



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS

at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

Expert panel:

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data

I.

Title of the study programme	Business Management
State code	6121LX043
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 4 years; Part-time 5,5 years
Credit volume	240 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

II.

Title of the study programme	Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics
State code	6121LX040
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 4 years; Part-time 5,5 years
Credit volume	240 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

III.

Title of the study programme	Business Logistics
State code	6121LX042
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 4 years; Part-time 5,5 years
Credit volume	240 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

IV.

Title of the study programme	Business Management
State code	6211LX058
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1,5 years; Part-time, 2 years
Credit volume	90 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Higher
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

V.

Title of the study programme	Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics
State code	6211LX057
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1,5 years
Credit volume	90 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Higher
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

VI.

Title of the study programme	Business administration (MBA)
State code	6215LX003
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1 years
Credit volume	960 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Higher
Registration date of the study programme	n/a

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 17th May , 2022.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. No additional documents have been provided along with the self-evaluation report and annexes.

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

Established in 1956 the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University is one of the largest research-based universities in Lithuania. Its major focus is on technical and engineering education, with some 29 study fields within the following groups; engineering, Informatics, mathematics, technology, social sciences, humanitarian sciences, business and public management, and arts. The study fields are grouped within 10 faculties of Antanas Gustaitis' aviation Institute, architecture, business management, civil engineering, creative industries, electronics, environmental engineering, fundamental sciences, mechanics, and transport engineering.

The University aims to educate skilled, creative and socially active professionals who have the capacity and competence to be able to work successfully across the range of labour and research activities both nationally and internationally.

In 2021 there were 9400 students enrolled at the institution and 960 staff members, of which 67% have PhD's. Of the student body 13.5% were international students. In addition to the faculty structure the University has 13 institutes, 3 research centres and 22 laboratories that focus on research and experimental work.

The Faculty of Business Management and the Faculty of Transport Engineering, implement programmes in the business studies field. There are three first cycle programmes offered in this field; Business Management (1993) with three specialisms, finance management, marketing and business, project management; Business Logistics (2014) and Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics (1993) with two specialisations, transport logistics and transport economics. In 2021 5.72% of first cycle students studied in the business field.

There are three Second cycle programmes, Business Management (1993) with four specialisations, electronic media management, organisation management, marketing management; Transport Engineering Economy and Logistics (1993) with two specialisations, logistics supply chain management and transport logistics, and a Master of Business Administration (2021). In 2021 46% of all second cycle students study in the business field.

The University has an ambition to rank within the best technical universities in Europe and business studies has a significant role in achieving that ambition.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Business study field and **first cycle** at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

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

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

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

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

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

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

Business study field and **second cycle** at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	24

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The goal of the first cycle programmes is to develop competencies and skills that allows the students to enter the labour market and be able to become successful managers within specialist management functions. The programmes provide opportunities for students to be able to better understand the underpinning knowledge required of modern business functions and operations whilst developing specialist skills to be able to apply knowledge and competencies within those specialisms. The specialisms are concentrated in the final semesters of the study programmes.

Within the aims and outcomes of the field and study cycle programmes there is the overall understanding that businesses have to adapt and transform in order to be competitive and to be able to understand and adapt to the changing nature of the global markets. The SER (page 8) indicates that the University pays particular attention to the rapid changing needs and how these business needs relate to the competencies being developed within the programmes.

Relevant employment opportunities for first cycle graduates suggest there is a need in the labour market for a wide range of the managerial skills and competencies being developed within the study field. This is supported by the significant number of employment opportunities being offered across a wide range of online recruitment platforms.

The second cycle programmes of Business Management with specialisations, aim to develop specialist skills required of highly qualified managers within specific functional operational areas. Similar aims are within the Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics second cycle programme where the aim is for the graduates to be able to take the lead in carrying out necessary research in proposing appropriate and effective business management solutions relevant to those industries. The MBA programme has a focus on developing business leaders who are able to apply the latest knowledge and management techniques to the leadership of a wide range of business organisations. This includes the ability to analyse and solve practical problems, use the latest technology based business and environmental research methods, and making the appropriate business decisions. The focus on leadership also includes creating the understanding of the needs for future professional development through lifelong learning. The MBA programme is targeted at executives and senior managers who may not have received any formal education within the business studies fields.

The total number of admitted students on first cycle programmes for 2021 including full-time integrated and full-time weekend was 63. Business Management full-time 16, full-time weekend 7, Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics full-time 23, integrated 3, and Business Logistics 14. (SER p 39-40) See table below for the pattern of applications, first choice and admitted students over the period 2018-2021. This indicates that with a relatively stable level of applications across the first cycle programmes, excluding the variation in 2019, the decline in admissions, unless addressed, must question the viability of future cohorts and the subsequent nature of the students' experience.

First Cycle	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>Business Logistics</i>				
Applications	185	279	173	179
Ist Choice	39	54	25	32
Admitted FT	19	26	16	14
<i>Business Management</i>				
Applications (Total FT/W.E)	255	471	255	389
Ist Choice	24	62	49	56
Admitted FT	14	36	18	16
Admitted Weekend	7	14	9	7
<i>Tpt Eng Ec & Logistics</i>				
Applications	222	333	276	267
Ist Choice FT & Integrated	60	77	79	65
Admitted FT	32	41	34	23
Admitted Integrated	4	6	3	3
<i>Business Field 1st Cycle</i>				
Total Applicants	662	1083	704	835

First Cycle	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total 1st Choice	123	193	153	153
Total Admissions	76	123	80	63
Withdrawal Rates (Annex 7 SER)		36%	38%	39%

For the second cycle programmes the total number of students admitted in 2021 was 108, of which 53 were for the Business Management Programme, 23 the Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics and 33 for the MBA.

The SER (page 54) when making reference to the dropout rate (withdrawals) of both first and second cycle programmes especially during the pandemic, noting that the majority were part-time students and difficulties combining work and studies (excessive workload) were amongst the reasons indicated. It also refers to the completion rates of students on first cycle programmes as being 61% in 2021, therefore a withdrawal or dropout rate of 39%. For second cycle students the dropout rates were 41% in 2018, 48% in 2019 and currently 7% for 2021. Again, a major reason for students voluntarily stopping studying were the difficulties of combining work and study.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel recognises that the programmes are designed to meet the needs and specialisation within the labour market. The aims of the programmes and the skills and competencies being developed are congruent with the overall employment needs but owing to the high dropout rates, the actual number of graduates entering the employment market is such that it is unlikely to have a major impact on the field of business.

