBUAS strategic plans, particularly the emphasis placed upon the use of collaborations to enhance internationalization in research and study programmes, in addition to contributing to regional, national and European strategies in terms of sustainability, digital competencies and entrepreneurship. The Self Evaluation Report (SER), Strategic Action Plans, Performance Reports and meetings conducted within the review visit, particularly those with representatives from IT and Finance, demonstrated that resources had been identified and allocated to underpin delivery of strategic goals. The Panel noted from the SER that social partners were reported to have participated in the development of the strategic plans, however the Panel did not receive any specific evidence of social partner, staff or students contributions to the strategic plan development process. A lack of awareness was also noted of LBUAS strategic planning priorities amongst social and business partners, highlighting a need to engage partners further to increase their familiarity with the 2020-2025 LBUAS Strategic Plan and its goals to contribute to the needs of the region.
24. The Panel questioned LBUAS management on the actions undertaken in response to the recommendations from the 2012 Institutional Review and the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. While evidence of improvement was noted in discussions and the documentation supplied, with progress evident in areas such as national and European collaborations, there was a lack of hard evidence of substantial progress having been made in terms of the 2012 recommendation for academic staff to contribute to and participate more frequently at international scientific conferences. Furthermore, despite the 2012 recommendation for the institution to develop a 'dashboard' and monitor performance indicators that could enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress and benchmark against competitors, the Panel did not see any formal tracking or monitoring tool being used.
25. The Panel recommends that a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan key performance indicators, targets and goals. This tracking tool should include a variety of indicators within all relevant areas of intervention (e.g. teaching, research, finance, internationalisation, outreach).

Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:

- *A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;*
- *Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;*
- *Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.*

26. The LBUAS Statute articulates the structures and responsibilities for management and decision making across the institution. The main governing bodies of LBUAS are identified within the Statute as being the General Meeting of Stakeholders - convened at least annually;

and Academic Board - convened at least biannually; and the Director. The Stakeholders are noted to be the two Founders, who are essentially owners, who were also the former LBUAS Director and Vice-Director of Studies until 2020.

27. The Academic Board of LBUAS, whose membership was last refreshed in 2019, is noted to comprise eleven members for a 5-year period of office. The Academic Board includes a range of internal and external members, including teachers, students and representatives of other research and study institutions. The two Founders and the Director are also members of the Academic Board. An organisation chart was also provided to the Panel and reflected the structure outlined in the Statute.
28. Responsibilities for management are defined in the Integrated Management System Manual provided to the Panel. Operational management structures are led by the Director appointed in 2020, supported by the Vice-Director for Studies and Quality and a range of departmental heads. The Panel met and discussed the effectiveness and transparency of decision-making structures with a wide range of participants during the visit, alongside the two Founders, Directors, and the Student Council President. The Panel also met with the Head of the Vilnius branch, who is responsible for overall activities of the Vilnius branch.
29. Evidence was received that demonstrated the regulations of the institution are frequently updated in line with business needs and stakeholder needs. This was most evident in terms of a range of regulations being published throughout the COVID pandemic to adjust operational as well as teaching, learning and assessment practices to digital delivery and remote working. The Panel also received and reviewed the LBUAS Risk Management Strategy. It was noted that the risk strategy was approved by the Director, although it was not clear to the Panel who was responsible for managing and monitoring risks operationally or how frequently the risk strategy was reviewed or updated. Despite asking questions around risk management roles and responsibilities with several participants throughout the review process, there were inconsistencies in responses provided. Inconsistencies around roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and strategic planning were also given to the Panel suggesting greater clarity is required.
30. While it was evident to the Panel that collegial decision-making processes spanned various layers of the institution, and included participation by a range of stakeholders from the Committees of Study Programmes up to Academic Board, given the continued role of the Founders in LBUAS decision-making, the Panel believed greater transparency is needed to ensure there is a clear distinction between the two Founders and the Director in operational and strategic decision-making.
31. Evidence was triangulated across the review process to confirm surveys, consultation processes, round-table meetings and annual events are frequently held with business and social partners, alumni, and students. These are designed to ensure the currency and relevance of LBUAS study programmes, research and graduates, as well as to increase opportunities for in-company practice placements. While it was clear to the Panel that the views of stakeholders and partners did inform decision-making, there was a lack of evidence to demonstrate what actions and developments were explicitly undertaken in response to stakeholder comments. The Panel recommends LBUAS document throughout the 2020-2025 strategic planning timeline the changes and actions made directly in response to stakeholder needs and views.

Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

- *Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;*
- *Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.*

32. The Panel received and reviewed a range of documents that presented qualitative and quantitative data on the performance of the institution. Data collection structures were in place, however the Panel did not receive sufficient evidence to confirm if the collection and analysis was systematic or how the data drove or captured performance improvements and impact. The Panel recommends that greater transparency be achieved to confirm who, at an institutional level, is responsible for ensuring qualitative and quantitative data is accurate, complete and utilised to inform operational and strategic decision making.
33. The Panel discussed concerns within the review process of programme performance data that identified some study programmes had very small numbers of graduates, particularly in their fields of Construction, Business Management and Law. While noting that graduation data is gathered and reported by LBUAS, when questioned by the Panel, LBUAS managers did not provide strong arguments, insights or evidence about the cause of this lack of completion by students, or indicate whether the data was of concern to them or informed decision-making. The Panel recommends that LBUAS increase its processes for analysing and understanding student performance data to enable it to apply appropriate retention and completion strategies in the future.
34. The Panel received and reviewed evidence to confirm that annual performance monitoring is undertaken across the institution. This results in Annual Institutional Performance Reports published on the website following Academic Board approval.

