



**STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS  
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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## **POLITICAL SCIENCE FIELD OF STUDY**

**Klaipeda University**

### **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**Expert panel:**

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4. Social partner representative: Mr. Simonas Gaušas
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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal. On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

## **1.2. REVIEW PANEL**

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. Stefan Gänzle
2. Academic member: Prof. Anu Toots
3. Academic member: Prof. Simon Lightfoot
4. Social partner representative: Simonas Gaušas
5. Student representative: Karolina Markauskaitė

## **1.3. SITE VISIT**

The site visit was organised on 4th of February 2025 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies);
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER;
- Teaching staff;
- Students;
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was a need for translation during the meeting with the Team responsible for preparation of the SER and Teaching staff.

## 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

### Overview of the HEI

Klaipėda University (KU) was established in 1990 and has developed into a multidisciplinary center for maritime sciences and Baltic region studies. It is integrated into international academic networks and operates in Western Lithuania with a focus on maritime sciences and research. The university's mission is to contribute to the region's sustainable social, cultural, and economic development, while its vision emphasizes international recognition in research and innovation. KU is involved in several research projects and international collaborations, including EU-CONEXUS and other academic networks. The university has three faculties, two institutes, and multiple research centers, with approximately 2,388 students as of 2023.

### Overview of the study field

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH) at KU focuses on research themes such as sustainable technologies, Baltic coast societies, and public health. It offers 24 study programs across Social Sciences, Humanities, Educational Sciences, and Business and Public Management, with first-, second-, and third-cycle studies. The Department of Public Administration and Political Sciences (DPAPS) oversees the Political Sciences study field, offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. The research focuses on governance, democracy, civil society, security, and societal challenges, with interdisciplinary and international engagement.

### Previous external evaluations

In 2021, an external evaluation accredited KU for the maximum period of seven years, with the highest rating given for its impact on regional and national development. Experts praised KU's study programs and research initiatives as well-suited to its regional and institutional context. In 2023, the Comparative Expert Assessment of the Political Sciences field rated it 3.5, recognizing international cooperation, publications with foreign co-authors, and research presentations at major academic events.

### Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested/provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Written responses provided in connection with the site visit*
- *Final theses*

### Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- *Site visit interviews*

## II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

### Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	<b>National Security</b>
State code	6211JX087
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 1,5 years
Workload in ECTS	90
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	University bachelors or professional bachelors after undertaking bridge studies
First registration date	2015-06-09
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	N/A

### III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **second cycle** of the Political science field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	2
5.	Teaching staff	2
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
<b>Total:</b>		17

## IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

### AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI
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#### FACTUAL SITUATION

##### 1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

Klaipeda University's second cycle study programme "National Security" is designed to produce graduates who are able to understand the complexity of national security policy and its application in practice. The focus on national security is relatively unique in Lithuania. The programme is aligned with the "Lithuania 2050" and the National Security strategies. It also aims to align with the Klaipeda City Vision 2021-2030.

The subject matter is clearly relevant to society and references national and local visions. The focus though does seem to be more on the knowledge of graduates than the skills they acquire via this programme. It is crucial Lithuania has graduates who understand national security issues but the programme could do more to surface the skills their graduates achieve. The core skills embedded within a masters programme in social sciences allows graduates to be able to respond to future challenges.

That said, graduates of the National Security study programme go on to work in an impressive range of sectors. There is a clear alignment between the course and work in a variety of security settings, including both internal and wider security contexts. The relationship between the programme and its alumni was visible during the visit. Graduates going into non security related careers (broadly defined) were going into roles commensurate with the programme's level.

##### 1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

The National Security programme aims generally to align with the mission, goals and strategy of Klaipeda University. They also generally align with the vision and the mission of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. This vision encapsulates "Towards Sustainable Technologies, Blue and Green Growth, and a Healthy Sea; Societies and Cultures on the Baltic Coast; and Towards Sustainable Health and Wellbeing". The programme could do more to align itself with this strategic vision.

#### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The study programme could do more to reflect the specific expertise of the University in topics related to maritime security and policy. The specific geographical location of the Baltics is an area where the panel felt the programme team could align the programme too more closely. This is especially important given the prominence of this theme in the various strategic visions within the city and university. The specific theme of Healthy Sea; Societies and Cultures on the Baltic Coast feels very well suited to the programme, the city and the destination of its graduates. The alumni connections with the Lithuanian navy were impressive and from our visit and the paperwork an underutilized resource. Given the uniqueness of the programme and the links to a key area of public policy namely National Security there is considerable scope for the programme to develop a regional as well as global direction.

The subject matter is clearly relevant to society and references national and local visions. The focus though does seem to be more on the knowledge of graduates than the skills they acquire via this programme. It is crucial Lithuania has graduates who understand national security issues but the programme could do more to surface the skills their graduates achieve. The core skills embedded within a masters programme in social sciences allows graduates to be able to respond to future challenges.

1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes
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## FACTUAL SITUATION

### 1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The programme complies with the relevant legal requirements. It complies with the relevant field Descriptor (Political Science) and the relevant Cycle Descriptor. These include the structure of the programme, ECTS credits, total programme workload, credits for final thesis (project), contact hours and independent student work.

### 2.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

There is general alignment between the programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods. However, given the nature of the programme the lack of learning outcomes that refer specifically to security is an oversight. The current Los are very generic political science. No course explicitly covers learning outcome E4 which is unusual given E4 covers research findings (E4. Ability to draw on research findings in political sciences and other research areas, and experience of research work and the skills of strategic and systems thinking). The link between research and teaching was not clear and this link is key.

Some courses have gaps in their alignment with learning outcomes (see table 3). The programme team needs to reflect whether the curriculum can sufficiently meet the requirements of C3. This states that students will have the ability to 'work in an international context, to engage in international academic and political communication networks....'. The panel was not able to see sufficient evidence of this in either the SER or the site visit. It was also difficult to see why the research paper course did not meet learning outcome C4. Ability to write academic texts and develop analytical models in the area of political sciences.