The number of admitted students across the first cycle programmes of 63, when seen in the context of the current completion rates suggests that less than 40 of those admitted students will graduate into the labour market. The second cycle programmes suggest an improvement with fewer current students voluntarily withdrawing from studies but with both first and second cycle withdrawing students citing the conflicting pressures of work and study, this must be a matter of concern.

The significant opportunities for specialisation whilst responding to very specific niche needs in the labour markets may be restricting the potential number of admitted students, especially potential candidates who may not have made specialist choices at the point of admission. This could suggest a more generic approach to a more open business management programme with opportunities for specialisations within a generic programme rather than specialist routes and narrow specialist programme titles that may not resonate with potential applicants.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University mission is to develop the civic responsible, creative, competitive personality, receptive to research in latest technologies and cultural values, to promote scientific progress, social and economic well-being, to create value that ensures the development of Lithuania and the regions in the world. This mission is supported by a number of operating goals which include; to train qualified specialists, creative and socially active professionals who would be able to work successfully in both Lithuania and foreign research and labour markets; to conduct international level research focusing research activities in the highest performing research divisions and pursuing a policy of attracting renowned researchers. To create research based innovations for the society and business, to become a leader of the Baltic universities in the fields of sustainable construction, transport, sustainable environment, information technology and communication science. To promote sustainable development of the country and regions, to train an innovative society.

The aims and outcomes of the first and second cycle programmes are to educate specialists across a range of functional business activities including logistics, transportation and the business specialisms in finance, marketing and project management. In addition for the second cycle programmes there is a focus within the MBA programme on developing business leaders.

Whilst the outcomes provide clear indication of the technical skills and competencies being developed it was not clear how the soft skills important for business, and commented on by social partners, were being developed nor how they were incorporated into the intended graduate outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel considers that the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes are congruent with the overall mission and goals of the university. The goal of training qualified specialists to be able to work successfully both nationally and internationally is evidenced in the aims and outcomes of the study field.

However, there must be some question marks about the significance that the contribution that business studies can play in achieving the ambition to rank with the best technical universities in Europe with relatively modest student enrolment numbers, relatively high dropout rates within the first cycle programmes and therefore lower than expected graduates entering into employment or further study.

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

(1) Factual situation

The business studies programmes have been formulated to conform to the levels of the Lithuanian qualifications frameworks 6 (Undergraduate) and 7 (Postgraduate).

The first cycle programmes conform to the overall scope requirements with 240 credits, and exceed the base requirements of subjects within the study field of 120 credits as follows, business logistics with 168 credits, business management with 162 credits, and transport engineering economics and logistics with 135 credits. All of the programmes conform to the maximum of 60 credits per year and exceed the base credits for the thesis or 15 with an allocated credit value of 18.

Second cycle programmes meet the legislative requirements as follows; the MBA programme meets the 60 credits legislative requirement for the scope of the programme of which all of the credits are awarded within the subjects in the study field, there is no legal requirement for a thesis with this programme and none offered. For the other masters level programmes they conform to the legal requirements with 90 credits awarded for the scope of the entire programme of which 30 credits are awarded for the final thesis.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the view that the first and second cycle programmes conform with the legal requirements.

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

(1) Factual situation

The aims and outcomes of the programmes are formally articulated in the annexes of the SER and the learning outcomes are grouped as; knowledge, research skills, special skills, social skills and personal skills. Additional specialist outcomes are defined within those groupings dependent on the programme specialisms. There are identified links between the learning outcomes and the modules within the curriculum where those outcomes are planned to be developed and assessed.

The SER states that the outcomes are defined based on Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive goals, focusing on different components of competencies and skills levels. The descriptors used for example in Annex 4, indicate the use of terms such as; to know, to apply, to be aware and understand. Annex 4 also provides examples of the indicative relationship between the expected outcomes, the methods of study, and methods of evaluation used in determining how the outcomes will be assessed. These general statements and the descriptors of the learning outcomes being used do not allow for observable or measurable outcomes, and do

not make the relationship between the outcomes, delivery and assessments of those outcomes obvious.

Learning and teaching focuses on the use of traditional methods of lectures, laboratory work, observation, and active learning involving seminars, group discussions, problem-based teaching and case studies. These study methods are in addition to students' independent studies. The learning and teaching focus is on developing and applying theoretical knowledge to practical problems with a range of techniques including digital simulations.

Students' learning is evaluated at all stages through interim evaluations which accumulate assessment points towards the final summative assessment. Assessment tools include diagnostics to assess student progression for a topic or part of the course, formative, cumulative and the formal confirmation of students achievements having completed the study programme through the aggregated summative assessments. The evaluation formula using the differing ratings for the different assessment components will vary depending on the study subject. Assessment tools include examinations, written assessments or online via Moodle with tests using closed, semi open or open ended questions, reports and group and individual works presented verbally or in writing.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is limited evidence of a relationship between the aims and learning outcomes of the programmes and how the learning and teaching methods are intended to facilitate those outcomes. The range of teaching methods, although in part based on the traditional lecture, also encompasses a wide range of methods that are appropriate in meeting the students' learning needs and developing student competencies.

The learning outcomes would benefit from a review to consider the use of specific and measurable verbs, avoiding verbs that are unobservable or unmeasurable and thus cannot be objectively assessed.

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

(1) Factual situation

For the first cycle programmes there is a clear progression and sequencing that allows the students to develop a fundamental understanding of the subject and understanding of the application of the subject to the wider business arena. The SER makes reference to the research conducted by teaching staff including literature reviews, to ensure a comprehensive and consistent development of the subject areas and keep them in line with current business issues.

Specialisms provide a more detailed knowledge and understanding of the relevant business area whilst the optional subjects including languages allow the students to broaden the learning experience. Comprehensive projects provide opportunities for the students to deal

with practical business cases. The culmination of the totality of the study programme is the presentation of the bachelors thesis which demonstrates a wide range of knowledge and skills including research skills and its development and final presentation.

The comprehensive study plans indicate by semester the subjects, including options, and the progression through the programmes from the more fundamental subjects towards the specialisms of the individual study programmes. Cognitive practice and professional practice in the 4th and 7th semester provide students with practical skills in the field of business they are studying.

