



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS**  
at Mykolas Romeris University

**Expert panel:**

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2. Prof. Dr. Eric Waarts, *academic*;
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6. PhD. Matthew Kitching, *students' representative*.

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Natalija Bogdanova*

Report language – English

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## Study Field Data

I.

Title of the study programme	Global Business and Modern Marketing
State code	6121LX053
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3 years; Part time, 4,5 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	22-06-2010

II.

Title of the study programme	International Business and Customs Logistics
State code	6121LX051
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3 years; Part time, 4,5 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	18-05-2016

### III.

Title of the study programme	International Trade
State code	6211L X073
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1,5 years; Part time, 2 years
Credit volume	90 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Higher
Registration date of the study programme	2009

### IV.

Title of the study programme	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
State code	6215L X001
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1 year
Credit volume	60 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	English
Minimum education required	Higher
Registration date of the study programme	2017

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

## 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 16th May 2022.

*Prof. Dr. Peter A. Jones (panel chairperson), academic, an independent consultant in the field of higher education, director of „Wensworth Jones Limited“ (U.K.);*

*Prof. Dr. José María Gil Roig, academic, professor in Business and Economics at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain);*

*Prof. Dr. Eric Waarts, academic, professor at Business Management School, Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands);*

*MSc Nicholas Coleman, academic; head of study programmes in Management in London Metropolitan University (U.K.);*

*Ms. Ugnė Bartašiūtė, representative of social partners, head of Communication at Modus Group, (Lithuania);*

*PhD. Matthew Kitching, students' representative, a PhD student at Lancaster University, ESU expert and member of the Steering Committee.*

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	link to the MRU Moodle system

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) was established in 2004 as a State University with predecessor institutions including the Lithuanian University of Law dating back to 1990. It is the largest social sciences university in Lithuania with 85 study programmes of which 29 are at the bachelors level, 50 at Masters level, and six doctorate level. Of the 85 study programmes 25 are offered in English language with 10 in the first cycle and 15 in the second cycle. In addition there are seven joint degrees or double diploma programmes.

The social sciences study fields dominate the portfolio with over 95% of the programmes within those fields. The University has over 6000 students including 785 international students with exchange students from over 40 countries. Slightly over 50% of the students are on first cycle programmes, with 40% on second cycle programmes. There are 180 doctoral students.

The business studies fields are the responsibility of the Faculty of Public Governance and Business. Of the study fields under review the first cycle programme of Global Business and Modern Marketing is offered in Lithuanian and English, whilst the International Business and Customs Logistics Programme is offered in Lithuanian. The second cycle programme of International Trade is offered in Lithuanian and English whilst the Masters of Business Administration is offered in English.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Business* study field and **first cycle** at Mykolas Romeris University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	2
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	2
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	19

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

*Business* study field and **second cycle** at Mykolas Romeris University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Evaluation Area</b>	<b>Evaluation of an Area in points*</b>
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	22

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.



### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

*Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:*

*3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

The SER states that the first cycle study programmes of Global Business and Modern Marketing (GBMM) and International Business and Custom Logistics, (IBCL) are developed in accordance with legislation, and recommendations determining requirements for the professional and general competencies of professional higher education graduates.

The study programmes are described as being linked to Lithuania's "Lithuania 2030 Progress Strategy" and informed by the "National Progress Plan (September 2020)". This document highlights the challenges for the economic development needs of society with the significant changes in the demographic profile and the relative decline of that population, being amongst the highest in the European Union. This is particularly relevant for higher education institutions when both the rate of unemployment in the 15 to 24 year olds is at 11.9% and the demographic changes are considered.

The Lithuanian economic environment is influenced by the inflows of European Union support, the growth of Lithuania as a centre of logistics and operations for international trade and business, and the identified labour market for business specialists to support economic growth.

The SER (p.7) evidences labour market and labour market forecasts that indicate whilst the demand for marketing and business professionals has decreased the demand for e-business logistics, and customs brokers, has or will increase. The study programmes have been developed taking the needs of the market into account with appropriate input on specialist competencies from the social partners and wider industry stakeholders.

The second cycle study programmes of International Trade and Master of Business Administration (MBA), have been designed to recognise the economic and labour market needs and providing a wider understanding of the leadership requirements for managing in developing businesses.

The second cycle study programme, International Trade and its specialism of Customs in International Trade (CIT) are designed to prepare specialists in the range of import and export logistics and the relevant regulatory controls and operational structures. The MBA provides a wider framework of understanding, focused on the development of graduates to lead and manage change in organisations and to participate in the strategic decision-making.

The number of applicants and subsequent signed contracts for the first cycle programmes has resulted, for the GBMM, in one student cohort of 21 in 2020 and one cohort of 18 in 2021, a situation the SER (P. 18) suggests "could be viewed as stable." It is noted that whilst the number of applications overall for this programme has risen since 2020 from 55 to 94 the number of first choice applicants has reduced from 21 to 19. (This is evidenced in the SER Table 3.1). The average admissions score for this programme is 7.2, and there have been no state funded students admitted to this programme.

There have been no admitted cohorts for the IBCL programme in 2019 or 2020, (This is evidenced in the SER Table 3.2) the minimum number of enrolled students per cohort to run the programme is 15. The lack of admissions is of concern given that the admission score of 3.69, significantly lower than the business field average is almost half that for the GBMM programme. It is also noted that for the cohorts that have been able to run, the dropout rate in 2018 was 31.1% and for 2019 35%, further exacerbating the issue and the impact on the remaining students experience and the coherent delivery of the programme.

The SER refers to this IBCL programme as being a unique bachelor's programme, the subjects of which relate not only to international business, but also to customs and logistics operations, but the SER provides no commentary nor discussion on the inability to recruit and retain students as an issue that needs action. With no recruitment to the programme and no action plan in place to address the issue, the ability of the programme to meet the identified needs of the labour market is not being fulfilled nor can the panel adequately evidence that the aims and outcomes are being met.

The second cycle programmes of IT and MBA have small cohorts not exceeding 11 students respectively over the last three years. Of the 2020 intakes, for the IT programme, 6 of the 10 students were state funded, whilst for the MBA, 3 of the 11 students were state funded. The dropout rate clearly exacerbates the problem of small numbers.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The aims and outcomes of the study programmes have been designed to provide graduates with the knowledge, understanding and specialist competencies to meet specific labour market needs. The panel recognises that labour market needs have been identified through the appropriate research and consultation with relevant stakeholders, and are intended to contribute to the wider economic development within Lithuania.

The first cycle study programmes titles reflect specialist labour market needs that in turn provide expectations to both students and employers in terms of aims and outcomes. Similarly in the second cycle programmes demonstrate through the programme titles the aims and intended outcomes.

The panel noted that while the study programmes aims and outcomes have been developed in response to the identified labour market needs, the programmes have not demonstrated attractiveness to potential students, given the low levels of recruitment that has resulted in the inability to run some cohorts. This is particularly the case with the IBCL programme with no cohorts on this programme since 2018. With so few students enrolled this must reduce the

impact of these programmes on the labour market needs through fewer graduates into employment. The panel further noted that the IBCL programme did not feature prominently as a bachelors degree on the University website nor was it easy to find through online searches. Therefore given the very specialist nature of the IBCL programme whilst clearly aimed at meeting identified needs of the specialist labour market, is clearly not attractive as a programme offer and should be comprehensively reviewed.

