



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of DESIGN
at European Humanities University

Expert panel:

1. **Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery (panel chairperson)**, *member of academic community;*
2. **Prof. Dr. Lylian Lainoja**, *member of academic community;*
3. **Doc. Dr. Maria Štraneckova**, *member of academic community;*
4. **Dovilė Gaižauskienė**, *representative of social partners;*
5. **Aistė Kazlauskaitė**, *student representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – Austėja Pliupelytė

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Visual Design</i>	<i>Visual Plastic Art</i>
State code	6123PX001	6213PX001
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (4 years)	Full-time (2 Years)
Credit volume	240 Credits	120 Credits
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Arts	Master of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian/Russian	Lithuanian/Russian
Minimum education required	Secondary	Bachelor's degree or equivalent
Registration date of the study programme	2019 04 23	2019 04 23

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field, SKVC takes a decision to accredit 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 Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The HEI site visit was conducted by the panel on 27 October 2022.

1. **Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery (panel chairperson)**, *academic* (United Kingdom); Director of Sustainability, former Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement at Ulster University;
2. **Prof. Dr. Lylian Lainoja**, *academic* (Estonia); lecturer at Tartu Art College; former Dean of the Faculty of Design at The Estonian Academy of Arts;
3. **Doc. Dr. Maria Štranekova**, *academic* (Slovakia); associate professor at Pan European University, Faculty of Media; former Head of Fashion Design department at Tomas Bata University Zlin;
4. **Ms. Dovilė Gaižauskienė**, *representative of social partners* (Lithuania); policy analyst at Government strategic analysis centre (STRATA) (*Policy Lab - strategic design*); former Head of processes at Design department at Vilnius Design college;
5. **Aistė Kazlauskaitė**, *student representative* (Lithuania); fourth-year Bachelor's student of study program *Multimedia and Computer Design* at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VILNIUS TECH).

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of document
1.	Examples of Bachelor's and Master's theses

1.4. BACKGROUND OF DESIGN FIELD STUDIES AT EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY

The European Humanities University (EHU) is a non-state higher education institution based on European values which was first established in Minsk, Belarus, in 1992 (closed 2004) and re-established in Vilnius in 2005, with the aim to promote the integration of Belarus and the region into the European intellectual space by reforming higher education after the Soviet period. In 2006, EHU acquired the legal status of a public institution, a Lithuanian university higher education institution operating in exile and operating in accordance with the laws of Lithuania as well as contributing to the development of academic freedom in Belarus. It is a public institution and operates under the laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.

EHU operates two academic departments: Social Sciences, and Humanities which are supported by the Academic Support Centre of the University. In Humanities, EHU offers first and second cycle study programmes in Heritage and a joint PhD programme in Philosophy (with Vytautas Magnus University and the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute). In Social Sciences, EHU offers study fields in: Law, Political Sciences, World Politics, and Communication. In Arts, first and second cycle study programmes are offered in both Design and Theatre.

Between 2006 and 2019 the University offered first cycle study programmes in *Media and Visual Design* (612W26001) and *Visual Design and media* (612W20008). Design studies were implemented in 2006 and new programmes introduced in 2019: a first cycle programme in *Visual Design* and second-cycle study programme *Visual Plastic Art*.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

The *second cycle* of *Design* study field at European Humanities 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	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	25

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

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

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

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

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

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)

As EHU has the status of a University in exile, the indicator 'Relevance of Study Aims and Study Outcomes to the Needs of the Country's (Region's) Economy and Society' is not assessed. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that EHU is a university with a double mission. It aims to provide a high-quality education as well as to create a platform for students, mostly coming to study from Belarus, to transform their systems of values - EHU functions "with the aim to promote the integration of Belarus and the region into the European intellectual space" (SER, p. 4). As it was stated in the meeting with senior staff, "we teach EU values and more narrow professional things", and "we are creating impact and change for the Belarusian society". In pursuit of these aims, opportunities for a distinctive art education emerge. In the curricula of the studies field of **humanities**, which brings a deep understanding of values, **ethics are coupled with art**. The structure of courses demonstrates a strong component of humanities in it - this supports personal as well as artistic student growth and can be considered as one element of added value in creating a long-term impact for democratisation within the Belarussian society.

Design study programmes respond to the steady demand for design professionals in both commercial and non-commercial sectors. The courses continually update their study content in line with the needs of the labour market. From the students' perspective, the choice of design opens up good job prospects and/or opportunities for creative problem-solving and self-expression. Graduates bring the values of an open society which in the long term will impact the future of the region. In the meetings with the Expert Panel meetings, solid instances of collaboration were mentioned, for example, in the field of audio design new interest from the IT company from Belarus web design field (this direction is very popular in the Russian-speaking market), development towards a digital school branch, work with representatives of creative industries, NGOs (especially in the field of civic engagement).