The second cycle programmes of Business Management and the Master of Business Administration, develop the students' understanding and competencies through providing specific modules that support the latest management thinking and to be able to undertake quantitative and qualitative research in the business environment. The modular structure and the range of modules look to ensure the students can take an integrated approach in relation to their ability to understand and critically analyse, in a scientific way, problems under consideration. The use of real business problems and situations ensures that the integration of knowledge skills and understanding and the ability to analyse and present solutions also includes the understanding of the importance of leadership skills when working in a complex business environment. The master study programme Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics provides specialist modules to deepen knowledge and understanding that may well have been gained in the first cycle programmes whilst also preparing students for detailed research lead analytical work in solving real-world logistics related problems.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel recognises that there is a consistent approach to progression, building on fundamental knowledge and understanding and then allowing students to gain deeper knowledge and skills as they progress through the stages of the programmes.

Inclusion of the comprehensive study plans for both first and second cycle programmes demonstrates how students' competencies are developed through their progression through the programmes.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students have the opportunity to develop personalised study plans for first cycle programmes to a maximum of 45 credits in each academic year. This approach allows students to arrange the subjects of study programmes according to the needs of those individual students. All such plans are required to be presented to the relevant dean for approval. Plans allow students on full-time study programmes to combine two or more programmes with supplementary or

part-time studies. Such study programmes also allow individual subjects to be studied remotely.

For the bachelors business management programme students can either study full-time or part time and that programme and the business logistics programme offers a range of elective study subjects allowing students to choose two electives in the second and third semesters from a range of general university study subjects and languages. This choice continues with elective subjects in the fifth and sixth semester. Specialisations of routes allow further choice for students to be able to meet personal learning objectives.

For the second cycle programmes students have the opportunity to personalise the structure of the study programme choosing alternative study subjects from the first and second semester on the business management programme and modules on the MBA programme. These can combine several content integrated study subjects linked by expected study results. A range of elective modules in the MBA provide further opportunity for students to develop special skills and expand their competencies in the light of their needs, personal and business interests.

The further development of hybrid approaches to learning and teaching delivery provide opportunities to enhance both the student experience and the opportunity for further personalisation.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel noted from the evidence provided that there is significant and extensive opportunities for students to be able to personalise the structure of the programmes to undertake personalised study plans and to engage with the student experience using a range of different modes of attendance.

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

(1) Factual situation

Final thesis are required for all first cycle programmes and are prepared under the order of the Rector dated the 7th of May 2021 "Description of the Procedure of Writing and Defence of Final Theses". This lays out the study regulations, and the annual calendar schedule. Usually, students on the masters business management and transport engineering economics and logistics study programme are governed by the order "Regarding the Description of the Procedure of Supervision of and Consultations on the Lithuanian Language of Final Masters Thesis at the ... University". This advises students on language related matters, the principles of supervision of final thesis language and the procedures for the organisation of the work.

The final thesis is a student's independent research in an applied project or creative work written at the end and the culmination of the student study programme. The thesis should represent the abilities of the student to meet the objectives of the programme. For both first and second cycle programmes the faculty formulate the final thesis topics and approve them

with the head of department prior to publication on an internal website in the first month of the semester when the final thesis is planned. Students alternatively have the option of presenting a topic proposed by social partners, this needs to include an indication of the support that the social partner will provide to the student during the research and presentation of the thesis. Thesis supervisors are appointed by the appropriate heads of departments and those faculty members can supervise up to 10 bachelors students and five Masters students within the same academic year.

All supervising staff are required to meet the threshold requirements in terms of academic qualification and experience. Reviewers for first local programmes must hold the relevant academic and experience profiles and social partners with the appropriate higher education and five years practical work experience may also be reviewers of bachelors final thesis.

University Degree Awarding Commission comprises five competent specialists including researchers and practicing professionals are the competent authority for the award of the degree. At least three members of the commission must have degrees or appropriate pedagogical titles. At least one member of the commission is from a different study field and the chairman of the commission must be a practicing professional who is not a member of staff of the University. The commission for the award of Masters degrees requires 5 to 7 competent specialists in the study field including scientists, practicing professionals and representatives of social partners. One member may be from another researcher and education institution. The commission must include the supervisor and review of the final thesis.

The approved final thesis titles demonstrate a relevance to the study field and clear focus on addressing relevant industry topics and on providing potential solutions to identified business problems. Many of the thesis address issues to do with improving either internal or external business practices, opportunities for further development and market growth, impact assessments, demand opportunities, and so on.

For the second cycle programme the focus of the theses is more on the higher level skill sets required of the business manager including feasibility studies, impact assessments, research and analysis of existing or potential practices, and testing and evaluating business models.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedures and structure for the development and presentation of the final thesis are comprehensive, well considered and clearly meet both the academic requirements as well as complying with official requirements for the business study fields.

The range of thesis presented indicates a strong relationship with the study field with the direct input of social partners. The focus of the thesis topics is based on reviewing, analysing and improving on a wide range of business practices demonstrates the integrated approach to the combination of the programme and a strong relationship with the needs of business.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The consistent and coherent development of the programmes to ensure students competencies are built upon throughout the programmes.
2. Range of learning and teaching delivery methods used to provide an active engagement in the learning process with the students.
3. The significant opportunities for students to personalise and develop their own personal learning plans
4. The development of the final thesis and the clear articulation and relationship with business in developing the thesis topics.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The limited and apparently declining number of students admitted onto the first cycle programmes and the high dropout rate is a matter of significant concern for the future viability of these programmes.
2. The descriptors used in the learning outcomes would benefit from review to ensure that the descriptors and the outcomes are more observable and measurable, and the relationship between the intend outcomes and assessments to measure the performance of those outcomes is more explicitly stated.
3. The lack of definable soft skills being developed within the study field programmes although these were recognised and highly valued by students and social partners they were not explicitly described in the learning outcomes.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

In the comparative research assessment in the fields of management and economics of 2018, VGTU scored sufficiently (3/5) for scientific output, with increasing but still limited international visibility and recognition. Social impact and potential were considered good-to-excellent. VGTU works on increasing their international visibility further through the personal networks of its researchers. The university and school policies on activating and rewarding research are clear and perceived by faculty members as effective. The university and the school set clear objectives for research output of individual faculty, e.g. the minimum production for a full-time research position in Department of Business Management is 2.30, in

department of Logistics and Transport Management the minimum is 1.10. Both departments are already complying with these goals.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the opinion that VGTU's research output and quality are at satisfactory levels. The school has a faculty model with clear incentives and measures for faculty to perform well and to grow further. The international visibility and connections in the school are present, but the panel believes it would be very beneficial for the school to develop further in this respect, notably for reaching its international ambitions.