### *3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The mission of MRU includes "to create a culture and the state of society in accordance with the principles of democracy; to educate an academic society; to promote the sustainable progress of organisation communities; and to leave each member of our community to their individual and professional success."

Within the strategic plan (2021–2023) the main aims include; global market driven studies, advanced science creating social innovation, sustainable international developments and the promotion of life-long learning.

First cycle programmes are identified as relating to the strategic plan through their focus on developments of social innovation, and the second cycle programmes through a focus on global international markets, sustainable international development, and the development of social research and innovation.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The MRU mission is recognised as having a breadth and depth that reflects the wider contributions of higher education to the continued development of society and the individual, with the complementary strategic plan focusing on the more tangible outcomes that can be measured in meeting the institutional mission.

The panel noted the stated congruence between the institutional mission and strategies and the aims of the first and second cycle study programmes but also observed that the first cycle programmes also have global and international dimensions including in the title(s) of both programmes. This suggests that an understanding of the global issues and international context and competitiveness would be within the programmes but this do not feature within the aims of either of the first cycle programmes as stated in the SER (GBMM/IBCL Page 5).

### *3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The aims and outcomes of the first cycle programmes correspond to level 6 in the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, and have been developed to comply with the recommendations of; European Management Development Foundation, EPAS Business programme quality, the Accreditation and European Quality Network, guidelines for bachelors degree in business and the relevant management and MRU senate resolutions.

The aims and outcomes the second cycle studies of the BS field at MRU correspond to the 7th level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework in accordance with the descriptor of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework; the 7th level of the European Qualifications Framework in accordance with Appendix II of the Recommendation; and the second study cycle of the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The first cycle study programme of Global Business and Modern Marketing and International Business and Custom Logistics, have 180 ECTS credits which conforms to the legal requirement for courses of this nature. The value of credits of the subjects of the study field, (GBMM 168, IBCL 174,) exceed the requirements of not less than 120 and both the thesis and internship credits exceed the legal requirements.

The second cycle programmes comply with the legal requirements with the IT programme having 90 credits of which 90 are subjects within the study field and the thesis contributing 30 credits. The MBA programme has a scope of programme of 60 credits with all of those credits being awarded for the subjects within the study field. Within the legal requirements credits for a MBA thesis are optional, in this case 14 credits are awarded for a capstone group assignment component.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

All of the programmes of study within the study field meet the ECTS credits, contact hours and overall structures to meet the legal requirements.

### *3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

For the first cycle programmes the learning outcomes are classified within; knowledge and its application, research skills, special abilities, social abilities, and personal abilities. The development of the learning outcomes follow the principles of Bloom's taxonomy. The study programmes curricula consist of general higher education subjects, specialist subjects of the study field, optional subjects, practice and the final thesis. There is an identified progression throughout the programmes where the students develop their knowledge and understanding

and their ability to apply their knowledge in a variety of business contexts. This contributes to their own analysis and the abilities to relate theory and practice in achieving appropriate solutions through synthesis and evaluation.

The learning and teaching approaches (study methods) include lectures, seminars, discussions, case studies with special attention to teamwork and individual and group projects involving problem-solving through problem based learning. Students are required to understand methodological approaches through the readings of scientific and methodological literature all of which is provided through the Moodle environment.

There are very clear and coherent links between the programme aims, learning outcomes, study subjects, delivery methods used with the methods of assessment. The desired graduate competencies are defined and related to the professional outcomes for graduates to be working within the relevant industries and sectors.

The learning outcomes are formatively assessed through the individual courses with summative assessments at the end of each course. The assessment structure provides for a cumulative grade of the formative assessments, plus the summative grade for the final assessment which normally takes the form of an examination. The cumulative grading is weighted at 60% with the endpoint assessment at 40%. This is the standard weighting across all of the courses (modules) with differing types and weightings of the formative assessments depending upon the subject and the learning outcomes to be assessed.

For the second cycle programmes there is an established interrelationship between the aims, learning outcomes, and the curriculum subjects. The outcomes are appropriately structured and the specific competencies to be developed are congruent and distributed within the context of the relevant programmes, where the generic competencies, specific knowledge and abilities are comprehensively described. As for the first cycle programmes the learning outcomes are classified within the domains of knowledge on this application, research skills, special abilities, social abilities, and social abilities.

The detailed matrices (SER Annexes) clearly articulate the relationships between specifically identified learning outcomes, subject content and the mechanisms through which these outcomes will be assessed.

The range of study methods for the second cycle programmes include; the traditional with lectures and discussion activities with more problem analysis and problem-solving as would be appropriate for programmes at this level. Individual group work includes information retrieval and synthesis, problem analysis, report presentations as well as consulting projects. A range of interactive and other online environments, such as Moodle, Microsoft teams, Zoom and Big Blue Button, supports the students' learning as with fieldwork, including visits to relevant businesses.

The range of assessments used include problem analysis, projects, tasks, colloquium, case studies, presentations, essays and reports as well as the defence of the masters thesis. There are formative assessments which form the sum of grades of the coursework for a subject plus

a final graded examination. The final grade awarded for the subject integrates all of the assessment grades.

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The SER provides evidence of well developed aims and learning outcomes and the relationships in the development of the students competencies against the subjects and the methods of assessment. In the discussions with the limited number of students there was a disparity between the clear and obvious documentation and how the students interpreted those aims and outcomes in the practice of the delivery of the programmes. This may have been a reflection of the profile of the students but given the small number of students on these study programmes and the lack of cohorts on the IBCL programme since 2018 it was difficult to form a considered view.

The students considered there were some limitations on the feedback they received as a result of assessments which varied depending upon the staff and was not considered to be systematic across the programmes. Opportunity for informal discussion and feedback was welcome but this varied across the study programmes.

The learning and teaching delivery is appropriate to study programmes and the assessments structures and approaches are recognised as being sound and as would be expected for programmes in this study field.

The panel noted the recent revisions and improvements in the learning outcomes of the MBA programme taking into account the new requirements in the descriptors of business studies that was approved in September 2021 by the Ministry of Education. It was noted that there is a continuing process of review to fully update the structure of the learning outcomes to meet the new requirements by September 2022.

### *3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The SER indicates a coherent development of the relevant and required knowledge and understanding as well as the competencies of the students, that is consistent with progression through the study programmes to meet the aims of those programmes. For the first cycle programmes with the orientation to internationalisation and global trade, the students are expected to be able to respond to the challenges of the international environment. The development of the competencies to be able to operate in that environment include the ability to analyse, and apply acquired knowledge along with the development of teamwork, project and organisational management competencies, that will be required in the workplace.

The first and second cycle programmes, aims and learning outcomes are consistently designed and demonstrate clear relationship between aims, outcomes, delivery and assessment. The subjects are relevant to the study programmes and contribute the

appropriate knowledge and skills within the aims and objectives of those programmes. Whilst the study subjects are delivered individually there are clear opportunities for demonstrating the interrelationship and the staff engaged work in cooperation with each other to avoid duplication of content and to be able to demonstrate to the students the subject interrelationships.

