CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

at Kaunas University of Technology

Expert panel:

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5. **Ms. Ieva Lazarevičiūtė,** *representative of social partners;*

6. **Ms. Ugnė Bičkauskaitė,** *students' representative.*

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	*Public Governance**	*Public Administration*
State code	6121LX027	6211LX040
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (4 years)	Full-time (1,5 years), part-time (2 years)
Credit volume	240	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business and Public Administration; Bsc in Nonprofit management (University of Central Florida, UCF)	Master of Business and Public Administration
Language of instruction	English	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Bachelor qualification degree or equivalent qualification defined in the Descriptor of the Study Field of Public Administration
Registration date of the study programme	13/11/1996	16/12/1992

Dual degree study programme, implemented together with the University of Central Florida (USA)

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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 (SER) prepared by Higher Education Institution (HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the HEI; 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 is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection 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 online on *18 May, 2022.*

> ***Dr. Christine Leitner (panel chairperson)***, *Senior Advisor, Centre for Economics and Public Administration (London, UK), and Senior Policy Advisor, Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, Austria;*
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> ***Dr. Egert Juuse***, *Research Fellow, Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance, School of Business and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia;*
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> ***Dr. Ieva Lazarevičiūtė (social partner)***, *independent expert, Lithuania;*
>
> ***Ms. Ugnė Bičkauskaitė (student representative)***, *3rd year student of Political Science at Vilnius University, Lithuania.*

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, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Updates to the programmes in the field of Public Administration in 2022 (2 May, 2022)
2.	Guidelines for Submission and Processing of the Students' Appeals and Complaints (2018)
3.	Guidelines for Detection of Plagiarism in Students' Written Works (2021)
4.	Description of KTU Emotional and Social Welfare Policy and its Implementation (2022, only Lithuanian)
5.	List of elective courses in 2021/22 academic year (incl. student numbers)
6.	Statistics and Reasons for drop-outs from Public Governance and Public Administration study programmes 2020-2021
7.	Syllabi of Public Governance study programme courses (Cinema History; Public Finance Management; Urban and Regional Development)
8.	List of Public Governance and Public Administration study programme defence committees 2019-2021
9.	List of Public Administration field teachers' publications in 2020
10.	Statistics on stakeholder (alumni and social partner) participation in PA programme evaluation and adjustments: frequency, methods and results
11.	Survey for KTU students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties (sample)

1.4. BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FIELD STUDIES AT KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Kaunas University of Technology (hereinafter – University or KTU) is a public HEI, known for its tradition in the field of technology studies in Lithuania. KTU has evolved from the Higher Education Courses established in Kaunas in 1920, later renamed the University of Lithuania. The University has 2054 employees and 8094 students (5517 are students of bachelor studies, 2073 of the master studies, 82 of integrated studies, 36 doctoral students and 56 students of professional pedagogy studies). 664 foreign students are currently enrolled in the University.

The University has the following institutions of authority and self-government: The University Council, the Senate (with four committees – Research and Innovations, Studies, Student Affairs and Strategic Development and Finances), the Rector and the Rector's Office, the Ethics Committee and the Students' Union. The Business Council is an advisory body subordinate to the Rector. The University also boasts the Internal Audit Office, the Board of Academic Ethics, the Equality Committee, the Labour Council (an independent body representing the employees), the Trade Union (unifying the present and former employees of the University). KTU has the Edu_Lab Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the National Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre. The Alumni Association is involved in the University's activities.

The University has nine faculties which are managed by the Deans and the Deans' Offices. The Deans are appointed to their positions according to the University Statute for limited terms of office. Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities applied innovative organisational system and has Study Programme Committees and Research Groups (not traditional departments). The study fields and study programmes are coordinated by the Field's Study Programme Committees (fSPC) led by the Heads of study programmes. Research activities are supervised by Research groups headed by Principal Investigators which are appointed by the Dean.

KTU provides studies in 42 study fields in the groups of study fields of mathematics, informatics, physical sciences, engineering, technologies, health, social, educational sciences and humanities, arts, business and public management. The University provides study programmes of the first, second and third study cycles. 96 study programmes were available for admission in the academic year 2020–2021: 42 of the bachelor's studies, 53 of the master's studies and 1 study programme of integrated studies, 43 of them are provided in the English language.

The studies in the field of Public Administration are provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and involve two study programmes: the bachelor's study programme *Public Governance* and the master's study programme *Public Administration*. Since 2019 the bachelor study programme *Public Governance* is a dual degree programme with the University of Central Florida (USA). The master programme *Public administration* has received ICAPA accreditation.

The present Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities emerged from the merger of the former Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and the Institute of Europe. Since 1 January 2014, the new Faculty started functioning as the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The Faculty is recognized for its research, scientific activities and studies, providing services not only in Lithuania but across the entire European Union and neighbouring countries. The Faculty implements five first-cycle study programmes, one non degree first-cycle study programme and seven second-cycle study programmes as well as doctoral studies in the study field of management, political sciences, sociology, education and history and theory of arts. In addition, the Faculty offers the professional non-degree study programme of Pedagogy Studies. In addition, the Faculty acts as the main division providing general university study subjects in the area of social sciences (law, psychology and

communication studies) and humanities (philosophy and languages) to all the students at KTU.

The last external evaluation of the Public Administration field programmes at KTU took place in 2013 (first-cycle study programme Public Administration and second-cycle study programme Public Administration). Both programmes were evaluated positively and were accredited for a maximum period of 6 years.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Public Administration study field and *first cycle* at Kaunas University of Technology 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	**25**

*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.

Public Administration study field and *second cycle* at Kaunas University of Technology 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	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	**27**

*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

KTU offers first-cycle the Public Governance degree and second-cycle Public Administration degree. The stated objectives of both programmes indicate that KTU aims to "contribute to the development of a smart society that is solidary, self-governing and politically mature by increasing students' knowledge and abilities in the area of public policy" (SER pg. 7). Furthermore, the planned outcomes of both programmes indicate the focus on students' abilities to interact with citizens in the context of public administration. Moreover, both programmes address public service values and ethics in their structure.

KTU programme aims and planned outcomes are aligned with the long-term progress strategy of the state of Lithuania (Lithuania 2030) which emphasises three priorities: smart society, smart economy and smart governance. Furthermore, the programmes consider international references such as the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service 2013 and the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity, 2017. KTU also links its objectives to the EU priorities 2019-2024 (specifically, developing a green economy and digital transition). During the site visit a clear interest in nonprofit management and strengthening nonprofit management capacities stood out. Finally, KTU stands out among other evaluated universities by referencing its planned outcomes to the European Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 as well as national Recovery and Resilience Plan for the respective period.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, the expert panel is convinced that the aims and outcomes of the study field programmes are fully aligned with the needs of society at large and, more specifically, the Lithuanian labour market. The links with the resilience and recovery plans, the attention to public service values and ethics as well as attention to multiculturalism and the opportunity to experience both European and US academic and public administration systems, in particular, set KTU apart from the remaining PA programmes in the country*.*

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

As outlined in the SER, both study programmes *Public Governance* (BA) and *Public Administration* (MA) are aligned with KTU's mission, objectives and strategy for the period 2021-2025. More specifically, they aim to "create knowledge for sustainable development and service to society by developing knowledge-driven practices and following public sector values and ethics" (Public Governance programme) and "to contribute to the welfare of society with transfer of expert knowledge to present and prospective public sector

employees and strengthening their skills needed to ensure effectiveness of public sector" (Public Administration programme). Nevertheless, in view of these strategic objectives, the relatively low student numbers (which is also referred to in other sections of the report) remains a matter of concern, in particular, considering the growing demand for public sector employees in Lithuania.