Effectiveness of human resource management:

- *Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;*
- *The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*
- *The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*
- *Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*
- *Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

35. The Statute, Integrated Management System, regulations and procedures are in place that outline a range of structures for the formation, management and evaluation of academic and non-academic staff. Responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of human resources was noted to lie with the Director, as no specific HR Director was identified within the organisation structure.
36. Annexes provided to the Panel contained evidence of staff CVs, as well as a listing of academic qualifications and work experience in each of the study areas, demonstrating that academic staff were appropriate for the purposes of the institution. Data within the SER on academic and non-academic staff numbers throughout the reporting period showed a high degree of consistency with incremental increases year on year which gave the Panel confidence in the suitability and scalability of staffing. Between 2016 and 2020 academic staff numbers increased by 40% (from 68 to 95 employees) with a 150% increase seen in full time academic staff (from 18 to 45). Administrative staff numbers also increased by 35% (from 17 to 23) within the reporting period.
37. Meetings with students and graduates confirmed the practical and professional skills and experiences of academic staff who continue to engage in businesses in addition to teaching, were considered highly valued assets of LBUAS and significantly enhanced the applied nature of the LBUAS learning experience and the work-readiness of its graduates, as attested by social partners. In response to suggestions from students and graduates, the Panel recommends LBUAS should expand its utilisation of top leaders and practitioners from across the business community to supplement the teaching team, either as associate professors or by delivering guest lectures.
38. The Panel discussed the adequacy of support for staff engaging in research, training, professional and academic development opportunities with academic and non-academic staff. No complaints or concerns were cited by staff in the support or opportunities made available to them. Allowances for staff to engage freely with conferences, research collaborations and the Erasmus+ programme were particularly appreciated. The Panel discussed with academic staff the support and encouragement provided for engagement in research activities and publications nationally and internationally. While encouragement for active participation in applied research opportunities regionally, engagement in the biennial international conference organised by LBUAS and publications in the internal Journal *Vadyba* / Journal of Management were noted and welcomed, in line with the recommendations of the 2012 review, this Panel recommends LBUAS set key performance indicators and incentivise staff to participate in and target research towards publication at an European and international level within this strategic planning period.
39. The Panel sought clarification on the number of staff located at the Vilnius campus. The SER stated there were 18 academic staff posts at the Vilnius campus in 2016 which rose to 30 in 2020, a 67% increase in the reporting period. Discussions during the visit indicated that the majority of academic staff delivering at Vilnius were travelling between campuses rather than based at Vilnius. While the willingness and flexibility of staff to travel from Klaipėda to deliver at Vilnius was considered positive, the importance and value of staff/student relationships was emphasised by learners to be a key benefit of the LBUAS experience and thus should also be a feature of the Vilnius campus experience. The Panel encourages LBUAS to ensure that as the Vilnius campus expands over time, the Vilnius campus staffing model remains under review and is scaled accordingly.

Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:

- *Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;*
- *Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*
- *Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*
- *Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

40. The SER and annexes confirmed that financial planning is aligned with and underpins delivery of strategic planning goals. Various SWOT analysis processes completed by LBUAS as part of the SER and within strategic planning have identified an ongoing dependence on tuition fees, which presently comprises 97% of the operating revenue. Strategies for reducing this dependency have been implemented to date, although progress is slow. LBUAS was considered by the Panel to be moving in the right direction by increasing engagement with schools to improve student demand, and increasing research activities and collaborations regionally and at a European level. Further advancements are, however, encouraged to maximise diversification in revenue streams.

41. LBUAS is recommended to proactively participate in European funded projects in priority areas such as sustainability as well as target its research towards top ranked European and international journals either alone or through alliances and collaborations, to increase funding diversification opportunities. This approach was considered by the Panel to be mutually beneficial institutionally and regionally. The potential to further expand and utilise the Vilnius campus to attract more domestic, European and international students and staff was also identified by the Panel as an avenue for LBUAS to explore to increase student numbers and revenue.

42. In terms of current learning resources, the Panel met with a range of staff from across learning resource services and was particularly impressed by the services provided by International Relations and Projects, IT and the Library. The proactive approach undertaken by the IT Team to utilise cloud computing, Moodle and Google was notable in supporting the smooth transition and continuity of services throughout the COVID pandemic. The International Relations and Projects Team, while small, was noted to be particularly active and commended by staff, students and graduates for the support provided through Erasmus+ opportunities and to international students. The support and guidance provided for securing practice placements within regional, national and international companies by the Centre for Practical Training as well the value of the simulated practice experience delivered through *Biurometa*, in terms of enhancing entrepreneurship, were also noted and commended.

43. The robustness and suitability of physical and digital learning resources available via the Library were considered in detail. The Panel were impressed that staff and students were not only able to avail of the resources available directly through the LBUAS Library, but also had access to databases and collections held in other HEIs as well as nationally. The Panel noted a range of open source materials were also available for use. Despite assurances from the Head of

Library that the Library budget was suitable and regularly increased, given the high costs of access to e-books, top research databases and journals, the Panel recommends the Library and IT budgets remain under review to ensure suitability and scalability in line with LBUAS digitisation, research and internationalisation priorities and strategies.

44. **In summary**, the Panel is satisfied that steady but relatively slow progress has been made by LBUAS since the 2012 SKVC Institutional Review, achieved through collegiate decision-making, stakeholder consultation and strategic planning. The Panel is supportive of the strategic directions being pursued, which are considered appropriately ambitious and potentially impactful institutionally, regionally and nationally. However, LBUAS is required to enhance transparency in its decision-making structures and increase the use of key performance indicators, incentives and strategies to advance progress more rapidly towards the achievement of strategic goals within this planning period. LBUAS must also from 2021 onwards formally track key performance indicators and impact throughout the 2020-2025 strategic planning process.

45. **Judgment: Satisfactory** - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given 2 points.