There are a variety of learning and teaching approaches applied to the study programmes which also includes the opportunity for combining class based interaction and learning with independent learning and group activities. Special consideration and attention is paid to the learning engaged in teamwork as well as problem-solving tasks. Case studies are focus on practical activities and analysis of international business, and include opportunities to consider the differences in the economic, social and cultural dimensions of international markets.

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The first cycle programmes clearly identify as being either global or international, whilst this focus can be found within a number of the individual study subjects, there may be opportunity for further integration and providing a more coherent international context. The development of integrated case studies and integrated assessments may be useful in ensuring the students understand how the complexity and interrelationships of international business work in practice.

The second cycle programmes have been coherently developed with logical progression towards the final thesis or the group capstone project in the case of the MBA.

The meetings with the students and faculty provided evidence that the learning and teaching demonstrated a breadth of approaches that were appropriate and engaging and that the hybrid and online resources are recognised as a useful and valuable contribution.

### *3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Students on the first study cycle programmes have opportunities for the personalisation of their learning objectives through a number of additional and elective subjects. On the GBMM programme there are free elective subjects during the second and fourth semesters, whilst the IBCL programme students have a choice in the fourth semester from two alternatives. These are in addition to opportunities with foreign languages that include; English, French, Spanish, Norwegian, German, Korean, and Chinese.

The second cycle IT programme provides opportunities for personalisation through choice of two elective subjects in the third semester. The MBA programme does not provide similar opportunities other than the topic for the final group project.

For both first and second cycle students there are opportunities for Erasmus exchange programmes and internships.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel is of the view that adequate provision is made for students to personalise their study programmes but would observe that should that result in small group sizes this could impact on the overall student learning experience especially given the importance of group work in meeting the stated competencies.

*3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements*

*(1) Factual situation*

In the first cycle programmes students whilst on internship are expected to collect the data necessary in support of their graduation thesis. The thesis has the aim of solving a real business problem identified during the period of internship. Although the SER also states that work on the final thesis preparation commences in the fourth semester when a list of themes supervisors and consultants are prepared from which the students can select. Students are recommended to consult supervisors and consultants during that process.

The regulations for the preparation, presentation and defence of the graduation thesis are outlined and approved through the Faculty Dean Order No. IVVV-28 of 2021-06-07. No. 1SN-45. Students are required to present their thesis to the Graduation Thesis Defence Committee.

The final submission of the thesis is made alongside a declaration in which the students confirm that the final thesis submitted for assessment has been accomplished independently without plagiarism and following the appropriate rules on academic writing. The Graduation Thesis Defence Committee is convened with external representation of another higher education institution or scientific establishment who would normally act as the chair. One third of the commission members must have a doctoral degree in the field of study in which the thesis has been defended. The mark of the final thesis should be determined by deducing the average of the commission members.

Second cycle students start considering their thesis topics from the first semester. This includes discussions on potential topics, preparation of the research plan alongside the research design. All students undertake a detailed Research Methodology subject through which they develop the skills and understanding to be able to understand the concepts and methodological principles of inquiry. This includes the process and quality of a scientific study, research strategies, empirical data collection, measurement, analysis and then the process of preparation and the presentation of results.

The processes for the preparation and defence are as described for the first cycle students.



## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The policies and processes for the development and defence of both undergraduate and postgraduate thesis are comprehensive and in the panel's view appropriate.

The panel noted a potential confusion within the SER documentation for the undergraduate programmes. The documentation suggests, in para 27, that the thesis is built on real life case studies arising during their internship where they can collect data, where para 31 indicates that the topics are agreed at the study programme committee and the final list is presented to students from which they can then choose. The review of the thesis suggests that the majority of the thesis topics address a wide range of business related issues at the contextual level rather than addressing specific business issues, suggesting that few are based on the real life cases studies related to the internship.

For the second cycle the thesis topics address the more strategic issues and social phenomenon, often at the global and international level which suggest these are more desk based research rather than using field research and empirical data.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

#### **(1) Strengths:**

1. The clear and comprehensive documentation.
2. The structure of the curriculum and the well-defined relationships within the study programmes between the learning outcomes, subjects and the assessments.

#### **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The lack of first cycle enrolments, especially on the IBCL programme, where no students have entered the programme since 2018.
2. The very low first cycle student numbers and therefore a limited impact of graduate employment on the labour market.
3. The difficulties in establishing that the aims of the IBCL programme are being met given the lack of viable cohorts despite the low admission scores, and insufficient recognition that this issue demonstrates some fundamental shortcomings in that first cycle programme.
4. The lack of a coherent international/global context in the first cycle programmes aims that reflects the programme titles and intended outcomes.
5. The variation in assessment feedback between courses and programmes.
6. The impression in the SER that for the first cycle programmes the thesis is focused on the internship yet it is clear that the topics must be drawn from the approved topic list set and approved by the study programme committee.

### 3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

*Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:*

*3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study*

*(1) Factual situation*

In the comparative research assessment in the fields of management and economics of 2018, MRU scored relatively low (2/5) for scientific outcomes, notably lacking national and international papers with significant scientific impact. Since then, MRU has put international research high on the strategic agenda pushing for more impactful research and peer reviewed national and international journal articles. Strengthening the research culture of the school is partly done through inviting international visiting research professors, through appointing postdoctoral researchers, and through research partnerships with international peers, for example with RMIT Australia.

According to the SER this has already led to an increase of the percentage of articles over the past few years produced by MRU faculty in management and economics that are included in the WoS/Scopus databases. The SER didn't specify this in absolute terms.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel is of the opinion that MRU is rightly working hard on improving their research output and quality. The panel has noticed that already some progress had been made in terms of a change in research culture, by incentivising high quality research, by creating postdoctoral positions, and by inviting visiting research faculty to MRU. That said, changing a research culture takes time, the upcoming research review in 2023 will tell more about the first results. For the moment, the panel recommends to decisively continue with the current approach. The faculty's formal research programme is currently only available in Lithuanian, but it would help to make it available in English, particularly for underlining MRUs international research ambition, and for connecting to foreign schools and visiting faculty.

*3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology*

*(1) Factual situation*

The composition of MRU's faculty and the content of its research largely corresponds with the content of the 1st and 2nd cycle programmes, i.e. regarding business models and business creation, social responsibility, custom logistics, blockchain, risk management, marketing, finance and taxation, etc. Generally, in the taught courses, links between theory and practice are built through guest lecturers, simulations, and internships. In addition, seminars and projects are organised in cooperation with business. The courses have a very practical locus that teach students how business works in the real world. However, the panel got clear signals

that scientific evidence through academic books and journal articles are only modestly embedded in the learning process of students. All programmes, except for the MBA, end with a research based thesis addressing a real world business issue. Unfortunately, not all expert panel members were able to evaluate these theses because they were written in Lithuanian, with only adding a short summary in English.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The expert panel finds that the content of MRUs research is well-linked to its programmes. Faculty is research informed and is able to disseminate their knowledge into the classroom. That said, since a strong scientific research culture is still lacking in the school, this translates in a similar culture in the classroom, where the practical relevance of theories and knowledge is well-included, but the scientific, evidence-based culture is rather lacking. This suggests that the academic perspective and culture in the programmes need to be addressed along with the changing research culture by the school's faculty.

Regarding the theses of English language taught programmes, the panel recommends writing these theses in English, or, if needed, at least bilingual. The panel was informed that that will be the case for the GBMM programme in the years to come.