Taking the above into account, and having reviewed the content of both programmes and related research activities, the expert panel concludes that the study field and the aims and outcomes of both study programmes (first- and second-cycle) are aligned with the mission, strategic objectives and activities of the University at large.

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

Table No. 1. Study Programme's **Public Governance** compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes*

Criteria	Legal requirements	In the Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	120 (optional + general subjects of university studies)
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	18
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	18
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	At least 40% of the study programme volume is contact hours.
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	60% - 85% of the volume of each course and 100% of the Internship and Bachelor's Degree Final Project.

Table No. 2. Study Programme's **Public Administration** compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes*

Criteria	Legal requirements	In the Programme

Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	90
ECTS for the study field Information Services	No less than 60 ECTS	60
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	18
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	40%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	60% - 85% of the volume of each course and 100% of the Master's Degree Final Project.

The study programmes for both study cycles meet the legal requirements and provisions stipulated in various legal acts of Lithuania. Learning outcomes of both programmes meet the requirements set out in the Descriptor of the Study Field of Public Administration. The study module's number of credits in both programmes is determined based on the learning outcomes and with regards to the student's working time required for the achievement of the learning outcomes. Even though the volume of all modules (except for thesis and internship) of both study programmes is 6 ECTS, which ensures that a student's workload is evenly distributed throughout the programme and between single courses, the hours of contact work in modules differ depending on the learning outcomes and the amount of the hours required for the student's independent learning, the number of tasks, and the time required to solve these tasks. Overall, the design of the programmes Public Governance (BA) and Public Administration (MA) and the number of credits is sufficient for students to successfully achieve the intended learning outcomes. The only shortcoming is the inconsistency in using academics from other HEIs in the thesis defence committees.

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

The aims and learning outcomes of the first-cycle study programme *Public Governance* as well as of the second-cycle study programme *Public Administration* have been devised on the basis of international and national requirements. The learning outcomes for both programmes have been systematically based on Bloom's taxonomy – presumably the revised version – in order to distinguish between the different cycle levels. The congruence of the first-cycle results and the learning outcomes of the first-cycle study programme *Public Governance* is shown in table 5 of the SER; annex 3a contains the relation matrix of the courses and learning outcomes as well as the differentiated scheme for the linkage between each module, its respective learning outcomes, teaching/ learning/ assessment methods and outcomes of the study programmes as a whole. KTU stresses the uniqueness of the special linkage between aims and learning

outcomes of this programme because of the combination between American and European classifications. For the second-cycle study programme *Public Administration,* the congruence of the second-cycle results and the learning outcomes is shown in table 6 of the SER; the corresponding relation matrix for the programme modules is contained in annex 3b (strikingly, here learning outcome B4 is mentioned, which is not listed in table 6). For both programmes, there is a regular revision and updating of the course and programme relation matrixes by the teaching staff foreseen twice a year, while the Study Programme Committee ensures the overall equilibration of the system.

The necessary mechanisms to ensure, revise and adapt the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes and methods are in place and well designed. Notably, the number of learning outcomes (13 for the first-cycle study programme *Public Governance*; 12 for the second-cycle study programme *Public Administration*) avoid an overburdening and allow for a realistic distribution and, therefore, better control of corresponding achievements between the single modules of the programme. During the online site-visit, discussion with the teaching staff proved the effective familiarity with the elements and the functioning of the system.

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

Due to its double degree classification and the need to combine European and American programme exigencies, the first-cycle study programme *Public Governance* has a rather unique and complex module structure as shown in Annex 1a to the SER. This might explain some of the general subjects of university studies (e.g. Mathematics, Classical Physics, Cinema History), which otherwise have no entitlement to form part of a public administration programme stricto sensu. In that regard, alumni representatives were rather critical during the site-visit, in particular about too general studies during the first two years of the first study cycle and the irrelevance of some of the courses such as mathematics, while some topics such as comparative public administration or digital technologies in public administration were missing, but deemed necessary.

The number of core and compulsory subjects is rather limited, but there are six modules in total for electives with a list of corresponding subjects as a counterbalance. Whilst the electives are generally in line with the subject dimensions of the study field and allow theoretically for the individualisation of the studies, this depends in practice on their factual availability. Also for the second-cycle study programme *Public Administration* the compulsory core subjects have been deliberately reduced in order to strengthen the number of elective courses which have been grouped in three thematic blocks (i.e. Public Policy; Multilevel Governance; Environmental Organisation) as mentioned in the SER and shown in Annex 1b. As in the first-cycle study programme, the electives of the second-cycle study programme *Public Administration* are generally in line with the subject dimensions of the study field and allow for the individualisation of the studies if they are effectively available and eligible.

Although the totality of corresponding subjects/ modules seem adequate to ensure the consistent development of students' competencies in both study programmes, the division between (reduced) compulsory and (enlarged) elective subjects can become problematic

when low student numbers result in the de facto non-eligibility of certain electives. In programmes attaching great importance to electives, this has to be closely monitored and eventually corrected by the reintroduction of more compulsory subjects.

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

The University provides various avenues for the personalization of studies (e.g. selecting elective courses for 48 ECTS (BA level) and 12 ECTS (MA level); the possibility of selecting and adapting final thesis topic; participation in an exchange programme; and completion of selected courses in Coursera platform). In addition, there are possibilities for students to select topics for assignments in various modules and, if needed, replacement of oral presentations with other solutions or prolonging exam times, in particular, for those with special needs. That said, the problem is that not all optional courses can be selected by students, as selection of optional courses is group-determined and hence, only few of them are actually offered. Also, during the site visit discussions the expert panel noted low awareness among first-cycle students about the study options at UCF and taking optional courses there, as well as the overall possibilities to use previous studies and working experience, i.e. non-formally acquired competences. And, even though some courses, such as Comparative Public Administration, were moved from the core mandatory course list to electives in the first-cycle studies, there are question marks about the relevance of some of the General University Study mandatory modules such as Cinema History and Mathematics. In principle, KTU offers opportunities for students to personalise the structure of public administration programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes, but in reality there are some constraints, in particular, in the first cycle studies.

