



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of Media Art**  
at Vytautas Magnus University

**Expert panel:**

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2. **Prof. Dr. Peeter Linnap**, *academic*;
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## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b><i>New Media Art</i></b>
State code	6121PX034
Type of studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time 4 years
Credit volume	240 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	17 August 2009

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions 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 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 the 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 the 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 SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on November 24, 2022.

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter Purg (Slovenia)**, *panel chair*, Dean of School of Humanities at University of Nova Gorica; associate professor at the School of Arts, University of Nova Gorica; President of the Slovenian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

**Prof. Dr. Peeter Linnap (Estonia)**, *panel member – academic*, Head of Photography Department at Pallas University of Applied Sciences.

**Ms. Viktorija Šiaulytė (Lithuania)**, *representative of social partners*, producer; curator at Rupert art centre; affiliate at The Art, Culture, and Technology programme at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Ms. Andrea Paricio Henares (Spain)**, *student's representative*, second-year Master's student of study programme Multimedia and Visual Arts at The Polytechnic University of Valencia; member of the ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool.

## 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. The self-evaluation report and annexes, as well as examples of final theses and descriptions of study subjects have been provided by the HEI before the site visit.

## 1.4. BACKGROUND OF MEDIA ART FIELD STUDIES AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter referred to as VMU) was established in 1922 and re-established in 1989. The University provides degree studies of all three cycles – Bachelor, Master and PhD studies, which cover a broad spectrum of study fields ranging from humanities, social sciences and arts to the fundamental sciences such as environmental science and biotechnology. Alongside a Bachelor's degree diploma in their major speciality, VMU graduates can also get a certificate of minor studies and later apply for a Master's degree programme in another study field. VMU works with many universities and scientists around the globe,

implementing projects, enhancing student and staff exchanges, and improving the study and research system. VMU is managed by two collegial bodies, the Council and the Senate, and the separate managerial body of the Rector. There are 14 academic divisions at VMU, Faculty of Arts being one of them. The New Media Art programme is based at the Faculty of Arts (hereinafter, FA). The study programme in the field of media art is administered by the Department of Contemporary Arts of the Faculty of Arts. The department was founded in 2010 and currently administers study programmes in the field of media art and in the field of music (music production).

Teachers of the programme participate in the project "Transform 4 Europe". The main social partners of the Department of Contemporary Arts of the New Media Art study programme are Kaunas Branch of the Lithuanian Artists' Union, "Meno Parkas" Gallery, Kaunas Branch of the Lithuanian Photographers' Union and Kaunas Photography Gallery, Kaunas Film Bureau, "Kaunas 2022", Kaunas Artists' House, Kaunas National Theatre of Drama, Kaunas State Puppet Theatre, Kaunas City Chamber Theatre, and Kaunas Multinational Cultural Centre. A lot of other international partnerships come into the programme through the artistic practices of the programme's teachers and staff.

The New Media Art study programme has been evaluated by the international expert committee in 2015 and was accredited for the maximum period.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

**Media Art** study field and **first cycle** at Vytautas Magnus University is given a **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	5
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	5
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
<b>Total:</b>		30

\*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)*

The aims and outcomes of the reviewed programme are well aligned with the needs of the society as indicated by the data introduced in the SER and confirmed in discussions with the social partners. The realm of new media art across the employment sector is absorbing the graduates quite well, offering them a range of possible study-field-relevant career pathways immediately after graduation, which is currently further stimulated by the trends and legacies of the Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. The value of an artistic study programme in the context of a university is well substantiated and provides a special combination of opportunities for a transdisciplinary approach to the needs of society and the labour market, as the graduates of the programme benefit from the possibility to expand their education with minor studies. Professional activity areas of the specialists trained under the study field analysed are clearly indicated.

*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*

VMU is successfully developing its role and image of a community-based research, art and study institution which pursues the mission of the University of Lithuania, established in Kaunas in 1922, creating liberal learning conditions for an individual, developing partnerships, taking an active part in the life of Kaunas, advances the future of Lithuania, and contributes to the global cultural and academic development.

The aim and the expected learning outcomes of the programme are in line with the University's mission, objectives and strategy, as since 2009 the University has been running media art



studies. The Department of Contemporary Arts is quite dominant among others at the HEI, within the arts and as a whole, upholding the tradition of media art development and training of media art specialists, while the university's creative community actively participates in the artistic life of the region, the country, the city, and the district.

The aims stated in the University's mission are closely linked to the purpose of the study programme and the learning outcomes, these aims and outcomes are well aligned with the HEI's mission, objectives and activities, and this programme ranks as the most visible and fast-developing among the artistic programmes of the institution. The outcomes are theoretical (knowledge-based), practical skills and general cultural knowledge (SER, p. 7). Special abilities (to master recent technology, to conduct research etc.), and social skills (communicating his/her creative ideas to art and media professionals, commissioners, critics and the general public) are among the most important of the outcomes.

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

This New Media Art programme of the VMU is fully compliant with the legal requirements applicable to this quality review. The structure of the programme complies with the general requirements for studies and the requirements of the description of the media art field of studies (see SER, Annex 1 - the study plan of the programme).

**Table No. 1.** New Media Art study programme and its compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes (bachelor).