*3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle*

*(1) Factual situation*

MRU involves students in research activities throughout their programmes via debates, seminars, workshops, case studies, analysis of scientific articles, and through the 1st and 2nd cycle theses. Students learn to use sources in scientific databases, to perform data collection, and to select and apply proper analysis methods. Students can take part in scientific events organised by the faculty, such as an annual international conference called "Whither our Economies", where they can also present the findings of their research. Each year, five to six students participate in this event with their own papers.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

According to the panel, in all programmes under review academic research skills are satisfactorily embedded in the curricula through courses, assignments, and projects. Given the still modest scientific culture in the school, more attention should be given to active academic learning among the student community.

**Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

**(1) Strengths:**

1. Developing a higher quality scientific research culture has been put high on MRUs agenda.
2. Core faculty is research informed and actively transfers that into the programmes.
3. Programmes include business relevant knowledge, applied research and consultancy projects.

## **(2) Weaknesses/improvement areas:**

1. The number of publications in international scientific databases is increasing, but is still relatively low compared to other institutions in the field.
2. International connections are growing but are still modest.
3. Students perceive a lack of scientific culture in the classroom.
4. The MBA programme would benefit from a dedicated international learning component putting scientific work in a broader context.

### **3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT**

*Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:*

#### *3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

The University has adopted a centralised approach to admissions for first cycle programmes, administered through the Lithuanian Centralised Admissions Information System (LAMA BPO). Applicants seeking state-funded places were required to secure a competitive score of at least 5.4 and to pass state maturity exams in Lithuanian language and literature, a foreign language and mathematics. In keeping with the national approach to admissions upon admission through both state-funded and non-state funded routes, applicants are eligible to be awarded additional competition points for significant achievements in international and national sporting events, participation in military service and volunteering activities, and involvement in national academies. However, in 2020-21 no applicants secured additional competition points.

The University informed the panel that information on the admission procedure is available through the website, study fairs and through meetings with prospective students. The Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport sets minimum thresholds for the number of students a study programme requires in order to run. The Global Business and Modern Marketing ran with 18 students in 2021 and 21 students the previous year. Prior to that, a cohort was not raised in 2019, consequently the institution revised the programme and switched delivery to English in order to attract a more international field of applicants. Between 2019 and 2021 the programme did not elicit any applications for state funded places. In contrast, the International Business and Customs Logistics programme has not run since 2018. Despite attracting in excess of 170 applications each year, only 25 students selected it as their first preference in 2019 and 2020.

Admission to the second cycle programmes is undertaken in accordance with the Ministry regulations and the University's own Rules for Admission of Students to MRU, which were approved by the Senate. In addition to prior academic attainment applicants must speak English to B2 level and have a minimum of 2 years' experience in a senior role. Prospective students must also sit a motivation interview prior to admission. The institution has seen a growth in applications for both the International Trade and MBA programmes in the second cycle. The former benefitted from 63 applications in 2019 and the latter 38, albeit with the overall cohort remaining small and stable between 2018 and 2020.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel considers that the current status of the programmes represents a fundamental weakness of the study field, and a significant shortcoming, especially since the International Business and Customs Logistics programme has not attracted a viable cohort for 3 years. The panel found that in reviewing the website it is very difficult to find any reference to the IBCL programme. While this may be due to the fact that the delivery language is Lithuanian the panel concluded that this nevertheless reduced the visibility of the programme to stakeholders, including prospective students. The panel found this surprising given the lack of recruitment. Ultimately, that the programme is delivered in Lithuanian and is specific to the national customs context reduces any likelihood of attracting international applicants and reduces the pool of potential applicants. While the panel recognises the role of universities when it comes to serving national strategic priorities this did not appear to be the case for the IBCL programme given the total lack of demand.

Despite the longstanding challenge with recruitment to the IBCL programme the panel determined that the institution lacked a clear or credible plan for addressing the issue. Overall, the panel concluded that the institution needs to reflect on the attractiveness of its programme portfolio in its current format.

*3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application*

*(1) Factual situation*

The University complies with the Ministry's regulations for recognising non-formal learning and specifically the common principles for the assessment and recognition in higher education of non-formal and informal learning competences. The institution's own processes and procedures are approved by the Senate. In order for non-formal learning to be recognised, applicants must meet three requirements, which are: possessing secondary education, have a minimum of between 3- and 5-years work experience and evidence of learning achievements acquired that align with the learning outcomes of the study programme.

Qualifications undertaken abroad may be recognised in accordance with the Procedure for the Evaluation and Academic Recognition of Educational Documents Issued Abroad, approved by

the University's Senate. The procedure is available for prospective students through the website. In 2020-21, 14 applications to recognise qualifications were refused, reasons for this included failed entrance exams and an assessment that prior qualifications were inadequate for admission to undergraduate study at MRU. At the second cycle level between 2018 and 2021 6 international applicants were refused recognition for their foreign qualifications.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel found that the institution's policies and procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning are appropriate, fit-for-purpose and accessible to prospective students. The panel also found that these processes were applied consistently.

### *3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students*

*(1) Factual situation*

The University provides information about Erasmus+ opportunities and exchange possibilities under bilateral agreements to students through its website, social media and on campus through printed materials and digital screens. This information is also provided to students during orientation. Between 2018 and 2022, two students participated in international mobility (one in South Korea and one in the Czech Republic). Mobility uptake was also low for students on second cycle programmes (5 between 2018 and 2020).

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel recognises that the University acknowledges that a comparatively low number of students participate in outgoing mobility. While the number of students studying on the programme is modest, and students confirmed they were aware of the opportunities available, the panel determined that more could be done to encourage student participation in academic mobility.

### *3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field*

*(1) Factual situation*

The University offers a range of support for students with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal concerns. This includes a Psychological Service, information about which is available on the website. The support is provided free-of-charge, in Lithuanian and English and is also accessible in person or online. The psychologists offer sessions that include mindfulness, relaxation, body scanning practices, light and sound therapy.

The institution organises the timetable with classes in the morning and afternoons dedicated to independent learning and engagement with social and other support activities. The social

programme includes aerobics, “Nirvana Fitness”, calisthenics, volleyball, badminton, basketball and workout sessions. Cultural activities range from the “Jazz It Up” vocal group, the Song Studio, the “SKALSA” folk dance ensemble, the Latino Dance Club, the Bolero Dance Club, and the university theatre troupe.

The Career Centre also maintains a strong online presence through the University website. Students can access an active job shop, or request career consultations to assist with CV preparation, job search and interview techniques. The Career Centre also develops and maintains relationships with social partners, undertakes analysis of graduates’ integration into the labour market and coordinates alumni activities.

Various financial support opportunities are available for students. These include Incentive Scholarships for high performing students, single scholarships for students who are participating in scientific, social, cultural or sporting activities that have a reputational benefit to the institution and social scholarships for students in financial hardship.