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

The principles of preparation, committee formation, defence and storage of final theses are clearly determined for both programmes. The process itself is structured, responsibilities are defined and support mechanisms are in place (supervisors, teaching staff, KTU library, linguists etc.). Due to the orientation of both study programmes, the subjects of final theses as shown in Annexes 2a and 2b of the SER cover a wide range of themes relevant for the study of public administration/ the public sector as a whole and respective interrelations with other fields of society. In practice, most subjects are proposed by the teaching staff, but other options are also not excluded, and students as well as alumni confirmed to be content. From their orientation and scope, the revised final theses seem to be compliant with the field and cycle requirements; a closer look at the final theses of 2020, however, revealed in some cases inconsistent standards of citations and bibliographical references. Also the omission of page numbers in references, which has been observed in a number of final theses, is generally debatable, but definitely not adequate at the bachelor and master level, where exactness and verifiability are of utmost importance. During the online site-visit the reasons for these inconsistencies could not be explained and should, therefore, be addressed in more depth by the programme management.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The study programmes are in line with the University's strategic aims and broader societal objectives.

2. The study programmes objectives (both cycles) are fully aligned with the society and labour market needs. Links with the resilience and Covid-19 recovery plans, the attention to public service values and ethics, non-profit management as well as the focus on multiculturalism and opportunity to experience both European and US academic and public administration systems, in particular, set KTU apart from the remaining PA programmes in the country.

3. KTU offers various ways and possibilities to personalise studies, even though the offering of optional courses is not individually determined (see Weaknesses below).

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The composition of mandatory and optional courses does not reflect the exact needs of students, alumni and social partners, as some modules are too general and not related to the study field.

2. Optional courses are group-determined and therefore their offer is limited, which reduces the possibilities for students to select courses according to personal preferences.

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

During the evaluation period KTU teaching staff published several articles in internationally recognised research journals (e.g. International Review of Administrative Sciences, International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, Total Quality Management and Business Excellence, East European Politics, Climate Policy, European Security) as well as chapters in books of internationally well-known publishing houses (including Springer, Palgrave Macmillan, and Edward Elgar). These achievements indicate that KTU teachers have visibility within the international research environment thanks to their research activities in management, administration, and political science. Furthermore, they have played a significant role in various international research networks. According to the information shared during the site-visit, KTU uses incentive programmes to support their teaching staff's research activities. In particular, it is possible to receive specific funding for research groups. It is highly appreciated that publishing in any predatory journal/s has been already banned. Within this context, it is very useful and important that teachers can consult with university librarians if they feel uncertain in regard to the quality of some international journal.

Furthermore, the collaboration with the Municipal Training Centre is another noteworthy activity. Teachers are invited as trainers or coaches which allows them to share their expertise and receive input from practice for their research activities in return. Their research activities partly reflect the needs of the Centre. In addition, during the site-visit, the teaching staff emphasised that the applied research conducted at KTU in the study field is in compliance with the present government's priorities, providing support for policy-making in regional development.

The information provided in the SER and collected during the site-visit confirm the compliance of the study programmes with the most recent achievements in science. This is an important precondition for the provision of high-quality study programmes and, at the same time, it contributes to KTU's relevance and recognition not only within the Lithuanian higher educational system, but also in a much broader international academic environment.

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

The coordinating lecturers in the study programmes belong to various KTU research groups such as "Public Governance" and "Civil Society and Sustainability" and thereby, they relate their modules to the scientific research, research projects and available research infrastructure. Teaching staff integrate their scientific research results into the content of the study programmes in their lectures and assignments. The integration of the latest developments in science into the study modules is ensured through the compilation and revision of compendia and other course materials. In the capacity of national experts participating in different working groups of governmental bodies, lecturers also transfer the knowledge from public administration practice in Lithuania. Therefore, the study content is continuously updated and new knowledge of public governance/administration is provided in response to changes taking place in public administration/governance. This is reflected in the incorporation of topics such as global megatrends, Society 5.0, digital government and AI applications, design thinking approach, etc. into the study programmes. Lecturers also use the latest data from official statistics, European Social Survey data, etc. and cover societal challenges in various regions. The ICAPA accreditation obtained in 2022 also highlights the research-based studies as a strength, in addition to the internationality of the scientific work. Overall, both theoretical and applied research are closely linked to the study programmes and the content of the study programme is closely linked with the latest developments in public administration discipline and practice.

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

At KTU students are actively encouraged to take part in ongoing research activities, especially by their teachers (during lectures or by the supervisors of their theses), but also by the University at large (through various scientific events where students are the most important target group, for instance, regular student conferences, and through publication of students' research results). However, taking information collected during the site-visit into account, there is still room for improvement in this field. On the one hand, teachers are proactive (this

was confirmed by students during the site-visit), and on the other hand, the engagement of students in research strongly depends on individual motivation to dedicate extra time to research (for instance, instead of paid work). The teachers who participated in the site-visit admitted that students have been involved more in individual research initiatives than in longer-term research projects. It indicates the existence of rather personal-relation-based collaboration between teachers and their students than an open mechanism leading to broader collaboration activities.

Another issue the expert panel noted during the site-visit discussion is related to the required skills of students for active participation in research activities. According to the students, courses on methodology are modern and regularly updated in terms of contents. However, students identified a lack of systematic preparation (and/or practical training) for academic writing within the evaluated study programmes. More precisely, they pointed out that students might not feel ready to produce academic texts, and their limited willingness to do so and to be involved in research could be rather determined by their doubts linked to their experience and skills in the field of academic writing than to their limited interest or insufficient knowledge on the subject.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KTU study programmes are closely linked with global and national developments in the field of Public Administration, as lecturers rely on up-to-date literature and practical use cases in the study process.

2. The collaboration between the University and its teachers and local as well as national stakeholders in applied research is very well developed.

3. The teaching staff is active in international research and some of their recent publications have received high international visibility.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The engagement of students in ongoing research activities is limited.

2. Students are not offered adequate and consistent preparation (as potential research collaborators) for academic writing.

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

The admission process for the first-cycle study programme (Public Governance) is organised under the national application system LAMA BPO. Candidates can apply for state-funded study places and non-state-funded ones. To enter this programme, the candidate's score must

not be lower than 5.4. Since 2019 the Public Governance study programme has been taught in English, so foreign students can be attracted. Admission of foreign students takes place through the University's internal system called DreamApply. The required information for application can be found on the KTU website.

In 2019 the Public Governance programme was updated and a double degree diploma with the University of Florida was established. It is interesting to note that according to the information provided in the SER, the average competitive score of students admitted to the study programme has changed from 7.01 in 2020 to 7.99 in 2021. That shows that the programme attracts better-prepared students.

The criteria for the application for the master programme are clear and can be found on the University webpage. There are three stages of admission to the second-cycle programme (June, July, and August). The same procedure applies for all three stages (submission period for applications, evaluation of the criteria, motivational interviews, and the decision about the admission finalised by the electronic admission system). In the Public Administration programme, the total number of submissions for the full-time state-financed option were in the range of 37 to 42 in the evaluation period (2018-2021).

Part-time students have the possibility to choose their studies in three Lithuanian regions – Marijampolė, Kretinga or Tauragė. The part-time studies are delivered fully online. KTU has made efforts to ensure the same level of quality for the studies there as in Kaunas. The total number of students enrolled in the second-cycle study programme (Public Administration) has been rather stable over the years. In 2019 the total number of students was 85, in 2020 there were 82 students enrolled in the programme.