Three core courses have no alignment with the research abilities (Learning outcomes B1-4). According to the table no course tests the learning outcome B4. Ability to articulate and highlight the limitations and added value of the findings of research into a policy phenomenon or process, and to make evidence-based recommendations for problem solution.

The changing nature of contemporary security as a concept is another area the programme team needs to reflect more carefully in the curriculum. The need for the programme to reflect the broader concept of security - both horizontally and vertically is crucial. Currently, security is understood in a rather classical and narrow sense, with a strong focus on Lithuania. Expanding the perspective to include the broader Baltic region, particularly in connection with maritime security, could be a constructive approach. This is something the SER team appear to acknowledge when they say the 'content of some subjects needs to be improved' although it was not clear which subjects or how this process will happen.

There was a comment about the need for distance learning study methods to be improved. It was not clear how this was to be achieved and what the underlying issue was from either the SER or the site visit.

There is considerable scope for more involvement of social partners, especially given the impressive turnout during the site visit. Importantly students could be helped to evidence the skills they are acquiring as well as the knowledge.

### 2.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

There are competences embedded in the programme learning outcomes although as stated above the programme team could do more to ensure these competences are surfaced and the students can articulate them. The site visit highlighted that most answers to questions around competence focused on knowledge not skill development. The issue of the language of instruction is one for the programme team/wider department to consider. There is clearly a need for a programme that provides experts in Lithuanian security taught in Lithuanian but given that the roles the majority of students obtain after graduation involve them working in multinational contexts more consideration could be given to courses taught in English and/or language skill development.

### 2.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

The programme provides some flexibility although two electives does seem on the low side. The programme team needs to think carefully about internships and study abroad given that the majority of students are working full time so student demand is low. There might be opportunities to internationalise the experience in other ways. The panel strongly encourages the programme team to expand the opportunities that exist for students to bring their “workplace” into assessments. For example, those students working in national security related professions could align aspects of their assessment with the roles they are currently performing. There is also more scope to involve the social partners here. There is some evidence this is happening but not in a systematic way.

### 2.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

The final theses comply with the requirement of field and cycle. The student conference is a great opportunity and perhaps more graduates could be encouraged to participate in the event. Again, there is more opportunity to involve social partners in this aspect of the programme. That said, the quality of the final thesis is high and the level of academic support high during the process.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)**

The small number of students on the programme speak highly of it in preparing them for work and further study and the impressive turnout of alumni and social partners show that the programme inspires loyalty.

That said, the programme should take this opportunity to refresh its curriculum and delivery. Too much of the programme still reflects the way it was created a decade or so ago now. The programme has the potential to deliver more in terms of offering a regional and societally important programme looking at the crucial issue of national security. The programme should make more of the opportunities offered by its location on the Baltic sea to internationalise the student experience. There is clearly a need for a programme in Lithuanian that focuses on national security but it is clear that both the geopolitical situation and the discipline have changed in the past decade. The need for the programme to reflect the broader concept of security—both horizontally and vertically

is crucial. Expanding the focus to include the wider perspective of security, building on the comparative advantage of their location as a Baltic university and alumni and ensuring the programme aligns with both the Faculty vision would give the programme a much needed refresh. In this refresh consideration should be given to update the programme learning outcomes to reflect the focus on security and to ensure the LOs map onto the courses on offer.

## AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 1</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>Second cycle</b>		X			

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Student satisfaction is high with the small numbers producing a positive experience.
2. Very high level of alumni loyalty.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. The programme needs to be refreshed to take account of the changed nature of security both in relation to the geopolitical context and the nature of the discipline
2. The programme learning outcomes need to be updated to take account of the suggested refresh and ensure they align more closely with the Faculty vision.
3. Ensure the competences developed on the programme are surfaced with the students to the same degree the knowledge elements are.

#### For further improvement

1. Greater involvement of social partners in the programme (this will help ensure the currency of the programme).
2. The programme could make more use of the work context of the students in the curriculum (again to ensure currency).
3. Ensure teaching methods (especially for the online element of the programme) enable high levels of active student participation.
4. Explore ways to internationalise the student experience, taking into consideration the nature of the student body and their employment situation. The alignment with learning outcome E3 is weak.

## AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research
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### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

The overall research focus of Klaipėda University is on the Baltic (Sea) region, which entails different disciplines and research topics. In the field of Political Science, the focus is on the two main themes: 1. The relationship between a democratic political regime, national security, and welfare; 2. The effectiveness of public policy in Lithuania and the Baltic Sea Region (SER, 15). Compared to other Lithuanian universities that have programmes in national security, KU has set its focus on internal security political issues (stability/instability of democracy; democratic transformation in general) and socio-economic welfare issues. Social and security developments in coastal areas, such as the Klaipėda region, are one of the research priorities albeit not yet developed in full.

Research profiles of teaching staff in the Programme cover a wide range of areas – political sociology, theories of democracy, political communication and information society, urban sociology, public services, governance. Only one lecturer (0,2 FTE) has the research profile in international relations and foreign policy, and has work experience in national security, but has not published in this area in the last five years.

The publishing activity of the teaching staff in overall has improved in 2021-2023. The total number of publications has more than doubled (from 15 to 36), but the volume of peer-reviewed articles indexed in international databases remains at the previous very low level (4 articles per year) (SER, 13). Publications in Lithuanian strongly dominate in the list of the most significant publications over the last 5 years. Staff's publications only to some extent support teaching at the programme. For lecture courses *Internal Security Policy*, *European Geopolitics*, *Transnationalisation of Security Policy*, *EU Foreign and Security Policy*, *Contemporary Nationalism in Europe* there are neither corresponding publications nor research projects produced by the teachers of the Programme. In other areas, not directly linked to the security studies, the Department has implemented internationally and domestically funded projects (on participatory budgeting funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Research Council of Lithuania and Klaipėda City Municipality; on student civic engagement funded by Erasmus+). One professor of the Department is involved in the COST Action *PlatfoRM OF Policy Evaluation Community for improvED EU policies and Better ACKnowledgement*.

#### 2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

Each study course in the Programme has a theoretical part supported by relevant research literature in English and Lithuanian. Visiting researchers from other Lithuanian HEIs are also invited to deliver lectures and present their research findings. Each year, the Department announces a call for a postdoctoral position which brings typically 2-3 applicants.