Academic support for students is provided by a range of staff including the ERASMUS+ Coordinator, the Internship Organization Manager and lecturers. Representatives of student organisations also provide peer support for students. In addition, the Study Coordinator is at students’ disposal to answer programme-based questions and assist in the completion of course documentation. Requests for assistance range from finance and personal issues through to suspension and termination of studies.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel found that the institution has a wide range of appropriate student support services in place. Students are generally aware of the support available to them and praised the responsiveness of staff, such as the Study Coordinator in responding to their queries and concerns. Nevertheless, despite the range of support services the panel found that when the IBCL programme was running it suffered from a high dropout rate 31.3% (2018) and 35% (2019). The panel therefore concluded that support arrangements could not compensate for other problems facing the programme, for instance its relevance, consequent competitiveness in the market and the challenge for students of combining work and study.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Study information is made available to students through the website, Moodle and by academic staff at critical points in the study cycle, including at the beginning of each module. The institution informed the panel that the forms of counselling are varied, and students communicate with lecturers at different stages, including at an agreed convenient time in the classroom; after and/or before sessions in the auditorium, by email or via the Moodle platform. The University also offers individual and group counselling sessions for students studying through distance learning, these are held on the virtual learning environment or other online platforms.



## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Students were broadly satisfied with the study information provided to them. Feedback from the student survey conducted in March 2020 demonstrated student satisfaction with the information staff disseminates at the start of each module, with a rating of 4.1 out of 5. The small group sizes make individual counselling possible among the student body and this is generally a strength of the study programmes.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

#### **(1) Strengths:**

1. The wide range of academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support available for students.
2. The individual counselling made possible by small group sizes.

#### **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The lack of a viable cohort for the International Business and Customs Logistics programme and the small number of applicants selecting it as their first preference.
2. The low level of engagement in outgoing mobility initiatives.
3. Lack of prominence for the ICBL programme on the website.
4. Historically high dropout rate for the IBCL programme 31.3% (2018) and 35% (2019).

### **3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

***Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

*3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

It is evident from the site visit that a student-centred approach is applied for the business study programmes. The institute benefits in this respect from the relatively small group learning and the opportunity for teachers to address individual students' learning styles and needs. This becomes relevant in the development of different practical projects especially while encouraging creativity that is important in the development of competencies etc. It is one of the benefits of small courses, but it has both positive and negative aspects attached to it. For example, group work involving two or three students is far from ideal if this occurs because of small enrolment numbers.



Self-directed learning is an integral part of the teaching learning process and at MRU there is appropriate attention paid to provide suitable conditions for independent work. A key feature of this is the use of virtual classrooms and communications through the Moodle platform and the Big Blue button app. Feedback from students at the site visit highlighted engaged staff that offered students options to discuss issues personally.

Study methods for cycle 2 programmes again demonstrate a student-centred approach which becomes especially relevant in the development of business specialists requiring networking, creativity, and measured risks exposure that can accompany the creation of new businesses (SER p24). The relatively small class sizes allow the widest possible involvement and participation of students in the study progress. Self-directed learning is an integral part of the teaching and learning process within international trade, for example having 83% of the total workloads as self-directed learning. Moodle is a widely used virtual learning environment and virtual classrooms have been developed for teachers and study programmes and groups.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Staff engagement with teaching and learning from the site visit was very positive and it is clear that many staff members are highly committed to the study programmes which they lead with real enthusiasm. Some of the staff members have previously graduated from the institute, and this is a positive factor for the development of programmes of studies particularly if such staff have had industry experience and return to teaching with the appropriate new knowledge to transfer. Former students indicated at the visit that they have built sustainable relationships with academic staff and in some cases became social partners.

The panel members were concerned with the alignment of these study programmes linked to the poor retention rates of students especially in the cycle one. The comparison of data indicates the dropout rates in cycle 1 for the business studies field for the programme IBCL is 31% in 2018 and 35% in 2019. This is a very high dropout rate and suggests that student expectations at the start of engagement with the university are not being delivered and this needs to be investigated and the solutions must be found. The panel is of the opinion that a potential contributing factor is the methods used for teaching and learning and assessment which need to be more flexible for the lifestyles of students that are attracted to the university.

The low student intake numbers reveal that the university has created study programmes that are not engaging enough for students to stay in the course and graduate. There is a lot of wasted effort when such large numbers of students drop out of studies whether they be full-time or part-time students. The world has changed a tremendous amount due to the pandemic and without question more flexible methods of teaching and learning need to be considered going forward under the blended learning agenda. Many students who start programmes are having to seek employment (part-time and full-time) to support themselves and this will require new ways of delivering study programmes. The data as presented in the SER indicates that drop out rates within the second cycle in the business studies field decreased from 29% in 2018, 20 percent in 2019, and 8% drop out in 2020. This of course is

significantly better than the first cycle drop out rates highlighted above but in themselves these are not sparkling results for second cycle programmes.

It is noted in the SER (page 25) that graduate opinions about the completed study programmes in terms of their professional skills highlights that graduates are critical of the modernity of the content of the study programmes and the relationship between teachers and students and the meaningfulness of the practise. The SER highlights that opinions differ mostly in the extent to which knowledge provided meets the needs of the market, positive reviews are evidenced as are critical ones! The observation goes on to highlight that this is not surprising as it is common for social partners to expect less academic content and more practical skills, and this is a complex area to address. As a Business School the priority should be to produce students with transferable skills to address real world problems and organisational issues. It would be recommended that closer attention is paid to this area as student engagement is critically linked to the ability post-graduation to obtain good employment, and offer employers immediate benefits.

It is also noted in the SER that social partners always express the need for more practical skills from graduates which is why interactive study methods are strengthened in the business studies programmes, however the evidence from the graduate surveys is that this isn't working as well as it could. It should be noted that data collected on graduate employment for business study graduates indicates 78% of the graduates employed in 2020, twelve months after graduation in 2018 and in 2019 the percentage had dropped to 57%, 12 months after graduation.

### *3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

According to the SER (p25) students with special needs complete a form to aid in the assessment of special needs and the university then plans appropriate measures for such students. The university has adapted its facilities in a practical manner to accommodate mobility issues and access to resources and equally the access to all appropriate learning materials etc. Students with special needs have access to the library and they can order publications online and connect remotely to subscribed databases. They are actively integrated into the life of the academic community and are encouraged to get involved with all the activities that the university offers.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

An open flexible environment is the aim of the university to ensure that studies are acceptable and adapted to the needs of students. The panel feels that the university has appropriate methods of assisting students with special needs but equally recognises that this is a complex and challenging agenda for all HEIs.

### *3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Student progress is a challenging area for many universities as the sector has been through an extraordinary period of problems with the pandemic and stresses on the delivery of HE programmes. The SER highlights some disappointing data on student retention and drop-outs, and this must be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

As already highlighted data for IBCL programme drop out rates under analysis are high at 31% in 2018 and 35% in 2019 and there appears to be no data for GBMM which is surprising. This should be a cause for concern and yet there was no specific mention of this during the site visit as a matter of significance. As the recruitment numbers are not particularly robust in the first place, especially for the IBCL programme with no enrolments since 2018, this is a potential serious problem that needs to be resolved. Factors such as students working (full-time and part-time) and trying to complete the programmes of study is a major factor in this issue.

MRU tries to engage with students when they are planning to leave the institute and this practice shows that after contacting failing students, most decide to continue their studies. Students who accumulate academic debts or show poor motivation, performance, and attendance during the semester in one or more subjects are contacted for discussions with senior staff. This involves the students negotiating an individual timeline with subject teachers to retake subjects or temporarily terminated studies and return as a student (SER p24). Cycle 2 picture is much better and there has been an improvement in the dropout rate for the programmes under analysis during the period with 8% dropouts in 2020 in cycle 2.