46. **Recommendations for the area:**

- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan key performance indicators, targets and goals. This tracking tool should include a variety of indicators within all relevant areas of intervention (e.g. teaching, research, finance, internationalisation, outreach).
- Greater transparency is needed to ensure there is a clear distinction between the two Founders and the Director in operational and strategic decision-making.
- LBUAS document throughout the 2020-2025 strategic planning timeline the changes and actions made directly in response to stakeholder needs and views.
- Greater transparency is achieved to confirm who, at an institutional level, is responsible for ensuring qualitative and quantitative data is accurate, complete and used to inform operational and strategic decision making.
- That LBUAS increase its processes for analysing and understanding student performance data to enable it to apply appropriate retention and completion strategies in the future.
- LBUAS should expand the utilisation of outstanding and top leaders and practitioners from across the business community to supplement the teaching team, either as associate professors or by delivering guest lectures.
- Set key performance indicators and incentivise staff to participate in and target research towards publication at an European and international level.
- Ensure that, as the Vilnius campus expands over time, the Vilnius campus staffing model remains under review and is scaled accordingly.
- Proactively participate in European funded projects in areas such as sustainability as well as target its research towards top ranked European and international journals either alone or through alliances and collaborations, to increase funding diversification opportunities.

- The Library and IT budgets remain under review to ensure suitability and scalability in line with LBUAS digitisation, research and internationalisation priorities and strategies.

47. **Good practice examples:**

- The IT Team who supported the swift and smooth transition of LBUAS staff and students to distance learning, online teaching, online assessments and remote working throughout the COVID pandemic were identified as an asset and commended by the Panel.

3.2. Quality assurance

Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:

- *The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;*
- *Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;*
- *Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;*
- *Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;*
- *Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;*
- *The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.*

48. The Panel received and reviewed the LBUAS Integrated Management System Manual, alongside the Quality Assessment Standard, and a Descriptor of the feedback procedure for study quality improvement, both refreshed and approved in 2020. The Panel also noted that a range of quality assurance and improvement documents are available in Lithuanian and English on the institutional website. The documents accessible to the public included the 2012 SKVC institutional review report; study programme evaluation reports; links to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) and internal documents such as LBUAS Study Regulations, Appeals Regulations and a Descriptor for the Organisation and Evaluation of Professional Practice Placements. The Panel reviewed evidence and considered LBUAS to be largely consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

49. In relation to ESG 1.2 - The Design and Approval of Programmes - the Panel triangulated evidence that demonstrated consistency in the programme development and approval process, including input from employers and social partners. It also received evidence through Academic Board minutes that the new Digital Economics programme had been considered and approved by the Academic Board in line with institutional quality structures. The Panel did, however, find

that the institution is failing on its website to clearly specify that its professional bachelor programmes were Level 6 on the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EQF). Furthermore, the minimum English language entry requirements (IELTS/CEFR points) were not specified for international applicants, nor the language of tuition at a programme level. It is unclear from the website if programmes are taught wholly or partially in Lithuanian, English and/or Russian and whether students have the ability to choose the language of tuition and assessment. LBUAS is recommended to ensure that the EQF level, English language requirements and the language of tuition are clearly specified on its website and other marketing materials for each professional bachelor programme.

50. Furthermore, while noting that programme information used in communications and marketing is the responsibility of individual heads of study departments, it is recommended that overall responsibility for the accuracy, currency and completeness of LBUAS programme information presented in marketing materials be allocated to the Vice-Director for Studies and Quality.
51. With respect to ESG 1.10 - Cyclical External Quality Assurance - LBUAS staff, students and partners engaged positively with this institutional review process. The SER prepared for this review process was considered robust, the Panel met members of the SER Steering Group within the review visit. The Panel noted actions planned in response to the 2012 review, with impact seen most notably in relation to the numbers of national and European collaborations established as documented in the SER and Annexes.
52. However, slow progress has been made since 2012 in relation to international research activities. The Panel did not see any evidence of a tracking tool being used by LBUAS to monitor progress against the 2012 review despite this being a specific recommendation. It is therefore recommended that from 2021 onwards, a structured tracking tool be used to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the actions proposed in response to the recommendations contained within this institutional review report.
53. The Panel noted that a strength of LBUAS was its commitment and active engagement with students, alumni, employers and social partners, particularly in the Klaipėda region, to ensure the relevance and currency of its programmes. Surveys were frequently cited as key mechanisms used for determining quality and driving quality improvement across study programmes. Students and graduates confirmed that they saw evidence that the institution was responsive to their experiences. While formal communication from LBUAS were not necessarily used to confirm the changes made in response to their feedback, both students and graduates commented that changes undertaken were visible and the speed of responsiveness appreciated. LBUAS would benefit from making its actions more visible by documenting them.
54. Overall students and graduates were very vocal to the Panel of the supportive environment provided by LBUAS. They commented upon the quality and support of staff, and the flexibility provided to them in terms of their study, final thesis topics and practice placements. International and Erasmus+ students were also very complimentary about the support provided to them by the International Relations and Projects Team. There was however insufficient evidence provided to the Panel to confirm a distinction of roles and responsibilities for overseeing the quality and consistency of support provided to all LBUAS students - domestic, diaspora, European and International. This may be a consequence of the 'whole of institution' approach to quality within

LBUAS, however, the Panel recommends that LBUAS increase transparency in the distinction of roles and responsibilities for supporting the quality, welfare and academic success of LBUAS students.