Research activities of academic staff are concentrated in research groups (RGs), but the Panel did not see evidence how particular RGs contribute to the teaching in the Programme. Individual teachers transfer their research experience to the classes to various extents. It is more extensive in urban governance, political sociology and communication (for example as part of a project on gender equality in local government or participatory budgeting experiments). Students were well

satisfied with the applied knowledge they have gained on critical analysis of political media content and speeches, on cybersecurity, on risk management, and on analysing recent political events.

The academic staff has been engaged in several editorial boards of 20 academic journals, including 3 journals by Elsevier and Springer. KU itself is publishing 3 journals to which staff members contribute both as board members and authors. Staff members actively contribute to the organisation of regional seminars and workshops, and have participated in several international conferences mainly in Eastern Europe. Since 2023, the university has been a member of the EU-CONEXUS European Universities Initiative that has set up several funds for faculty mobility and publishing. Some of the staff members have shared their experiences of mobility and conference participation in their classes.

### 2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

KU students are provided with opportunities to engage in research activities through the study process, by completing relevant course assignments and the preparation of final theses. MA thesis topics are proposed by teaching staff and then specified in accordance with the student's interests. There is an annual prize for the best Master's thesis established by the Lithuanian Ambassadors' Club. Three students of the Programme were awarded this prize in 2021-2023. Research-oriented students have the possibility to continue in the Ph.D. programme in Pol. Science, and some MA graduates have done so.

Every year, the FSSH organises student research conferences; papers are peer-reviewed and conference proceedings are published in a special issue. After some decline, the interest of DPADS students in this type of conference has started to increase again (19 participants in 2023).

KU has set up a special funding scheme in the University Science and Studies Promotion Fund for student projects. The process of grant awarding is application-based.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

Political Science at KU is embedded into the University's overall research strategy and focuses on domestic aspects of national security. In a small sized regional university such a position seems rational and justified. Yet, even with Political Science the list of research topics is very wide which entails two risks. First, the small number of academic staff makes it rather difficult to maintain a high level of research in all of them. Second, the concept of 'national security' becomes too fragmented while lacking the global-regional dimension at the same time. The list of the subject courses in the Programme is badly aligned with the research profiles of the staff and hinders executing a research-based teaching that is expected at the second cycle programme. Also, the volume of the research output is very low both in terms of international publications and projects. While local applied projects are adequate to the regional focus of the Programme, these need to be complemented with the more ambitious projects both in terms of geographical scale and scientific novelty.

## AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 2</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
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<b>Second cycle</b>		X			
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## COMMENDATIONS

1. Strong focus on supporting students' academic development by way of conference participation.
2. Active use of local sites (city municipality, port of Klaipeda) for learning activities, vital connections with the alumni.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address shortcomings

1. To define more clearly, what the concept of 'national security' entails for the Programme and Department, and how research of the academic staff links to this conceptualisation and to the various aspects of national security within a highly interconnected and increasingly geo-politicised world and (Baltic Sea) region.
2. To increase the volume and level of international research output (both publications and projects).
3. To ensure that student involvement in applied projects is in line with the National Security studies and contributes to Programme outcomes.

### For further improvement

1. To work systematically on building research co-operation with non-academic partners in the close (West Lithuanian) region, and with academic partners in Lithuania, Baltic Sea Region and other European coastal regions (including making use of the EU-CONEXUS network).
2. To effectively implement the existing regulation on assessing the match between staff members' research interests and teaching, and guide their fundraising activities accordingly.

## AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1. Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes
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### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

Admission to the 2nd cycle study programme in National Security at KU is conducted through institutional admission, with rules set by the Faculty Council and approved by the Senate. The competitive score criteria and admission principles are published on the KU website and promoted via social media, printed materials, and external advertising. Since 2021, applications for graduate studies have been processed through LAMA BPO.

Eligible candidates must hold a university bachelor's degree or a professional bachelor's degree, with the latter requiring completion of a bridge programme. The competitive score (KB) is calculated differently depending on the applicant's background: for university bachelor's degree holders, it is based on the weighted average of bachelor's diploma subjects (60%), the final thesis/exam grade (40%), and any additional points, while for professional bachelor's degree holders with a bridge programme, it is calculated based on the weighted average of bachelor's diploma subjects (40%), the bridge programme results (60%), and any additional points. Applicants with published scientific articles receive one additional point, and only candidates with a competitive score of at least 6 points are eligible for admission.

Currently, only six students are enrolled in the programme, resulting in a low number of accepted students, despite the fact that, according to additional data provided by KU, 32 applicants applied in 2024. Furthermore, fewer applicants are selecting this programme as their first priority, with more choosing it as a lower priority. A positive aspect is that the applicants' competitive scores are high, indicating the attraction of motivated students.

During the visit, stakeholders noted that KU could enhance the visibility of the programme and more actively involve social partners and alumni in the admission process, as their engagement could help promote the programme and attract potential students.

#### 3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

KU has the authority to recognize foreign education qualifications for students intending to study at the university, as granted by the Minister of Education and Science in 2018. The recognition of study results from other higher education institutions follows procedures approved by the Senate and outlined in KU Study Regulations.

Academic credits from foreign institutions are recognized if the institution is legally accredited in its home country, with final approval given by the Dean of the Faculty. KU facilitates student mobility through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), ensuring that credits earned during Erasmus+ or other international exchanges are transferred to the KU Academic Information System and reflected in the diploma supplement in both English and Lithuanian.

Despite these provisions, the majority of credit recognition requests have come from students within KU, with no applications for recognizing studies from other Lithuanian universities or international institutions during the evaluation period. Additionally, KU allows individuals to apply for recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, but no applications were received during the evaluation period.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)**

The National Security 2nd cycle Programme at KU has experienced low student enrollment, with only six students currently in the programme despite 32 applicants in 2024. A contributing factor is that fewer applicants are selecting this programme as their first priority, although those who do apply have high competitive scores, reflecting the programme's appeal to motivated and academically strong candidates. However, during the visit, it was noted that proper promotion is not applied to increase admissions to the programme.