During the studies teachers provide formative feedback to promote and measure students' knowledge and skills and ongoing feedback is designed to highlight students' strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need improvement. Summative feedback typically falls in the middle and at the end of a teaching (SER p26).

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There is clearly a problem with dropout rates, and this is a highly complex area of understanding and can be impacted by a range of factors, some of which are within the university's control and some which are outside its control. It is vitally important to assess these factors in a meaningful manner and consult with stakeholders to address the problems and consider the solutions. There is no doubt that the pressures on the younger generation of graduates or potential graduates is greater now than perhaps ever in the past, we have a very difficult economic environment globally after the pandemic and young people's priorities are shifting as a result. What type of institute should be developed to accommodate these changes and what type of study programmes are needed in business schools are a critical area of the analysis. Currently there is a misalignment between the recruitment of students

particularly in cycle one and the engagement with the study programmes. The expectations from the market for these study programmes need to be fully evaluated to determine their viability for longer term recruitment and retention.

It appears to be worth reviewing the assessment cycle and determining whether there is a culture of over-assessment, as this is a significant barrier to students who have distractions from their economic and social backgrounds etc. Early warning systems need to be in place for monitoring students and making access to recorded lectures and materials is clearly important. This mismatch between expectations and the delivery of the study programmes must be reviewed holistically and review marketing materials and expectations of students as a result.

#### *3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

Employment data is collected on graduates six months and three years after graduation. In 2018, MRU graduates ranked first among Lithuanians HEIs in terms of the percentage of those employed six months after graduation (77%), in 2019 it was 73%, and in 2020 this figure reached 75%. There are several tools used to monitor the graduates including direct communications from the faculty, social media, meetings for alumni etc. Graduates are working in a well-known Lithuanian company and obviously from the programmes under analysis the focus is very much on logistics, transport, and government roles.

A survey of graduates is conducted periodically in which graduates are asked how they evaluate professional skills that this study programmes have enabled, and this is a valuable way of developing the appropriate competencies for industry (SER p25). The positives include the infrastructure provided to them during their studies, along with library services and technological support. Teaching methods are seen as modern and acceptable, and support provided is rated positively but we must remember these are the success stories. Graduates are slightly more critical of the state-of-the-art competencies of the study programmes and the relationship between teachers and students, and the meaningfulness of the study practise. There is no official data regarding employers' opinions on the competencies of graduates or their skills for employment benefits and this is an area that could be addressed going forward.

Cycle 2 MRU Participates in KARJERA.IT which is a software programme that allows the university to monitor graduates' careers and to see how they succeed in establishing themselves in the Lithuanian labour market. According to the statistics, in 2018 MRU graduates ranked first amongst Lithuanians HEIs in the percentage of employment after six months' graduation at (78%) which is clearly positive.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The university has achieved good results for those students graduating and this is positive and suggests that the study programmes are robust. Social partners and other stakeholders appeared to want to enhance the programmes of studies, this is also positive. However, there

is a need to understand that for this to be sustainable there may need to be an overhaul of the learning and teaching of these programmes in association with all stakeholders and particularly social partners.

There is no current data regarding employers' opinions on the training of graduates or the acquired competences and this is clearly an area for attention going forward. This data really should be collected and provide guidance for the programmes of study.

#### *3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

MRU places a great emphasis on academic integrity (SER p25) and applies a code of academic ethics adopted in 2015. MRU is a member of the international academic integrity centre, and this acquired the right to apply the academic integrity assessment guide developed by this centre. Cycle 1 - no appeals or complaints during the last three study years in the business study programme area. Cycle 2 - no appeals or complaints during the last three years.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There is adequate evidence that the university has appropriate guidance and policies to deal with integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. The problems of students using outsourced suppliers of academic assessments needs to be constantly monitored.

#### *3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

The procedures for the submission of appeals and complaints is robust and is rather fortunately hardly used as there were no such appeals in the 3 year window for the business programmes prior to the evaluation.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The university has the appropriate policies, principles and procedures for this vital issue which is very positive.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

#### **(1) Strengths:**

1. The university historically has a good track record in placing graduates of their study programmes into good employment opportunities in Lithuania.

2. There is evidence that those students who graduate can obtain appropriate employment and appropriate remuneration.
3. Social partners and key stakeholders are consulted and engaged with the study programmes and internship opportunities.
4. Former students generally hold a positive perspective on their studies at the university.

## **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The dropout rates particularly in the first cycle study programmes is a problem and suggests that there is a misalignment between the aims and objectives of the programmes and the fit with the recruitment of students and the delivery of the teaching and learning.
2. That the complex lives of young students often taking on part time and even full-time jobs while trying to manage higher education programmes is not fully recognised in the teaching and learning delivery methods provided on the study programmes.
3. That the potential of over-assessment should be reviewed to ensure that learning outcomes are not over assessed and there is a clear relationship between the learning and teaching, learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the assessment.
4. The competencies of graduates should be collected periodically to ensure alignment with the study programmes and the demands of social partners.
5. The fact that IBCL has not recruited enough students to offer the programme of study since 2019 is clearly a warning sign for the sustainability of such programmes as linked to the teaching and learning environment, the student experience, and student performance.

## **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

***Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:***

*3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes*

### *(1) Factual situation*

All members of the academic staff team have the necessary qualifications and experience for the different degrees. Around 70% of the staff teaching in First Cycle Degrees and 82% of the staff teaching at Master level hold a PhD. There is also a good equilibrium between experienced and younger researchers although research productivity levels are unequally distributed in favour of the younger. Additionally, there is a good combination of permanent and part-time staff. The latter are hired for specific topics and used to work in real business, providing students a complementary view to the theoretical content in the different topics.

The staff have a lot of flexibility to allocate their time into research and teaching. Some of the teachers interviewed declared that they were able to allocate one full semester to teaching and another one to research. Although some improvements have taken place in the last years, the SER explicitly recognizes the need for improving the quality of the staff research activity. As mentioned in Section 3.2, MRU ranks low (2/5) in scientific production, taking into account the last national assessment of the research activity (2018). The management staff declared that they are trying to incentivize higher research quality. Instead of a full University research programme, one specific research programme has been established for each Faculty. In any case, during the meeting of the staff, they showed a positive attitude towards increasing the quality of the scientific production, but they also were aware of their need to increase their research skills mainly in the field of analytical tools (statistics, econometrics,...).

Amongst the positive features are the ratio of lecturers to students (between 1:4 and 1:5 in the first cycle degrees and 1:2 in the second cycle ones) - although this is partly due to the low student numbers over the past years -, the age distribution of lecturers and good relationship with social partners. However, in spite of the good relationships with social partners, little evidence has been found about contractual/consultancy relationships between real business and MRU staff.