55. Throughout the visit, the Panel discussed the guidelines and measures used by LBUAS to monitor academic integrity and standards. The Panel questioned the robustness of the mechanisms used for detecting plagiarism, contract cheating and ensuring integrity within online assignment submissions and exams particularly. The Panel was informed of the tools used to detect plagiarism in assignment submissions as well as the guidance provided to students in terms of guidance in referencing and academic writing. Regulations and procedures for detecting and penalising cheating as well as for online examinations and the defence and evaluation of the final thesis online were shared. The Panel noted only two students were penalised for breaching academic integrity regulations in 2020. While LBUAS staff and students reassured the Panel of the measures used and confirmed alignment of academic integrity controls against national guidelines and practices, given the well documented global challenges faced across higher education with contract cheating, and online assessment throughout the COVID pandemic. the Panel recommends that LBUAS review and benchmarks its academic integrity regulations and procedures against European and International best practice and guidelines
56. Similarly, the Panel also noted from the SER that cases of academic appeals, harassment, bullying and disputes within the reporting period were remarkably low. There had been no cases of disputes between students and the Administration, and also only one academic appeal over the five year period. While evidence suggested to the Panel that concerns and complaints from students may have been resolved through early resolution or informal action, the Panel recommends that LBUAS consult with staff and students to ensure transparency and awareness of student complaints and appeals processes.
57. **In summary**, the Panel found satisfactory evidence of consistency in alignment between ESG and institutional policies and procedures for quality assurance. The willingness to engage with and respond to internal and external stakeholders to ensure the relevance and currency of programmes and also the quality of the student experience was noted. However, LBUAS is recommended to increase the visibility and consistency of its quality assurance and student support roles, responsibilities and structures. It is also required to implement a rigorous tracking tool to measure and monitor the progress and impact of actions undertaken in response to this institutional review, in light of the lack of hard evidence of responsiveness to the 2012 review recommendations.
58. **Judgment: Satisfactory** - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given 2 points.
59. **Recommendations for the area:**
- To ensure that the EQF level, English language requirements and the language of tuition are clearly specified on its website and other marketing materials for each professional bachelor programme.
 - To consider the allocation of the overall responsibility for ensuring the accuracy, currency and completeness of LBUAS programmes in marketing materials to the Vice-Director for Studies and Quality.

- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the actions proposed in response to the recommendations contained within this institutional review report.
- Increase transparency in the distinction of roles and responsibilities for supporting the quality, welfare and academic success of LBUAS students.
- Review and benchmark academic integrity regulations and procedures against European and International best practice and guidelines.
- Consult with staff and students to ensure the transparency and awareness of student complaints and appeals processes.

60. **Good practice examples:**

- Students and graduates were able to confirm that changes undertaken in response to their feedback were visible and the speed of responsiveness appreciated.

3.3. Studies and research (art)

The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:

- *The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;*
- *The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*
- *Studies are based on research (art);*
- *Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

61. The Panel reviewed the evidence contained within the SER, its annexes, and supporting materials which included regulations from the LBUAS Scientific and Applied Research Department. It also undertook discussions throughout the virtual visit and consequently agreed that the (applied) research and study programmes at LBUAS were consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the institution currently and to underpin its ongoing studies. Evidence considered enabled the Panel to confirm that LBUAS was responsive to the needs of the labour market nationally and especially within Klaipėda, and was preparing qualified and work-ready graduates who were able to apply lifelong learning skills as well as subject specialist skills in the workplace, as attested by social partners and graduates. The Panel noted that applied research activities cited in the SER as undertaken between 2018 and 2020, totalled 15 projects that earned the total sum of 61248 Euro.

62. In response to recommendations from the 2012 institutional review, LBUAS was noted to have been active and ambitious in developing a network of alliances and collaborations nationally and internationally, within and outside of the Erasmus+ programme. During the visit, the Panel met with a partner from Klaipėda University who confirmed the current participation

of LBUAS in the development of joint programmes and research projects particularly to address regional priorities and plans. Both LBUAS strategic plans emphasised the importance of meeting regional needs through applied research activities completed by LBUAS staff and students. This was reflected in discussions with participants throughout the review visit. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan also identified priorities for research topics including sustainability, in response regional, national and European higher education area policies and strategies with progress underway with key partners.

63. LBUAS is encouraged to continue to engage with other regional HEIs as part of the proposed Joint Higher Education Consortium in response to the Klaipėda Region Development Plan. This requires the education sector in the region to play more of a leadership role in initiating and conducting research in collaboration with the private sector, in providing information to industry and the investor community on markets.
64. The Panel considered evidence that research performance indicators and annual research plans were in place within LBUAS with indicators that required participation in conferences, delivering reports and making presentations in international and national conferences. The 2020 Management Report highlighted research activities in the subject areas of Economics; Management; Technologies, and Tourism and Communication.
65. However, significant progress and impact was far from realised at a European and International level. Given progress in scientific research activities internationally was a recommendation of the 2012 institutional review, concerted action through the implementation of a targeted research strategy and action plan, with measurable annual key performance indicators is essential if LBUAS is to make a discernible impact and contribution to research at an international level befitting its status as a higher education institution within the current strategic planning period.
66. Furthermore, despite claims in the SER that *'Studies in LBUAS are based on research activities through participation of teachers and students in various international and national conferences, projects, activities of which are linked to research production, scientific studies'* the Panel saw little hard evidence of this within the currently accredited LBUAS study programmes. It is recommended that a clear and explicit plan for research-informed teaching should be established to ensure the evolving research culture, increases in research capacity and capabilities across the institution are reflected in the design, delivery and assessment strategies of LBUAS programmes currently under development and subject to accreditation within the current strategic planning period.
67. LBUAS students were found to be making positive and demonstrable contributions to the region particularly in respect of their time and experiences in practice placements. The Panel noted that students completed initial placements in the simulated environment *Biurometa*, part of the international European-Pen International Network of practical business training networks, that unites 7500 practical business training simulation (virtual) firms from 42 countries of the world. Examples were provided to the Panel by students and graduates of actual businesses being established by LBUAS students within the simulated business environment that resulted in successful businesses nationally and internationally. The entrepreneurial benefits and opportunities of the *Biurometa* simulated business environment were commended by the Panel.