KU has provisions in place to recognize foreign, non-formal or informal qualifications and the university applies the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), though there has been limited demand for qualifications recognition from other institutions during the evaluation period.

3.2.	There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress
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## **FACTUAL SITUATION**

### **3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured**

KU participates in the Erasmus+ programme, encouraging students to study abroad while ensuring credit recognition upon their return. The university has established around 300 cooperation agreements, including 11 partnerships specifically in Political Sciences.

To promote mobility, KU organizes information seminars in Lithuanian and English, where the Erasmus+ Mobility Coordinator explains the programme's rules and opportunities. Former Erasmus+ students share their experiences, and incoming exchange students present their universities. Erasmus+ selection competitions for studies and internships are held twice a year. Communication takes place through social media, email, and faculty channels, and faculty members who have participated in Erasmus+ are encouraged to share their insights with students.

Each selected student signs an Erasmus+ Tripartite Agreement, ensuring recognition of their academic achievements abroad. KU is also a member of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which helps incoming Erasmus students integrate through excursions, social events, and practical assistance.

Despite these efforts, no students from the 2nd cycle National Security programme have participated in Erasmus+ mobility in the past five years, mainly due to personal circumstances.

The university faces challenges in offering suitable Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) to students, as many other universities offer national security and similar programmes within military academies or similar institutions, rather than in the field of Political Science. However, the university is actively exploring and providing alternative opportunities for students to participate in short-term visits abroad. During the visit, students noted having had the opportunity to attend conferences and other events abroad.

### **3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective**

KU offers academic, financial, and social support for students. Academic support is based on professional and collegial relations between students and lecturers, with individual meetings held to discuss study-related concerns, career prospects, and student expectations. First-year students are assigned a tutor from the department, and lecturers provide consultations according to a set schedule.

Students have the opportunity to earn microcredentials by studying modules offered by the alliance to which KU belongs.

Financial support includes various scholarships, such as social, merit-based, and study scholarships, which are administered by the State Studies Foundation. Students with outstanding academic performance and active participation in scientific, artistic, or university activities may receive additional incentive scholarships awarded by the Senate or Faculty Council. One-time scholarships can also be granted for academic, artistic, or sports achievements, as well as in cases of temporary financial hardship. Social scholarships are available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with disabilities, or those who have lost their parents. Financial aid measures for students with disabilities include targeted monthly allowances and study cost compensation. Tuition fee reductions ranging from 15% to 75% are available. Prefects of academic groups studying in state-funded places receive a monthly allowance, while self-funded students in this role receive tuition fee reductions.

Beyond financial aid, students also receive social support, including the possibility to study under an individual learning plan due to personal circumstances. Students who are socially disadvantaged or live outside Klaipėda have access to university dormitories. Psychological counseling is available in multiple languages, both in-person and remotely, and spiritual pastoral support is provided by the university chaplain. Career counseling is offered, with students able to seek guidance via phone or email, ensuring continuous support for academic and professional development, and career fairs are also organised.

### **3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient**

At the beginning of their studies, students are introduced to their study programme and relevant university information by faculty representatives, lecturers, student self-government members, and academic group curators. Following the general academic year opening events, faculties hold introductory lectures where the administration presents faculty staff, their responsibilities, and key points of contact for student inquiries. Departmental meetings further familiarize students with their academic environment.

During the first lecture of each course, lecturers provide an overview of the syllabus, detailing course topics, assignments, assessment methods, and deadlines. A consultation timetable for lecturers is prepared each semester and made public at the Faculty and on the Faculty's website. Students are encouraged to approach their lecturers with academic concerns, and if necessary, they are directed to appropriate university staff. Consultations take place in designated faculty areas or remotely. Important study-related information is communicated via email, primarily through academic group prefects, with urgent matters conveyed by phone.

At the end of each course, students complete an anonymous evaluation questionnaire, providing feedback on course content, teaching methods, and assessment criteria, ensuring continuous improvement of the study process.

During the visit, students noted that student counselling is very good, and all study-related questions are answered very quickly and accurately. They always know who to contact for specific issues or where to find answers in the information systems.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)**

KU actively participates in the Erasmus+ programme, promoting student mobility and ensuring the recognition of credits earned abroad. Despite efforts such as information seminars, exchange competitions, and strong communication channels, no students from the 2nd cycle National Security programme have participated in Erasmus+ mobility in the past five years, primarily due to personal circumstances. KU is also facing challenges in offering suitable BIPs for National Security

students, as many similar programmes are housed in military academies, but is exploring other opportunities for short-term visits abroad.

The university provides extensive academic, financial, and social support for students. Academic support is built on strong relationships between students and lecturers, with regular consultations and tutoring for first-year students. Financial assistance, including scholarships and reductions, is available to students in need, and additional support is provided for those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Social support services, such as psychological counselling, career guidance, and individual learning plans, ensure students have the resources they need for both academic and personal development.

Student counselling at KU is particularly effective, as students report that their queries are addressed promptly and accurately. The university's structure ensures that students know exactly who to approach for various issues and where to find the necessary information, contributing to a supportive and responsive academic environment.

### AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 3</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>Second cycle</b>			X		

#### COMMENDATIONS

1. Well-developed and high-quality support for students on academic or social matters.
2. High student satisfaction with the lecturers, faculty staff, their support, and the opportunities offered.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### To address shortcomings

1. To increase the number of students, with collaboration from social partners and alumni.
2. To explore new strategies for promoting the programme, with a stronger emphasis on its significance to the region, as well as greater involvement of social partners and alumni.

##### For further improvement

1. To actively seek BIP or other exchange opportunities and encourage students to participate in them.

## **AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

<b>4.1.</b>	<b>Students are prepared for independent professional activity</b>
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### **FACTUAL SITUATION**

#### **4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes**

The study programme offers diverse learning methods, including lectures, group and individual work, oral presentations, discussions, literature analysis (incl. analysis of how laws apply in current situations), etc. Innovative methods such as real-life simulation, participatory budgeting lab or problem-based teaching are applied to a limited degree (in few courses). Students also participate in one-off activities such as hackathons, trips (e.g. a trip to Poland to discuss geopolitical situation), and analysing video material using results from legal analysis. Based on information provided by management and administration staff, teaching is mostly carried out onsite and up to 30% of study programmes can be delivered online.