Overall, according to the SER and the discussions at the site-visit, the admission to first-cycle and second-cycle studies is carried out efficiently in accordance with the established procedures. Students confirmed that all relevant information about the admission process can be found on the University website in Lithuanian and English. The Bachelor study programme is quite stable in terms of numbers of students/entrants attracting a small number of foreign students, which is not the case for the Master programme, likely due to the fact that it is only offered in Lithuanian language.

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

The recognition of qualifications and partial studies acquired abroad as well as of previous non-formal and informal learning is carried out in accordance with the KTU Guidelines for the Inclusion of Learning Outcomes and the Guidelines for the Acknowledgement of the Competencies Acquired via Formal Education as a Part of the Study Program to the Persons who Want to Continue Studies at the Higher Education Institution (SER page 34), which are in line with the national legislation and the applicable regulatory documents:

- The study modules of the student who wants to have the learning outcomes of his/her previous formal education to be recognized, are included (up to 75% of the study programme volume for the 1st cycle, 25% for the 2nd and 40% for integrated study

programmes) after the evaluation of their compliance with the formal requirements of the study programme and the subject requirements.

- Competencies acquired via non-formal education (work activities, non-formal adult educational system, unpaid work and volunteering, traineeships, courses, seminars, projects, independent learning) have to be evaluated and acknowledged as learning outcomes (up to 50% of programme content). Credits are granted for a particular study module if the student proves that he/she has the knowledge, abilities and skills described in the outcomes of the study module.

- The learning outcomes of partial studies at a foreign HEI are included if the institution is recognised as corresponding to the type and cycle of studies under the procedure set out by the law of that country and the documents on the achieved outcomes and volume of studies submitted by the student after his/her return from another HEI comply with the set requirements. ECTS is used as a reference.

Considering the details presented in the SER and additional information submitted upon request of the panel, the expert panel concludes that the procedures for the recognition of partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and foreign qualifications are adequate. However, the information to assess the application of these procedures is very limited. As stated in the SER, there were very few requests for such recognition. That being said, the expert panel observed that all submitted requests were approved during the 2019-2021 period (SER report, p. 35).

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

KTU follows the national and inner regulations for the recognition of foreign qualifications and the organisation of partial studies. The needed information and documents are depicted on the University website in Lithuanian and English. The partial studies under the Erasmus+ program can be completed in all the EU Member States and third countries (the list of partners may vary every academic year). The students can also complete the exchange studies of 1-2 semesters or summer/winter programmes abroad under the bilateral cooperation and student exchange agreements signed between KTU and the university partners.

As common practice indicates, students of the second cycle study programme are less willing to go and study in foreign countries due to job related issues or family reasons. Most of the students of the programme have jobs and/or families that are major obstacles for Erasmus+ exchange. Covid-19 pandemic also played a role in the number of outgoing students, because during the 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 academic years only two students went abroad.

KTU also provides opportunity for the students to carry out practice in foreign institutions such as research institutes or private companies. The whole information can be found on the University and Faculty websites. Students who already participated in these academic mobility programs share their experiences during the events. The selection for the Erasmus+ mobility program is carried out twice per year. As a solution for a small number of outgoing students, Faculties even established a Coordinator position for International Relationship consultation.

The University has well-established links with foreign institutions. Yet students are not so willing to try academic mobility and encouragement from the University at this point is needed the most. The financial aspect should be reconsidered especially for the master students. The expert panel noticed that the academic mobility with the University of Florida is doing quite well because students mentioned that they would like to go on a physical visit after having a few remote models.

The experts noticed that the foreign students are kept "isolated" from the local students: for instance, kept in separate dormitories. This limits cultural exchange possibilities.

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

The University is providing all the needed information regarding the financial, psychological, and personal support for its students. The information related to study needs is provided by the KTU Student Information and Service Centre or the University website as well as the Study Centre in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The University has an academic advisor whom students can contact for personal questions related to career consultation and academic information. KTU provides academic support to students: mentorship program, "GIFTed" Talent Academy, individual consultations with teachers, etc.

Various options of financial support are offered to the students: the University's talent scholarships, the nominal Sponsor's scholarships, and the scholarships by enterprises, the one-time incentive scholarships can be awarded for active participation in extracurricular activities. The students who are seeking a double degree in the U.S. can have an option to have their tuition fees waved, which is particularly relevant as they are higher compared to the European university fees. The reason for that is that KTU was given a private donation for supporting student mobility in double degree programmes.

Students with disabilities can be granted targeted payment for special needs, they can get partial study fee compensation, social scholarship, and a reduced fee for the accommodation in the students' dormitories.

The University provides its students with psychological support. Currently, two psychologists work at the university, and they are free of charge for each student. University also provides mentors and tutors for students that can be personal support for each of them. The University assigns students a peer mentor at the beginning of the academic year. Mentor's task is to introduce the newcomers to the main procedures at the University and facilities. Elder course students can also apply for the career mentor program. They just need to possess professional experience and have knowledge in career planning and personal development.

Apart from what was written in the SER, the expert panel noted that the University is trying to build a strong sense of community. Not only consultants but also elder students and teachers are trying to help students to adapt faster to the University's society. The panel heard examples of teachers trying to adapt final assessments to students with special needs. One teacher used a translator for a student with a hearing disability. Another teacher had a student with psychological stress due to public speaking, so the exam was reorganised in

written form. These examples are quite efficient in proving that the university is very flexible and reacts to the individual needs of each student.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

At the beginning of the semester, during the first lecture, teachers present the course unit syllabus, laying down the main topics and their content, independent work tasks, main literature, deadlines for the assessments, and final exam. Students can find all the presented requirements later in the AIS and Moodle system. Other needed documents relevant to students can be found at KTU Intranet, Office 365. All the necessary information is presented in the weekly newsletter of the Student Information and Service Centre or by email. The University also runs the Study@KTU ambassadors' program, which consists of a group of students selected to represent the University to prospective students. The students' interests are represented by KTU Students' Association.

One week before the beginning of the academic year, KTU holds a Welcome Week for new students. During this week students are introduced to the necessary information related with the University and it is an important part for an effective integrational process.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Programme management rapidly responds to the declining number of entrants.
2. The cooperation with the University of Florida and the established availability of a double-degree diploma.
3. Strong University inner link and flexibility of teaching methods including for students with special needs.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The University has many international connections. Yet students are not very motivated to participate in academic mobility mostly due to personal reasons.
2. The opportunity to study at UCF is conditional. KTU can send only as many students as it receives from UCF. This seems to generate some resentment among the students and certainly goes against their expectations that led them to opt for KTU. KTU runs the risk of reduced enrollments and needs to consider alternatives.