Regarding how research skills are translated into teaching, the panel noticed two issues. First, relatively low participation of students in research projects, and second, the content and structure of the theses. Generally, the theory and literature sections of the theses are good, with an adequate use of scientific references, but the methodological framework section is rather brief with limited references and a limited use of analytical tools. The theses are empirically oriented, most of them following a similar structure, independently of the topic analysed. Although some flexibility is provided in the selection of topics, most of the students choose a topic provided by lecturers.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel suggests that the research performance of MRU should be the focus of the next period. It seems that the measures adopted by the Management Staff have generated some improvements in the scientific performance, but new incentives should be provided. Perhaps further economic incentives or reduction in teaching duties could be provided to teachers with high scientific production. In addition, in the meeting with the panel, teachers expressed a strong need for training in quantitative analytical tools. In addition, in the meeting with the panel, teachers suggested that they would be interested to be trained in upgraded quantitative analytical tools. Finally, there is a need to generate more collaboration among permanent staff and social partners to conduct research/consultancy as a way to measure the impact of their research in society.



### *3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The SER provides some satisfactory figures about international mobility: 57 teachers went abroad between 2018 and 2020, which is a significant share among permanent staff. However, no indication is provided about the exact purpose and duration of the stays, although their international mobility mainly refers to teaching. The number of incoming teachers is relatively low, even before the COVID-19. The SER does not provide information international projects (i.e. H2020 projects). Additionally, the number of publications with international authors is very limited.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The Expert Panel suggests that the staff should be more proactive in looking for international mobility for research, looking for outstanding researchers who could increase the research skill of MRU staff. The international dimension is still at its earlier stages. The panel also suggested providing better and more detailed information about international proposals or projects in which MRU staff is involved, as well as to increase the international co-authorship in published papers. Finally, they should provide more evidence about the engagement of master students in their research projects.

### *3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

MRU provides a significant range of facilities to staff to develop teaching tasks. MRU has reacted well to changes in teaching conditions due to COVID. The students feel very positive about how the COVID situation has been managed. A very positive aspect is the staff involvement in different trainings and courses for staff's professional development, although there is still a need for training in analytical tools and skills.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

As mentioned above, the SER does not provide much information about research incentives. During the meeting with the Management Staff, some re-orientation of the internal research programmes has been undertaken. Although figures have slightly improved, it seems not to be enough. As mentioned above, the panel suggests that MRU should develop new and innovative research incentives based on performance indicators. Moreover, it is also advisable that MRU expands its traditional offer of courses addressed to staff by including some related to analytic tools in business research and/or conferences to incentivise participation in international projects as well as with social partners in joint research projects.



## **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

### **(1) Strengths:**

1. Flexibility to accommodate content and students' assessments to changing conditions (new business challenges, COVID, and so on.
2. Flexibility to allocate time to research and teaching.
3. Effectiveness of indicators for the staff to monitor the fulfilment of learning outcomes.

### **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The limited use of analytical tools in business research.
2. Limited research focus is given to international mobility.
3. Need for the implementation of research incentives.
4. Need for increasing research contracts with social partners.

## **3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

*Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:*

*3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process*

### *(1) Factual situation*

MRU has a modern campus with physical resources required to ensure an effective learning process of the evaluated first and second cycle programmes. It has modern auditoriums, individual and group work spaces. Auditoriums are also adapted to the need to change their layout for lectures, group works or other activities according to the need. That allows the University to achieve learning outcomes. The University's infrastructure is also adapted to people with special needs.

According to the MRU, it has the most modern academic library in Europe (though the arguments to support this were not detailed in the SER) where the up-to-date material both - online and offline is ensured. The scope of publications and databases needed in the business studies field are appropriate for both - studying and research. The library is periodically updated with the latest material needed for social science studies.

In 2021, more than 80 80 thousand EUR was planned for printed resources and subscription of databases. The number of investments into infrastructure was not provided in the SER document. However, from the video material provided, it can be stated that the University strives to continuously improve its infrastructure and facilities.

During the meetings with the MRU students and staff it was several times noticed that the University provides all needed resources to ensure a smooth learning process both - on site as well as organising studies online.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Overall, from the SER and video material provided, it can be stated that the MRU has a modern campus and physical and informational resources that meet the requirements and standards. The overall feedback from the stakeholders (students and staff) was also positive on this topic.

### *3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies*

*(1) Factual situation*

According to the University, it periodically updates the resources needed in the studies process. The teaching staff is included into this process while providing information for the renewal of resources needed in the studies process.

Also, the University has a plan for continuous improvement of its infrastructure. As it was noted by students and staff, the University pays attention to feedback provided by the community while upgrading resources needed for the studying process.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The conclusion can be drawn that the MRU has an acceptable renewal policy for its facilities as well as library services. The University should keep high standards in the future as well and seek for continuous improvement in order to ensure that needed resources to carry out field studies are in place.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

**(1) Strengths:**

1. Modern campus with needed infrastructure.
2. Technologies in place to organise the learning process smoothly both online and offline.
3. The resources of the library seem broad and periodically updated, easily accessible.

**(2) Weaknesses:** None identified

### 3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

*Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:*

#### *3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

The University internal quality systems comply with the "standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area" (ESG, 2015). There are a number of internal documents outlining the appropriate procedures to ensure both the quality and the improvement in study programmes. These include, the Regulations for Study Programme Committees, the Procedures for Organising Feedback on Studies, and the Procedures for Preparation and Improvement of Study Programmes.

Whilst the systems and procedures are implemented at the institutional level the study programme committee has the responsibility for the supervision of the quality of the content of the study curriculum, its implementation, and compliance with the needs of the stakeholders. The study programme committee has the responsibility for maintaining the feedback system with the stakeholders and to adjust the learning outcomes in relation to that feedback.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The procedures and processes of the internal quality assurance system are sound and reflect good practice. They are well documented and the role of the separate study programme committees provides the appropriate oversight to ensure the effectiveness of the systems.

#### *3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

A range of stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance processes including students, teaching staff, employers and the wider social partners including alumni. There is an annual review process that includes those stakeholders where discussions focus on the learning outcomes, study plans, and feedback from students, whilst reviewing student achievement and graduate employment data.

As a formal meeting of the study programme committee the staff have the opportunity to both import into the discussions whilst also taking note of the outcomes of the wider aspects of the quality assurance process to be able to take account of, and plan for the forthcoming academic year.

Informal feedback through students' comments and reactions can be dealt with at the beginning and end of each semester through the student representation on the study

programme committee. This is an addition to a number of formal questionnaires that cover matters of content, learning and teaching, areas for improvements and overall student satisfaction.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

It is clear that the stakeholders are appropriately represented in both informal and formal input into the quality review and evaluation processes. The study programme committees have a clear and key role in implementing the outcomes of the reviews with the faculty. There is evidence that the students are both involved in the process and receive feedback on the outcomes.

*3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes*

*(1) Factual situation*

The website provides publicly available information on a range of indicators of the study programme in both Lithuanian and English. This includes details on the admission requirements, recognition of prior learning, the intended learning outcomes, study contents as well as the outcomes of the students satisfaction surveys, students endorsements and graduate career indicators. This is presented as the percentage of graduates in employment twelve months post graduation and average monthly salaries. The website did not provide easy visibility to any information about the IBCL programme thus reducing its exposure to potential students and other stakeholders.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The data collected by the institution in terms of student feedback is well presented on the website as are the details of the study programmes and related information that will support potential students and other stakeholders in making informed decisions on the programmes. The lack of any meaningful information in relation to the IBCL programme is considered to be a major omission and of concern.