Both methods and learning outcomes are differentiated by each course (table 3) and this information is readily available at Academic Information System (AIS). Students are informed about module structure in the first lectures. When asked about the study programme's contents, students expressed the need to further consider the overall global and regional national security environment going beyond borders of a single country.

Assessment follows a ten-point scale with cumulative grading. KU provides flexible study options, allowing students to accelerate their degree, suspend studies, or extend exam sessions when necessary. Distance learning is integrated through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE, using the open-source Moodle software), offering digital resources.

Low number of students (currently 6 with the ambition of the management representatives to grow up to 6-12) encourages teachers to be more active and attentive to students, introducing more live discussions. At the same time, being in a small group, students cannot escape and need to be more involved. However, the low number of students and, in particular, the need to attract students who pay, is also the main challenge for the programme. When asked, most students indicated that they would not pay for their studies.

Erasmus+ opportunities for students are limited. For example, over the last 5 years, there have been no students of the study programme who have gone abroad for part-time studies or placements (incl. blended intensive programmes). Accepting incoming Erasmus+ students is not intended as the study programme is delivered in Lithuanian (according to the SER team, there is no demand for the programme in English) and some courses are focused on Lithuanian topics (e.g. national security strategies). Internship possibilities are not emphasized or promoted as approx. 90% of students are working.

Students have the possibility to continue their studies at PhD level in political sciences.

#### **4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.**

KU ensures accessibility to education through policies and infrastructure that accommodate socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs. The KU Code of Academic Ethics mandates reasonable accommodations during assessments for students with disabilities. The university campus (except for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities that operates in a historic building with cultural heritage status) is designed for accessibility, featuring lifts, adapted

toilets, and a website version for visually impaired individuals. Additionally, a team of psychology counsellors was established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to provide mental health support.

KU offers flexible and personalised study options to accommodate students' individual needs. For example, students can take examinations individually, and those with mobility, visual or learning disabilities have access to specialized equipment in the university library. Very small student base (currently 6 students) in the study programme allows for a more tailored learning experience, ensuring that students receive the necessary support for their academic success. However, there were no students during the evaluation period for whom specific access conditions would be needed.

KU actively integrates students into university life through student organisations and faculty-specific representation. The KU Students' Union unites all students and advocates for their interests, while the faculty has its own student representation to address specific concerns and organize events. These structures provide students with opportunities for engagement, participation, and socialisation within the academic community.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)**

Teaching and learning satisfactorily addresses the needs of students and enables them to achieve intended learning outcomes. The programme is in a challenging situation. Entrepreneurship and leadership of university's management, administration and teaching staff to boost the number of students is insufficient to ensure the programme's sustainability. Staff largely relies on state-funding places and little is done to attract non-state funded places. The current teaching and learning methods need to be improved if the university wishes to maintain this programme.

Access to higher education for socially vulnerable students and students with individual needs is ensured. Study process can be individualised. However, everything is theoretical since there were no students with individual needs during the evaluation period. Practice may be different, especially if the number of students increases significantly.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity
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## **FACTUAL SITUATION**

### **4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic**

Student learning progress is monitored at multiple levels – course, academic group, and study programme. Course teachers assess individual students, while study administration staff oversee group-level progress, by ranking students based on their academic performance and revising their position as state-funded or self-funded students. At the programme level, the Department of public administration and political sciences conducts progress monitoring, including student surveys for continuous improvement. Student surveys focus on study programmes, course teaching, study process organisation, and quality of the student competence assessment.

Students receive feedback through formal and informal assessments via email, phone, or in-person discussions within the VLE in accordance with ethical requirements. Semester assignments and reporting forms, grading criteria, and final assessment structures are introduced at the start of each course when presenting the syllabus. Semester study achievements – including participation in seminars, independent assignments, and presentations – are evaluated according

to a plan drawn up and published in the AIS. Feedback covers session results, assignment quality, progress tracking, and peer as well as self-assessment, and acquired competences helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement while supporting their academic development.

#### 4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

The university collects graduate employment data from the Employment service and at the time of evaluation it covered a very limited number of graduates (i.e. four programme graduates were registered in the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023).

The KU Study Service's Student Affairs and Careers Unit supports students with employment-related information, training, and advice. According to the management and administrative staff, this year the career events will be expanded beyond the university, involving 35 companies.

Both alumni and social partners seemed rather satisfied with the study programme. However, they did not provide much information on the role of the university in involving them to further develop the programme. Most often mentioned example was inviting alumni for open lectures. Alumni surveys are carried out but no information on their results is provided. Employer surveys are not carried out.

#### 4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

KU upholds academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination through its Code of Academic Ethics and the Code of Ethics for Teaching Staff and Researchers. Student papers must adhere to academic integrity guidelines as outlined in the General Requirements for Independent Papers. To ensure originality, the university encourages the use of professional plagiarism detection tools such as Oxsico and Turnitin. Violations of academic ethics, including plagiarism or cribbing, can result in severe consequences, such as expulsion, as stated in the Study Regulations.

The university promotes a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination, as reinforced by its Code of Ethics, which outlines principles related to fair evaluation, research and academic ethics, individual freedom, and other fundamental human rights and values. These guidelines ensure a respectful academic environment, emphasizing equal treatment and ethical research practices. Over the last three academic years, there have been no reported breaches of academic integrity, tolerance, or non-discrimination, reflecting the institution's commitment to maintaining these values.

#### 4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

The appeal process is formally announced before each examination session through the Rector's Order, ensuring that students are informed in advance. The detailed guidelines in Chapter XIII of the KU Study Regulations provide clarity on the steps involved, reinforcing procedural fairness. However, the restriction on appealing the content assessment of the final thesis may limit students' ability to challenge subjective evaluations, as the Qualifications Committee's decision is final. Despite this limitation, the system allows students to appeal issues related to grading, unfair prevention from defending their thesis, procedural violations, and ethical breaches. This ensures that concerns beyond content assessment can be addressed.