The efforts of EHU to create more sustainable contacts with the Lithuanian labour market is, in the opinion of the expert panel, a good direction for further development - those contacts could help to fulfil the need to broaden the understanding of the design field which would in turn raise the quality of the study outcomes. As was stated in the meetings, EHU was quite isolated from the Lithuanian cultural context and in particular the Lithuanian design field. However, the situation is improving and the design field staff are developing more partnerships with Lithuanian institutions and companies, and students, for example, are encouraged to

participate in the “Young Designer Prize” competition. Internships with Lithuanian companies are also becoming a more popular option. Students and staff highlighted collaboration with the exhibition space gallery “Academia”.

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

The EHU mission is to deliver a quality international experience in the humanities and liberal arts that encourages the development of practical and thinking skills in civic society to students from Belarus and the region. The student experience is designed to develop and foster European values and education within the liberal arts by developing independent thinking through the acquisition of critical skills, in this instance, within the field of design.

The expert panel was reassured that the students received a well-rounded education in key practical and theoretical skills within the design field. EHU offers two design programmes: Visual Design (first cycle) and Visual Plastic Art (second cycle), both of which are clearly embedded in the university strategy of providing a European democratic values focused education within the humanities context. Both programmes foster creative free-thinking, independent study, practical skills acquisition, and personal and professional development, which are directly linked to the mission of the university (SER p. 6). Further, the proportion of courses delivered in English has increased which is in line with EHU’s internationalisation strategy. The self-evaluation report states: “[...] the aims and study outcomes of the programmes are virtually in line with the mission, operational goals and strategy of the institution” (SER p.7) which, after meeting the various stakeholder groups, is a position endorsed by the Expert Panel.

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

The organised courses comply with the following Lithuanian legal requirements: ‘General Requirements for the provision of studies’ from 30 December 2016 No. V-1168, the ‘National Descriptor of the Study field of Design’ from 2021-03-18 No. 2021-05451 and ‘Law on Higher Education and Research’ from 30 April 2009 No. XI-242. The ECTS credit system is well-structured. The hours intended for the study field, optional studies, individual learning, final thesis and contact hours constitute the appropriate amount according to legislation.

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

The outline of the aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods within the SER (p. 10) does not provide the required level of detail expected with regard to pedagogic and formative and summative assessment approaches. However, meetings with the various stakeholder groups confirmed a rigour within these areas. The teaching methods and the learning culture within EHU and related levels of challenge are relevant to how students

progress through the course and are commensurate with other degree programmes. The diverse modes of delivery (inc. via electronic methods) and the ability to offer blended learning experiences for students depending on their circumstances are to be applauded.

Showcasing student works through exhibitions, work displayed on walls throughout the campus, and the creation of a more visually stimulating learning environment would offer an opportunity to showcase learning outcomes and the diversity of the curriculum.

The SER (p. 10) mentions: “[...] the potential for improvement in further implementation of specialisations” which will need to be undertaken in a strategic manner in order to preserve coherence and clarity of mission (for all concerned - staff, students, applicants, and social partners). This is not a criticism, rather the Expert Panel was encouraged that EHU has ambitions to develop their spread of programmes and were encouraged by their enthusiasm and foresight for extending their provision.

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 first and second cycle design curricula incorporate key core competencies (drawing, colour, History and Theory etc.), as well as modules that are specific to individual discipline specialisms within the design field. Internationally, design programme delivery combines practice with theory and the offering at EHU reflects this well-developed model. The level of challenge increases as students progress through their studies as does independent study which is crucial for the personal and professional development of a designer. The ‘four cities’ project (*Vilnius, Saint Petersburg, Florence, Athens*) offers an excellent vehicle for students to experience and consider various aspects of the two- and three-dimensional designed world. Whilst these may be considered direct comparator cities, it may be an idea to introduce different scales and environments for example, cities, towns, villages, and rural environments, although it is accepted that the majority of design activity takes place within or near dense urban environments.

As one would expect with the second cycle Visual Plastic Art programme, there is a focus on developing thinking skills and a broadening of understanding of design cultures through theory and context teaching. Whilst the Expert Panel query the programme title, the course team were emphatic and convening in their defence of the reasoning for the name, which the Panel was content to support. The programme forms the basis for more practical modules and options to study given specialisms during the remainder of the studies.

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

Due to the nature of design education, it is clear that many opportunities are offered for students to engage in self-directed creative projects throughout their levels of study. Further, students are able to work with other students on projects, for example, the EU Heritage

programmes. Students are also able to choose individual specialisms according to their own interests and competencies, for example, graphic design, motion design, animation, and web design (SER p. 12). They are supported in their choices and project development by the teaching staff.

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

BA level studies at this university are student- and project-oriented. An interdisciplinary approach is important for students working on their thesis projects, for example, combining animation and graphic design (collaborations within the fields of Visual Design and Media). The internship is carried out during the eighth semester in full-time studies and during the tenth semester in part-time studies within the field and tasks related to the bachelor's thesis.

Within two years of MA studies the student of Visual Plastic Art programme is required to create a design/art project - practical work and to carry out artistic research. Students are required to demonstrate individual creative thinking and good knowledge of the context of one's field. Whether the student has achieved the goal is assessed at the defence of the thesis, where the results are presented to an independent jury. The thesis work should include the mandatory humanities component.