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

(1) Factual situation

VGTU's research covers a broad range of topics in various business and management fields. In terms of its content, there is a clear connection between VGTU's research areas and the expertise taught in the programmes. The vast majority (>90%) of the teaching staff in the programmes are producing scientific publications, they are actively participating in conferences, research networks, etc. Faculty use their scientific knowledge in their fields for educating students in terms of most recent insights in the area, while also developing students' academic and critical thinking skills.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel finds that the content of VGTU research is well-linked to its programmes. The faculty are quite research active and is able to bring science and practice into the classroom through exercises, readings, guest lectures, internships, and the thesis.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students get involved in VGTU's research activities in a variety of ways. Throughout the 1st cycle programmes students are trained to think from the perspective connecting scientific insights with practical business relevance. In addition, they follow mandatory basic courses such as Philosophy, Mathematics, and Decision making. The 2nd cycle students all follow courses on research methodology, and they practice in writing scientific articles. Students of the 1st and 2nd cycle programmes need to write a research based thesis. In addition, students of all programmes at VGTU are stimulated to participate in an annual conference where students write and present their thesis research. Student attendance is substantial, while also a number of their papers are published in the conference journal.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

According to the panel, in all programmes under review academic and research skills are well embedded in the curricula through a variety of courses and study activities. Students have ample opportunity to connect to the scientific community, but this link may be strengthened further in particular in the Bachelor programmes.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Almost all teachers in the programmes are research active.
2. The research is well-linked to the practice of business.
3. Students can actively connect to the scientific community through the annual conference.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Research can be improved further in terms of international connections and visibility.
2. Link between scientific research and students' experience should be strengthened in particular in the 1st cycle programmes.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The University admits students on full-time, full-time weekend and part-time study pathways. More specifically the routes are as follows: in the first cycle, Business Management (full-time and full-time weekend studies), Business Logistics (full-time), Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics (full-time and part-time studies); and in the second cycle, Business Management (full-time) and Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics (full-time). These routes, similar to the Business Administration MBA, programme have been designed with flexibility in mind, in an attempt to allow students to combine work and study, mitigating student attrition rates.

The admissions procedure is accessible on the University's website and there are clear entry criteria in place and include foreign language competencies and prior academic qualifications. The institution's Public Relations Department, Admissions and Information Centre and faculties all play a role in disseminating information to new and prospective students. In order for applicants to be admitted onto a state funded place they must also meet the associated

competitive score as part of their application. Formally, the Rector admits students to study programmes based on the recommendation of the Director of the Admission and Information Centre, and to further years of study based on the recommendation of the Dean.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution has attempted to introduce flexibility in its study pathways. However, this approach has not been that effective to date as the enrolment and dropout numbers indicate. This may partly be because the part-time studies and full time weekend, often include a heavy semester study load almost equivalent to the standard full-time study, which students find difficult to combine with employment. The panel recognise the need for the equivalence of the full time and part time routes in terms of credit hours and contact, but more flexibility in the total duration of the studies with a variable semester study load may be a consideration to allow students to better manage the study/work balance through to programme completion. When seen in the context of a national decline in the number of school leavers, this study/work balance issue has contributed to volatility and, as evidenced in some programmes, a decline in student recruitment. It has also contributed to high dropout rates, in particular for first cycle studies, which are identified in 3.1.1 and further discussed in 3.3.4.

Between 2018 and 2021 admissions to both tracks of the Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics programme reduced from a high of 47 in 2019 to just 23 enrolments in 2021; together with a reduction in applications. Enrolments to the full-time and full-time weekend Business Management programme have remained low over the same period (50 in 2019 and 24 in 2021). Business Logistics admissions have declined to just 14 as of 2021. Second cycle enrolments, however, were more buoyant with respect to the full-time MSc in Business Management, with admissions increasing from 35 in 2018 to 53 in 2021. Enrolment to the Transport Engineering and Logistics programme, while lower, remained more stable than its first cycle equivalents. The panel recognise the national challenges in the demographic and economic situation in the recruitment of students but also note that these challenges hold true for all institutions. In this increasingly competitive environment the panel found that the challenges faced with respect to falling applications and enrolment were compounded by high dropout rates (discussed under section 3.3.4) that, were they not to be arrested, had the potential to jeopardise the future success and potentially viability of the study field. The panel concluded therefore that the University needed to review its programme portfolio, study pathways, credit load and support arrangements to ensure that it is effectively recruiting and retaining viable cohorts.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a series of regulations in place for ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning. These include the

Description of the Procedure of Crediting Study Results, the Description of the Procedure of the Mobility of Studies and Internships. Where students wish to have credit applied for studies undertaken abroad the Center for International Studies (CIS) oversees the process. Where a prospective student is seeking credit for non-formal and informal learning, they must have secondary education and at least two years related work experience. Such experience is not permitted to exceed 70% of the intended study programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The regulatory framework governing the assessment and application of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application is fit-for-purpose and well understood by students and staff.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

The University promotes academic mobility opportunities to students through the Vice-Dean, International Relations Office and International Relations Coordinator, they are also included in the Introduction to Studies lecture delivered at the start of each year and then on a semesterly basis as well as on notice boards and across social media. The institution has clear application and screening processes in place for students wishing to undertake mobility, this includes mapping of curriculum and learning outcomes, language competency and students' motivation for studying. In addition to study opportunities at other international universities, the institution has a series of internships available to students including with companies such as CERN, PRAXIS, Talentoteca and BLUEBOOK.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students confirm that information about mobility opportunities is clear and accessible. However, engagement with incoming and outgoing mobility is mixed. A growing number of incoming international students have selected the University for incoming periods of mobility (86 in 2021). Yet, a limited number of students participate in outgoing mobility (5 in 2020/21). Similarly, only 4 students undertook an internship in 2020/2021. The panel acknowledges that the pandemic has had an impact on student engagement with academic mobility. However, students' work commitments outside of their programme and other factors also influence their ability to engage in such opportunities and the panel concluded that the institution would benefit from considering further, innovative approaches to mobility (e.g. online and short-term opportunities).

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a broad range of student support measures in place designed to assist students with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal needs. To help new students feel a sense of community first cycle cohorts are assigned a tutor from the faculty and a senior student in a supervisory role. The tutor introduces study procedures, activities performed by the Dean's Office and Departments, students' rights, duties, the procedure for awarding scholarships and introduces the study timetable. The supervisory student assists students to get involved in social activities, outlines work done by the Student Representative Body and initiates meetings to discuss the issues of study quality and community life of the group.

The Academic Support Centre also offers students consultations in areas such as career choice, job search and interview preparation. The University also hosts Career Days, with guest lecturers and employers delivering presentations to students. Employer engagement extends beyond this to simulated interviews and industry seminars.