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

Both at the systemic (Academic Information System/ AIS) as well as the individual course level the relevant information about the teaching and learning process and its requirements is provided for the students. The teaching and assessment methods are diverse and encompass *inter alia* lectures and guest lectures, discussions, experiential and reflective learning, concept mapping and case analysis and, respectively, mid- and end-term examinations in written and/ or oral forms, defence of individual and/ or team work, presentations, poster sessions etc. as shown in Annexes 3a and 3b of the SER. As was highlighted by teachers during the site-visit, interactive learning has been embedded into the study processes and supported by the use of various technologies and platforms such as Miro, Mentimeter, Zoom whiteboards etc. Special emphasis has been given to the establishment of a „Design Thinking Laboratory" at KTU, which has also trained lecturers of the evaluated programmes and shows the efforts to support students' learning processes by up-to-date teaching methods. Face-to-face teaching has been complemented by elements of virtual/ distance teaching. In both formats, frequent contacts, feed-back, grading and evaluation offer students as well as lecturers a variety of indicators with regard to the achievement/ non-achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Apart from personal interactions with the teaching staff and interim/ final course evaluations, students also have the possibility to discuss all aspects of the teaching and learning process at round tables at least twice a year (examples for actions derived from such round tables have been given in the SER). In combination with the general importance given to the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes and methods, therefore pertinent systems and mechanisms are in place to ensure that the teaching and learning processes take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the defined learning outcomes. During the online site-visit all relevant groups – especially the teaching staff and the students/alumni – confirmed their satisfaction with the corresponding results. The only suggestion by the alumni was to consider the re-introduction of intensive 2-3 week long courses that are taught sequentially in blocks in the second-cycle studies.

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

KTU offers potentially a wide range of financial, social and psychological support for students with special needs. These encompass e.g. the partial compensation of study costs for state non-funded places, a social scholarship and reduced accommodation fees. The students concerned can address their needs to a social welfare coordinator at the Department of Student Affairs who acts as a mediator to ensure their full integration in the university and their studies. Flexible forms of studies and assessments are feasible for them and the responsibility of the programme management to inform teachers correspondingly is defined. The premises in which the evaluated study programmes are delivered and the Central Library are adapted for students with special needs and there are differentiated approaches regarding visual, hearing, mobility and mental impairments. KTU also offers psychological and personal support to students including inter alia free psychological services and pertinent information (Website, booklets). Furthermore, the university also has an „Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy'' with a clear understanding of the diversity of potentially vulnerable groups. Corresponding complaints can be submitted to the university's Commission of Equal Rights. During the online site-visit especially the programme management and the teaching staff

showed their general familiarity with the existing institutional and procedural mechanisms, but the question if there were students with special needs at all in the evaluated programmes (no as stated in the SER; yes as stated by one teacher) could not be clarified. A discussion and a review if the targeted groups are really reached might, therefore, be an intermittent management task.

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

The KTU „Regulations on the Assessment of Study Modules" in general and more specifically the announcement of assessment criteria and their differentiation for each module at the beginning of the semester and the use of evaluation rubrics by the teaching staff provide for a high level of transparency. In both formats, permanent feedback to students is provided by different means (personal contact, e-mail, discussion of presentations, tasks, examinations) during course and tutorial hours. Moreover, the students' study progress is additionally monitored by the Study Programme Committee through the AIS. Special importance has been given to the existence of an "Early Warning System" administered by the Study Centre of the faculty and intended to monitor all indicators "identifying the students whose learning outcomes and behavioural patterns can have an impact on the termination of studies and to anticipate further actions to be taken aiming to help such a student", which include mentoring etc. (SER, p. 43). Teaching staff as well as students/ alumni have confirmed their great satisfaction with the existing monitoring and feedback mechanisms without mentioning any relevant deficiencies or needs for improvement. The only "weakness" detected during the online site-visit was a certain unsureness if all existing data could be combined in order to better predict and possibly lower the dropout of students. This might be a perspective to be further discussed and explored by the programme management.

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

For career tracking KTU uses the Consortium for the Career Management Information System of Lithuanian Higher Education Students and Graduates (www.karjera.lt) and the Government strategic analysis centre (STRATA). KTU has also launched the WANTed programme, which aims to develop students' career competencies, helps plan their studies with focus and purpose, and puts them in touch with their future career. Students are encouraged to participate in the events, seminars, receive consultations on the career issues, and look through the job and internship offers. The platform functions as a meeting ground for both students and employers.

Employment statistics between 2018 and 2020 (cf. pp. 8 and 45 of the SER) is fluctuating but shows an overall positive tendency (with a notable dip in 2019 for second cycle graduates and no data for 2020 for the criteria "12 months after graduation") indicating an increasing employability of KTU graduates. Furthermore, during site-visit the expert panel ascertained that the KTU second cycle PA programme was recently certified by ICAPA and the report specifically emphasised the impressive careers of the KTU PA alumni.

KTU indicates that students of the second cycle study programme of Public Administration have no problems in finding jobs, because most of the applicants are already active in the labour market and apply to the programme mainly to advance their careers or to prepare for switching from the private to public sector (cf. SER, para 44). However, the University does not track career progression in order to ascertain whether such expectations are met. Furthermore, for both cycles there are no specific measures in place to ensure that graduates actually work in the public sector after concluding their studies.

The expert panel considers that KTU graduate employability is good. However, additional measures could be implemented in order to obtain and analyse data on career progression.

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

KTU has established policies and procedures to ensure academic integrity which have been implemented effectively. As described in the SER and confirmed at the site-visit, by signing the learning agreement and the declaration of academic integrity, students commit to follow the Code of Academic Ethics and the University's other internal legislation. The University has adopted the Guidelines for the Detection of Plagiarism in the Students' Written Works, which establish procedures for plagiarism detection, the settlement violations and the penalties. To ensure the originality the co-occurrence inspection subsystem EPAS (ESAS) of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library eLABa is used. For works written in foreign languages the international co-occurrence inspection system iThenticate is used. Appropriate information on rules and requirements and the collaborative approach between teachers and students have contributed to a culture of mutual trust. Teaching staff are regularly provided with training on how to ensure academic integrity. Regarding written exams/assignments as well as bachelor and master theses, cases of plagiarism are rare (details have been provided in the SER).

Regarding tolerance and non-discrimination, KTU has established policies with a clear set of rules and procedures. The University assures tolerance and non-discrimination by implementing the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. The objective is to ensure equal opportunities of all the University's employees, students and the persons applying to the University, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, age, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, faith, language, origin, social status, convictions or views, citizenship, family status, intentions to have a child (children). University's employees and students, as well as candidates to the vacancies, who feel that equal opportunities have not been provided to them or the situation of the violation of equal opportunities has occurred, have a right to submit a justified complaint to the University. Cases are dealt with by the Commission of Equal Rights set up by the order of the Rector (hereinafter – Commission). Complaints are confidential and cannot be disclosed to the persons who are not related to the alleged violation or its examination, except for the cases when the applicant has already disclosed this information. Site-visit respondents (in particular students) confirmed that the information provided was adequate. They were not aware of any cases of discrimination in the evaluation period.

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

KTU has established effective policies and procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints. The rules and procedures for appeals (theses and other exams) are stipulated in KTU's study regulations (described in the SER). According to the SER, no appeals were received in the study field in the evaluation period. According to the respondents at the site-visit (students, graduates), students are aware of the rules and support services for complaints and appeals. Students also confirmed that teachers in general are very approachable and responsive to students' complaints and most issues/complaints are solved in an informal and amicable manner.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. High importance is given to the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes and methods, and pertinent systems and mechanisms are in place to ensure that the teaching and learning processes take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the defined learning outcomes.