When asked students indicated that they know whom to contact regarding submission of an appeal or complaint. No complaints or appeals were submitted during the evaluation period.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

Overall, students are satisfied with how the learning progress is monitored, how the results are used and how teachers provide feedback to them on their performance. Graduate employability and career are not effectively monitored. The university is not sufficiently active in engaging both social partners and alumni in the programme development. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are created. However, it is not possible to assess whether they are effective in practice since no cases of violations were observed during evaluation. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are ensured. However, it is not possible to determine if they are effective as no procedure has been carried out in practice during the evaluation period.

## AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 4</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>Second cycle</b>		X			

## COMMENDATIONS

1. There is a positive trend toward specialisation, with initiatives like the Blue Growth Leaders Academy. Positive links seem to exist with the navy, some government institutions (e.g., State security department). The programme has high potential of further specialisation including building links with the port (e.g. addressing smuggling and migration challenges), further developing sea sciences and providing good geographical alternatives to similar degrees in the capital region.
2. The programme seems to have a positive image among current students, alumni and some social partners involved in the programme. This potential can be much better exploited than it currently is.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address shortcomings

1. Management and administrative staff should take more ownership of the programme and lead efforts in streamlining its identity. Management and administrative staff, and teachers need to innovate more, so they provide higher value to students building on the region's strengths outlined above. Efforts in this regard may include, for example, better marketing, specialisation, involvement of social partners and alumni, proactive work with government. Based on alumni opinions, the programme needs to better consider its global context, set a better balance between classical threats and contemporary issues, and add strategy and policy incl. military points of view.

2. The university needs to further adapt the building of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities to students with individual needs (i.e. access to higher floors is restricted as there is no elevator; toilets in the first floor need renovation so they are more accessible). Although students with individual needs are all expected to request help, not all of them may do that. Proactive role of university staff is very important in offering support to address their individual needs.
3. More entrepreneurship is needed for involving social partners in programme development. Efforts may include more frequent sharing of student achievements in the local media, better promoting the programme at the student conference and other events, seek more active feedback from employers and alumni through surveys and other means (e.g. group discussions) to identify and build on synergies.
4. New alternative ways to collect employment statistics covering programme's graduates are recommended. Instead of trying to collect Employment service data, universities could call each graduate strictly following GDPR requirements.
5. Procedures and policies for ensuring access to higher education, for ensuring academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination and for submitting and processing appeals and complaints need to be tested in real practical situations and further improved in case gaps are detected.

For further improvement:

Not applicable

## AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1. Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes
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### FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

The National Security programme is delivered by nine educators, including five from Department of Public Administration and Political Science (DPAPS) and four external contributors, such as a researcher from the KU's Centre for Research on Social Change as well as practitioners with relevant expertise. According to the SER, the staff comprises 33% professors, 22% associate professors, and 44% lecturers, with 90% holding research degrees and 10% being practitioners with professional experience aligned with their teaching responsibilities. Staff engage in research activities nationally and internationally, contribute to conferences, publish in academic journals, and develop methodological materials. In 2024, for example, DPAPS staff published 34 scientific publications registered in the KU's Research Management System of which several were "devoted to the topic of national security" (written information provided by KU, February 4, 2025).

The selection of teaching staff is based on the relevance of their research, publication records, expertise, and willingness to engage with students. Efforts to internationalise the staff face challenges such as limited resources for salaries and accommodation. Staff turnover and renewal is low for the time of the evaluation.

The student-academic staff ratio is about 2:1 which is favourable. The number of students in the program is relatively small, yet, the amount of state-funded places has been growing to 8 in 2024. This suggests that there is interest in maintaining the program at KU. Still, during the site visit participants from the management panel affirmed that there was a need for focusing on expanding student numbers as well as for more "top-level research" and geopolitics as an important foundation of security.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

Although the formal requirements in terms of academic status and experience are met, the number of teaching staff in the National Security programme is relatively small. The Full-time Equivalent (FTE) effectively only is about 5,64. One member of the core faculty died in 2022 and was not replaced. This makes the programme, in principle, rather vulnerable. Clearly, the KU-based doctoral programme at the Faculty could become an element of staff renewal, yet it might be advantageous to also consider hires from outside. To date efforts to internationalise the teaching staff have been constrained by a number of factors including location, salaries and focus of the programme.

Several staff engage in research activities with a strong national and regional focus, with a few of them being very productive in the field of national security. Publication activities reasonably meet the requirements of outlets (in terms of Scopus) but are not visible at a more international scale. The online presentation of teaching staff on the DPAPS is rather incomplete (i.e., in most cases there are no bibliographical notes or contact information, <https://shmf.ku.lt/en/structure-1/departments-1-1/department-of-public-administration-and-political-science>). The understanding of "national security", both in terms of teaching and research is very narrow focusing on its national dimensions. Yet, in today's interconnected world a broader conceptualisation, including the global, subregional (i.e., Baltic), national and regional as well as local dimensions might be necessary. The development of a course on port security (scheduled for release in the "National Security" programme in 2025) seems promising. It will also allow the programme to connect with KU membership in the European Universities Initiative EU-CONEXUS bringing together several portal universities across Europe.

Several graduates and social partners suggested strengthening English as a language of instruction and expanding the notion of security. This could allow the programme to consolidate as a core programme at a regional university and to expand its application amongst students.

Although the core teaching staff is qualified, it most likely needs to be complemented by additional staff that will help to make the necessary adjustments both in terms of teaching and research. Method-training in the social sciences has not yet become a priority in the “National Security” Programme. This is a shortcoming that requires some adjustments. In short, the program needs an update or even overhaul – as also maintained as a conclusion in the SER – in terms of its course syllabi taking into account a more expanded notion of security that will satisfy the demands of its students.