68. The final practice placements within companies were also commended for their positive impact on addressing practical regional and national needs. Social and business partners also welcomed practice placements being completed internationally as being beneficial to the LBUAS graduates and graduate employers. LBUAS are encouraged to continue to provide more international placements where appropriate. Students and graduates were very complimentary about the support and guidance provided for securing placements by the Centre of Practical Training. The flexibility afforded to them and the ability of LBUAS to secure company placements in a range of countries in line with student personal circumstances and needs was impressive. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, there were no indications that placements could not be secured in 2020 and 2021. Given practice placements comprise at least 30 ECTS within professional bachelor programmes, the ability of LBUAS to continue to offer high quality placements in a variety of regional, national and international companies throughout the COVID pandemic is to be commended.
69. Evidence considered by the Panel, including interviews with participants, confirmed that final thesis topics could be suggested by students; linked to practice placements, or selected from a list of challenges and problems prepared by regional business and social partners including the Klaipėda City Municipality. In light of the COVID pandemic, it was noted that many of the current final thesis topics were focused on sustainable tourism and the consequences of COVID-19 on the tourism sector both regionally and nationally. Social partners also confirmed they participated in the proposal of thesis topics and participated in the committees held to oversee the review and defence of a thesis. There was however no evidence presented to the Panel of the overall impact of student thesis contributions to regional or national development plans or projects.
70. While noting that LBUAS does not deliver Masters or PhD programmes, and thus it would be challenging to involve (professional) bachelor programme students in high quality research projects, the institution is encouraged to consider how its students that have demonstrated the ability and desire to continue further study after their professional bachelor programme might be able to contribute towards high quality research being undertaken by LBUAS staff as an option for their final thesis topic.
71. During the visit, the Panel also reviewed evidence of the mechanisms within the institution to support lifelong learning. LBUAS was noted to have been one of nine HEIs that participated in a national project on the development and implementation of competences acquired through non-formal learning between 2012-2014. Data from the SER showed LBUAS reviewed documents for assessment of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning each year within the reporting period. In 2020 of the 11 submissions received for assessment 100% of applicants chose to study in LBUAS.
72. When questioned about the roles and responsibilities for making admissions decisions about applicants presenting with non-formal, informal experience, or foreign qualifications, it was not clearly answered to the Panel who made the final decisions on recognition or how consistency in decision making around recognition was achieved. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity in distinctions between the roles undertaken by heads of departments and the Business Information Centre in recognition and admission decision-making processes. The Panel recommends that greater transparency is needed to distinguish roles and responsibilities for the recognition of prior learning, non-formal learning and foreign qualifications in LBUAS application and admission

processes. Greater clarity was also required of the support and monitoring structures in place for these learners to enhance student retention and success.

Internationality of studies, research (art):

- *The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);*
- *The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.*

73. The two successive strategic plans reviewed by the Panel identified internationalisation of study programmes and research as priorities, with indicators for internationalisation identified. Goals outlined and actioned in response to the 2016-2020 strategic planning period, resulted in increased Erasmus+ and international student numbers; alongside increases in international cooperation agreements and academic exchanges for staff both outward and inward.

74. The first priority of the 2020-2025 Strategic Action Plan is identified as compliance with the European Higher Education Area, which reflects two strategic directions, namely: the building of an EU Alliance and the development of internationalisation in scientific research and study programmes. The Panel saw evidence that some progress has indeed been made under both strategic directions - from 2016 till 2018 years, although considerable action is needed to ensure a demonstrable impact is achieved by 2025.

75. The Panel noted from discussions with staff, students and alumni that the benefits of increased cultural diversity and experiences across the student and staff population had already been seen in some LBUAS study programmes. Participants, including social and business partners, also informed the Panel that they would welcome increases in international student numbers to provide the staff, students and graduates with enhanced multicultural and multinational experiences beneficial within the workplace. In line with a drive to increase learning delivered in English, four study programmes were also noted as currently being prepared for delivery in the English language to attract increased participation by European and international students and enhance English language skills of Lithuanian students. These new programmes under development for accreditation are: Smart Management; Sales and Logistics Management; Tourism and the Entertainment Business Industry; and Applied Informatics and Programming. The latter is a joint study programme currently being prepared with Liepaja University (Latvia).

76. While acknowledging the journey towards internationalisation since the 2012 review, and noting the achievements made, if LBUAS is to build momentum and maximise evidence of its impact within the current strategic planning period, the Panel recommend that a targeted internationalisation strategy and action plan, that includes measurable annual key performance indicators, is needed to embed internationalisation across LBUAS study and research activities.

77. The Panel maintains that LBUAS needs to develop a distinct strategy for internationalisation. Within this strategy, greater consistency and clarity is required in a number of areas, including

the use of the English language for teaching, assessment and research activities. English language is not formally incorporated as a language of communication in LBUAS, despite an increasing number of lectures being delivered in English for Lithuanian, European and International students. CVs considered by the Panel identify a notable percentage of academic staff who have the ability to teach on study programmes and undertake research activities in Lithuanian, English and also in Russian. An internationalisation strategy could capitalise upon this by offering study opportunities in at least two foreign languages which would enable LBUAS to demonstrate alignment with the multilingualism policy of the EU Commission in the creation of the European Education Area.

78. Consideration should also be given to the development of a new internationalisation strategy to adjust the LBUAS mission statement to highlight the prioritisation of internationalisation as outlined in the 2020-2025 strategic plan. The internationalisation strategy should also seek to increase opportunities to integrate Lithuanian, Erasmus+ and International students within teaching and learning experiences. Increased multiculturalism amongst LBUAS students and graduates was considered beneficial by all participants that were questioned by the Panel. The strategy should also include expanding international practice placements where appropriate as adding value to students and graduate employers.