The University has a Description of the Procedures for Awarding Scholarships and Benefits and Distribution of the Scholarship Fund in place. These procedures govern the criteria and process through which financial awards are made to students. A number of incentive scholarships are also linked to academic performance. There are also scholarships in place to support students owing to illness or death in the family and to participate in cultural and sporting events. The University monitors the funding it awards and has a comprehensive overview of students in receipt of scholarships and bursaries.

Psychological support is available to students within detailed information provided on the website. The University also organises workshops on key issues such as reducing stress, improving communication, time management and effective learning skills. Students wishing to terminate their studies are subject to an exit interview with the Vice-Dean.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Despite the broad range of student support services, which were appreciated by students, the panel found that those processes and procedures were not in themselves sufficiently effective in helping a high proportion of students remain on their programmes. Critically, and in addition to the general downward trend recruitment in the first study cycle programmes, the institution suffers from high dropout rates. For first cycle programmes this ranged from 36% to 39% for cohorts admitted between 2015 and 2017. In the second cycle this was even higher, between 51% and 56% across the same period (albeit with a marginally improving trend compared to the first cycle dropout rates, which also suffered a downward trend of the period). Therefore, despite the range of support measures available to students the first cycle programmes, in particular Business Management and Transport Engineering Economics and Logistics, are suffering from small and dwindling cohorts, with those admitted at significant

risk of dropping out. The panel determined that these represent serious shortcomings which must be addressed in order to ensure the ongoing viability of the study programmes.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

Study information is provided to students in a range of formats. The initial 'Introduction to Studies' lecture provides the basis for such information. This is complimented by training material and guidance on the library, accommodation, careers and psychological support. Student representatives and the formal student body also play a role in cascade relevant information to students. All staff maintain dedicated office hours when students can request consultations. Such consultations may be carried out by phone, online or through email. The University website and virtual learning environment (Moodle) also serve as a key repositories for critical study information. The University gathers feedback from students on an annual basis about the sufficiency of counselling.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel found that the University produces an appropriate volume and range of study information. Students supported this view and confirmed that they find staff and counselling provision to be accessible and supportive.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Comprehensive and support induction arrangements which blend support from faculty and senior students.

(2) Weaknesses:

2. Low, volatile and downward trends in student recruitment on first cycle programmes.
3. High attrition rates on first and second cycle programmes.
4. Ineffective interventions to arrest student attrition rates (more flexible study pathways and student support arrangements).

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

It is evident from the site visit at VGTU that a student-centred approach is applied at the institute, and this is the primary methodology for teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning process reflected in the SER evidences a traditional approach to developing competencies and transferring knowledge and the study methods include many of the traditional approaches. However, the problem highlighted by the SER is that these study methods do not appear to be achieving appropriate levels of retention and this suggests that they need to be reviewed, in the context of the student population of the university and its recruitment policies.

There is a lack of evidence of how the teaching and learning methods are developing in the context of changing dynamics of student lifestyles and the requirements for employment while studying full time and additionally part-time students' requirements. The development of a 'blended learning' environment which is attractive to such students is not outlined in any meaningful way. The study programmes are highly vocational, and this again introduces opportunities for programmes that have more access to the dynamics of the business world and the issue becomes, how can this be accommodated. Another way of putting this is that the learning outcomes are clearly stated and the alignment between these learning outcomes to study programmes is established, but the reality is that these programmes of studies are not as engaging as they could be.

VGTU collects data on students' learning progress and analyses progression at the subject, department, study programme and faculty levels. The university provides data in the education management information system. In the SER (p54), under consideration the following share of students completed first cycle studies in the field of business in total, only 64% of all entrants for 2019, 62% in 2020 and 61% in 2021. In the second cycle analysis, 44% of graduates, in 2019, and 49% in 2020 and in 2021 percentage of those dropouts decreased from 56 to 51%. These are outside expected parameters and suggest that there is a fundamental issue of retention across the study field as identified in 3.1.1. The SER provides background on the reasons for students terminating studies in some useful detail for each programme of study, but the overall impression is that there is a problem with the retention. This highlights that more attention is needed to the development of student engagement and recruitment to the programmes as these figures are not acceptable for the sustainable development of the programmes. The panel see this as a significant shortcoming.

Of course, the pandemic has had an impact in the last two years, but the trend is clear prior to the pandemic, that retention is a major problem or even a crisis for these programmes. Good teaching and learning encourage student engagement and can only occur if all stakeholders are aligned and fundamentally the programme of study is engaging and a positive experience. The problem may be very fundamental, are these programmes aspirational enough or too specialist, do they offer potentially interesting employment opportunities or further academic

career options? There is a need to deconstruct the detailed information on the reasons why students sign up and then terminate studies, to establish where the misalignment exists. New ways of delivering the programmes must be considered that better fit the complex social and financial lives of younger adults who often need additional income during their study periods. Part time studying should be successful for many people who require such arrangements and the opportunity to work and study but this does not seem to be happening on the programmes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Teaching in the modern world of the 21st century is always evolving and the introduction of a black swan event like the pandemic has changed the pace of change and the orientation of higher education globally. The needs of students and their lifestyles, their aspirations and their social, cultural, and economic circumstances must be constantly monitored for significant new realities.

The panel sees a problem and shortcomings with the orientation of the business school first cycle study programmes based on students drop-out rates and how the programmes are recruited for and delivered. The panel feels that the learning outcomes reflect the study programmes in an appropriate manner but unfortunately perhaps this is not inspiring enough for student retention or engagement. Students' numbers graduating fall far short of what should be expected from the recruitment cycle. This needs special attention going forward and a review of all forms of delivery and most importantly a detailed analysis of what type of delivery fits to the profiles of the market for these programmes.

Significantly, it is very evident that the VGTU has an appropriate focus on the Lithuanian economy and the effort to supply appropriate graduates to sustain the economy is a key driver for the study programmes. It may be that the restrictive nature of such programmes as described in the SER need to be broadened so that there is a more aspirational dynamic to their appeal.

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

(1) Factual situation

The university pursues a discrete policy towards socially vulnerable students with special needs creating appropriate environments for such students and the elimination of physical barriers for people with disabilities. Each individual case is assessed, and staff have discretion in adapting assignments and to assess specific needs which is positive. The university holds training for educational support specialists, the purpose of which is to help improve the study conditions for the students with special needs (SER p53).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel believes that there is evidence from the site visit and the SER, that the university pays special attention to the socially vulnerable students and groups in an appropriate way. There is always more that can be considered to support this area but on the evidence of the site visit and the SER, the institution has an appropriate focus.