5.2.	Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated
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## FACTUAL SITUATION

### 5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Academic mobility is regulated by KU Senate Resolution No. 11-60, foreseeing that academic staff participate in measures of professional development, including e.g. research and teaching trips. Centrally signed Erasmus+ agreements as well as membership in the European Universities Initiative EU-CONEXUS provide opportunities for exchange. The Department participated in various initiatives such as e.g., the Student Civic Engagement project (funded by the EU) and projects funded by the Lithuanian-Polish Youth Exchange Fund. Mobility of KU academic teachers in the National Security Programme has been growing since 2020 (2021: 1; 2023: 3). The number of incoming visitors under the Erasmus+ agreement is low with only one international academic staff coming for teaching purposes.

### 5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

Academic staff at KU is obliged to engage in professional development within the period of five years. During the time of training or research visits, the salary is being covered by KU. The number of staff participating in various formats has been growing modestly since 2016.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

KU provides various opportunities for both academic and professional development. Whilst professional development opportunities and outbound mobility have been seized by a growing part of the academic staff, inbound mobility remains rather low. The EU-CONEXUS alliance could provide a springboard towards increasing in-bound and outbound mobility as well as internationalisation of course offerings.

## AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b>	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b>	<b>Good - 3</b>	<b>Very good - 4</b>	<b>Exceptional - 5</b>
<b>AREA 5</b>	Does not meet the requirements	Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings

<b>Second cycle</b>		X			
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### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. Participation in professional development has been growing over the past few years.
2. The instructors of the Programme National Security receive high scores in terms of students' and social partners' satisfaction.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### To address shortcomings

1. To explore strengths as a regional university and Lithuania's connection to the Baltic Sea both in terms of teaching and research related to the Programme National Security.
2. To make an effort for external hires (from outside the region as a bare minimum) to internationalize (if possible) and expand the research base of staff and to prepare for the generational shift.
3. To increase international visibility of the National Security Programme and its staff (e.g. via marketing and presentation on the KU website).

#### For further improvement

1. To consider using opportunities provided by KU membership in EU-CONEXUS and Erasmus+ more strategically.
2. To consider strategic participation in national and European projects (e.g., Horizon Europe) to develop the research portfolio further.

## AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes
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### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

Klaipėda University is situated in a historic complex built in the early 20th century, which has been modernized to support contemporary teaching and learning. The Faculty of Social Sciences, Education, and Humanities (FSSH), where the program is implemented, has 29 well-equipped classrooms. With an enrollment of approximately 20 students, the existing facilities fully accommodate the program's spatial needs. All classrooms have internet access, and some feature advanced technological equipment such as interactive boards, SMART tables, and a Participatory Budgeting Lab. Additionally, two computer labs with a total of 24 workstations are available for student use.

The university provides a Moodle-based Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which hosts learning materials for courses and facilitates online student discussions. The VLE is also used for delivering lectures and providing both group and individual consultations.

The FSSH Library, used by students in the program, includes a lending department, a reading room with 47 study spaces (10 of which are computer-equipped), as well as group and individual study rooms. Although the library space is somewhat limited, and book collections are only partially available on open shelves, wireless internet access helps mitigate the restricted number of computer workstations. The library offers a sufficient and up-to-date collection of political science literature. Over the past four years, more than 10 new titles have been acquired for each major lecture course in the program, ranging from 56 in *International Security Policy* to five in *Research Methods* (SER, p.38). The number of new acquisitions in Lithuanian exceeds that of foreign-language publications, comprising approximately three-quarters of the total. Given the domestic composition of the student body and the regional focus of the program, this distribution appears justified. Textbooks are purchased in multiple copies and can be borrowed for extended periods. Additionally, students have access to copying services in the library.

Klaipėda University also offers a Virtual Library, developed in collaboration with other Lithuanian research institutions with financial support from the EU and the Lithuanian government. The university holds licenses for 28 academic databases, which fully meet the needs of the program and are accessible both on and off-campus via proxy settings.

#### 6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

Library resources are updated regularly. The acquisition policy prioritizes digital resources, a trend reflected in recent statistics: between 2021 and 2023, funding for printed publications decreased by €7,700, while investment in databases increased by €14,700 (SER). The selection of new materials is carried out by faculty members and approved by the Head of the Department. According to interviews, "there are some limits," but these do not negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning. All new course syllabi are reviewed by a designated committee to ensure the adequacy and sufficiency of the literature, and existing syllabi undergo regular evaluations.

The planning process for resource allocation follows a bottom-up approach and primarily operates on an ad hoc basis: "A plan for improving the infrastructure for research (whenever necessary) shall be drawn up, based on surveys" (SER, p.39). Needs identified at the departmental level are incorporated into the procurement plan and implemented as financial resources permit.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The existing facilities, as well as informational and financial resources, are sufficient to support the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. While physical space for the library, staff offices, and student socialization is limited, the classrooms are in good condition and well-equipped.

## AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 6</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>Second cycle</b>			X		

## COMMENDATIONS

1. Despite limited physical space, the library collection is good; the volume of new acquisitions both in Lithuanian and English is impressive.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address shortcomings

1. Plans for upgrading resources would benefit from a more systematic and holistic approach that integrates top-down strategies (currently lacking) with the existing bottom-up agility.
2. The strategy for expanding the Virtual Library includes increasing access to literature in English. To maximize the benefits of English-language e-databases and e-books, to ensure a modern, internationally competitive education, KU should place greater emphasis on language training for students and further strengthen the English proficiency of its staff.

### For further improvement

1. Increasing office space for academic staff and creating more social areas for students would foster stronger interactions, ultimately enhancing academic engagement and performance.

## AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information
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### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

Klaipėda University (KU) ensures the quality of its study programmes through an internal quality assurance system aligned with (inter)national standards and European higher education policies. Key processes, such as study programme development, feedback management, and professional guidance, are documented and monitored annually. Programme quality is overseen by the Committee of the Study Fields of Social Sciences (CSS) and other governing bodies, supported by the Study Quality Commission, which provides analysis and recommendations.

The National Security study programme follows stringent quality protocols. Staff qualifications and research activities are evaluated according to established guidelines. Feedback from students is collected through regular surveys, fostering continuous improvement. KU employs digital platforms like the Academic Information System and Virtual Learning Environment to streamline programme administration, enhance learning resources, and support student engagement.