The review of the provided thesis, however, showed that the design component could be strengthened - artistic research and practice could be positioned more as a problem-solving approach than an artistic expression of the student.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The well-developed intellectual culture and ethos of EHU provide an excellent learning environment for students.
2. The broad variety of theory and culture support delivered alongside more practice-based modules.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Evidence of design problem-solving could be strengthened.
2. Showcasing student works through exhibitions, work displayed on walls throughout the campus, and the creation of a more visually stimulating learning environment would offer an opportunity to showcase learning outcomes and the diversity of the curriculum.

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

EHU participates every year in the annual external evaluation of artistic activities organised by the Research Council of Lithuania. The European Humanities University conforms to the national statutory requirements in line with Lithuanian higher education legislation. The design discipline is constituted by academic staff who are professional artists and designers operating at national and international levels in Lithuania and Belarus and where possible through mobility initiatives, elsewhere. Research and practice are monitored through annual evaluation, which has steadily increased over recent years (SER p. 17) and whilst there is evidence of a steady growth in international ambition, the Expert Panel would recommend a more ambitious programme of internationalisation for both staff and students. Trips to Florence, Athens and various locations of Vilnius are evidence of proactive outward engagement, and EHU is encouraged to develop and extend its range and type of partnership with exchange agreements, Erasmus+ and other initiatives designed to stimulate the exchange of skills, ideas, knowledge, and expertise across teaching, research, scholarship, and administration.

To develop and activate more artistic and art education activities, the Digital Art Activism Centre has been set up in the Department. “The Centre’s main focus is on digital art media and its mission is to strengthen EHU as one of the regional educational centres. A Centre of this type is oriented towards free creative communication, self-expression, organising digital conferences, symposia and e-exhibitions, and finding curators and sponsors for future exhibitions and other projects” (SER, p. 18). It is mainly for artists, directors, designers, and musicians from Belarus, Russia and other non-democratic countries from a regional comparative perspective-struggle for democratic views. There is also a large space to exploit the potential offered by OSUN and CUMULUS networks in the future.

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

According to both the SER and Expert Panel meetings, the content of the curriculum of the Visual Design programme has sufficient links in artistic practice and research, even though the programme is anchored in more traditional techniques and systems of art education. According to market requirements, design and media studies are based on current trends in cross-field and interdisciplinary environments (e.g. visual communication, publishing, computer games and film industry). More interdisciplinary allow students to develop more conceptual abilities, which seemed to be lacking in some examples of work viewed by the Expert Panel. As the departments keep abreast of new developments in design and visual arts mastering new

technologies (e.g. AI, CAD, VR etc.), the programme is directed towards human-centred interaction and user-centred design alongside ethnics and cultural values, which could have a unique position and successful perspective for applicants, current staff and students, and graduates. The content of the Visual Plastic Art programme is clearly linked to the latest developments in science, art and technology, although the SER (p. 19) identifies that it is within a cycle of continuous development. The subjects of the programme such as: 'Eroticism and Irrationality', 'Contemporary art', and 'Art Project' are focused more on the field of contemporary free art than on design, although within the wider field of art and design, they are nonetheless connected. There is also evidence of innovative and practical creative endeavour in the field of, for example, sustainable design or new material technologies.

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

The Expert Panel observed that the University's academic environment is supportive for learning and research, students are motivated, participate in artistic, scientific and various collaborative projects, which are mainly supported by internal and external funding (SER p. 19). Also, the recent new system of grants for students' artistic work to cover tuition and fees is very supportive, particularly in regard to internationalisation, for example, in *Cumulus Green*. Students also get information about the possibilities to take part in projects, and competitions directly from academic staff, or via the Moodle system, which is very well built and helped significantly during the pandemic period and is particularly helpful for delivery in the challenging political environment in Belarus. The presence of the academic staff from Vilnius Academy of Arts (VAA) has greatly enriched the study programme and artistic perception at EHU.

In 2022, EHU celebrated its 30th anniversary and its commitment to providing students with a broad education in liberal arts to promote creativity, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. However, the Expert Panel observed a lack of more contemporary visual expression and detachment and would recommend that EHU develop more connections with European art and institutions and local public communities with a view to celebrating and displaying with confidence more "good examples" of such cultural richness and networks.

EHU should also place higher demands on the quality of students' artistic/design work which could be implemented by having strict requirements for a higher level of conceptual and critical thinking. Similarly, and in tandem EHU should consider providing more accessible creative studio space for students to develop their own work outside normal teaching hours, an aspect that could considerably enhance the creative peer-learning and individual expression within the environs at the school and beyond through students being encouraged to celebrate their achievements at EHU using their social media accounts. There are opportunities for EHU to display greater corporate and visual presence within the marketplace (including the effective and ongoing use of social media platforms) - locally, nationally, and through web-based and other means of their international identity. Finally, whilst the language of design is predominantly non-verbal but research is often based in English, EHU should consider how it