79. In response to the need to increase internationalisation in research, LBUAS managers confirmed to the Panel that in collaboration with Klaipėda Chamber of Commerce and Industry researchers from European HEIs, LBUAS has organised two international scientific conferences biennially since 2017 on the theme of Sustainable Regional Development. While the conferences were referenced by both staff, business and social partners during the visit, it was unclear to the Panel what tangible benefits or impact to the institution or the region had been achieved as a consequence of the international conference.

80. In terms of partnerships, at present LBUAS reported in its SER to have 127 partners under the Erasmus+ programme. LBUAS is also participating in the formation of a EU Alliance that brings together 7 universities that will submit applications for joint EU Council funded projects. The aim of the Alliance is to encourage mobility, enhance the quality of study and science, and strengthen links between study, science and innovations. While the Panel noted that funding has yet to be successfully secured by the EU Alliance, partnerships working amongst alliance members was operational. The potential for greater research impact with other European HEI partnerships around the theme of youth are also encouraged to be explored. Given its active contributions in 2021 the Klaipėda region's 2021 European Youth Capital celebrations, LBUAS would be well placed to seek to submit applications for European Commission grants through initiatives such as the European Education and Culture Executive Agency's (EECEA) European Youth Together initiative. Youth-related research funding opportunities should be explored with Erasmus+ and other regional, national and European partner HEIs.

81. **In summary**, the Panel is positive about the good progress that has been made since the 2012 review in terms of the contributions of LBUAS, particularly its applied research and study programmes, to Lithuania and specifically the Klaipėda region. Staff and students are contributing proactively through applied research, practice placements, and final thesis topics to the advancement of Klaipėda regional plans as well as to address business and social partner needs. Staff and students continue to benefit from the opportunities provided through the Erasmus+ programme, regional and national collaborative partnerships. Internationalisation has

been progressing in terms of joint study programmes and English language delivery, but is less advanced in relation to scientific research. LBUAS must be able to demonstrate and document its actual impact and contributions to the international research community to the next institutional review panel. Concerted action through targeted and distinct research and internationalisation strategies with measurable key performance indicators is essential if LBUAS is to make a discernible impact and contribution to research and internationalisation befitting its status as a higher education institution within the current strategic planning period.

82. **Judgment: Satisfactory** - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given 2 points.

83. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Concerted action through a targeted research strategy and action plan with measurable annual key performance indicators is essential if LBUAS is to make a discernible impact and contribution to research at an international level befitting its status as a higher education institution within the current strategic planning period.
- A clear and explicit plan for research-informed teaching should be established to ensure the evolving research culture, increases in research capacity and capabilities across the institution are reflected in the design, delivery and assessment strategies of LBUAS programmes currently under development and subject to accreditation within the current strategic planning period.
- Greater transparency is needed to distinguish roles and responsibilities for the recognition of prior learning, non-formal learning and foreign qualifications in LBUAS application and admission processes. Greater clarity was also required of the support and monitoring structures in place for these learners to enhance student retention and success.
- To build momentum and maximise impact within the current strategic planning period, a targeted internationalisation strategy and action plan, that includes measurable annual key performance indicators, is needed to embed internationalisation across LBUAS study and research activities. LBUAS is encouraged in the strategy to continue to provide more international practice placements where appropriate.

84. **Good practice examples:**

- The prioritisation of internationalisation of study programmes and research in both institutional strategic plans is commended.
- The entrepreneurial benefits and opportunities of the Biurometa simulated business environment were commended by the Panel.
- The ability of LBUAS to continue to offer high quality placements in a variety of regional, national and international companies throughout the COVID pandemic is to be commended.

3.4. Impact on regional and national development

Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:

- *The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;*
- *The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

85. Evidence received and considered throughout the review process enables the Panel to be confident that a considerable strength of LBUAS is its commitment and active engagement with alumni, employers and social partners, particularly in the Klaipėda region, to ensure the relevance and currency of its programmes and its institutional contribution to regional priorities.

86. LBUAS is considered by the Panel and external stakeholders to be responsive to the needs of the labour market nationally and regionally, especially within Klaipėda. LBUAS was preparing qualified and work-ready graduates who were able to apply lifelong learning skills as well as subject specialist skills in the workplace, as attested by social partners and graduates. The SER included qualitative and quantitative data on 8 LBUAS graduates who were offered higher positions in their respective companies following completion of their studies. The SER also provided details of 15 graduates who were making contributions to regional development by being business owners or holding managerial positions within businesses of strategic importance to the Klaipėda region. Furthermore, in the last 5 years 27 alumni were noted to have been employed in their practice placement companies after graduation. Finally, overall, the SER highlighted that with the exception of 2017, over 85% of graduates had found a job following completion of their studies.

87. Evidence was triangulated across the review process to confirm surveys, consultation processes, round-table meetings and annual events are frequently held with business, social partners and alumni. These are designed to ensure the currency and relevance of LBUAS study programmes, research and graduates, as well as to increase opportunities for in-company practice placements. It was clear to the Panel that the views of regional business and social partners did inform decision-making within LBUAS at a programme and institutional level. Furthermore, LBUAS leaders, staff and students were also found to be making positive and demonstrable contributions to the region as highlighted throughout this report.