2. Policies to ensure academic integrity and the rules and procedures for appeals are well established and implemented, and most conflicts are solved early on in a cooperative manner.

3. KTU offers potentially a wide range of financial, social and psychological support for students with special needs and the programme management and the teaching staff is familiar with the existing institutional and procedural mechanisms.

4. KTU has demonstrated good employability of KTU graduates.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. While the "Early Warning System" implemented to detect possible problems regarding the study process and success of the students was considered as a very good initiative by the expert panel, it was not clear if/how all existing data could be combined to better predict and lower dropout-rates. This should be further discussed.

2. The panel was unable to identify any specific measures in place to ensure that graduates actually work in the public sector after concluding their studies for both cycles.

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

While 11 teachers have been involved in teaching in the Master programme (Public Administration, 27 teachers have been teaching in the Bachelor programme (Public Governance) for at least three years. Interestingly, individual courses are organised in various ways. Some courses have been taught by teams of teachers during the evaluation period. Since the first cycle Public Governance study programme is offered in a partnership with the University of Central Florida, six teachers of this partner university taught at the KTU during the evaluation period.

Teachers involved in the study programmes possess both the necessary pedagogical and research competences. Since their research activities are usually closely interconnected with courses/subjects delivered, there is only a marginal risk that the contents of their courses/subjects might become outdated. Besides, it is important to positively assess institutional efforts leading to the engagement of various experts from practice to deliver guest-lectures.

The workload of teaching staff is adequate, and the ratio between teaching staff and students in both study programmes allows student-oriented teaching (in the "Public Administration" study programme the ratio is 1:5; in the "Public Governance" study programme the ratio is 1:2). Such a ratio increases the chance of achieving the learning outcomes. At the same time, however, this poses a challenge, especially if students are not demanding. From this perspective it is necessary to motivate teaching staff to continuously improve the desired competences and update the contents of all offered courses/subjects.

The teachers are also encouraged to enhance their personal motivation through a remuneration scheme. This mechanism is based on a set of clear evaluation criteria and is an incentive for teachers who want to increase their salaries. It is important that this incentive programme is specifically focused on postdocs. A postdoc period of any academic career is very sensitive and usually during this period teachers decide whether they want to continue an academic career or not.

The SER emphasises that KTU focuses its human resources activities on meeting current market needs and trends identified in the University strategies. KTU has tried to improve the quality of its teaching staff based on internal and external resources. KTU applies open and competitive procedures, and has introduced an effective tenure track system aiming at institutional stability and offers continuous professional development for the teaching staff. In summary, taking the information from the SER and clarifications provided during the site-visit into account, KTU teaching staff meets both quantitative and qualitative requirements of the Lithuanian higher educational system.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff's academic mobility

Active participation of teaching staff in academic mobility was relatively imbalanced. While some teachers were very active and took part in several teaching mobilities abroad during the evaluation period, others did not take part in any mobility. Teaching staff confirmed that the assistance from administration was adequate and sufficient information is available if one intends to take part in international academic mobility. As for the Erasmus+ teaching mobility

programme, teachers considered it a suitable tool to ensure and enhance necessary international academic networking.

KTU is aware of differences in individuals' interests in academic mobility, and although some teachers are very active, there is still a fairly high number of teachers who should be more involved in international teaching mobility activities. According to the information mentioned in the SER, during the evaluation period, almost 50% of the coordinating teachers of Master courses and 40% of the coordinating teachers of Bachelor courses took part in international teaching and/or training visits. On this matter, an important measure has already been adopted, namely the participation in academic mobility programmes (i.e. the delivery of lectures abroad) has been recognised as a precondition for the application for full professorship. At the same time, KTU should also put additional efforts in attracting more incoming teachers from abroad.

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

Generally, KTU offered an impressive number of options for teachers to improve their competences during the evaluation period. These options, including external training activities, addressed various individual needs, and teachers could voluntarily decide which courses, workshops or training they wanted to attend.

KTU offers various courses and training for its teaching staff in order to improve their competences. In-house courses are ensured, inter alia, by the EDU-Lab Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching or the Centre for Data Analysis and Archiving. Their main objective is to improve both didactic competencies and innovative teaching methods of teachers. The active participation of teachers in other national or international training activities and conferences can be considered beneficial in terms of the overall improvement of their competences, too. Furthermore, KTU applies its own language policy (aiming for the academic personnel to have English language knowledge of at least level B2, and level C1 for the lecturers who prepare and teach courses in English), which makes its teaching staff more ready for both international research collaboration and teaching in an international academic environment.

The SER states that the Department of Student Affairs organises training for the administration and lecturers on disabilities, ethics and adaptation of studies, etc. In addition, according to the information in the SER, this unit, in cooperation with the KTU Students' Association, organises two or three events focused on equal opportunities each year. However, during the site-visit it was mentioned that teaching staff has not been trained for dealing with students with disabilities or special needs. This factual discrepancy could be caused either by limited capacity (i.e. only a limited number of teachers could take part in the above-mentioned training) or by insufficient awareness of teaching staff about this opportunity. In both cases it should be assessed as an important challenge. Despite the fact that students with disabilities have not been common in the evaluated study programmes yet, it is necessary to emphasise that prevention is more appropriate than any rapid and improvised response.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Teaching staff fulfils both quantitative and qualitative requirements and KTU uses a strategic approach in the field of human resource management.

2. KTU has adopted its own incentive programme to support teachers' research activities which is not exclusively based on publication records.

3. Although KTU offers additional courses, workshops or training for teachers in its own centres, teachers can take part in externally offered courses, workshops or training.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Participation of teaching staff in international academic mobility programmes is imbalanced (some teachers are very active, while many others do not take part in these programmes), and the total number of incoming (guest) lecturers from abroad remains limited.

2. According to the insights gained during the site-visit, teachers are not adequately aware of the training offered by the Department of Student Affairs and not very focused on dealing with students with disabilities or special needs.

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

There is a sufficient number of class-rooms equipped with up-to-date technologies for both face-to-face and online studies. Yet, equipment for hybrid teaching needs to be improved as well as possibilities provided for pre-recorded lectures for dual-degree purposes. KTU uses two electronic platforms – Moodle for studies and AIS as an information management system. Various software licences have been obtained for studies and research and a Design Thinking Lab has been established to add value to the studies. KTU also has EDULab, which helps with didactics and introduction of new teaching methods. Likewise, systems of plagiarism check have been adopted. Facilities and study processes have been adapted to the special needs of students. There is a functioning university support system in place for teachers in the form of guidance provision and tutoring to work with disabled students (e.g. Moodle support team is helping with IT issues). By and large, teaching staff are aware of the (special) equipment and how to use it, but there are not many use cases. Also, disabled people are not disadvantaged in accessing study buildings or partaking in study process, i.e. there are special applications and devices for students with reduced mobility, hearing disability, visual impairment, or mental issues. KTU has also provided facilities and resources (access to needed databases and platforms) for doing research by students. And, students have even the possibility to borrow laptops from the KTU. Library services are of good quality and accessible to students

physically or electronically. There is a late-hour accessibility to the library and plenty of rooms for individual and group-work studies. Study materials – literature, databases etc. – are updated every semester. Overall, there is a diverse and rich environment for conducting studies.