might plan its internationalisation strategy in the context of the shared use of English - both as a language of instruction and for international recruitment purposes.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The academic environment offered at the European Humanities University is intellectually challenging and designed to draw out new and innovative thinking in its students - many of whom are not Lithuanian.
2. The city-based academic context is an excellent environment for the study of design and its relevance to culture, industry, commerce, and the entire workings of a city and its galleries, museums, architecture, transport networks etc.
3. The appetite and ambition for developing new modules of study in areas likely to develop free-thinking and embracing broader cultural understanding of areas related to the perception, practice, and theory of design.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The Expert Panel valued the increasing effort towards active cooperation with local partners, mainly VAA, but there is definitely a need to develop close cooperation with art design professionals, local and international social partners in the stated area whose cooperation tasks could enrich and encourage the vision of artistic design research and practice, and their dissemination.
2. Whilst it was clear that EHU is successful in opening the intellectual, creative, and cultural horizons of its staff and students, the university should be more confident in reflecting this rich learning environment within its physical learning environments (studios, corridors, staff offices etc.), within the wider city and across Lithuania, and internationally through greater emphasis in its teaching, research, and culture of intellectual free thinking and design problem-solving.
3. Given the aspiration to develop a greater international presence, the Expert Panel observed that the various languages of instruction (Russian, Lithuanian, English etc.) are not being used to their full potential to strategically develop the reach and diversity of the university.
4. There is a potential to explore more interdisciplinary project opportunities within the field of Design to develop more practical and conceptual skills of the students.

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

Even though representatives stated in the meeting with the Expert Panel that “we are not allowed to advertise ourselves in Belarus - we don’t exist there [Belarus]”, the university works proactively to attract new students via social media and by organising online events, meetings etc.

Admission procedures to the undergraduate studies of the design field are clear and carried out in accordance with ‘Institutional Regulations for Admission to the First-Cycle (Undergraduate) and Integrated Studies and Admission to the Second-Cycle Studies’, which are updated each year. As stated in the SER, since the academic year 2020–2021, students have been admitted for the first-cycle studies through a competitive process organised and run by EHU units (Academic Support Centre, Communication and Development Unit, and the departmental Subject Committee). The Admissions Committee is formed and it analyses received admission documents and decides whether to recommend or not recommend students for admission. Applicants participate and have to pass the Composition exam and demonstrate an arithmetical average of secondary education is at least 7 (seven) in order to get an invitation to apply to chosen study programmes. Applicants are also invited to participate in the admission interview, which is carried out by the Subject Committee of the design field in order to determine the candidate’s personal attitudes, and readiness to study abroad.

The Expert Panel welcomes the practice of interviewing students as it helps to accommodate initial challenges that might occur for students when preparing to study abroad and helps the school to really understand the motivation of the applicant, which is an important factor for study success.

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 evaluation procedure for the recognition of foreign qualifications is performed according to the EHU Description of the Procedure for the Academic Recognition of Qualifications Acquired Abroad. Information about the procedure is published and publicly available on the website of the school. As stated in SER (p. 25), since May 2021, when the University was granted the right to assess the academic qualifications acquired by the entrants on its own, there have been no cases where the qualification was not recognised for those applying to become students in design. No shortcomings in this area were detected.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

The university has a dedicated unit which is responsible for students' academic mobility. International opportunities are introduced for the students gradually, from the first study semester. Erasmus mobility is functioning well and the school has agreements with 12 schools for mobility in the field of design. It is a popular choice for students who want to enrich their study experience. Outward mobility is performing better than inward.

As a strength of the school, cooperation with Bard College (USA) and other academic institutions of the Open Society University Network must be mentioned. EHU students can join or initiate collective projects with students from other OSUN institutions, and financial support for the implementation of their academic and creative projects is offered. Each EHU student can choose and study elective courses offered by each OSUN institution (for free) through the virtual OSUN Partner Institution Course Platform.

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

As stated in SER (p. 29) and was mentioned in the Expert Panel meetings, the university provides a combination of different types of student support. One of the strengths is the opportunity to get free/affordable mental health and well-being assistance and to get visa support. An important element of the support system is the opportunity to select an individual study plan if needed and financial support includes social, counselling and guidance, and other types of scholarships.

A valuable asset to the support system is the creation of opportunities for students to showcase their artistic approaches, for example, students' participation in Kaunas Biennale as artists. As was mentioned by students studying at EHU, the university helps “to organise your art, think of self-marketing”.

Overall, EHU has put in place several key support mechanisms to assist students in regard to mental health and wellbeing, finance, studies advice, and personal and professional development.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

Students are introduced and inducted to programmes in a variety of ways: the EHU website, via e-mail, through ‘Moodle’, in social media channels, and in introductory meetings with first year students. The Student Service connects with newly admitted students and transferor students from other higher education institutions and the curator of the study programme and staff from the Academic Support Centre also support students. EHU supports and counsels students in a variety of ways including via direct academic and administrative consultations and through assistance from the programme curators, lecturers and administrative staff.

Moodle contains programme content and information including timetables, requirements for written and other works, teacher consultation times, public lectures and seminars, training courses, summer camps/internships (home & abroad), opportunities to study abroad, and internship proposals. EHU also operates a system of mentors to support new students to navigate to Lithuanian ways particularly in an unfamiliar city and language environment.