88. Through two meetings with business and strategic partners, including the Deputy Mayor of Klaipėda, and senior representatives from the Klaipėda Chamber of Commerce; the Klaipėda City Municipality Education and Culture Department; the Klaipėda Tourism Information Centre, the Panel was able to confirm LBUAS's contributions, influence and impact in the Klaipėda region was impressive given the size of the institution. The 2020 LBUAS Management Report highlighted contributions to the Klaipėda region included: membership of the Klaipėda Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts Education Committee; membership of the Klaipėda City Municipality Committee for Academic Affairs; membership of the joint organising committee for Klaipėda city study fair on the academic year opening day, "Regatta of Studies"; membership of the work group for inter-institutional collaboration at Klaipėda City Municipality; and membership of the group for funding of applications for non-formal adult education and lifelong learning programmes at Klaipėda City Municipality.

89. The maturity of relationships between the institution and its partners and the mutual respect was clearly evident. Participants identified that LBUAS programmes, including those for Law Enforcement which prepares specialists for courts, Tourism, IT as well as the Applied Informatics programmes were specifically highlighted as being beneficial for the Municipality and examples of how LBUAS responds to the modern challenges of the labour market.
90. The impact of LBUAS on the Klaipėda region including active contributions to the 2021 European Youth Capital celebrations were considered particularly notable given the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. Students, graduates and partners from Klaipėda University and the Klaipėda City Youth and Community Affairs Coordination Group confirmed LBUAS has been pro-active and engaged in the 2021 celebrations particularly in terms of leadership, by promoting entrepreneurship in young people. LBUAS was noted to have organised seminars and training sessions for youth to set up their own business.
91. Social and business partners also confirmed LBUAS representatives frequently participated in meetings, conferences and events to ensure the institution remained aware of and aligned with regional current and emerging needs. A representative of the Klaipėda Seaport Authority gave examples of LBUAS working closely with the Authority organising events, exhibitions and workshops. A representative of the Klaipėda Tourism Information Center stated LBUAS was also a valued participant in a sustainability project in the region. Partners also confirmed they contributed to the design and review of LBUAS programmes and learner experiences through practice placements and final thesis topics, enhancing LBUAS responsiveness to the evolving needs of the region. The SER and interviews conducted during the site visit confirmed that at least once a year an opinion survey of social and business partners is conducted in order to find out how actively a given organization collaborates with LBUAS, how many students and how often it takes or invites students to participate in practice placements. Additionally, annual 'round table' meetings are held to further explore the views of LBUAS students, graduates and programmes, particularly with a view to identifying new programmes or research needs. The Business Information Center within LBUAS was noted by the Panel to be responsible for maintaining strong relations with social partners and the business sector in the region in order to ensure that students would have practice placements in the best companies. However, hard evidence was not provided to the Panel on the impact of LBUAS activities on the region or the changes made by LBUAS in response to feedback provided via surveys and round-table meetings.
92. The applied nature of the LBUAS research, study programmes and graduates was considered beneficial to the regional community, as attested by participants including the representative from the Klaipėda Seaport Authority, who described LBUAS students as being work-ready and able to apply their knowledge, skills and experiences in the work-environment. The LBUAS internationalisation agenda was also considered positive and mutually beneficial by business partners particularly linked to the Seaport and Tourism industry given the internationalisation of their own business environments.
93. Participants in the review process also confirmed that LBUAS actively engages in project work with a range of partners. The Panel were advised of the participation of LBUAS staff and students in the FOCUS project – Facilitating blue growth with open courses by utilizing R&D products and virtual mobility (2017-2019) which included colleagues from HEIs in Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Denmark to create 11 open access modules in English language for Marine

biotechnology and Coastal tourism courses. This project was noted as being beneficial institutionally, regionally and nationally. This was one of the range of sustainability projects that LBUAS had contributed to recently to benefit regionally.

94. However, while a wide range of examples of impact were presented in the SER and cited throughout the review process by participants, the Panel saw little documented evidence that the LBUAS management team systematically monitors or evaluates its effectiveness or impact in the Klaipėda region or nationally. The Panel recommends that a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor and evaluate the impact of LBUAS on regional and national goals.

95. Furthermore, despite the Vilnius branch being established in 2013, there was little evidence of LBUAS explicitly contributing to the goals or development plans of the Vilnius region or municipality. The Panel was of the view that LBUAS strategic planning goals for 2020-2025 around internationalisation could be enhanced by attracting more European and International staff and students to the Vilnius campus if it has the capacity to expand. Consequently, the Panel also recommends that key performance indicators be established to demonstrate the impact of LBUAS in the Vilnius region throughout the current strategic planning period.

Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

- *The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;*
- *The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;*
- *The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

96. The Panel received and reviewed evidence throughout the review process to confirm that LBUAS plays an important leadership role in the development of skills and competencies in the region as well as providing opportunities for lifelong learning to help businesses, social partners and learners adapt to changes in the labour market. This is in line with the institutional vision and mission statement.

97. Examples were provided throughout the review process to the Panel by partners and graduates of the LBUAS learning experience supporting lifelong learners. Graduate tracking data and discussions with alumni confirmed the benefits of the LBUAS experience to lifelong learners. An example was provided by one graduate that had enrolled on a diploma programme at LBUAS and is presently on a Masters programme with intentions to continue to doctoral study. The Panel meeting with graduates provided several examples of alumni that had progressed to Masters programmes having benefited from the accessible and supportive learning environment provided by LBUAS. Other participants referenced how they as well as family members had returned or transferred to study at LBUAS given its reputation and standing for delivering an accessible and high quality learner experience.

98. The Vilnius branch was also considered valuable by the Panel in terms of supporting lifelong learning in the Vilnius region and nationally. The Panel encourages LBUAS to continue to work

in partnership with other HEIs nationally to enhance lifelong learning opportunities. While the Panel was reassured of the contributions of LBUAS to lifelong learning regionally and nationally, however, the Institution lacked hard evidence or data to confirm that it monitors or analyses its impact on lifelong learning regionally or nationally. It is recommended that this be rectified within the present strategic planning period.