*3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI*

*(1) Factual situation*

Students are regularly surveyed as to their opinions on the study programmes and the results are considered by the relevant study programme and institutional committees as appropriate. Synopsis of the results are made publicly available.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The systems, processes and outcomes are appropriate and sound in evaluating the students' opinions on the quality of their studies. The panel noted in discussions with students that a more formal and timely response to their issues would enhance the process and the students' understanding that the issues had been addressed.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:**

#### **(1) Strengths:**

1. The processes and systems of the internal quality assurance are appropriate, sound and fit for purpose.
2. Relevant data is collected systematically, regularly and is used to inform the quality assurance processes.
3. The publicly available information is well presented on the website in both Lithuanian and English for the majority but not all of programmes under review (See 1. Below).
4. The wider stakeholder community are involved in the quality assurance processes.

#### **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The lack of any meaningful information on the IBCL programme that will inhibit student recruitment.
2. The need to provide more formal and timely feedback to students on issues raised.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A renewed and committed focus on student recruitment and enrolment for both first and second cycle programmes, especially for state funded students.</li> <li>2. That a considered and comprehensive review of how both the aims and intended outcomes of the IBCL programme are being met. This given the lack of viable cohorts despite the low admission scores, and insufficient recognition that this issue demonstrates some fundamental shortcomings in that first cycle programme.</li> <li>3. That the international/global themes in the first cycle programmes are appropriately reflected within the aims and learning outcomes at the programme and module level to ensure a coherent and consistent approach.</li> <li>4. To clarify the thesis requirements for the first cycle programmes as to whether the topic is based on the research during the internship or from an approved list of topics set by the faculty.</li> <li>5. That a more systemic and consistent approach is taken to providing students with feedback on assessments.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That there is a focus on achieving an increase in research publications in recognised journals.</li> <li>2. That international collaboration is further developed to support both the research and learning and teaching.</li> <li>3. That consideration be given to the incorporation of an international dimension in the MBA programme.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the lack of a viable cohort for the International Business and Customs Logistics programme and the small number of applicants selecting it as their first preference is addressed.</li> <li>2. That the low level of engagement in outgoing mobility initiatives is reviewed and that actions are put in place to address the issue.</li> <li>3. Ensure all programmes feature prominently in the University's marketing material.</li> </ol>

<p>Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That urgent and serious consideration is given to the issue of student dropout rates which clearly impact on both programme delivery and graduate outcomes.</li> <li>2. That programme reviews are undertaken to consider the new and different pressures on students that may be impacting on their ability to be able to complete the programmes.</li> <li>3. That a review of the assessment strategies be undertaken to ensure that no over assessment is taking place.</li> <li>4. That a continuous of updating graduate competencies is undertaken to ensure the study programmes align with the social and economic needs and desired outcomes.</li> </ol>
<p>Teaching staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That consideration be given to doing and expanding the analytical tools used in business research.</li> <li>2. That the institution considers the need to implement research incentives for faculty.</li> <li>3. That closer cooperative working with the social partners should focus on developing research opportunities with those partners.</li> </ol>
<p>Learning facilities and resources</p>	<p>That the university continues to maintain and develop the resources required in support of the study field.</p>
<p>Study management quality and public information</p>	<p>That the establishment of a formal process to report back to students on their issues raised in a timely manner is considered and implemented.</p>

## VI. SUMMARY

### **Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Business* at Mykolas Romeris University:**

Within the field of studies there are a number of strategic as well as more programme related issues that need to be addressed as significant shortcomings. The low student numbers, applications and enrolments are all issues that impact on the viability of the programmes and future development opportunities. The question is clearly how to differentiate the business study field amongst many competing programmes. The University is very well-known in the areas of law and other social sciences, this reputation could in the future be used as an asset in further developing the study fields of business.

There is clear evidence that the school and the University are closely monitoring day-to-day development and responding to short-term issues but these in themselves do not necessarily address the bigger wider strategic issues related to the attractiveness of these programmes to potential students.

The panel discussions evidenced that the students feel very engaged with the institution and are very supportive of the level and the nature of the engagement that they enjoy. They are appreciative of the faculties support and the ability to provide immediate informal feedback that is acted upon at the programme level. There is a systematic approach to the collection of feedback, but from the students perspective there may be opportunities to report back to the students in a more structured manner.

The students felt that there was a very good university level of communication. The staff and programme management were very responsive to their suggestions and requests.

There is evidence of the student-centred approaches and their engagement in participation in a variety of learning and teaching approaches which were appreciated by the students. The learning outcomes are well constructed, follow Bloom's taxonomy and are very comprehensive, perhaps even overly so in determining the outcomes from the study programmes.

The panel noted the lifelong relationships between the University and the staff and the opportunity provided to students to progress through to doctoral level and then ultimately into faculty positions.

There was clear academic freedom and flexibility for faculty to be able to propose modifications and improvements to courses and to consider the most appropriate assessment strategies for their individual courses. As with all higher education institutions there is a tension between the demands of developing research profiles with the teaching requirements. The staff opportunities for professional development are clearly available to encourage and enhance the staff across both research and teaching.

At the course/module level that is clearly developed good relationships with the students with discursive informal opportunities for feedback and for deliberation and continuous improvement. The panel noted that assessment feedback was reported by the students as



varied and could be improved whilst the staff evaluation feedback is systematic and acted upon. The ability to change topics for the final thesis is recognised as providing a degree of flexibility and is appropriate as the students need to be in a position of 'owning' their topics rather than being imposed upon them. Although the panel remains unclear as to whether the undergraduate thesis can be as a result of research obtained during the internship or only from topics set by faculty.

There is a clear individual rather than group staff focus on improvements and developments at the faculty level. The panel did not get a real impression of a collegiate faculty with a shared vision of the direction of the study programmes. This may well be because the faculty tend to specialise within their own areas and teach across a wide range of study programmes. Perhaps opportunities could be explored for integrated teaching approaches where more than one course or module could look for areas of synergy to develop a joint approach and perhaps joint assessment.

The university has clearly defined KPI's including the growth in student numbers but at this point this has not translated into evidence of growth in student numbers within these study programmes. There is obvious potential market demand for a new range of skills and understanding and competence in the labour market but there remains a disconnect between the future needs of the labour market and the attractiveness of these current courses to potential students.

The high dropout rates for the programmes within this study field must be a matter of concern especially given the very low number of enrolments. When taking the two first cycle programmes together, with one programme having, in the universities terms, "a stable recruitment position" yet a high dropout rate, and the other programme having had no enrolment since 2018 and a high dropout rate when running, it must put into question the viability of these programmes within the study field. Some of the issues surrounding student recruitment are at the national strategic level but the current positioning of these programmes and their specialisms is not translating into consistent student enrolments.

The panel recognises the need for urgency and action at the strategic University level to consider the future of the study programmes within the overall vision, mission and strategy of the University. Consideration could be given to the global international context and joint collaboration at both the national and international level with a re-focus on the internationalisation in meeting the wider national and international labour market needs. This was evidenced in the discussions with alumni and social partners. Such an approach could include the establishment of joint international programmes and awards with study abroad opportunities. To consider these programmes in a global context would also support the national profile and attractiveness to domestic students and establish an interesting and viable future positioning.

**Expert panel chairperson signature:**

**Prof. Dr. Peter A. Jones**