Arrangements for internship are clear and well-communicated to students, as there is a dedicated coordinator, who provides information on what assignments need to be done and helps students with finding internship organisations. KTU has also a Municipal Training Centre that provides and broadens internship opportunities for BA students. Internship procedures are defined by the Decree. Students can find themselves an internship place, but KTU is coordinating and proposing some places for students, organising introductory workshops and mentorship as well.

The main finance sources of study programmes are state appropriations for studies and student tuition fees. The main funding of the study programme is dedicated to the salaries of human resources. That said, one of the challenges is the administrative side and financing of running the dual-degree programme. With respect to implementing a dual-degree programme, there are also facility-related issues such as reconciling various electronic study platforms. Other than that, physical, informational and financial resources overall are sufficient for carrying out studies effectively.

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

The planning and updating of resources required for the implementation of the public administration studies is conducted by the Study Committee. The planned or renewed resources include books/textbooks, online subscriptions, software, types of classrooms. The renewal or acquisition of these resources is dealt at the university library level (books, databases), university level (software) or faculty level (books, software, various subscriptions, classrooms). For instance, the faculty makes infrastructure renewal plans every year. Likewise, once a year, the Study programme committee submits to the Dean's office the need for the renewal or new resources for studies. All in all, it can be concluded that learning facilities and resources available at KTU are planned, updated and enable the current number of students to achieve their learning outcomes both by face-to-face studies and by distance studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Very good quality library services, modern facilities and adjustment of premises and facilities to people with special needs.

2. Establishment and access to a study- and research-related lab - Design Thinking Lab - that adds value to the study processes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Technical, financial and administrative shortcomings and challenges in running a dual-degree programme.

2. Room for improvement in conducting studies in a hybrid form.

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

The SER (p. 61) indicates that KTU internal quality assurance system is based on the key EU documents of the policy of higher education (Bologna and Copenhagen Declarations, Berlin and Bergen Communiqués, etc.) and complies with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area as well as national legislation. The study field quality assurance system includes a set of instruments for regular and sporadic monitoring, assessment and improvement. The main functions of the internal quality assessment and monitoring are performed by the University Study Programme Committee and the Study Quality Assurance and Development Office at the Department of Academic Affairs that periodically analyse and assess the approved study programmes.

Based on assessments and stakeholder feedback, the faculty prepares an annual quality improvement for the study programmes under its responsibility focusing on the development and improvement of studies at the faculty. In Spring 2021 Faculty study committee (FSC) was established in order to advise the field study programme committees (fSPC) on the issues related to the quality of study programmes within their purview. The study programme committee is led by the vice-dean for studies and involves heads of fSPCs, principal researchers, director of the Institute of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, head of the student representation. The first cycle study programme Public Governance and the second cycle study programme Public Administration fall under the Political Science, Sociology and Public Administration study programme committee. The head of the fSPC every year reviews the programme objectives and mission and after discussion with the SPC, if needed, updates the objectives and mission of the study programme. Notably, fSPC links assessments and plans for quality improvement with the teacher competence assessments and plans for their professional development (SER, p. 62-63). The decisions of the fSPC have to be approved by the Council of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities.

The changes in syllabus, teaching staff, student mobility issues of dual degree programme first simultaneously are discussed at national level (fSPC, FPC, etc. at KTU) and international level online meetings (program directors of both sides).

During the site visit, KTU team clarified that quality assurance system covers the full cycle (plan – do – check – improve), on all levels (Senate level, Faculty Study committee level, Study field level and study subjects level) and is fully integrated linking management, teaching performance and teachers' competence improvement, model/philosophy behind relations with the students. Additionally, PA department identified that they have at their disposal an EDULab, which helps with didactics, introduction of new methods and other improvements in response to the identified improvement needs. Finally, feeling that the ISO standard does not fit for HE university, KTU developed its own system for teachers' improvement, evaluation

monitoring, and other aspects integrated into university's internal QA system containing 11 overarching criteria that are used to provide feedback on study programme performance.

Considering the description of the quality assurance mechanisms, the consistency of inputs and comments received from all the participants of the site visit (including the administration, teachers, alumni and students) as well as the level of integration of the different quality assurance mechanism components (management, programme, teaching staff, students and alumni), the expert panel found KTU public administration field quality assurance system fully adequate in terms of structure and effectiveness.

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

The university has established multiple channels for engaging students in the activities of the University's governing bodies at all levels and its operating commissions (Council, Senate, Committees of the field Study Programmes, various commissions). The alumni participate in the University's events (open lectures, conferences, meetings), share their knowledge and experience with the academic community (career mentorship, giving lectures and presentations, support of young talents, etc.) and express their opinion on relevant issues.

At the level of a study programme, the social stakeholders are involved in all the processes of preparation of the study programmes, the quality assessment and improvement according to the level of their competence. They are members of the fSPC, the Qualification Commission, and the Faculty Council. The employers are involved in the teaching of individual topics of the study modules, can submit the topics for the students' final degree theses and provide the possibilities to perform the final degree projects and research work in their organisation.. Stakeholders and alumni confirmed the information contained in SER on the subject during the site visit.

Notably, changes of the programme as well as initiation of new study programmes are implemented following the bottom up principle, i.e. they are usually discussed in the fSPC; however, students, social partners or members of teaching staff may initiate changes in study programmes as well.

The University periodically asks students, alumni, teachers, and employees to evaluate different aspects of processes in the University: study subjects, the content of the programmes, etc. The University currently has two different surveys to gather student opinions. One survey is launched at the end of every semester and aims at the quality of teaching methods and course content. The other survey called "Student Voice" is launched annually and aims at the general student opinion of studies and leisure at the University (SER, p. 65).

This dynamics described in the SER (p. 63-64) matches that observed during the site-visit. Both students and alumni were very active in providing inputs and feedback and demonstrated engagement and a broad understanding of how the PG/PA programmes (first and second cycles) function, what their perspectives are and what changes could be made to further improve the programmes. At the same time, reduced social partner participation was observed, although positive assessments were received from those present. Furthermore, the

site-visit indicated that the Municipal Training Center could be better integrated with the study programmes/career services in order to bring social partners closer to teaching staff and especially students. Finally, student response rates to the varied questionnaires posed to them are quite reduced (11% of the average number of students in Public Governance (BA) in 2018–2020; 24% of the average number of students in Public Administration (MA) in 2018–2020, according to the SER, p. 9), and alumni response to the survey were very limited as well.

Based on the information contained in the SER and complemented by the site-visit, stakeholder involvement in quality assurance mechanisms are ample and well designed and function well as far as the engagement in the quality assurance committees is concerned. However, additional measures to ensure greater alumni and student engagement in surveys could be implemented in order to achieve greater representativeness of their feedback. Social partners should be more systematically engaged and the MTC should be more integrated in order to serve as a tool to increase stakeholder feedback on the quality of PG/PA programmes.