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programme</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	184 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	56 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of	ca 40 %

	learning	
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	ca 60 %

The programme complies with the General Requirements for the Provision of Studies in terms of its scope, the logic of the individual groups of study courses and the time allocated to the achievement of the different learning outcomes. The structure of the New Media Art programme is traditional – 240 credits (4 years). This number of credits is optimal because the programme is based at a university and is not solely focused on the training of applied professionals but should also provide graduates of the programme with the opportunity to obtain an appropriate specialised and broad university education.

Like all the first cycle study programmes at the University, the New Media Art programme in the field of media art studies consists of 1) general university studies (compulsory and optional study courses in Groups A and B); 2) study courses in the field of study (Group C). Group A comprises the courses of specific study fields and foreign languages. This group consists of 4 areas and one subgroup of foreign languages: Biomedical, Physical and Technological Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Arts, and Foreign Languages. VMU degree students must choose at least one study subject from all four sub-groups of study fields (at least 16 credits) without having to choose the subject from the group of their own study programme. Group B is comprised of alternative introductory courses of study fields, taught in study programmes other than what the student is studying.

The New Media Art study programme fully meets the requirements set out in VMU Study Regulations. The programme is structured in such a way that students study a common set of university study courses (some of which they can choose to personalise their studies). These study courses account for 56 ECTS. The programme consists of no more than 6 study courses per semester (the volume of each study course to be studied is not less than 4 ECTS).

According to SER (p. 12), the aim, learning outcomes, structure and content of the programme are in line with the qualification of a Bachelor’s degree, the full-time form of study, the academic and professional requirements, and the scope of the programme are sufficient to achieve the intended learning outcomes (ibidem). A solid curricular base for developing a corresponding master-level programme is also provided with the current BA-level curriculum.

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

The outcomes of the study programme are structured in a way to achieve the aims of the programme. The compatibility of study methods used in media art studies is one of the key elements to successful achievement of the learning outcomes, and the fulfilment of the aim of the study programme in the shortest, most effective ways. The appropriate methods provide students with skills and knowledge in the shortest time. The management and the teachers are very well aware of this architecture: this realm is well aligned with the institutional framework, including the strategy and the vision. The relevant Descriptor was considered and the staff was included in designing and updating these; they consider it to be useful (SER, p. 13). The practical competencies are well aligned with the standard documents and confirmed to be relevant by the social partners, especially the practical placements are selected well and implemented efficiently. Theoretical, critical (and also even curatorial) competencies are fairly well and consistently supported by the programme and its implementation. These competencies are recognised as relevant both by students and employers.

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

The programme establishes a total of 5 major groups of competencies to be achieved by students, which are subdivided into 11 total sub-competencies described in Annex 5. Annex 3 shows an example of the *links between the learning outcomes of the study programme and the learning outcomes, study methods and assessment methods of the study courses*, which appear consistent and holistic. The main objective of the programme is to focus on the acquisition of practical skills so that graduates are professionals in the field of media arts with a strong focus on interdisciplinarity within the individualisation of learning. All these objectives are applied in the curriculum and in the approach of modules and subjects.

Good feedback from alumni, consistent methodology and good data quality (surveys + focus groups) are particular indications of the quality of this programme. The programme management has reacted quite consistently to all the emerging needs of adjustments, also during the covid period. They changed curricula recently in terms of creating projects, and

courses related to production management, which was done in response to the actual production environment needs. Managerial and production skills were introduced also transversally to some other courses. The creative folder or portfolio additions worked well and the student community feels very well supported by some of the teachers. Lectures specifically for self-presentation and career development of students are organised by younger staff.

The broad knowledge and multidisciplinary that stems from the university's liberal arts profile are positively recognised by employers, who would wish to be more deeply involved in developing the course and defining the aims and outcomes. The alumni feedback system, however, is well in place. Employers also suggest a more focussed development of group work and sharing of responsibilities, as well as true multi-disciplinary collaboration as a contemporary need of the workplace to be reflected in the programme.

### *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 opportunity for students to customise their own curriculum is one of the big stakes of the VMU in general and the New Media Art programme in particular. From the first semester, students can choose general elective subjects of the university (a total of 56 ECTS) and the ones of the study field (16 ECTS), as it was mentioned above. In addition, students can freely obtain elective minor studies following the rules of the *VMU Description of Procedure for Organization of Minor Studies*. Furthermore, VMU provides students with the possibility to study according to an individual study schedule in order to meet specific learning needs following the *Description of the Procedure for Providing the Individual Study Schedule*. Extracurricular in terms of implementation, but still included in the curriculum, students have the possibility to adapt the projects they work on in the subjects to their personal and professional preferences, as well as choosing the subject and design of their final thesis.

The mixed graduate profile of the producer, writer and creator is well supported with major and minor systems and a fairly wide selection of electives for the programme, on which communication, psychology and informatics are the common combinations. The extra credits are not limited, and not charged additionally. Practical placements are a welcomed addition to the in-school curriculum, however, they still do not sufficiently open students to the outside world of employment. More international and out-of-school experience could be beneficial,

especially, if coded into the curriculum more deeply. Self-guided career development could be better supported since the initiative of the students themselves in activities outside of the HEI activities depends more on individual initiative.

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

Principles of final thesis preparation, committee formation and defence are described sufficiently. There is good granular sensitivity in grading, especially in final theses, where grades 6 and 7 are not uncommon. The final theses produced in the study programme during the assessment period present a good range of different media, such as photography, short film, videography, audiovisual installation, illustration or mobile applications and correspond to the range of new media art practices outside school.

Students are aware of the level of the thesis' practical and theoretical competencies, and are most eager to continue to the Master's level; most of them would choose the same institution if it would offer a Master's programme option in the field of media art. The support for the thesis work could start a bit earlier than in the last study year. Portfolio work could be better supported in terms of coordination on the programme level, and by individual mentors linked to the final thesis and project work.

Employers are involved in the assessment of the final works of students which they are proud of. They are well aware of the graduates' exit competencies.

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

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Good study programme personalisation possibilities through the major/minor programme options and a wide set of electives offered, also from across other academic fields at VMU.
2. A solid curricular base to develop a corresponding MA-level study programme which is already a clear strategy of the institution, and is supported by students, staff and employers. This shows the good strategic thinking of the school.

3. Practical competencies and mentoring support of their development inside the programme (and inside the school), also some broader soft skills prove relevant in out-of-school practice (as confirmed by the employers).

***(2) No weaknesses are identified, however, the following recommendations for further advancement are:***

1. The programme could stimulate more out-of-school, especially international experiences that should be recognised within the programme's curriculum, possibly integrated across relevant courses.
2. The backing for the thesis project might commence slightly ahead of schedule and the portfolio work could benefit from improved coordination on the programme level and through individual mentors who are connected to the final thesis and project work.

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

#### ***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***

The programme delivers a sufficient amount and a good variety of artistic activities, supported by a proper and relevant theoretical (historical and critical) set of contents. The current status of media art practice and trends are predominantly well reflected in the programme, with a slight need for updating in the field of emerging electronic arts such as DIY electronic practices and coding, bioart, investigative arts, robotics, AI etc. According to the results of the 2019 expert evaluation of Lithuanian universities' works in the field of fine arts, VMU ranked 3rd, only behind Vilnius Academy of Arts and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, which specialises in art studies, while in 2018 VMU ranked 2nd among Lithuanian universities and colleges, only behind Vilnius Academy of Arts (SER, p. 19).

Considering the landscape of new media and photography education in Lithuania, it could be useful to divide and synchronise the research fields and subject matters between various Lithuanian HEIs. VMU's potential strength in this landscape is the wide range of both disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching staff available from the other departments of the big university. On the other hand, there is a possible danger of losing its own identity as a result of

being surrounded by many other and often very different departments with different aims. However, as artistic activities are at stake, one could surely mention that those activities are often carried out in continuous collaboration with external partners (Artist Union, galleries and museums), also with partners abroad such as the Croatian Union of Artists etc. (SER, p. 21).

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

New Media Art study programme is systematically updated with its technical and digital infrastructure. There is a lack of specific criteria for how to strengthen teaching staff's credentials in terms of scientific and artistic developments in the field of new media art. The programme might benefit from more consistent participation of international guest lecturers as well. The teaching staff's experiences and participation in artistic and academic events are not entirely trickling down to the study process as students rarely get opportunities to accompany teaching staff to these events. As a recommendation, more tight and mutual relationships with external partners with the ability to involve state-of-the-art technologies in the art could be introduced. Among such institutions, one could find useful partners in other departments of VMU and technical universities, also VR-Centers, advertising companies, technology-orientated entertainment centres or other experimental technology-based enterprises. Among these, the new National Science & Innovation Centre (Science island) of Kaunas is a potential partner that could be useful.

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

Students of the New Media Art programme have several opportunities to engage in artistic activities. According to SER, these various forms can be partaking in ongoing artistic activities and exhibiting their works frequently in permanent VMU Art Gallery "101", among others. They can also participate in interdisciplinary arts and science events at the University or take part in artistic activities and projects run by social partners. Finally, VMU students organise annual exhibitions of their final Bachelor theses and some courses. Although SER states that "There are currently no areas for improvement in this area, as all available opportunities are being optimally exploited," it could be recommended to do workshops or to get involved in assisting activities in museum pedagogy and many more. In reality, those interdisciplinary possibilities

could be integrated in a more consistent and deeply combined way, also supported by the curriculum. Moreover, solely theoretical final theses do not exist, which is due to the requirements for the study programmes in the field of art, however, this could be considered as further improvement aspect if the approach towards the regulation of art studies changes on the national level. Whenever this might positively affect academic quality, teachers could try to work in a more synchronised way, connecting their courses in terms of projects, etc. The panel would support further improvement in the area by following strategies.

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

#### ***Strengths:***

1. Lot of possibilities to mix various scientific and artistic ideas and methods (thanks to the university environment). The possibility to have a diploma plus a minor additional specialisation.
2. Students proactively seek to have solid theoretical grounds for their diploma works which is notable for a BA-level programme.

#### ***Weaknesses:***

1. Interdisciplinary possibilities are not integrated in a consistent way. For further integration of interdisciplinarity, the possibility of more formal support for this process to consolidate the potential could be explored.

## **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***

Applicants for the New Media Art study programme must participate in the admissions selection procedure. Applicants must have a Certificate of Secondary Education. Admission to the programme is based on the admission rules approved by the Rector of VMU. These rules are drawn up on the basis of the description of the procedure for drawing up the competitive queue



of applicants for the state-funded first cycle and integral studies and applicants for study grants approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and the procedure laid down in the documents of the General Admission Procedure of Lithuanian Higher Educational Institutions for First Cycle and Integral Studies (LAMA BPO).

The conditions and rules of the entrance exams are published on the websites of LAMA BPO, VMU and VMU Faculty of Arts. Admission rules, criteria and the entrance exam are also presented and explained in interviews with prospective students at schools, at study fairs, at various events for schoolchildren presenting study opportunities, and at counselling sessions and preparatory courses specially organised for applicants. The competition score for admission to study programmes in the Media art field consists solely of the marks obtained in the entrance exam.

The competition score for applicants to the New Media Art programme is based on a 100-point marking system and consists of the scores of the four parts of the entrance exam: the photography of the assigned topic (25 points), the interpretation of the assigned topic in the frame (25 points), the motivational interview (20 points), and the creative works folder/portfolio (30 points). The competition score is calculated according to the table (SER, Table 5). In conclusion, the entrance conditions, content and procedures are rather typical and worked through in practice. The publicity for the programmes is sufficient, given the case that they have enough applications to fill the places (state-funded and non-funded). According to SER (p. 28), for the state-funded student places this competition is on average 7.7-8.75 students per place and for the non-state-funded places the same indicator is 6.7-7.7 candidates per student place. The panel suggests that this programme has a good advertising and marketing system.

### *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 procedures of recognition of formal and informal qualifications are clearly described. The HEI has the right to carry out academic recognition since 2017. Foreign qualifications are recognised centrally, partial learning outcomes are regulated VMU Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Learning Outcomes. The cases of academic recognition in relation to the New Media Art programme during the assessment period are provided.

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

The VMU provides many different forms of academic mobility placements, both at Erasmus+ level and outside the EU. These opportunities are usually accompanied by a grant to ensure equal opportunities. SER data shows low overall participation of the students of the programme in this type of mobility, however, during the interviews, it has been found that the interest of the current students in having this type of experience is high and the low results of this period are due to the situation of the COVID. However, in any case, the promotion of such activities should be increased to encourage participation. SER also mentions, as a possible difficulty, the coordination of individual curricula. However, it is the duty of the institution to ensure academic participation in these activities. It is therefore recommended to encourage, to the extent possible, academic mobility opportunities whose bureaucratic processes are clear and simple for the student.

### *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*

Students in the field of Media Art receive extensive academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support: 1) *Academic support* covers several aspects including easily accessible and relevant information on the studies, data that helps students to choose their study courses according to their individual study needs and preferences. Also, there is support for student organisations to carry out their activities and not drop out. 2) *Social support* is coordinated by VMU Student Affairs Department and the VMU Student's Representative Council. 3) *Financial support* consists of various scholarships and grants, among other forms. 4) *Psychological support* comes from the VMU Psychology Clinics, which offer individual meetings that can be handled online. 5) *Personal support* for career modelling is offered by the VMU Career Centre with the possibility of choosing a minor study programme.

Also, students with disabilities receive specialised support from a disability coordinator. It is noted that there are several students with disabilities studying this programme and the adaptations work correctly.

To sum up, the various forms of support provided to the students of the New Media Art study programme is sufficient and effective.

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

The programme has various ways of providing information and advice to students. Especially first-year students who have an introductory event to the degree during which they communicate essential and general information. This information is also accessible through the student's website and *Moodle*, from which they can make specific queries. Information channels also exist informally at VMU and the Council of Representatives levels. This is completed by management with meetings of the Study Programme Committee (hereafter SPC; which include a student representative), a formal meeting with students once per semester with the Vice Dean and the Head of the Department and informal meeting during the semester between the students and the Head of the Study Programme. Students are further represented through representatives of each year. Students were also involved in the preparation of the Self-evaluation report. Students in the programme participate in the student council system.

Students are extremely pleased with this area of assessment, therefore, the panel suggests that this area should be granted a score of 5 ("excellent").

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

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

1. Good opportunities for academic mobility for students. The programme offers a large number of different options for academic exchange that are being used increasingly again by students after the covid period. Students show a good knowledge of this program and the subject recognition system works correctly.
2. Strong student support. During their studies, students are offered a wide range of academic, financial, social, psychological and other types of support.
3. Clear and formal holistic student counselling. The programme has a clear structure for providing the necessary information to the students throughout their studies.
4. Strong and clear student representation system. Students are represented in decision-making bodies in both horizontal and vertical coordination.

##### *(2) No weaknesses are identified, however, the following recommendations are:*

1. It is the responsibility of the institution to guarantee involvement in academic mobility, hence, it is recommended to simplify bureaucratic processes as much as possible to allow for smooth academic opportunities for students.

### **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*

According to the formal statement in the SER (p. 37): “The content, objectives, expected results, assessment methods, forms and methods of the study course are discussed during lectures together with students at the beginning of the semester.” As students in the New Media Art study programme work in small groups, teachers have the opportunity to take into account the individual needs of each student, and most of the study courses in the study programme are devoted to meeting such needs (e.g., Creative Project, Personal and Media Project Management and other courses focus on personal creative projects). With the help of a supervisor, each student can develop individual creative inclinations by choosing the topic of the Bachelor thesis that is relevant to him/her and can acquire the desired practical skills by freely choosing the place of the qualifying practice.

The SER describes well and categorises the different types of methods of study, which are subdivided into *methods promoting artistic self-expression, active methods, interactive methods, and traditional methods*. They also use other forms of works such as creative experiments and projects, attending virtual and traditional exhibitions, and analysis of works of art. Generally, the methods used, as well as the content and assessment methods are discussed together with students at the beginning of the semester. Assessment methods are usually diverse in each subject, and no more than 70% of the final assessment method can be passed, so the assessment form is cumulative.

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

Support for students with special needs is available. Socially vulnerable groups have access to the programme of study, however, there was no evidence of positive anti-discrimination activities or any proactivity to attract such groups to enrol. VMU, however, on the general level of HEI and not specific to the department, has a clear accessibility policy, as well as measures to support students from socially and economically vulnerable groups.

### *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 monitoring of student learning progress is currently regulated by VMU Study Regulations and the Description of Procedure of Monitoring of Student Learning Achievements and Providing Assistance to Students of VMU (SER, p. 40). Monitoring of learning achievements and delivery of assistance covers interrelated processes, which include the *analysis of student enrolment in studies* and learning situation in study courses; an analysis of the reasons for the students' nonparticipation in interim and final examinations; analysis of intermediate and final evaluation of students and finally *implementation of preventive measures* to manage student failure and improvement of the organisation of studies.

University claims to do monitoring of learning achievements on a regular basis. During the semester, the learning achievements of students of the New Media Art programme are monitored by teachers of the study modules. Feedback is provided to students systematically: after intermediate assessments and exams, students are introduced to evaluations and comments on how they succeeded in completing the tasks. Teachers provide feedback to students using tools in the *Moodle* environment; assignments during lectures and seminars are discussed immediately. Generally positive is the feedback of social partners regarding the creative and critical skills of the graduates of the study programme.

Students are satisfied with the feedback methods they get on their progress during the study progress. The feedback process between the students and teaching staff functions well in terms of quantitative methods. However, during the site visit, some students expressed their concerns regarding qualitative or informal feedback on the study progress in terms of quantitative

grading (feedback about assessment), as well as expressed a need for more clarity in terms of expected course outcomes.

In conclusion, both the SER and on-site visit indicate that indeed the monitoring of the student study process and feedback are provided systematically. Potential improvements could be made in providing qualitative feedback in more detail and more frequently.

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

To ensure the quality of studies and provide career-planning services that meet the needs of the students, the University monitors the employment and career of VMU graduates. The main sources of information are as follows: VMU alumni survey, statistics provided by the Employment Service and information provided by the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA). On the basis of the cooperation agreement with the Employment Service, signed on the 6th of November in 2019, VMU will get statistical information about VMU graduates registered for a job search. Information will be provided twice per year, i.e., 12 months and 15 months after their graduation. Information on the employment of graduates 12 months after their graduation is provided below from the following sources: 1) Data provided by STRATA; 2) Data provided by the career portal *karjera.lt*; 3) VMU graduate survey data. The latter's output is briefly collected in SER (p. 43) and lists the most frequent professions of the VMU new media graduates. Among others, these are creative industries, advertising agencies, development companies etc. and undertaking the second cycle studies in the field of Media Art in Lithuania and abroad (*ibidem*). Further opportunities to continue studies are known for students who continue studies in the second-cycle studies.

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

The HEI provides some tools for addressing complaints from the student body, however, the processes of this kind seem to be fairly informal and the procedures regarding the handling of potential specific cases of harassment or mobbing, or how to reach out for independent support were not known precisely, as people usually referred to getting help from people positioned higher in the administrative hierarchy which might be problematic in some cases. Psychological counselling opportunities are known and used by the students. The HEI has a well-developed

infrastructure for anti-harassment training, however, during the site visit those opportunities appeared to be not too well known to the teaching staff and student body of the department.

#### *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*

The procedures for appeals and complaints are established according to the general regulations of the VMU (*VMU Regulations for Submission of Appeals Regarding Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and/or Assessment Procedure*). The process of submission and examination of appeals are described well and follows the general procedures of the HEI. In addition, the appeal committee has a student representative proposed by the student council to ensure the integrity of the final decision and guarantee the rights of the appellant. These seem to be resolved by informal methods, but it is recommended a method to file and process such complaints formalised and anonymised or, if it already exists, advertised among students.

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

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

1. Study forms and methods, teaching/learning methods, and performance assessment methods encourage students to be active participants in the teaching/learning process.
2. Graduates have a clear idea of their future prospects in either further study or professional work.
3. The study programme benefits from a well-developed whole-university infrastructure regarding access, academic integrity and other issues.

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

1. Satisfaction across the student body regarding qualitative or informal feedback on the study progress in terms of quantitative grading (feedback about assessment) is not uniform.
2. The students of the study programme are not aware of the systematic anti-harassment and anti-discriminatory policies in place, which otherwise are well developed within the HEI, with training available for both students and teachers.

### 3.5. TEACHING STAFF

#### *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*

There are 12 teachers in total with a workload from 0.5 to 1.5. The course leader has a PhD and he mostly teaches theoretical subjects. Among other teaching staff in the faculty, there are also internationally well-known artists and photographers. Altogether, the situation with teaching staff is quite appropriate and well-productive with various high-level competencies. With this high-quality team, the expert panel concludes that the learning outcomes of the curriculum are achieved. The number, qualifications and competencies of teaching staff meet the requirements of General Requirements for the provision of studies (p. 8, points 28 and 29). That being said, whenever this might positively affect academic quality, teachers could try to work in a more synchronised way, connecting their courses in terms of projects, etc., as they lack sufficient awareness of the specific learning outcomes outlined in the curriculum, particularly those outside their own subject area, and struggle to differentiate these outcomes from others.

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

Despite this being one of the priorities for improvement and showcasing high motivation, the mobility figures remain fairly low and there is no significant teacher mobility habit in place at the HEI, even if this has been improving in recent years. Surely, the pandemic has also played an unfavourable role in the current situation, as does the neighbourhood of Belarus in today's context. It is mostly a few teachers from the community that regularly travel and benefit from this. Younger staff is keener on academic mobility.

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

The study programme benefits from a wide selection of opportunities to improve general, pedagogical, and personal competencies of the teaching staff. The HEI being part of the European University Alliance *Transform4Europe* opens up even more possibilities. Being a part



of a larger university also gives additional possibilities to involve teachers from other departments (“liberal art studies”, as it's called in many VMU's documents).

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

#### ***Strengths:***

1. Obvious enthusiasm of the majority of teachers to participate in exchange programmes and complementary studies.
2. The institutional infrastructure that provides the teaching staff with good opportunities to enhance its general, pedagogical, and personal competencies.

#### ***Weaknesses:***

1. Teachers are not enough aware of the study outcomes as set within the curriculum, especially outside their own course, and distinguishing these from others.
2. Low teaching staff's academic mobility.

## **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***

The programme benefits from being part of a large university with many economic, physical and informational resources that students of all programmes can access. From the library, central services, and the gym, to classrooms, laboratories, sound studios, galleries, reading rooms, and own work. It also has a *Moodle* online learning environment. All have enough space for the classes to develop comfortably, and can also be used and reserved by students for self-work.

In addition to the specific resources of the programme within the Faculty of Arts, whose spaces have been expanded and renovated since 2014, these complexes have different auditoriums,

seminar rooms, reading rooms, workstations with computers, photography studios and laboratories, and a gallery. All spaces are properly equipped with enough computers and updated operating systems; as well as specific resources for photography, video, sound, and artistic creation works. These resources and spaces can be easily reserved by students through a centralised electronic system. Students in the programme can also experiment with photography materials, such as special papers, reels, and chemicals, provided by the University both inside and outside of classes. As a further step, the programme should consider amplifying the diversity of equipment, especially used in electronic media arts and DIY practices etc. (such as Arduino, Playtron, programming language alternatives, VR/AR, 3D, etc.). The programme could also rethink the booking system in order to let the student reserve more types of equipment outside the faculty for a longer time.

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

A centralised system exists at the VMU and Faculty level for both management and procurement of new materials and resources. This planning is done based on the needs of the learning processes, both students and teachers can request what they need from the system. It is also done in this way for the physical and electronic resources of books and magazines. The library has an online procedure for requesting purchases that are not in its files.

This process is coordinated on an annual basis. The documentation provided in the SER shows that there has been a significant and constant increase in both physical and software materials. As well as the short and medium-term planning of the upgrade and purchase of new equipment. Equipment needs are well communicated and there is a feeling that teachers are listened and responded to, even if the process of acquiring equipment is relatively long. Even so, teaching staff could be more involved in composing long-term investments into keeping hardware up-to-date.

In general, both teachers and students are taken into account when planning and prioritising such processes.

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

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. (Example of Excellence) Excellent learning facilities and resources. Both in terms of quantity and quality of different spaces and equipment specific to the field of media art. Also, the programme gives great opportunities to the students to experiment with resources from other interdisciplinary fields that they can choose for their personal academic and even professional development.
2. Good formal and systematic booking and reservation system. For both spaces and equipment that ensure equal opportunities and track of all the materials lent.
3. Strong planning and upgrading system that ensures the renovation and adaptation of facilities and resources for the learning process.

***(2) No weaknesses are identified, however, the following recommendations are:***

1. As a further step, the programme should consider amplifying the diversity of equipment, especially used in electronic media arts and DIY practices etc. (such as Arduino, Playtron, programming language alternatives, VR/AR, 3D, etc.).
2. The programme could also rethink the booking system in order to let the student reserve more types of equipment outside the faculty for a longer time.
3. Teachers could have greater involvement in deciding upon long-term investments to update existing hardware.

### **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 QA system is highly systematic, very robust on the level of the institution, with a high involvement of external stakeholders. The synergies between the University, and the programme itself appears to be vertically and horizontally well integrated. The QA team is well integrated into the programme and linked on the HEI level. They conduct research in the field of creative innovation that provides relevant third-level data for the QA process. The QA system is based on an organisational culture qualified by a bottom-up approach, with a good standard

of formality and agreed rules and regulations, however, there is enough space and appreciation for informal administration and management solutions.

The programme holds semester meetings that are well minuted and followed up, also monitored by the QA department and excerpts are published; this is a positive complement to the process of both quantitative and also qualitative QA processes at the programme level. Teachers fill in forms for pedagogical activities but also separate ones for artistic activities and gathering points.

The QA loop is still not completely closed since a wide enough response to surveys for all courses is still lacking; a more consistent promotion of the QA culture among all teachers, as well as students, would be beneficial.

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

Teachers are aware of the feedback loop and aware of students' opinions, however, this is coming from their mostly informal contacts. Some of this communication still happens through the department/programme leads that are the main node (but sometimes also filter) of this information exchange. Still, it appears that this part of the feedback loop quite quickly and efficiently leads to programme improvement, both in curricular and implementation terms, equipment etc.

There are good possibilities for teaching staff to get and give satisfactory feedback to the management. However, teachers seem to be feedbacking to the administration informally and not regularly. The teachers can easily access also the academy management on informal terms. The "dean's presentation" annual event acts as a substitute for the academic assembly, it also includes students.

As it was mentioned above, employers play a role in evaluating the final theses of students that they are proud of, and they have a good understanding of the skills and abilities the graduates possess upon leaving, however, they would like to be more involved in the study process to help link the result and learning outcomes to real working conditions. It was expressed by some that there is even more potential in their involvement in the study programme process.

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

The programme makes a comprehensive and detailed collection of information on all subjects related to studies throughout the course, as well as the views of different interest groups. The procedure is appropriate, regulated and inclusive. The examples mentioned in the SER show that this information is analysed and used to make improvements in the programme. These improvements are carried out each year, an example of which is the *New Media Art programme Improvement Plan for 2021-2022*, which takes into account the student's feedback at the surveys.

The system is proper and well-recognised by the staff and students. Public information is consistent, and the presence is both on social media (inclusive also for teachers) and in the cultural space of the wider region. Course syllabus information is not to be completely updated on the website, as students expressed inconsistencies on several points; also, the page design is considered to be updated and students deem it could be more representative of such a programme – “this course, after all, is about new media art” (remark by one of the students). The social media platform is used to promote student work and students agree it is efficient and inclusive.

### *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*

Questionnaires to students on the overall quality of the programme take place online once per semester for formal data acquisition, but this usually is combined with regular informal discussions with students twice a semester, conducted by programme leads.

Questionnaires are also conducted for recent graduates; several items are evaluated on a scale of 4 (this could be extended to a larger scale) and usually give quite good results on the scale. In any case, it cannot be said that this is representative because only the results of the 2021 surveys have been shown, the previous ones do not appear in the SER due to the COVID situation and the low participation.

The system works well, surveys are in place, and well promoted even if not always retrieved in

a sufficient quantity. There is strong compensation with year-level student representatives and regular discussions with the management that give students the feeling of a closed feedback loop. The quantitative inter-year checks appear to be covered well by the SER but are not completely considered along the entire feedback loop in practice.

Students did not confirm a regular or representative filling in of the surveys. The informal and oral feedback is in place only partially (some courses do not implement it) and compensates for the low online survey responses. The SPC (meeting twice per year) student members are compensated for that as well. As noted previously, students (of years 3 and 4) expressed a need to increase the quality and frequency of informal oral feedback about the study progress.

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

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

1. Very thorough and integrated SE system that is set for long-term efficiency, especially from the top-down, i.e. administration level (consistent coordination).
2. Semester meetings with students and (some) staff are consistently minuted which is passed onto the central QA node of the institution, and diligently acted upon.

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

1. The QA loop needs to be completely closed by completing the bottom-up approach to ensuring quality by introducing a complete response to surveys for all courses and promoting the QA culture among all teachers, as well as students.
2. Involvement of social partners in the study programme development is not sufficiently diverse, strategic and consistent.
3. As reported by several students, course syllabus information on the institution's website is not completely updated on several points (course content, teachers, resources).

#### **IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE**

The equipment management, the quality, accessibility to students, and ambitious proactivity of the programme management toward the HEI to assure the above-average quality of spaces and remarkability of equipment.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The programme should stimulate more out-of-school, especially international experiences that are to be recognised within the programme’s curriculum, possibly integrated across relevant courses. Such could be connected to the many recently available possibilities and capacities in the city and region of Kaunas, after the year 2022, which the school should become a more proactive agent of.</li> <li>- Expand the support for the thesis project beyond the final academic year. Improve the portfolio work coordination on the program level and through individual mentors who are connected to the final thesis and project work. Moreover, it might be useful to have a more sophisticated division of teaching labour in helping students to collect their portfolios.</li> </ul>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interdisciplinary possibilities should be integrated in a consistent way to both research and studies. Provide specific courses or other curricular solutions to integrate the very wide variety of different electives (A+B combinations) to bring about a good potential for deep interdisciplinary collaboration and production; develop a special solution as to the interdisciplinary mentoring support of such courses or projects.</li> <li>- In the future, it would be productive to have some of the graduation thesis only theoretical if the landscape of national regulations allows it. Among other things, this would also facilitate establishing the MA course.</li> </ul>
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is recommended to ensure, to the extent possible, academic international mobility opportunities whose bureaucratic processes are clear and simple for the student.</li> </ul>



<p>Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearer course outcomes guidelines for the department student body are recommended, specifically, thus ensuring consistent teaching staff's availability throughout the study process. It would be useful to integrate more discursive, qualitative feedback processes in the coursework assessment.</li> <li>- Ensure that the students of the study programme are aware of the systematic anti-harassment and anti-discriminatory policies and related protocols in place at the HEI.</li> </ul>
<p>Teaching staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teaching staff should be (made) aware of the study outcomes as set within the curriculum, and especially outside their own course, and distinguishing these from others – consider introducing some training or collaborative activities.</li> <li>- Introduce systemic nudges for teachers to participate in academic mobility given the existing high motivation for such activities.</li> </ul>
<p>Learning facilities and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rethink the booking system in order to let the student reserve more types of equipment outside the faculty for a longer time.</li> <li>- As a further step, the programme should consider amplifying the diversity of equipment, especially used in electronic media arts and DIY practices etc. (such as Arduino, Playtron, programming language alternatives, VR/AR, 3D, etc.).</li> <li>- Enable more teachers in the decision-making of long-term investments concerning learning resources.</li> </ul>
<p>Study quality management and public information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The QA loop needs to be completely closed by completing the bottom-up approach to ensuring quality by introducing a complete response to surveys for all courses and promoting the QA culture among all teachers, as well as students.</li> <li>- Foster the continuous, more diverse and strategic involvement of employers in defining study outcomes and aiding/informing course designs, especially since they are openly willing to support the programme in this way.</li> <li>- Course syllabus information on the institution's website needs to be fast and completely updated in several points</li> </ul>

	(course content, teachers, resources), and the page redesign considered.
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## VI. SUMMARY

The VDU New Media Art programme has enhanced many of the aspects previously identified as improvement pathways since the last evaluation procedure. It is a programme whose focus towards interdisciplinarity makes it distinctive within the panorama of the Media Art Field in Lithuania.

In general, the programme shows a correct relationship between **learning objectives and the academic curriculum**, which has been confirmed by various stakeholders. The opportunity for students to personalise their own curriculum is one of the great general attractions of this university and this particular programme. The multidisciplinary profile, oriented also strongly toward practical technical skills, is positively recognised by social partners and employers. There are still potential areas of improvement such as curricular inclusion of international and national out-of-school experiences, so the panel recommends that students be encouraged and supported to perform activities outside the classroom and to achieve greater interaction between employers and learning outcomes.

The programme provides a good variety of **artistic and creative activities**, which are aligned with the latest technologies and fashions in the current art market, thanks to the faculty that combines their educational work with professional work. Through the final works the ability of the students to acquire solid theoretical training for their research of the current state of the art and creative practice is shown. How to consolidate interdisciplinarity provided by the HEI could, however, be explored.

In the area of **student support**, there is a great diversity of formal structures and mechanisms that students can access throughout their studies and as graduates. This support ranges from academic and training needs to social, financial and psychological support. We should especially mention the good opportunities for academic mobility, which is of great interest to students, so it is recommended to review bureaucratic processes with an aim to eliminate possible failures and make this aspect a point of excellence in the future.

In the field of **learning methodology**, there is a correct variety and diversity of teaching and evaluation methods focused on proactive learning by students. Quantitative feedback results work correctly, however, students need a more informal and personal feedback process on

their academic results in qualitative terms, so that their future performance can be improved and deepened.

The **teaching staff** consists of well-trained professionals, including artists and photographers from the creative environment, which serves as inspiration and support to students with their future profession. During the meetings with stakeholders, the panel learned about the teacher's enthusiasm for sharing knowledge and learning opportunities offered by the VMU. Given the open approach to the liberal arts of the university, an incentive of communication between teachers from different departments is recommended for greater academic coordination in the classes to avoid possible overlaps or absences from training.

The panel found **excellence in the spaces and resources** available to students, both in terms of quantity and diversity of materials. The equipment planning and improvement are working correctly and have ensured constant updating of materials during the evaluation period. In addition, the new classrooms and laboratories made available to the programme give students a great opportunity for creative experimentation with different means.

In the area of **quality assurance**, the panel found the formal system to be well-integrated by the whole institution which exemplifies good coordination between all actors. This is reinforced by programme management with semester meetings with students that provide more informal means of quality improvement. In any case, the system should include a higher number of surveys to all stakeholders and a greater promotion of quality culture among the teaching staff to completely close the QA loop. A need for formal involvement by social partners and employers has also been identified.

Finally, we would like to thank the management and the entire team for the work carried out during the evaluation process, both before and during the visit of the panel. Our objective with this report is to provide the programme with an external analysis for identifying points of improvement and strengths of the programme that support the achievement of future objectives at this ambitious institution and programme.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

dr. Peter Purg