EHU assesses student satisfaction both through quality questionnaires and via an annual survey of student satisfaction in areas including administration, material resources, information, and forms of support.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A clear student-centred approach to student selection, admission, induction, and studies advice.
2. The various policies and mechanisms to support students' mental health and well-being, alleviate financial hardship, and promote outward mobility.
3. The ongoing development of international links with either institutions nationally and internationally.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. A low number of incoming exchange students, which could indicate EHU's international reach as well as the low attractiveness of programmes due to the small number of subjects taught in English.

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

As main means for individualisation of the study process according to the students' needs, individual study plans are used. Individual consultations provided by the teaching staff also provide a good basis for monitoring the individual progress of the student. Students are free to choose and are encouraged to select the topics for their thesis work based on their artistic interests. Students could benefit if more creative spaces or individual studios were provided by the university so that they could manage their time in a good quality space individually.

The university is also focusing on helping students to find their voices as free individuals and express their opinion freely which reflects well the stated mission of the university. There is clearly a transformational impact of creative education in developing confidence and entrepreneurial skills in EHU students.

However, systematic tools for self-reflection or additional tools for self-studying were not presented in the SER or during meetings. Taking that into account it is recommended to

systemise students' self-reflection and provide help and tools for planning and monitoring students' individual learning paths.

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

As stated in SER (p. 34), "EHU provides study opportunities not only for people with physical disabilities but also for other vulnerable social groups of students. Measures for individualisation of the study process such as financial support, psychological help and various other support measures are provided." No shortcoming in this area was observed. In general, the microclimate of the school seems very good.

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

Students' study achievements are evaluated with a cumulative scoring system. Information about evaluation is provided for students in the description of each study subject online and students are informed about them during the initial classes. Beyond the normal weekly formative feedback sessions, summative student progress is assessed twice during each semester at the mid-term and final evaluation points. The mid-term evaluation covers homework, individual and group creative assignments, reports, written assignments, presentation of projects, presentation of internship results, etc. and final exams - reviews of creative assignments, tests, written assignments, defence of works, etc. Collegial evaluation (peer review) is applied in the creative study subjects of the *Visual Design* programme in order to give a more transparent and critical evaluation.

The student's learning progress is closely monitored by the lecturer during the semester. If the student's learning results are unsatisfactory, the student may get individual or group consultations by the teacher or his colleague.

At the end of the study subject, a survey of students is conducted, and their opinions on subject quality and methods of teaching are asked - the results of this survey are discussed at the study programme committee. Together with other data, the results of the surveys are analysed and recommendations for the improvement of study subjects are provided.

However, the self-evaluation skills of the students could be strengthened especially in the MA programme where students could co-mentor or co-evaluate each other's work.

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

EHU is working closely with a range of partners in civil society, business, industry, art, and other academies. That, combined with different directions provided for students to make the choice of specialisms, helps to ensure students are equipped to search for, find, and secure employment. As stated in the SER (p. 37), 30% of students start working while studying. As

discussed in previous sections of this report, a closer collaboration with Lithuanian or even European markets as well as Lithuanian employment services would provide even more opportunities.

Monitoring of graduate employability is supervised by the University's Career Centre, which provides career planning-related services to students, graduates, academia, and the private, public and non-governmental sectors. The Centre helps to link employers and students on matters related to the search for internships or upon graduation, a job.

Graduate surveys are implemented as well as work within the EHU alumni community in order to collect data on graduate careers. Data provided in the SER (p. 36) shows that "the majority of respondents indicated that they are already working or will be employed in the near future under their acquired qualification (in 2019: 19 out of 22, in 2020: 18 out of 21, in 2021: 17 out of 19)". This data indicates there is high student satisfaction with the quality of studies among graduates.

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

The EHU has a well-established system for ensuring academic ethics, academic dishonesty and plagiarism for staff and students. The library regularly organises training for students and counselling on issues related to correct citation and independence requirements.

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

If a student disagrees with the Evaluation committee's collective evaluation, he/she/they may file an appeal (SER, p. 35). The possibility of submitting appeals and complaints is regulated by the 'Procedure for Preparation, Defence and Storage of theses' and the 'Procedure for the Evaluation of European Humanities University Students' Results', available online. Appeals may be submitted against evaluations of learning results, while complaints are submitted on the grounds of non-compliance/violation of procedures. A dedicated Board of Appeal, consisting of at least 3 persons, including the Chairperson, examines the specific appeal/complaint and provides a decision. Judging by the data provided in the SER, appeals are very rare in the school. No obvious shortcomings were observed in this area.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. EHU provides a range of learner support mechanisms to ensure students perform to their best ability.
2. Alumni community is a valuable asset for the school - it is useful for information sharing and exchange, and for getting updates on graduates' careers.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of systematic tools for self-reflection or additional tools for self-studying which were not presented in the SER or during meetings.
2. Limited creative space for individual use or group work of students which would improve their self-management and learning assessment skills.