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

The feedback on the studies as well as their improvement possibilities collected from different sources discussed above is fed back into the integrated quality assurance system that leads to the updates of the study programmes' objectives, outcomes, structure and other aspects. The survey results are also used as inputs for the annual assessment of the study programmes and modules. Particular attention is given to the input from social partners, graduates and students and relevant University bodies.

Notably, during the site-visit the expert panel observed that all the participants in all sessions were aware of how the quality assurance system functions at KTU and how to access it in addition to mentioning various instances of their participation and resulting changes.

KTU uses multiple channels for sharing the information on the different aspects of its activities and has created different platforms for specific interactions such as WANTed mentioned under employability and career tracking criteria above. The university also publishes the results of the various surveys on its website. Information is normally shared both in Lithuanian and English in order to increase the reach and accessibility. SER (p. 65-67) provides a significant amount of detail and examples of the use of these diverse channels to share information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes.

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

It was mentioned in the SER that – on a scale from 1 to 5 – the indicators of the Student's Voice survey showed that the student satisfaction in 2018-2020 for the Master studies was 4.16 and for Bachelor studies was 3.45 in the same year. The main strengths of the programmes were related to the high teaching competences, interesting tasks, simple communication between students and teachers and available consultations after the lectures. Yet, a few weaknesses of the study programmes were mentioned during the site-visit: the

huge workload, students did not like some of the online teaching methods, some courses were considered too general and not very specific to the study programme. Graduates of the Bachelor programme evaluated it with 4 points (out of 5) and graduates of the Master programme evaluated it (similarly) with 4.05 points (out of 5). The biggest strength highlighted was becoming more confident and competent in working in public administration.

The expert panel noted that the University is paying a lot of attention to the student feedback system. During the site-visit, students provided concrete examples of actions that were taken based on anonymous survey results. It is a good practice to start collecting feedback in the middle of the semester in order to improve in the second half of the course. However, during the site-visit students suggested that they would like to have a broader list of elective subjects in their studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KTU has established a well-designed and fully integrated quality assurance system that brings together management, teaching performance and teacher competency development, as well as student relations; ample options for stakeholder feedback and engagement are provided.

2. Graduates of both Bachelor and Master studies mentioned that skills collected during their studies are used in their current works.

3. Multiple communications channels available for both sharing the information and academic life as well as receiving external feedback and inputs.

4. Impressive student engagement and proactiveness in sharing feedback and contributions as evidenced by the site visit.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low student response rates to the varied questionnaires posed to them (11% of the average number of students in Public Governance (BA) in 2018–2020; 24% of the average number of students in Public Administration (MA) in 2018–2020), and alumni responses to the survey were very low for both programmes as well.

2. Social partners should be more systematically engaged, in this context, further integration of the MTC would be beneficial.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	• The composition of mandatory and elective courses should be revised to better reflect the preferences of students, alumni and social partners, and the relevance for the study field. • The scope of optional courses could be broadened to include more study-field related courses, but also courses on general competences, i.e. study field non-related modules, could be offered as part of electives. • KTU should ensure that students can select optional courses according to their individual preferences. • Representatives of other HEIs should take part in all thesis defence committees on a regular basis.
Links between science (art) and studies	• Students should be further encouraged and adequately supported to participate in ongoing research activities. In particular, students should be offered training for academic writing (as potential research collaborators).
Student admission and support	• While the University has many international connections, students hardly participate in academic mobility mostly due to personal reasons. Further incentives will be required to increase student mobility. • The opportunity to study at UCF is conditional (KTU can send only as many students as it receives from UCF). KTU runs the risk of reduced enrollments and therefore needs to consider alternatives.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	• KTU should further explore how all existing data on students can be combined in the „Early Warning System" in order to better predict and/or lower dropout-rates.
Teaching staff	• The participation of teaching staff in international academic mobility programmes is not balanced (only a few teachers are very active); further incentives should be explored to increase participation; in addition, efforts should be made to further increase the number of incoming (guest) lecturers • Teachers could be more focused on dealing with students with special needs.

Learning facilities and resources	- It is recommended to improve the communication channels, technical interoperability (syncing the platforms) and financial arrangements for a more effective operational running of a dual-degree programme, but also for having a more extensive mobility of students. - There is room for improvement in conducting studies in hybrid format.
Study quality management and public information	- Communication/information and marketing related to the dual degree programme should be improved. - Further analyses of the factors behind the limited student and alumni response rates to the varied questionnaires should be carried out, and the methods/tools adjusted accordingly. - Social partners should be more systematically engaged, in this context, the MTC should be further integrated into the system.

V. SUMMARY

Overall, the expert panel found that in the evaluation period KTU has systematically developed all seven evaluation areas of the two (first and second-cycle) programmes in the Public Administration study field in line with the legal requirements, the needs of the labour market and the specific needs of the public sector. No fundamental shortcomings have been identified by the expert panel in the evaluation period. The panel noted that all recommendations of the previous evaluation have been taken into account and KTU has taken appropriate action to mitigate shortcomings identified at the time.

One of the key strengths of the study programmes in the field of Public Administration is the international and interdisciplinary approach of the study field and KTU at large, e.g. the establishment of the dual degree programme with the University of Central Florida (USA), the involvement of teaching staff in international research projects and networks as well as the involvement of lecturers from abroad through international cooperation. The expert panel also noted the strong interlinkages between research, teaching and practice. In addition, KTU has developed and implemented a solid and fully integrated quality assurance mechanism, as well as sound policies and procedures for academic integrity and appeals which are adequately communicated and function well in practice. Students and social partners are actively involved in programme development and improvements. Teaching staff are responsive and apply a good mix of innovative teaching methods.

That said, there is still room for improvement in the majority of the seven evaluation areas, notably related to student recruitment, drop-out, the personalisation of studies (individual choice of electives and re-focusing of core vs. optional courses), student involvement in research, the composition of thesis committees, and communication and marketing, in particular related to the dual degree programme. Especially, running a dual degree programme from the administrative and operational perspective seems to be one of the core challenges in KTU due to different timezone related issues, study credit system incompatibility aspects, academic exchange organisation problems within Erasmus+, and communication, coordination and financing issues, etc. Finally, to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the programmes and the best possible outcomes in terms of meeting the needs of the public sector (in Lithuania but also e.g. to defend Lithuania's interest in the EU), it would be advisable to further institutionalise the cooperation with social partners rather than relying on individual contacts of the teaching staff. From a more general perspective, another issue that was raised during the site-visit (by alumni and social partners) was about finding the identity of the institute/faculty in the Technology University and also finding common grounds with other departments in terms of linking the public administration field with other (more technical) disciplines such as IT. In the same vein, considering the strategic international orientation of KTU and the study field, the low mobility of students and teachers (outgoing and incoming) remains an issue that deserves further attention.

In conclusion, the expert panel would like to express their thanks to the team at KTU for compiling the self-evaluation report, for organising the site-visit and for providing additional

information in response to our requests for clarification. The panel also wishes to thank all site-visit participants for sharing their valuable insights.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Dr. Christine Leitner