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

(1) Factual situation

The university follows the principle of collegiality in the context of academic progress and assessment and feedback are clearly critical to this agenda and the monitoring of students' progress is periodically required as a result. Feedback is gathered via systematic student surveys focussed on the quality of teaching and the implementation of study programmes. The university monitors the results of surveys on a regular basis and cascades the information in appropriate faculty meetings and committees. The student voice is used to improve the study progress etc.

This is a very thorough analysis that allows the university to understand the variety of factors that can affect the student's decision to leave the programme. The site visit highlighted the significant impact on students from the pandemic and this combined with difficulties for international students created a situation of increased numbers of students terminating their studies. The report has a great deal of detail about the statistics but the fact is these are high numbers of student dropouts for the programmes under the review. This must be a cause for concern although it is also recognised that this has been an extraordinary period of challenges in higher education with the pandemic changing the whole studying and teaching process. Whilst the data indicated areas of concern these were not addressed in the SER in terms of the recognition of the issue or consideration of potential solutions.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel strongly recommends that high dropout rates for these programmes (data already highlighted) should be reviewed urgently. The data supplied for this area highlights something of a crisis in engagement after the admissions process and equally a lot of wasted effort. Obviously, some of the drop out students will be recycled back to the university potentially at some later date, but such large termination rates indicate a fundamental problem that needs a solution. There is evidence that students who engage with their studies are provided with appropriate feedback and assessments that test their competencies and allow for the development of employable graduates, but they are relatively few from the group that starts out.

There is no doubt that the recruitment process and the marketing of programmes must be reviewed and to ensure that there are no gaps in the information supplied and that material does not raise expectations in an inappropriate manner. It goes without saying that early

intervention is critical, but this will not work if there are fundamental issues at play that prevent the appropriate engagement of students in their studies.

The SER provides interesting details on the reasons for withdrawals and this includes in the first cycle, limited financial opportunities and difficulty in combining work and studies as a main cause, plus changes to study format (remote learning and teaching) etc. Reasons for withdrawals in the second cycle include poor academic progress, changes in study format (remote learning) and study interruptions and a complex range of interrelated issues which highlight the stresses of modern day students studying over the COVID pandemic period etc. All of these factors reflect complex issues for higher education to maintain an innovative agenda for teaching and learning as issues develop.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER has some very useful graphics highlighting the professional preparation of graduates and acquired competencies after graduation. Results from these surveys highlight that most graduates (83%) SER (p57) are satisfied about having graduated from the university. Further, 68% say they have sufficient theoretical knowledge of the profession acquired during their studies and 39% state that the professional skills acquired during their studies are sufficient. This data was collected for the period 2018 -19 and obviously does not reflect the pandemic impacts. It is noted in the site visit, that a lack of practical skills was raised in the discussions as an area of concern, which suggests that there is a gap here to be exploited. As an example, one of the social partners highlighted the fact that he could provide useful training programmes from his company to bridge some of the gaps that had been identified in the practical applications. The panel recognised this is a single exemplar but is indicative of the positive contribution being offered by social partners.

The first cycle employment data presented suggests that 21% of those graduates are in low skill jobs 12 months after graduation. This despite the results of the survey of social partners who have employed graduates from the university show that social partners are satisfied with the decision to employ graduates, with 80% strongly agreeing with that statement and this is positive. The strong relationship with social partners indicates that they are active in graduate recruitment, but that does not help in understanding wider graduate ambitions, other graduate employment destinations and whether or not the programmes are meeting the needs and expectations of the potential employers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panels' view is that there is a scope to improve the interaction between the social partners and the business programmes and there is a willingness for further assistance here which is very positive. However, there is also a need to develop appropriate programmes that

ensure that graduates have broad employment options, and this would encourage retention of students etc. Or in other words there should not be an over-reliance on the orientation of a few social partners for the study programmes outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The teaching staff, students and other stakeholders follow the principles of academic integrity in the code of academic ethics for the university. There are procedures in place for the reporting of student academic fraud which are appropriate for the prevention of this problem. The University has implemented a specialised system for the issues of plagiarism, and this is an area of on-going focus. The university clearly has a tradition of academic integrity and a sense of a community of students with a senior student curator and academic staff disseminating best practice of studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel believes that the relationship between the academic community members appears to be based on the principles of respect and goodwill and impartiality and non-discrimination. Student representative bodies provide guidance to the academic staff and support their students voice which is very positive.

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

(1) Factual situation

In the study period in question there were no appeals in the Business Management and Business Logistics programmes which is very positive. The SER highlights the policies, principles and procedures for such appeals. There were two appeals regarding knowledge assessment procedures from students in the Transport and Engineering faculty which were resolved appropriately.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the view that appropriate policies are in place to ensure that the university is not compromised by this agenda.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Former students from the site visit have a high level of engagement with the university post-graduation.

2. The university tries to educate graduates that are suitable for the Lithuanian economy and there is some evidence of success in this regard.
3. Teaching staff appear engaged and positive about the programmes of studies that they are involved with, and some have graduated from this university.
4. Whilst the SER does a good job of identifying the problems outlined, the lack of evaluation and discussion on solutions suggest an internal understanding of the challenges ahead, but at this stage no specific actions.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Student dropout rates are unacceptable for good practice which highlights a misalignment between study programmes, student aspirations, marketing, and recruitment.
2. A mainly traditional approach to the delivery of teaching and learning and assessment and limited consideration of a more 'hybrid' delivery model that can adapt to students' work and study needs.
3. The first cycle graduate employment position of graduates in low skill roles 12 months post graduation.
4. Whilst VGTU is trying to link the business world directly to the teaching and learning in the classroom with highly vocational study programmes which reflect national economy needs, this in itself may not be enough to sustain the study programmes if they are not attractive to larger numbers of potential students.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

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

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

(1) Factual situation

All members of the academic staff team have the necessary qualifications and experience for the different degrees. 56 out of 66 permanent staff teaching hold a PhD, where the rest have, at least, a master's degree. Non staff teachers are mainly part time lecturers working in other teaching institutions, public institutions and businesses. There is also a significant part of PhD students. The participation of teachers from business is not very significant and the Management Staff recognize the difficulties to recruit this type of people, mainly due to the low salaries, although some recent efforts have been done to reverse this situation. Teachers below 40 years old only represent less than 20% of the total permanent staff. The panel does not see a future risk as there are some PhD students that could be easily be recruited when they finish the thesis. In any case, it is important to note that research productivity levels are unequally distributed in favour of the younger.