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

The European Humanities University complies with the legal requirements as set out for Universities in Lithuania. The academic context and the celebration and development of the European intellectual tradition for the benefit of the citizens of Lithuania and elsewhere. The University has several staff with doctorates and others who are members of professional organisations (Lithuanian Artists' Association, Lithuanian Interdisciplinary Artists' Association, Belarusian Union of Artists). Over 50% of academic staff teaching on the first cycle programme and 80% of academic staff teaching on the second cycle programme are researchers and/or renowned artists. The institution has grown rapidly over recent years - from less than 600 students five years ago to circa 1100 students today and in the design disciplines remains healthy with 219 in 2018-19 and 224 in 2020-21 (SER, p. 40). EHU has protected and improved its staff-student ratio during this time and changes in delivery have ensured the programmes remain relevant and current, for example, Animation subjects became more focused in the first cycle and new modules in photography, art/design in public spaces and curatorship were introduced. It is also helpful to see that EHU has had a proactive staff replacement policy (SER, p. 41) and supports as well as celebrates the successes of staff in competitions and awards.

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

The European Humanities University has 'Procedures for the International Mobility of EHU Students and Staff', which is published on the University website. Academic staff are actively encouraged to participate in mobility schemes via various mobility programmes including Erasmus+, Cumulus, and OSUN. Clearly, the pandemic has had an impact on the development of student and staff mobility which has been unfortunate for a discipline that thrives on the exchange of cultures, experiences, and practices. However, EHU identified the challenges and their Communication and Development Unit put in place procedures for virtual mobilities for both staff and students (SER, p. 42). As with all other universities, the lifting of movement restrictions provides great opportunities for staff and students to actively re-engage with outward and inward mobility initiatives.

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

The European Humanities University has put in place various strategies and procedures to support and develop staff including a development of teachers' competencies scheme for promoting the application of innovative teaching methods and student-centred teaching methods. Similarly, an annual plan for developing pedagogical staff qualifications is approved, supported, and implemented using internal funding. Staff development is managed via an Integrated Staff Management System (SER, p. 43) which is designed to bring together various aspects of academic and professional development alongside a number of other procedures including a Procedure for the Promotion, Motivation and Remuneration' of pedagogical staff. These clearly indicate a well-rounded approach to monitoring quality, supporting staff development, and objective-setting in teaching, research, and scholarship.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The academic context and the celebration and development of the European intellectual tradition for the benefit of the citizens of Lithuania and elsewhere.
2. The recent development of a variety of systems, procedures, and funding to support and develop staff.
3. Visiting artists and designers from other institutions in Europe.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The low numbers of students and staff recruited from elsewhere in Europe and beyond and the establishment of meaningful exchange partnerships which would strengthen and develop a more 'European' culture within EHU's academic setting.

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 premises of the former Augustine Monastery, where the studies take place, are well located in Vilnius Old Town and newly renovated (opened for use in 2018). However, the premises where the school is located are owned by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and the agreement about the use of the premises is temporary, therefore, there is a question about the sustainability of the use of the premises in the future.

There is enough space (82713 m²) for different study areas, including auditoriums, computer classes and areas for independent students' work. Auditoriums are well equipped with

computers, projectors, and audio broadcasting equipment for hybrid lectures. In general, there are 126 computer workplaces equipped for students, teachers and administration staff. Students are happy to use all the university equipment both inside the University and, under separate agreements, beyond its walls. Also, students have access to different computer programmes, needed for work and study, via a system for managing personal remote access to computer classroom workplaces, if they are unable to attend the lectures. The Expert Panel learned during the site visit that this possibility is highly valued by students and works well.

School is well connected to the internet services and the traditional studies are well combined with the use of the virtual learning environment. There is a sufficient package of different professional computer programmes for the design studies field: Adobe Creative Suite licence packages, TV Paint, Blender, Cinema 4D, DragonFrame. Virtual learning environment Moodle is actively used and studies are being digitised, this is valuable for students who do not live in Lithuania and was extremely useful for all students during the pandemic restrictions.

Students with special needs have access to all the premises and facilities.

University has a well-operated library. Students can use the library's resources in the reading room, and a large part of the publications can be taken home. Students also have access to subscribed databases of scientific publications in the library or online (approximately 20 databases are regularly subscribed. Users can also use the EHU virtual library and browse all subscribed and main open-access scientific resources. The electronic catalogue can be browsed, and publications can be pre-ordered. If the required publication is not available at the University library, it can be ordered from other libraries.

While adequately furnished auditoriums and computer classrooms were observed, the availability of dedicated spaces for design students to engage in creative and independent work was limited. Moreover, student creativity was to some degree evident within the building, with a few posters here and there, but the long corridors appeared rather empty and lacked creative vitality. By integrating visual elements that embody the proclaimed freedom of thought and active involvement in meaningful pursuits like alternative policy and critical discussions, there is potential for a more accurate and outward representation of the environment.

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

Since previous accreditation university has invested remarkably in the improvement of the virtual learning environment and also in equipment. As the number of students in the design field rises, there is special attention on developing material resources in the design studies area. According to the SER, it is planned to purchase additional graphics tablets for digital design and additional cameras, as well as to continue updating the hardware and software base of computer auditoriums, and to purchase additional specialised programmes.