99. **In summary**, LBUAS is commended for its proactive involvement and impact in the advancement of priorities within the Klaipėda region. There is good evidence from business and social partners as well as alumni of the robust involvement and impact of LBUAS in addressing and responding to regional and national challenges and priorities. The LBUAS learning experience and the work-ready skills of LBUAS graduates was also noted as being commendable by the Panel following discussions with stakeholders. However, LBUAS needs to be more rigorous in documenting and monitoring its contributions to the needs and priorities of the Vilnius region. LBUAS is also encouraged to continue building upon its long standing active engagements and commitments in line with regional and national needs, but ensure these are clearly documented, monitored and analysed within the current strategic planning period.

100. **Judgment: Good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

101. **Recommendations for the area:**

- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor and evaluate the impact of LBUAS on regional and national goals.
- That key performance indicators be established to demonstrate the impact of LBUAS in the Vilnius region throughout the current strategic planning period.
- LBUAS lacked evidence that it monitored or analysed its impact on lifelong learning regionally and nationally. It is recommended that this be rectified within the present strategic planning period.

102. **Good practice examples:**

- The impact of LBUAS on the Klaipėda region including active contributions to the 2021 European Youth Capital celebrations which were considered particularly notable given the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. LBUAS was identified as having been a coordinator of the EU Youth Capital programme in leadership, which promotes entrepreneurship in young people.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in the Lithuanian Business University of Applied Sciences (LBUAS):

- The IT Team who supported the swift and smooth transition of LBUAS staff and students to distance learning, online teaching, online assessments and remote working throughout the COVID pandemic were identified as an asset and commended by the Panel.

- Students and graduates were able to confirm that changes undertaken in response to their feedback were visible and the speed of responsiveness appreciated.
- The prioritisation of internationalisation of study programmes and research in both institutional strategic plans is commended.
- The entrepreneurial benefits and opportunities of the *Biurometa* simulated business environment were commended by the Panel.
- The ability of LBUAS to continue to offer high quality placements in a variety of regional, national and international companies throughout the COVID pandemic is to be commended as beneficial to students and graduate employers.
- The impact of LBUAS on the Klaipėda region including active contributions to the 2021 European Youth Capital celebrations which were considered particularly notable given the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. LBUAS was identified as having been a coordinator of the 2021 EU Youth Capital programme in leadership, which promotes entrepreneurship in young people.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement to the Lithuanian Business University of Applied Science (LBUAS) are:

- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan key performance indicators, targets and goals. This tracking tool should include a variety of indicators within all relevant areas of intervention (e.g. teaching, research, finance, internationalisation, outreach).
- Greater transparency is needed to ensure there is a clear distinction between the two Founders and the Director in operational and strategic decision-making.
- LBUAS document throughout the 2020-2025 strategic planning timeline the changes and actions made directly in response to stakeholder needs and views.
- Greater transparency is achieved to confirm who at an institutional level is responsible for ensuring qualitative and quantitative data is accurate, complete and used to inform operational and strategic decision making.
- That LBUAS increase its processes for analysing and understanding student performance data to enable it to apply appropriate retention and completion strategies in the future.
- LBUAS should expand the utilisation of outstanding or top leaders and practitioners from across the business community to supplement the teaching team, either as associate professors or by delivering guest lectures.
- Set key performance indicators and incentivise staff to participate in and target research towards publication at the European and international level.
- Ensure that as the Vilnius campus expands over time, the Vilnius campus staffing model remains under review and is scaled accordingly.

- Proactively participate in European funded projects in areas such as sustainability as well as target its research towards top ranked European and international journals either alone or through alliances and collaborations, to increase funding diversification opportunities.
- The Library and IT budgets remain under review to ensure suitability and scalability in line with LBUAS digitisation, research and internationalisation priorities and strategies.
- Ensure that the EQF level, English language requirements and the language of tuition are clearly specified on its website and other marketing materials for each professional bachelor programme.
- Overall responsibility for ensuring the accuracy, currency and completeness of LBUAS programmes in marketing materials be allocated to the Vice-Director for Studies and Quality.
- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor progress quarterly against the actions proposed in response to the recommendations contained within this institutional review report.
- Increase transparency in the distinction of roles and responsibilities for supporting the quality, welfare and academic success of LBUAS students.
- Review and benchmark academic integrity regulations and procedures against European and International best practice and guidelines.
- Consult with staff and students to ensure the transparency and awareness of student complaints and appeals processes.
- Concerted action through a targeted research strategy and action plan with measurable annual key performance indicators is essential if LBUAS is to make a discernible impact and contribution to research at an international level befitting its status as a University of Applied Sciences within the current strategic planning period.
- A clear and explicit plan for research-informed teaching should be established to ensure the evolving research culture, increases in research capacity and capabilities across the institution are reflected in the design, delivery and assessment strategies of LBUAS programmes currently under development and subject to accreditation within the current strategic planning period.
- Greater transparency is needed to distinguish roles and responsibilities for the recognition of prior learning, non-formal learning and foreign qualifications in LBUAS application and admission processes. Greater clarity was also required of the support and monitoring structures in place for these learners to enhance student retention and success.
- To build momentum and maximise impact within the current strategic planning period, a targeted internationalisation strategy and action plan, that includes measurable annual key performance indicators, is needed to embed internationalisation across LBUAS study and research activities. LBUAS is encouraged in the strategy to continue to provide more international practice placements where appropriate.
- That a structured tracking tool be used from 2021 onwards to enable the Director and Academic Board to monitor and evaluate the impact of LBUAS on regional and national goals.

- That key performance indicators be established to demonstrate the impact of LBUAS in the Vilnius region throughout the current strategic planning period.
- LBUAS lacked evidence that it monitored or analysed its impact on lifelong learning regionally and nationally. It is recommended that this be rectified within the present strategic planning period.

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