The staff have a lot of flexibility to allocate their time into research and teaching. Around 92% of the teachers have published a peer reviewed paper and 50% have participated in research projects. Although the Management Staff are quite happy with the latter figure, there is a need to increase it in the future as research projects can contribute significantly to increase research productivity. It is also interesting to note that although staff mobility is satisfactory and a significant share of this mobility is research oriented, the participation in international proposals is still low. Moreover, in the meeting with social partners, very limited evidence was provided about research collaboration between staff and social partners. As mentioned in Section 3.2, VGTU ranks average (3/5) in scientific production. The number of published papers in WoS impact factor journals seems satisfactory but the proportion of such publications in Business journals is still limited as a high percentage of the scientific production is published in multidisciplinary journals.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel suggests that, although the research activity is satisfactory some efforts should be allocated in the future in three main areas: 1) increase the quality of the research with at least some publications in high ranked journals in the Business Area. Providing a significant weight to such criteria in staff promotion could contribute; 2) increase the participation in research project; the percentage of 50% of the staff participating in research projects is considered low taking into account that over 80% of the permanent staff hold a PhD; and 3) increase the collaboration with social partners in research, which could facilitate in the future their willingness to participate in VGTU second cycle teaching activities.

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

(1) Factual situation

VGTU is one of the leading Lithuanian institutions in terms of internationalisation. In the Business area, the mobility figures are more than satisfactory. Both in terms of incoming and outgoing staff, the SER provides evidence of the international collaboration of VGTU staff with international partners both in teaching and research activities. However, in the latter, this has not been translated to an increase in international research projects (i.e. H2020 projects). Additionally, the number of publications with international authors is still very limited.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Panel suggests that the staff should be more proactive in looking for more effective international mobility for research, looking for outstanding researchers who could increase the participation in sound international projects and the collaboration in joint scientific

publications. Moreover, it could contribute to improve the engagement of master students in their research projects.

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

(1) Factual situation

VGTU provides a significant range of facilities to staff to develop teaching tasks, some of them which are compulsory, which contributes to a good update and upgrade of the staff teaching skills. Moreover, VGTU has reacted well to changes in teaching conditions due to COVID. The panel had the opportunity to see some examples about how the Moodle Platform is being used and was positively impressed. The panel also positively assesses the flexibility about the use of teaching methods which fits the different learnings outcomes associated to each topic as well as on the use of evaluation criteria. Students were also satisfied about both issues and about the feedback provided by the staff after exams.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel considers that VGTU is doing well in terms of updating and upgrading staff teaching skills. Moreover, for new teachers there exists an adequate inception course about such skills. In the context of what is happening in most Business Faculties across Europe, and taking also into account the discussions held during our visit, VGTU should provide some training courses addressed to increase the staff research skills in the following areas: 1) analytical tools in business (econometrics, operations research,...) to increase the scientific productivity and value of those teachers with lower performance; 2) coaching activities to stimulate joint research among staff working in different areas (multidisciplinary); and 3) proactive activities to increase international research collaboration as well as with social partners.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

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

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Somewhat limited use of analytical tools in business research.
2. International mobility of staff not focussed on research.
3. Need for the implementation of training course to update/upgrade research skill.
4. Need for increasing research contracts with social partners.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

VGTU has a modern campus with needed infrastructure and resources to ensure a smooth learning process for the study programmes evaluated. Business field studies are organised in the Faculty of Business Management and Faculty of Transport Engineering. Auditoriums are equipped with modern technologies, such as interactive boards. 95 percent of the University's premises area is covered by WiFi.

Also, what can be noted is that the University closely cooperates with business partners while upgrading its resources. For instance, FinanceLab for students and the Bloomberg terminal were installed, which was noted as useful by students.

To ensure a modern study process, students can access a self-service portal that provides all organisational information on studies, allowing to ensure a smooth learning process both on site and online.

The campus has all required infrastructure for students with special needs.

Students and staff have access to modern working spaces that suit both – group and individual work, research.

VGTU has a strong library with access to the latest material – both offline and online. It has also ensured access to a number of databases needed in the studies process.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The overall impression of the suitability and adequacy of the resources allocated to ensure effective learning processes is positive. No negative indications during the meetings with the stakeholders were identified. The University should keep high standards in the future as well and seek for continuous improvement in order to ensure that needed resources to carry out field studies are in place.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a plan to constantly update its resources (software and infrastructure) needed in the study process. It also plans to expand study software services using cloud technologies and adding new software every year.

In order to improve accessibility of literature recommended in the studies, the library has created an electronic services platform where students from all programmes can easily find relevant information. Also, the plan for periodically upgrading Library material is foreseen.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

From the material provided, the conclusion can be drawn that the University has a clear plan and priorities in place to continuously upgrade its resources.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Modern campus with periodically upgraded infrastructure and technical resources to fit the changing needs.
2. Software needed for research and distant learning is ensured and periodically updated.
3. Adequate periodically updated library resources.

(2) Weaknesses: None was identified during the evaluation process.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a system of internal quality assurance that includes internal and external evaluation with the participation of faculty, students and social partners representing the wider business community. The internal systems are based on the European High Education Quality Insurance Regulations and Guidelines and is implemented through a university wide processes, details which are contained in the Descriptions of the Internal Study Quality.

Stages of the process include preparation, approval, monitoring and evaluation of study programmes, evaluation of student achievements and regular feedback from teaching staff and social partners. The processes are very well documented in a range of university wide regulations, processes and procedures.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel has confidence that the internal quality assurance processes are both very well documented and clearly implemented across all of the programmes within the study field.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students on both the first and second cycle programmes of study as well as the faculty staff, graduates, alumni and employers have the opportunity to actively participate in the quality assurance processes. The stakeholder involvement is at a number of levels within the process with the main contributions taking place in the study programme committees, but also with representation at the Faculty committees level. The Study Programme Committees have the responsibility for ensuring the appropriate participation as well as organising appropriate surveys of all of the stakeholders on the quality of the study programmes and opportunities for quality enhancement. The results of the surveys are published within the department and support the opportunity for wider discussion between the stakeholders. The Study Programme Committees where shortcomings are identified are required to initiate the appropriate remedial measures.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The involvement of the external and internal stakeholders is commensurate with the requirements of the study field and considered to be entirely in accordance with good practice in higher education.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University website publishes the detail of the programmes of study and these are also available on the universities internal information system. The study programmes aims and objectives are available on a number of open information systems including the website of the Lithuanian Higher Institutions Association for Organising Joint Admissions with links to the University website.

The range of surveys undertaken appears extensive and includes staff, students administrative staff, exchange students, withdrawals and social partners in employers. The analysis and reporting happens at the study programme as well as at the University and in meetings with students.

Student surveys about teaching performance provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their own performance as well as to encourage the sharing of good practice and the encouragement to attend academic pedagogical development opportunities.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel noted the detailed opportunities for the collection of appropriate data, analysis and its use in supporting the improvement of the programmes across a wide range of stakeholders.

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

(1) Factual situation

Student surveys are undertaken after consultation with the student representative body to determine the best way to be able to gain student views. When surveys are initiated students have two weeks to complete the online surveys. The surveys take the form statements against which the students are asked to rate their responses from; I agree to disagree or I can't answer this question. Typical questions could include; the subject was linked to a profession and provided examples of application of the theory, the main material was presented in a consistent understandable manner, learning loading pace of study was adequate to masking material and complete the assignments. The surveys are analysed and teaching staff are presented with the results for further evaluation and to set their own goals for further development in the light of those results and to record that in the departmental improvement plan.

The results of the student surveys presented in the SER indicate a positive opinion about the subject. It was noted that the first circle students tend to be more positive in their opinions about the subjects than those on second cycle programmes with a number of responses being in the neither agree or disagree or I can't answer the question.

The SER noted that there needs to be more innovative ways of capturing feedback as the response rate on surveys gradually diminishes over time and students are not that keen to complete so many surveys.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Whilst there is good evidence of the systems in place to evaluate the opinions of students on the quality of the programmes of study it is recognised that Survey fatigue is a present problem and that alternative and more innovative ways need to be considered to ensure an appropriate level of student response.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The well developed and implemented range of quality assurance and improvement processes and procedures.
2. The consultation processes involving all of the stakeholders in the quality assurance process and the appropriate feedback especially to the students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The danger of survey fatigue especially among students needs to be addressed with alternative and more innovative mechanisms being developed to obtain student feedback and views.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the high dropout rate of admitted students specifically on first cycle programmes is kept under continuous review. 2. Given that the major reason stated by students on voluntarily withdrawing from study is the difficulties of combining work and study, consideration should be given to reviewing the student workload, methods of delivery, and the curriculum to develop innovative hybrid approaches that would be less constraining on the students ability to work and study. 3. That the structure and specialisations offered be kept under review to ensure that these are attractive to potential students as well as meeting the needs of the labour market. 4. That the learning outcomes are reviewed to consider the use of specific and measurable verbs, avoiding those that are unobservable or unmeasurable and thus cannot be objectively assessed. 5. To develop and describe the soft skills being developed in terms of graduate outcomes.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That further development of the research agenda in terms of international connections and the visibility of those connections would be of benefit. 2. That a more explicit link be demonstrated between the research undertaken and how that better informs the curriculum and the student experience especially in the first cycle programmes.
Student admission and support	<p>That a comprehensive review is undertaken to better understand the decline in first cycle applications, the high levels of withdrawals and the role of support interventions that could mitigate the voluntary withdrawals.</p>

<p>Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the relationship between marketing, student recruitment based on student aspirations, and the study programmes, be reviewed to better understand potential misalignment that may be contributing to the high dropout rate. 2. That the teaching and learning delivery be reviewed to better understand and accommodate the student cohorts lifestyles and the pressures of combining work and study. 3. To consider development of hybrid delivery options and concepts of blended learning with more flexible methods of attendance and assessment. 4. To develop a more longitudinal approach to tracking graduate employment to be able to better understand why a high percentage of students are identified in low skill jobs 12 months post graduation.
<p>Teaching staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the apparent limited use of analytical tools in business research is addressed. 2. That the relationship between research and international mobility becomes a focus for research projects and activities. 3. That continuous professional development of research staff is maintained to update and upgrade those research skills. 4. That the opportunities for developing research contracts with social partners are further explored to secure greater synergy and demonstrating the value of research to social partners.
<p>Learning facilities and resources</p>	<p>That the resources are maintained to the appropriate standard to support the development of the study field.</p>
<p>Study quality management and public information</p>	<p>That innovative and alternative approaches to student surveys are considered in order to overcome the apparent survey fatigue being experienced among students and other stakeholders.</p>

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Business* at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University:

The Self evaluation report provided a comprehensive review and evaluation and the level of detail in the analysis that is commendable. The evidence presented indicated the focus for the development of the study field in meeting the identified needs of the labour markets at both national and international level.

The University has very well developed procedures and systems in place to support the development of the study field programmes, their administration, and quality improvement and enhancement.

The common tensions between research engagement and teaching were noted but it is clear that the staff are engaged and have the opportunity and flexibility to be able to take responsibility for their subjects, research and activities. There are clear opportunities for professional development including that of international mobility, but as with many institutions issues of recruitment and progression for staff are recognised.

The higher education environment has and continues to change rapidly both through the pandemic and through demographic and social change. This has already influenced methods of communication and engagement with students, but further adoption of hybrid approaches to learning and teaching may well overcome some of the challenges being faced by students within the study field as well as at the institutional level.

The changes in students' lifestyles and expectations provide a number of challenges including declining levels of recruitment and retention. The high dropout rates are a matter of significant concern and identified shortcomings in the study field that should be addressed as a matter of some urgency. This should be seen in the context the wider national demographic and economic position and the evident pressures on students when combining work and study.

The range and nature of the technical specialisations could be somewhat restrictive especially in the context of low completion rates. A wider more generalist approach in the early stages of the programmes may provide a more attractive offer to potential students.

The ambition as a technical University is commendable but it is recognised that the strength of the global competitive environment within the business study fields will continue to be a challenge. A clarity of vision for the business study fields of where and how the study area will position itself into the future may be helpful.

This could be built on the current strengths including the; links with business, the recognised research profile, the experienced staff and the levels of graduate employment post graduation, but may need an innovative approach to considering how this could be taken forward into the rapidly changing business environment.

Developing a vision and strategy for the business studies field could present opportunities for joint initiatives and awards, micro credentials or developments in executive education and innovative methods of learning and teaching delivery. Such approaches could include a full form of engagement with industry in the delivery of the programmes given the stature of the institution and its strong relationships with business. Such ideas incorporating work-based learning as a fundamental component of the study field could be a major development that would resonate with potential students and employers.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Peter A. Jones