KU reviews and updates its study programmes annually, with courses undergoing periodic re-attestation. The institution emphasizes transparency by making programme-related information, including feedback, alumni surveys, and quality assessments, publicly accessible. These measures ensure KU maintains high academic standards and fosters student-centric improvements.

#### 7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

The social stakeholders – teachers, students, alumni, employers, and practitioners – receive feedback by way of surveys and questionnaires as well as direct participation (e.g., in thesis committees). Social partners, in particular employers and practitioners, are invited to university events and conferences and may express their views on study issues.

#### 7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

The Head of the National Security Programme, who currently also serves as the Head of the Department of Public Administration and Political Science (DPAPS), along with the teaching staff, is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the programme, with their respective roles and responsibilities clearly outlined. Feedback on the programme's implementation is gathered through analysis of student survey results and insights obtained from stakeholder interviews.

#### 7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

The Head of the National Security programme and teaching staff ensure its effective implementation, with responsibilities clearly defined. Feedback is collected via student surveys and stakeholder interviews. Student satisfaction with the programme has scored high throughout the years.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Following the SER, the internal quality assurance is well-organized and structured following a set of national and international rules and adhering to European standards. Evaluation of the study process and the quality of the programme is carried out annually involving a wide range of different stakeholders; on the whole students and graduates give good scores to National Security and have expressed their satisfaction in the respective on-site meetings, too. It can be said that KU has effective monitoring systems in place which are further strengthened by close student-teacher interaction and feedback. Social partners are closely involved in the study process allowing the inclusion of timely topics. From the perspective of both students/graduates and social partners alike, the study program is attractive as a program available at a regional university fulfilling particular needs of these local groups.

## AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 7</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>Second cycle</b>			X		

## COMMENDATIONS

1. The second cycle “National Security” prompts high satisfaction rates amongst students and graduates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address shortcomings

1. There is a need to effectively implement feedback received from different stakeholder groups.

### For further improvement

1. To develop a database on student feedback and satisfaction (e.g., by way of a Study Barometer).

## V. SUMMARY

The second-cycle study programme National Security at Klaipėda University focuses on national security policy and its practical application, aligning with national strategies such as Lithuania 2050 and the National Security Strategy, as well as regional frameworks. However, it does not fully capitalise on Klaipėda University's geographical advantage and expertise in maritime security, an area with significant development potential. While the programme integrates national and regional security strategies, a more balanced approach that places equal emphasis on theoretical and practical competencies is needed. Graduates find employment in various security sectors, with strong alumni connections, particularly in the Lithuanian navy. Although the programme meets legal requirements, there is room for improvement through more flexible learning options, expanded internship opportunities, and increased international experiences. The final theses are of high quality, and greater involvement from social partners could further enhance the programme.

Klaipėda University's research in Political Science focuses on national security, internal security, and socio-economic welfare in the Baltic Sea region. Faculty research covers political sociology and governance. However, only one lecturer specialises in international relations and national security, with limited publications in this area. While the number of faculty publications has increased, most are in Lithuanian, and international peer-reviewed articles remain scarce. Research activities are not well integrated into teaching, and the overall research scope appears fragmented. Students engage in research through assignments and theses, with some continuing to Ph.D. studies. However, the programme would benefit from more ambitious, globally focused research projects.

Student support services are well-developed, with high levels of satisfaction. The university provides comprehensive financial, academic, and psychological support. However, participation in Erasmus+ mobility is extremely limited, largely due to students' employment commitments. The programme would benefit from alternative internationalisation opportunities that accommodate working students. Additionally, despite strong applicant interest, low student enrolment remains a challenge. More targeted marketing efforts and increased collaboration with alumni and social partners could enhance programme visibility and recruitment.

The study programme employs diverse teaching methods, though innovative approaches remain limited. Students appreciate the applied knowledge in areas such as political media analysis and cybersecurity. However, the low number of enrolled students affects programme sustainability and limits opportunities for growth. Despite this, the programme offers flexible study options, allowing students to continue to Ph.D. studies. The university ensures accessibility for socially vulnerable and special-needs students and offers tailored learning experiences. While the teaching meets student needs, additional efforts are required to attract non-state funded students. Student progress is monitored systematically, and feedback mechanisms are in place. However, graduate employability and career support remain limited. Employer and alumni engagement in, for example, shaping the curriculum, could be improved. Academic integrity and non-discrimination policies are in place, with no reported violations. However, the effectiveness of the appeals and complaints processes is difficult to assess, as no appeals or complaints have been submitted.

The teaching staff is well-qualified, but the small number of core faculty members poses a risk to programme sustainability. The lack of faculty specialisation in security studies limits academic depth, and research output remains insufficient at the international level. Although professional development and academic mobility opportunities are available, inbound faculty mobility remains low. The EU-CONEXUS initiative presents potential for enhancing both inbound and outbound mobility.

Klaipėda University provides adequate facilities, informational resources, and financial support for the National Security programme. The faculty has well-equipped classrooms featuring advanced technology, including interactive boards and SMART tables. A Moodle-based Virtual Learning Environment supports course materials and online consultations. The library maintains a sufficient collection of political science literature, with regular updates and access to academic databases.

Although the library space is limited, ongoing resource planning and ongoing upgrades ensure that the programme's needs are met.

Quality assurance processes are well-structured, involving various stakeholders, and student satisfaction with programme monitoring is high. The programme's quality is overseen by multiple committees and continuously improved through staff evaluations, student surveys, and feedback management. However, there is room for improvement in the systematic implementation of feedback from students, alumni, and social partners.

In conclusion, the National Security programme at Klaipėda University has notable strengths, such as its alignment with national security priorities and the positive feedback from students and alumni. However, it does not fully capitalise on its strategic coastal location to develop expertise in maritime security and international cooperation, which remains an underutilised opportunity. Additionally, it faces key challenges that must be addressed to ensure long-term success. The curriculum should be updated to reflect evolving security demands, faculty expertise must be strengthened, and student engagement in international opportunities should be expanded. Addressing these issues through strategic planning and targeted improvements will be crucial for maintaining the programme's competitiveness and sustainability.