During the site visit, the Expert Panel got the insight that teachers are involved in development plans and are interviewed every year about their material needs to take studies forward to the

higher professional level. As well social partners were involved to improve the material resources and advice was given to staff.

The cost of purchasing equipment is included in the department's budget each year, and major purchases of infrastructure are made from the University's main budget. According to the SER, the search for business partners for the purchase of equipment that does not have sufficient funds from the University budget, the search for donations and the development of support funds are planned and are being carried out.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The premises are well located and newly renovated, accessible for students with special needs. There is enough space for different study areas, including auditoriums, computer classes and areas for independent students' work.
2. Students can use all the university equipment both inside the University and, under separate agreements, beyond its walls.
3. Students have access to different computer programmes, needed for work and study, via a system for managing personal remote access to computer classroom workplaces, if they are unable to attend the lectures. This possibility is highly valued by the students.
4. Social partners' equipment is also available for the students, this is a great value.
5. University has a well-operated library. Students have access to subscribed databases of scientific publications in the library or online, publications can also be ordered from other libraries.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. During our site visit we could see well-equipped auditoriums and computer classes, but we did not see so many rooms for design student creative and independent work.
2. Student creative work was purely visible in the building (we could see some posters, but still the long corridors looked rather empty and sterile). We highly recommend adding visual testimony of declared freedom of thinking and participating in valuable processes of alternative policy and critical discourse.

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

EHU has a range of recognised and accepted quality assurance systems, for example, QAHEA 2015 (SER, p. 50), that are commensurate with other European institutions. EHU has an action plan 2021-26 that focuses on quality assurance and a set of quality assurance procedures as

outlined in their internal regulations ([EHU 'Regulation on Study and Science Quality Policy'](#) (under the Order No. 123-20 of the Rector of EHU of 16-05-2017), [Quality Manual](#) (Order No. 01-131 of the Rector of the European Humanities University of 14 May 2013)(SER, p. 50).

At the meeting with the Expert Panel, the senior leadership team clearly articulated the governance arrangements and there was strong evidence of good governance arrangements and team working across the senior managers including the Rector and senior representatives from academic support, student services, finance and human resources, communications and marketing, and the head of humanities.

Matters of quality assurance are coordinated through the University Academic Support Centre which is supported by a quality coordinator and science/art co-ordinator. Students were immensely supportive of the institution and, given the challenging student recruitment situation, the courses both met and exceeded their expectations.

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

The Expert Panel met with a range of external social partner representatives of three social partners and five graduates including one designer/artisan/artist based in Belarus (via video link), alumnus/alumna graphic designer, a curator and critic, and a Professor of Textile Art. They commented on their contribution to online discussions, and their involvement in the 'Common Ground' project involving partnerships with other designers and artists in Iceland, Poland, and Lithuania. They discussed a variety of projects including scholarships, technology and knowledge transfer opportunities, and the development of stronger links with Lithuanian culture and society. Stakeholders are also involved indirectly in surveys, and the student voice, and are aware of the Moodle virtual learning environment. However, the Expert Panel could not identify strong collaborations between students and staff to enhance employability-focused programmes and curriculum advancement.

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

EHU reviews programme information for the purposes of analysing study performance in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of its courses in order to develop improvement strategies. Key trends in the evaluation of teaching are discussed and decisions regarding steps for improvement.

Public information about EHU's activities (in Russian, English, and Lithuanian) including study programmes, admission requirements, and qualifications are available on the [University website](#). Internal University information designed for the EHU community is located in the virtual learning environment via 'Moodle' and 'Google Drive'. Further, Student opinion is collected through student and annual study satisfaction surveys conducted each semester.

Graduate opinion is obtained through the EHU Alumni Association, and annual alumni meetings and EHU graduates are invited to participate in Open-Door events. Further, employer opinion is sought by visiting graduates' workplaces and monitoring placement duration. Employer opinion is also sought via professional/industry competition and through the defence of theses evaluated by design specialists.

Programme evaluations are published on the website of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and the [University website](#) and improvement strategies also constitute strategies for improvement. Programmes continuously evaluate and update the expected study results and since 2018, the design programme committee has updated study plans. However, there is a lack of clarity in expressing the role, function, and system of the University as a place of free thinking which could be strengthened through diversifying the range of programmes in the first and second cycles offered by EHU.

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

Student surveys about subject quality and teaching are conducted every semester with summarised data made public on the [University website](#). Departmental heads and lecturing staff receive individual evaluation data about the quality of studies and the evaluation of various individual components of studies and environments. Survey results indicated that design students viewed material base, study materials in the Moodle system, communication of lecturers with students, and assistance provided by the faculty administration to students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Clear and effective quality assurance mechanisms.
2. Student and graduate feedback and collation of information from social partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of articulation of the role, function, and system of the University as a place of free thinking.
2. Lack of maturity in developing robust student/staff partnerships for the purposes of programme/curriculum development with regard to employability.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Core definition: Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

1. The ethos of the institution and its clarity of message regarding freedom of expression is a real strength. The university has created an environment which provides the opportunity to engage in the big ideas of contemporary society.
2. The flexible learning environment should be commended, it is a place that encourages creative risk-taking regardless of location.
3. The access to online support in its broadest sense via Moodle, digital portfolios, and the wider digital environment is excellent.
4. The clearly transformational impact of creative education in developing confidence and enterprise in students.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	The EHU creative ethos, combined with a strong practice-based culture makes for a well-developed intellectual environment that provides an excellent locus for students. However, evidence of design problem-solving could be strengthened and opportunities to showcase student works through exhibitions, work displayed on walls throughout the campus, and the creation of a more visually stimulating learning environment would make for a more vibrant creative learning space.
Links between science (art) and studies	The city-based academic context is an excellent environment for the study of design and its relevance to culture, industry, commerce, and the entire workings of a city and its galleries, museums, architecture, transport networks etc. However, there is a need to develop closer cooperation with art and design professionals and for the institution to be more confident in promoting its rich learning environment across Lithuania, and internationally through greater emphasis on its teaching, research, and culture of intellectual free thinking and design problem-solving. The suggestion is to create a more vibrant visual environment that portrays interest and excitement to a visually literate audience. More clarity on languages of instruction and a strategy for increasing the use of English could help to attract a greater international staff and student cohort.
Student admission and support	There is a clear student-centred approach to assist and support students throughout their student journey. However, the institution should aim to develop its international recruitment potential beyond existing markets.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	EHU has maintained a strong and influential link with its students and alumni and has an excellent range of learner support mechanisms to ensure students perform to their best ability. However, the University could help with arrangements of creative space for individual use or group work of students which would improve their self-management and learning assessment skills. Further, EHU should consider systematic tools for self-reflection or additional tools for self-studying that were not presented in the SER or during meetings. The university should also investigate opportunities to strengthen links with other institutions, organisations, the community sector, and industry/business locally, nationally, and internationally.

Teaching staff	The academic context and the celebration and development of the European intellectual tradition and the array of visiting artists and designers from other institutions in Europe are to be commended. However, the low numbers of students and staff recruited from elsewhere in Europe and beyond and the establishment of meaningful exchange partnerships, which otherwise would strengthen and develop a more 'European' culture within EHU's academic setting.
Learning facilities and resources	The institution should consider a studio-based allocation for students to allow greater peer learning and to create a better sense of belonging to a creative environment. This may also be achieved through partnerships with external organisations.
Study quality management and public information	EHU should investigate ways of making the institution more visible (its creative learning culture and design programmes) particularly given its uniqueness and reputation. They should also develop more robust student/staff/social partner feedback systems regarding curriculum/programme/employability development. It is recommended that EHU reflects on its design discipline programme titles and strategies for diversifying the number of programmes in the first and second cycles.

VI. SUMMARY

European Humanities University (EHU) makes an important contribution to the Lithuanian higher education landscape in that it is an exemplar of an independent scholarly institution supported by the Lithuanian government that contributes to the intellectual and academic freedom of students from across and beyond the country. The teaching and learning ethos as presented in the self-evaluation document promotes independent learning and research and encourages a higher level of thinking and scholarship.

The University possesses a strong creative ethos and practice-based culture, fostering an intellectually rich environment that benefits its students. However, there is room for improvement in terms of enhancing design problem-solving skills and providing more opportunities for students to showcase their work through exhibitions and campus displays.

Additionally, EHU's city-based academic context offers a favourable setting for studying design and its connection to various aspects of culture, industry, and commerce. To fully capitalise on this advantage, closer collaboration with art and design professionals, as well as more assertive promotion of EHU's learning environment both within Lithuania and internationally, is needed.

Creating a visually stimulating learning environment and clarifying the language of instruction, with a focus on increasing English usage, would attract a more diverse staff and student population. EHU demonstrates a student-centred approach and provides effective support mechanisms, but efforts to expand international recruitment beyond current markets should be made.

The institution has maintained strong ties with its students and alumni and offers comprehensive learner support. However, facilitating access to creative spaces for individual and group work would enhance students' self-management and assessment skills. EHU should also establish systematic tools for self-reflection and additional self-study resources.

Strengthening partnerships with other institutions, organisations, and industries locally, nationally, and internationally would be beneficial. While EHU celebrates the European intellectual tradition and hosts visiting artists and designers from European institutions, there is a need to increase the recruitment of students and staff from outside Europe and establish meaningful exchange partnerships.

Implementing studio-based learning and fostering partnerships with external organisations can promote peer learning and create a stronger sense of belonging to a creative environment. EHU should explore ways to raise its visibility, particularly emphasising its unique creative learning culture and design programmes.

Furthermore, developing more robust feedback systems involving students, staff, and social partners regarding curriculum, programme, and employability development is recommended.

Reflecting on the titles and diversifying the range of design discipline programmes at different academic levels should also be considered.

EHU requires support to develop its academic mission through investment in resources to strengthen its creative and entrepreneurial spaces. Its currency accommodation requires investment to develop and extend its outstanding work in promoting free thinking, creative independence, and high-level intellectual rigour.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery