



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of PHILOLOGY
at Vytautas Magnus University

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Report language – English

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Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>English Philology</i>	<i>Language and Culture of Francophone Countries</i>	<i>Italian Studies and Romance Languages</i>	<i>German Language and Communication</i>
State code	6121NX039	6121NX043	6121NX045	6121NX001
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (4)	Full time (4)	Full time (4)	Full time (4)
Credit volume	240	240	240	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities
Language of instruction	English	French	English	French
Minimum education required	Upper secondary education	Upper secondary education	Upper secondary education	Upper secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	1997	1996	1997	1996

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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 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 HEI*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 15 - 17th May, 2023.

Prof. Dr. Irina Moore (panel chairperson), *Linguistics, University of Wolverhampton (UK)*
Prof. Dr. Liviu Lutas, *French Literature, Linnaeus University (Sweden)*
Prof. Dr. Karolina Prykowska-Michalak, *Polish Literature and Culture,, University of Lodz (Poland)*
Ms. Erika Lasovskyte Frittoli, *Representative of Social Partners, Freelance translator*
Ms. Viktorija Lankauskaite, *Student Representative, PhD candidate in Art Studies programme, Kaunas University of Technology*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Examples of final year thesis
2.	Course plans
3.	Description of the procedure of the validation of learning outcomes
4.	Programmes improvement plans

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD OF PHILOLOGY BY LANGUAGE AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Vytautas Magnus University (referred to in this report as VMU) is a public (Liberal Arts) university in Kaunas, which was originally established in 1922 and re-established in 1989. It currently has approximately 8,800 students taught by approximately 550 academic staff members (<http://www.vdu.lt/en>) (accessed 19.05.2023). The University is managed by a University Council, the University Senate, and the University Rector. It has fourteen faculties, and defines its mission as follows: “to uphold humanist culture, avoiding limitations of narrow, highly specialised studies, and remain the hotbed for intellectual sophistication and civil consciousness” (<http://www.vdu.lt/en/about/mission>).

This report evaluates the Study Field of Philology by Language, which is one of seven study fields offered by the University. It consists of four study programmes: English Philology, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, Italian Studies and Romance Languages, German Language and Communication (1st cycle). Each is a four-year, 240 ECTS credit programme, leading to the degree “Bachelor in Humanities”. These programmes are administered by the Department of Foreign Language, Literary and Translation Studies at the Faculty of Humanities.

The goals of these study programmes are to prepare Philology (by language) specialists with a broad range of knowledge and competences in the chosen main language and another foreign language. Graduates of these programmes should be able to apply acquired skills in a variety of professional spheres, as social and cultural cooperation between Lithuania and other EU countries is constantly expanding. Therefore, the graduates of these programmes should be able to meet the needs of the labour market where competent multilingualism is required (international businesses, tourism, hospitality, translators, etc.). Another possible career path is foreign language teaching. The English Philology programme prepares its graduates to teach English as a foreign language in secondary schools. The other three programmes enable graduates to teach in informal language teaching schools. However, if graduates complete a pedagogy course, they acquire a teacher qualification and can teach in secondary schools.

Overall, the programmes are designed to combine academic and professional skills required for employment in chosen specialities by language. Their importance to the University and to society is based on the growing needs for linguistically and culturally educated specialists, capable of working in multilingual national and international contexts.

The programmes are also enriched by the activities of the Faculty's research centres (e.g. The Centre of Francophone Countries, The Centre of Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication, The Centre of Computational Linguistics, etc.)

The study programmes English Philology, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, and Italian Studies and Romance Languages have been last evaluated in 2016, whereas the study programme German Language and Communication has been evaluated for the first time during current evaluation.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the study field *Philology* 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	27

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The four Bachelor's degree programmes in the field of Philology by Language: English Philology, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, Italian Studies and Romance Languages, and German Language and Communication are run by the Department of Foreign Language, Literary and Translation Studies, belonging to the Faculty of Humanities. The Department was established in 2016, as a result of internal restructuring and merger of two former departments (English Philology and German and Romance Languages and Literature).

The programmes have a wealth of experience of delivering tuition in the field of Philology for a number of years. They were originally registered as follows: English Philology (in 1997), Language and Culture of Francophone countries (in 1996), Italian Studies and Romance Languages (in 2012), German Language and Communication (in 2017). The aims and outcomes of all study programmes (SPs) are clearly stated in the SER (SER, pp. 8-14) and in Annex 4. SPs aim to prepare language specific philology specialists (plus another foreign language) with a broad range of knowledge, skills and competences in the fundamentals of linguistics, literary studies, translation, intercultural communication, history and politics of the respective language related countries and prepare graduates for work connected to these areas or for further education on master level.

During discussions with staff and students the panel learned that the differences in the entry level language competency, also shape specific aims and outcomes in each programme. For example, the students in the programme English Philology have a good command of English, whereas the students in the other three programmes have to study the chosen language from the elementary level. Therefore, the aims of these three programmes include provision of chosen language competency to C1 level. In addition, each study programme has its own distinctive language and country specific modules, discussed further in the report. Moreover, the difference in the entry level language competency has an impact on one other aim and outcome, namely, the ability to teach the chosen language as foreign. The aims of the English Philology Programme include preparation of teachers of English as a foreign language, who are able to teach in secondary schools. The other three programmes enable graduates to teach in informal language teaching schools only. However, the panel notes that there is a discrepancy between our findings and the content of the SER, which states "that students of both English Philology and Italian Studies and Romance Languages study language teaching methodologies" (SER, p. 9). This seems to be a factual error, as our examination of Annex 4 Relationships Between Study Program Goals, Study Results and Study Subjects (Modules) reveals that

Learning Outcomes and Aims section for the SP Italian Studies and Romance Languages contains no Learning Outcome (1.6) (Annex 4, p.18), which is present in the section for English Philology (Annex 4, p.4) related to the graduates' ability to understand and describe teaching/learning principles and methods and apply them in practice.

In addition, the panel would like to note that the SER states: "there is a severe shortage of foreign language teachers throughout Lithuania, including Kaunas and Kaunas County" (SER, p.16), but the teaching methodology module is compulsory only in two programmes, namely English Philology and Italian Study and Romance Languages. Our discussion with students has also highlighted their wish to have compulsory teaching related modules in all SPs.

Despite the factual error in the SER, and the above information gleaned from students, the panel believes that all SPs offer a good balance of theoretical and practical knowledge of appropriate depth and intensity for BA level, with an emphasis on gradual accumulation and complexity of study matter, and therefore, are comparable to similar programmes in European universities. This impression was supported by the panel's discussion with students, social partners and alumni, as well as the information in Section 4 Studying, Student Performance and Graduate Employment of the SER (SER, pp. 55-57). In order to achieve the aims of the SPs, detailed lists of competences and learning outcomes are presented in SER (SER, pp.9-14). They are based on the academic and professional requirements and take into account public needs and the needs of the labour market. They mainly correspond with the activities performed by professional philologists and translators/or interpreters. Abilities to communicate and collaborate in intercultural and interdisciplinary social and business environments are also taken into account.

The programmes are continuously revised and updated by the Study Programme Committees and the Faculty Council in line with the institutional efforts to update the curricula to better comply with present-day needs of society. The programmes include a focus on interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship, use of modern technology and the provision of transferable research and leadership skills.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The four SPs are well designed to meet the academic and vocational needs of students. Both staff and students testified to the attractiveness of the academic offer, and to the extensive skills built by the programme. The content of the programmes corresponds well with planned learning aims and outcomes and the needs of the Lithuanian society and labour market. The study programme is compatible with learning outcomes, content and qualifications offered. The only minor suggestion of the panel is to emphasise teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all SPs.

As Lithuania continues to expand its social, cultural and business cooperation with the EU countries, there is a growing number of new multinational businesses and a noticeable growth of the tourist and hospitality industry. These areas create an increasing demand for competent multilingual communication specialists, translators, editors, media specialists, foreign language teachers, etc.

The panel came to the conclusion that learning aims and outcomes of the Philology by Language Study Field and study cycle programmes are adequately aligned with the needs of the society and labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

Mission and Vision statement of Vytautas Magnus University declares among various goals and intentions its commitment to providing “broadly themed subjects to ensure that studies offered are not narrow or restricted to specialty subjects”; creating comfortable conditions “to receive higher education, scientific and professional qualifications”; to developing international networks and intercultural dialogues” (<https://www.vdu.lt/about/mission>) (accessed 23.05.2023).

All four SPs aim at providing universal education and educating specialists according to the mission of the University. The study of Philology, by its very nature is not exclusively a language study requiring strong linguistic skills, it is also the study requiring a wide knowledge of social, cultural historical backgrounds of chosen languages and their intercultural differences. Thus, the SPs are well designed to align with the University’s Mission Statement.

According to the SER (SER, p.16), the University’s current Strategic Plan for 2021-2027 outlines five areas focusing on specific objectives, including community, internationality, academic excellence, self-governance and responsibility and openness. In line with these five areas, all SPs contain learning outcomes related to the ability of graduates “to think critically and creatively and take responsibility for personal performance and its impact on society” (SER, p.17). This was confirmed during the meetings with students, who praised the flexibility of the programmes and freedom of choice in individual study programme planning, opportunities to participate in student exchange programmes, and benefit from internships under the current bilateral ERASMUS+ agreements. The teaching staff commended national and international cooperation with various organisations, the opportunity to develop long-term international partnerships with European universities and participate in national and international research projects and underpin their teaching by latest research.

In compliance with the University mission and Strategic Plan, the panel wishes to note approval that some of the theses submitted for our consideration aimed at analysis of topics which served to strengthen the social character of the programmes (e.g. An analysis of the translation of headlines in online news portals from English to Lithuanian; Types of assessment in ELT classes in Lithuanian primary schools; Representation of Lithuania in Russian News Portal, etc.). Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the panel that it might be beneficial to encourage students to choose such topics, as many of the thesis are strictly theoretic, or dedicated to exotic topics and not related to the present day agenda of Lithuanian society.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As discussed above, the demand for well qualified multilingual philology specialists is important for both the economic and cultural cooperation of Lithuania with the EU countries and for the promotion of Lithuanian science and culture abroad. All four SPs take into account this demand and shape their aims and outcomes accordingly.

The Panel assesses the conformity of the field of Philology by Language and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives and strategy of the HEI as adequate.

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

Table No.1. Study programmes in the field of Philology by Language and compliance with general requirements for *first cycle study programmes (bachelor)*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	English Philology - 196 The other three SPs - 184
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	English Philology - 44 The other three SPs - 56
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	15
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	15
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	No less than 30%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	No less than 40%

(1) Factual situation

The current requirements have been in operation since November 2021. Detailed information on each Programme's compliance with legal requirements is provided in the SER (SER, pp. 19-23) and in Annex 3. The panel has also gleaned the necessary information during discussions with faculty administration, teaching staff, students, and alumni.

Based on the information provided in the SER and during discussions, the panel believes that all four SPs are consistent in their structure, delivery and outcomes with similar programmes

in European universities. Programmes' structure, student progression, amount of individual learning and contact hours appear to meet all relevant criteria regarding complexity, variability, and autonomy.

Curriculum design of all programmes meets the legal requirements set out for under-graduate study programmes in Lithuania. The modules are consistent with the level appropriate for undergraduate studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All four programmes are pursuant to all the legal acts of the Country and to the rules of the University.

The panel concludes that all SPs meet all the necessary legal requirements, as we understand them.

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

(1) Factual situation

Overall, the information provided in the SER (SER, pp.23-25) and obtained during discussions with staff and students, indicates that the content of modules/subjects of the programmes mostly develops gradually at different stages of studies. There is clear evidence of logical incremental progression of modules/subjects content from level to level. This corresponds well with planned learning outcomes and types of assessment. The teaching and learning methods seem to be mostly appropriate to the level of instruction, depth and complexity of assignments and difficulty of the skills being tested. These are described in great detail in Annex 1, where classroom activities and assessment methodologies are detailed for every SP.

The scope of this report and the extent of the four programmes does not allow the panel to address each one of them individually, but overall, the learning outcomes are well defined, teaching and assessment methods are coherently woven throughout the SPs levels with increasing complexity as students progress through the curriculum. It was, however, noted by students and alumni, that there is an insufficient amount of time for active teaching practice for those who chose to study teaching methodology. For example, the students brought to the panel's attention that in one of the recent teaching practices only 3 hours out of 80 were dedicated to active teaching. The panel notes that this might be an area of consideration and change, where active teaching hours are increased within the allocated amount of time.

However, this is a minor consideration, particularly in the light of the broad coherence of the SPs in terms of their structures, delivery, assessment methods, and intended learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the panel commends the coherence of teaching and assessment methods and their alignment with learning outcomes.

The panel assesses the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes is adequate.

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

(1) Factual situation

The courses of all four SPs in the field of Philology by Language (including theoretical courses, internships, and the final thesis) comprises a total of 240 ECTS and are distributed over four academic years. As all other 1st cycle SPs at the university, the programmes are organised in 2 blocks: 1) the general education university part and 2) the specialty part. Depending on the specific aims of each programme and the entry language level, the percentage of each block differs between English Philology and the other three SPs. Although, overall, the percentage for the specialty courses is much higher on all programmes. This curriculum design meets the legal requirements set out for higher education study programmes in Lithuania. The subjects are spread evenly. Generally, the modules are consistent with the level of the studies.

The contents of the subjects offered are consistent with what one should expect in an BA programme in this field. Furthermore, the contents of the subjects mostly develop gradually at different stages of the studies. After closely analysing the curriculum design and after discussions with staff and students, the expert panel noted that there is clear evidence of a logical incremental progression of subject content from level to level. The core modules are thoughtfully chosen and, as was mentioned previously, are comparable with similar programmes in European universities. They are selected to develop theoretical skills and practical knowledge compatible with the country's labour market and social needs, which allows to produce employable philology graduates.

After reading relevant parts of the SER (SER, pp.25-27) and talking to staff and students, the panel also came to the conclusion that there is clear evidence of flexibility in all SPs, as they are shaped to meet the individual needs of students and encourages them to study and use new research methods, technology and participate in student conferences and other faculty and city events.

The subjects in all SPs cover a wide range of topics within the study field. The broad and interdisciplinary character of the programmes is commendable. However, a somewhat puzzling fact in view of this is that there are no courses on topics such as language policy, language and power, second language acquisition, materials design, multilingualism, etc. These are fields that have gained prominence in recent years and that would be especially relevant in interdisciplinary SPs. Perhaps, establishing courses in some of the mentioned disciplines should be considered, possibly, in cooperation with other departments at the Faculty.

A recurring theme in the meetings was the fact that many of the students end up teaching foreign languages in different contexts, but SPs do not include courses in second language acquisition or psycholinguistics. Introducing these topics to the programmes would answer the needs of the students and also increase the relevance of the programmes to the society.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the panel is satisfied that all four SPs are solid and sustainable. They are well designed, outcome oriented, and well delivered.

They may simply benefit from minor changes in material selection and module choices to reflect new developments in language research and teaching.

The panel concluded that the totality of the field and cycle study programmes subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students is adequate.

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

(1) Factual situation

The topic of personalisation of the structure of field study programmes is something that came up frequently during various meetings and is clearly stated in the SER (SER, pp.27-29). Individual study schedule is offered university wide and is regulated by the Description of the procedure for Individual Study Schedule (SER, p.27). As the University fosters the principles of *Artes Liberales*, it is not surprising that students also have the opportunity to design their own individual study plans, which are regulated by the Order on Organization of Individual Studies and University Regulations (SER, p.27).

It was very clear from our meeting with students that opportunities to personalise their study programmes are widely available and are greatly appreciated by the students. Their positive feedback on these was unanimous. They stated that the wide choice of SPs is an opportunity in itself to personalise their study. Moreover, the choice of languages not studied at school and the opportunity to choose the second foreign language (from more than 30 foreign languages), wide range of general university study courses during the first two years of study and multiple opportunities for course selection (elective courses) throughout their last two years of study are very valuable and beneficial for their academic success and professional future.

In addition, the process of thesis topic selection also appears to fulfil the requirement for student personalisation. Although it is a guided process, students have freedom of choice of their supervisor and research area. This was clearly evident from the list of theses topics presented in Annex 2 and the sample of theses the panel had opportunity to examine during the visit.

Another commendable opportunity to individualise their study is offered by the University's *Academia cum laude*, 'which allows highly motivated undergraduate students to go beyond their major studies and delve deeper into a selected study area, working individually with renowned professors at the University' (SER, p.28). The panel heard first-hand account of a mature student who took this route and was very appreciative of this opportunity. In the panel's opinion, this is an example of excellence related to the organisation of individualised study programmes for academically capable and motivated students.

The only drawback of such a wide variety of personal choices which came up during the meeting with students is that many first-year students find the process of programme planning difficult, despite the Orientation Week and the introductory practical Training in Career Planning (AKL10111, PRC1010, IRK1006, VKD1004 offered to new incoming students by the University. It was voiced during the meeting that students would appreciate a formal form of support and advice from the SPs staff during the first few weeks of the academic year ("instead of resorting to Facebook students' group").

(2) *Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The main elements of personalisation in the four SPs, discussed above are appropriate and valuable. One element, namely, *Academia cum laude* is an example of excellence, which promotes independent further academic and future profession related research and independent critical thinking within undergraduate study programmes.

The suggestion to develop a formal support system for first year students is comparatively minor and does not detract from the overall quality of personalisation in the study field of Philology by Language. The formal support system can take different forms and the following are some examples of practices implemented by many EU universities. For example, drop-in SP planning workshops during the first 2 weeks of Semester 1. Such workshops are very popular with students and help them to familiarise with available choices in non-lecture/seminar formats.

The panel concluded that opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes is adequate.

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

(1) *Factual situation*

As stated in the SER, the procedures for the preparation and defence of final theses are regulated by the VMU Study regulations and the General Order on the Preparation and Defence of the Final Theses (SER, p.29). The specific requirements for the preparation, formatting and defence of the theses are stipulated by the faculty, the detailed methodological guidelines and assessment criteria for students are prepared by the appropriate departments. From our discussions with staff and students it became apparent that the general system of theses

coordination, its length, supervision, and defence is consistent with common practices in European universities. As was noted above (3.1.6), the process of these topic selection appears to fulfil the requirement for student personalisation. Students have freedom of choice of their research area supervisor.

During the visit, the panel had an opportunity to examine over 20 hard copies of the final theses, as well as to see the list of topics in Annex 2. The panel's conclusion is that the themes and problems addressed in the final theses are consistent with the content of SPs in the field of philology. The fact that students write their theses in the language of their programme of study illustrates a high level of fluency, linguistic and academic competence, as well as the ability to conduct research and critical analysis in a foreign language. These skills are fully compliant with study aims and learning outcomes.

As was noted above (3.1.2.), the panel expressed its approval of the fact that some of the theses submitted for our consideration aimed at analysis of topics which served to strengthen the social character of the programmes. The growing trend of theses commission by social partners deserves a particular mention and commendation.

The panel has two minor concerns. Concern number 1, Discussions with students and staff appear to indicate that there is no formal requirement for students to run their theses through an anti-plagiarism software during various stages of their work on the thesis. The process seems to be centralised and is usually conducted by the library at the stage of submission. A requirement to run a part of their thesis draft through Turnitin (or other similar service), for example, two months before the final submission deadline, could be used as a part of formative assessment to help students learn to avoid plagiarism.

Concern number 2 is that students were not very clear on ethical considerations regarding ethical considerations for theses involving data collection from live participants. The Team noted, that although there are institutional bodies and regulations dealing with ethical considerations for theses involving data collection from live participants, the students indicated that they were not aware of these considerations, or what steps to take to insure them. Consider greater emphasis on highlighting ethical considerations during the theses research proposal stage and on familiarising students with all relevant institutional documents.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel assesses the compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements is adequate.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The SPs are well designed, with a good balance of theoretical and practical knowledge of appropriate depth and intensity for BA level, with an emphasis on gradual

accumulation and complexity of study matter, and therefore, are comparable to similar programmes in European universities.

2. The analysis of the subject-specific competences and learning outcomes indicates that the programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered.
3. All four SPs have a strong element of professional skills development and, therefore, meet the academic and vocational needs of students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Increased emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all SPs would be beneficial.
2. There is an insufficient amount of time for active teaching practice for those who chose to study teaching methodology. This might be an area of consideration and change, where active teaching hours are increased within the allocated amount of time.
3. It is a concern that students do not have a formal requirement to put their theses (and other pieces of assessment) through an anti-plagiarism software during various stages of their work on the thesis. Incorporation of such compulsory practice into formative assessment during all levels of study and during final theses writing would be beneficial.
4. Consider introducing ethics considerations as a part of the theses research proposal form .

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

Research, as well as teaching and learning, appear to be the distinguishing characteristics of all SPs under evaluation. The panel's impression is supported by the information presented in the SER and gleaned during the meetings with teaching staff and administration. As stated in the SER (p. 37) and as was discussed during the interviews, the teachers in the different SPs carry out their main body of research in their respective teaching fields. In the period 2019-2021, they have participated in more than ten nationally and internationally funded research projects. Their high research qualifications are also confirmed also by the fact that many of them teach in second and third cycle programmes. As it was expressed in the interviews with both management and staff, that faculty management encourages research activities and includes them as an important evaluation point in the annual interviews that the head of the academic unit has with each teacher. Research outputs of the teaching staff are also encouraged financially by high performance bonuses (SER, p. 63). The field of Philology at VMU regularly receives very good evaluations due to the quality and social impact of its research. Moreover,

the number of scientific articles published in scientific journals cited in relevant international databases have increased in recent years, probably due to the recently implemented VMU Regulation on the Promotion of the Most Significant Research Results (SER, p. 34). Thus, it can undoubtedly be concluded that the declared principles of VMU research goals, which are interdisciplinarity, internationality and social impact, have led to the expected positive developments.

Research at VMU is structured in a highly efficient way, which gives the teaching staff clear incentives for their research related to the field of Philology by language. The teaching staff of the SPs are members of six interdisciplinary research clusters of the VMU, which receive university funding in relation to their research outcome. These clusters are (SER, pp. 35-37):

- 1) Applied Translation and Intercultural Communication Studies (with nine teachers of the SPs involved)
- 2) Multiculturalism and Language Change in the Context of Globalization (with two teachers of the SPs involved).
- 3) Multilingual Competence Development (with four teachers of the SPs involved)
- 4) Digital Language Data and Intelligent Technologies (with six teachers of the SPs involved)
- 5) Migration and the Diaspora Studies (with one teacher of the SPs involved)
- 6) Links Between Literary Texts and Cultural Processes (with one teacher of the SPs involved).

Besides the University research funding, the researchers in the field of Philology have access to external national and EU funding, for instance for the project Promoting Cooperation between Foreign Baltic Studies Centres and Lithuanian Research and Study Institutions and for the COST project European Network for Web-Centred Linguistic Data Science. The panel's discussion with staff revealed that many of them actively participate in research conferences. This is also supported by the information provided in the SER, where it is stated that even during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2022), the staff organised several international and national academic conferences and participated in the scientific and organising committees of these conferences (SER, p. 37). Several teachers of the SPs are appointed experts of different national or foreign scientific institutions (SER, p. 37).

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

A close look at the publications list provided in Annex 3 confirms the conclusions of the SER, that staff research outputs are of a very high national and international level. However, in the panel's opinion, without being an essential shortcoming, the international dimension is still underrepresented, even if the recently implemented VMU Regulation on the Promotion of the Most Significant Research Results (SER, p. 34) seems to lead into the positive direction. Despite this, it is the panel's recommendation to consider allocation of financial and time resources to provide wider opportunities for staff to seek publication opportunities in prestigious foreign journals and publishing houses, and especially to participate in the most important international conferences in appropriate research fields. A suggestion from the panel is to

create an infrastructure, similar to a Projects Support Office in many European universities, which could monitor international funding opportunities and help research active staff to regularly submit research proposals for external funding.

The panel notes with satisfaction that research results are publicly disseminated via various media sources (SER, p. 41). The VMU strategy of allocation of research resources, concentrating on the research clusters, seems to be efficient, probably because it encourages productive forms of collaboration between the cluster members. The accumulated research experience is impressive from all points of view. However, during the interview, there was a general feeling expressed by the staff that the time allocated for research was not sufficient. Nights, weekends or holidays are, for example, used for writing articles and other research activities. The high performance bonuses mentioned earlier in this section seem, in staff's opinion, to be rather symbolic and do not provide real incentive for active research.

The panel also learned that there is no clear sabbaticals applications/allocation system with defined time frame and open to all staff who are on permanent contracts and have three years of continuous service. The panel does not consider this as a major shortcoming, but an implementation of a clear research sabbatical system for all eligible staff would be a welcome solution and incentive, and something that the teaching staff would greatly appreciate.

The panel's recommendation is therefore to implement a clear and well defined system for research sabbaticals (see also 3.5.3).

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

(1) Factual situation

As stated in the SER, and as the interviews with the teaching staff confirmed, the teachers connect their research to the content of the courses on a regular basis, and students are encouraged to develop academic style of writing already at early stages (SER, p. 35, pp. 39-41). This can be confirmed by an overview of the curriculum and the lists of recommended reading for the courses. Guest lectures and tutorials are used regularly in the courses (SER, p. 39), something which provides diversity in the students' exposure to the latest research in the field. Students in all the SPs have participated in international research projects, such as Multilingual Student Translation Project (MUST) (SER, p. 35). Especially in the field of translation, students are regularly involved in the activities of the research cluster "Applied Research on Intercultural Communication and Translation Issues" (SER, p. 35), in which even the translators of the Lithuanian language units of the Directorate General for Translation of the EU Institutions are involved. As it is stated in the SER (p. 42) and confirmed by the interviews, students, as well as teachers, have access to up-to-date research-based knowledge, such as language resources and analysis tools needed for translation and other studies. Various textbooks, journals and research databases are freely available for their research projects.

The links between research and the content of studies are also reflected by the subjects of the

students' theses. The texts used in the contents of the curriculum, among which texts by the teachers of the SPs, are often quoted by the students in their final theses.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel is satisfied that the staff's research expertise is clearly and adequately reflected in the contents of the studies. Students are regularly and naturally exposed to the most significant recent national international research outcomes, thanks to the high research standards of the teaching staff.

The only matter of concern in this case, without being a major shortcoming, is that the link therefore becomes rather dependent on the competences of one person (the teacher), which can affect the continuity of the course over time in case of change of teachers. However, the connection of the staff to research clusters, where several teachers share the same expertise field, can be used as a solution in some cases.

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

(1) Factual situation

The most relevant and successful ways of getting students involved in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle are their participation in annual student scientific conferences. As stated in the SER (p. 42), and as the interviews with both students and staff confirmed, students are actively encouraged by their supervisors to participate in these conferences, and they do it successfully. Students are also encouraged to participate in student scientific events outside VMU, and this is done in organised ways that can be particularly mentioned as positive. Information about student academic events such as conferences, seminars, webinars, training and ongoing projects is published on the official website of the University (SER, p. 42). Possibilities of connecting students' research to non-academic environments are provided in many ways, which are particularly mentioned both in the SER and in the interviews. Thus, connections with the social partners, such as political, business, and cultural institutions, schools in Kaunas city and region, the embassies and consulates of Germany, Italy, France, the USA, Canada, and other countries, cultural institutes of foreign countries operating in Lithuania, and business representations, are used creatively in different student research areas (SER, p. 38).

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel has come to the conclusion that students' involvement in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle is encouraged and achieved in competent and creative ways in the evaluated SPs.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Staff at VMU Philology conducts research at a very high national and international level, something that is constantly improving, probably also due to the VMU new strategies.
2. A large number of the teaching staff participate in VMU research clusters.
3. The staff's research results are clearly and adequately related to the courses of the SPs.
4. Access to the up-to-date research-based knowledge is provided for students in their study courses.
5. Students have many opportunities to engage in research adapted to their study cycle.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The time allocated for the staff research activities could be better structured by the management. One strategy which the panel recommends is the implementation of a clear, varied and universal system for all academic staff who are on permanent contracts and have three years of continuous service.
2. More funding would be beneficial for research, both for conference participation and article production. This can be done by actively encouraging fundraising, for instance by raising staff awareness of the Project Implementation Unit to help staff with applications for external funding.
3. Strategies could be implemented to avoid that the research content of the courses becomes too dependent on one person (the teacher).

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

Vytautas Magnus University carries out the admissions similarly to the majority of higher education institutions of Lithuania, and follows the rules set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The prospective students can apply to the university through LAMA BPO (Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions) or directly through the university. However, direct applications only allow competition for the non-state-funded places.

According to the SER (p. 44), the application score consists of: 1) the score of the maturity exam of Lithuanian language and literature (0,4 of the competitive score); 2) the score of the maturity exam or the annual grade of History, or Geography, or Mathematics, or Information Technology (0,2 of the competitive score); the score of the maturity exam or the annual grade of any subject that does not coincide with the other subjects already counted (0,2 of the competitive score); the score of the Foreign language maturity exam (0,2 of the competitive score).

Additional points can be awarded for other achievements, such as Olympiads or volunteering activities. Vytautas Magnus University itself also gives additional points to the applicants of non-state-funded places:

Applicants for state-funded places in all the study programmes at VMU are awarded additional points in accordance with Annex 326 of the description approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport. Applicants for non-state-funded study places in all study programmes of the University are also awarded additional points. In 2018, VMU applicants to non-state-funded places were awarded the following extra points: 1,5 points for the graduates of VMU *Rasa* Gymnasium; 1 point for the graduates of partner gymnasiums or secondary schools; 0,5 point for the applicants who have completed the initial military service or military training as citizens of the Republic of Lithuania; 1 point for the graduates of *Lithuanian Junior Achievement* programmes, winners of *Lithuanian Junior Achievement* competitions. The SER states that in 2019, one additional point was given to the applicants of *Language and Culture of Francophone Countries* and *Italian Studies and Romance Languages* if they have graduated from the VMU Institute of Foreign Language courses, or won the 2014–2019 translation competitions, but in 2020 and in 2021 there was no such practice.

The information about the admission to VMU is available on the University [website](#), social media accounts, and is provided to prospective students at study fairs.

The number of applicants to English Philology with first priority has decreased from 35 to 11 during the years 2018–2021 to state-funded places, and from 13 to 8 to non-state-funded places. While the numbers of other priorities are larger, they are decreasing as well (from 215 total in 2018 to 114 in 2021 to state funded places). The Language and Culture of Francophone Countries study programme faces a similar situation, with applicant numbers decreasing from 14 to 5 for first priority, and 89 to 26 for the rest of priorities (to state-funded places). The number of applicants to non-state-funded places has increased only from 2 to 3 during the evaluated period. The Italian Studies and Romance Languages also has experienced a decrease of applicants (from 13 to 9 as a first priority in state-funded places, and from 5 to 1 as a first priority to non-state-funded places), as has the programme of German Language and Communication (from 17 to 5 as a first priority to state-funded places, and from 5 to 2 as a first priority to non-state-funded places). The remaining priorities of the aforementioned programmes have also decreased. As the student numbers are decreasing, the report (SER, p. 45) names demographic situation, lack of interest in humanities, raised minimal score, and increased study fee as the main reasons for the decrease. Similar reasons as challenges (e.g., the lack of interest in humanities and demographic situation) have been also named during the evaluation meetings.

The number of signed agreements provides a similar picture. The number of signed agreements to all of the field programmes has been decreasing during the evaluated period of 2018–2021. While some of the programmes experienced some fluctuations (such as Italian Studies and Romance Languages), the numbers in 2021 are much lower than in 2018. For comparison, the number of signed agreements in English philology has decreased from 18 in 2018 to 9 in 2021 to state-funded places, and from 22 in 2018 to 6 in 2021 to non-state-funded places. Other

changes are not as significant, with the study programme of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries has experienced a decrease from 9 to 7 (2018 and 2021 respectively, state-funded places). The German Language and Communication programme has seen the most significant change with 15 state-funded places, and 6 non-state-funded places agreements in 2018, and no students in 2021 (SER, p. 45).

The admission scores have been fluctuating, but mostly due to the changes in the higher education policy. Lowest admission score in 2018 was 3,6 in the study programme of English Philology; in 2019 – 5,54 in English Philology as well; in 2020 – 5,45 in the study programme of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries; in 2021 – 5,56 again in English Philology. The highest admission score in 2018 was 8,4 in the study programme of German Language and Communication; in 2019 – 9,41 in English Philology; in 2020 – 8,72 in the study programme of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries; in 2021 – 9,41 again in the study programme of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries. This might show a difference in the preparedness of students in one group, especially, for example, in English Philology in 2019, since the programme had both the lowest admission score and the highest admission score, as well as the continuing high level of students in the programme of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries. It is difficult to compare scores between 2018 and 2019, as the minimal score was raised in 2019 to 5.4. This helps to admit better prepared students, but also influences the student numbers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The admission process is clear, follows national regulations and procedures, and does not appear to raise any major issues. The decrease in the number of students is noticeable, and possibilities to increase the admissions could be considered, yet, as the situation is similar across all of the higher education institutions in Lithuania, especially in terms of humanities, it is understandable that there are many factors influencing that.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University is able to recognise foreign qualifications, partial studies, and prior non-formal and informal learning. According to SER, foreign qualifications are recognised by the Department of International Relations. The Department follows the “Rules for the Admission of Citizens of Foreign Countries to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies at Vytautas Magnus University organised in a Non-Lithuanian Language and Paid for at Their Own Expense”, as well as the procedural acts, and information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

The crediting of the partial learning outcomes follows the VMU Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Learning Outcomes. The procedure is usually organised by the concerned faculties or academies. The crediting is based on pre-agreed equivalences, where study

agreements are set. According to SER (p. 47), the students agree on the study plan before leaving for an exchange programme, and the learning outcomes are recognised after the academic certificate from the host institution is received.

When entrants come to the university with partial qualifications, they can be recognised as part of a study programme or a course. The principles of that are regulated by the VMU Study Regulations, and the VMU Description of Procedures for the Assessment and Recognition of Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education and the VMU Description of Organisation of Non-formal Adult Education. Work activities, unpaid or voluntary work, internships, courses, seminars, projects, and other non-formal learning activities can be assessed. When it comes to the Philology field study programmes, such assessment often takes place in terms of the language skills of students. The language skills can be assessed, and the students are allowed to take higher level courses.

(2) *Expert judgement/indicator analysis:*

The procedures are clear and well outlined in the available documents.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) *Factual situation*

The University provides students with the opportunities for academic mobility. The main programme for that is Erasmus+, and it allows students to go on a half year or a year long study exchange, or on an internship, lasting between 2 and 12 months. According to SER, the university has agreements with 487 partner institutions inside the EU, and 115 partner institutions outside the EU.

Additionally, the students can go on a half year or a year long study exchange with a mobility grant provided by VMU, or with a scholarship from VMU's partner universities (173). The same scheme applies for internships, 1–3 months, to companies outside the EU.

There are also opportunities available to students for part time studies or internships (1 to 6 months) related to Lithuanian studies, the scholarship in the name of F. and L. Mockūnai supports this opportunity. Also, the Education Exchange Support fund provides an opportunity to join internships in Lithuanian education schools, Lithuanian communities, or study centres abroad (2 to 6 months).

The information about mobility is provided by the international coordinator of the International Cooperation Department at VMU, as well as the coordinator of the faculty. The information is also available on the university's [website](#), social media accounts, and intranet.

According to SER (p. 49), the total number of incoming students at the Faculty of Humanities through the year 2018–2021 was 335. For the studies in Philology by Language, 43 came from Turkey, 42 from Italy, 40 from Japan, 32 from Kazakhstan, 29 from China, 22 from Ukraine, and 20 from France. There is also a reported number of 22 full time students in the English Philology

programme, coming from Azerbaijan, Belorussia, India, Italy, the Philippines, Kazakhstan, China, Russia, Georgia, and Syria.

The number of outgoing students was 59. The most popular countries among them were Italy, Germany, France, and Spain. As in many higher education institutions, the student mobility has decreased in 2020-2021 due to the pandemic.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel concludes that the university provides good opportunities for student mobility. The procedures, and available programmes are well developed, and seem to work well. While there is a big difference among the incoming and outgoing students, meaning also financial differences for the university in terms of the exchange programmes, given the number of students in the field, the number of outgoing students seems sufficient.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The University provides a variety of support to students. Academic support includes teachers regularly consulting students, teachers and other staff helping students choose their electives, providing information about the processes at the university, events, meetings, and opportunities for personal and professional development. The information reaches students on Moodle, student portal, by email, newsletters, or is available on the website of the university, as well as announced through social media.

In terms of financial support, students can apply for a state funded scholarship before beginning their studies, both for the tuition fees, and for living expenses. Additionally, social scholarships are provided to students depending on their situation. Motivational scholarships are available to students depending on their academic achievements, and, according to SER (p. 51), around 10–12 % of the students in the field are awarded the scholarship, paid monthly. Philanthropic scholarships are also established for various student activities. The university, given a request, can also postpone the payment of the tuition fee, or allow it to be paid in instalments. The procedures are outlined in the “Description of the Procedures for Tax Exemption and Compensation” and the “Description of the Procedure for Compensation of Tuition Fees”. Furthermore, the accommodation fee can also be reduced, depending on the situation of the student, as well as their academic results. The processes of the social support and accommodation are handled by the Student Affairs Department.

As stated in SER (p. 51), psychological support is available at the VMU Psychology Clinic, the counselling is free. This has been confirmed during the evaluation visit. It was stated that VMU having psychology study programmes contributes to the psychological support for other students, as the students in higher courses can practise.

The disability coordinator at the university counsels and supports students with disabilities and special needs. The evaluation visit also helped to confirm this, as a student in need of such support participated in the meeting and was able to express how helpful it was.

Students also receive support in terms of planning their career. The Career Centre of the VMU Student Affairs Department provides advice for career planning in various ways: seminars, face to face meetings, disseminating information about job offers, and other career related activities.

According to SER (p. 51), The Students' Representative Council is also responsible for providing support and information to students across all areas, especially cultural and social activities.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel concludes that the students seem to have sufficient support in the majority of areas, although slightly dispersed, especially when it comes to the financial support. The external scholarships are commendable, but it appears that there is no university wide system to financially support more students that are doing well academically. It was noted that some of the information, especially studies related, does not reach students as widely or as effectively, as expected, especially when it comes to student representatives, and as expressed during the meetings, student and staff meetings would be useful.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

The students get acquainted with their study programme at the beginning of their studies in the "Introduction to studies" – an event designed specifically for that. The event introduces students to the University, its services, structure, relevant staff, and other processes necessary for a good start of the academic journey.

The information about the study programmes is also available on the VMU [website](#). More details about the study programme and its courses are available on Moodle. In terms of the study process, the main point of activity for students is the student portal. The students receive emails and reminders about certain actions necessary in the study portal; they also see their marks and timetables there. The information is also provided by the Student Centre.

The evaluation visit revealed that students lack some of the academic support, especially when choosing electives, as the study programmes are flexible, and allow many credits for choosing different subjects. The students appreciate the possibility to choose, but lack guidance for that. Additionally, as discussed during the meetings, most of them go directly to the teachers, which also increases their workload.

The philology field students are also informed by the Study Programme Committee. The meetings of the committee are attended by a student representative, who disseminates the relevant information among students. The students are also consulted on organisational matters by the administrative staff of the faculty.

In terms of the study process itself, teachers have a certain number of hours allocated for consultations, and advise students on study related questions.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The students seem to have sufficient introduction to their studies, and counselling along the way, but there are gaps. Students lack guidance in choosing electives, as revealed in the evaluation visit, where the use of Facebook groups and contacting people they know better was expressed as a more favourable way to learn what subjects to choose. The Team concludes that the processes could be overseen better.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. International mobility opportunities available to students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of academic guidance in terms of choosing electives.
2. Limited financial support available to 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

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER (p.7) and during the visit to the University, it was confirmed that the Faculty of Philology constantly monitors the learning process and cares about the needs of students. This is evidenced by the growing number of English Philology graduates since 2018 (SER table 1, p. 7) and the start of German Language and Communication teaching SP.

The learning outcomes of the programs of study English Philology, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, Italian and Romance Languages and Literatures Francophone countries, Italian Studies and Romance Languages, and German Language and Communication have been planned in relation to the skills and competencies expected by students and the needs of the labour market, and, importantly, have also been adapted to the programmes of individual philologies (Learning Outcomes 2, Effect 2.2. A graduate is able to compose, refer to, translate, interpret and edit texts of various genres in English, communicate orally and in writing in English (C1/C1+ level) and in a second foreign language (A2–B1 level), taking into account the intention of the communication, addressee, social environment, etc. and 2.5. A

graduate is able to translate and interpret independently, considering the particularities of the source and target languages, stylistics and intercultural communication. 3.1. A graduate is able to carry out linguistic, literary, translation and interdisciplinary research by applying acquired knowledge and practical skills.)(Annex 4 VMU).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Both the SER and the site visit provide evidence of VMU strong commitment to appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and adjusting to student needs to improve achievement of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are clear and relevant to the field of study and future employment opportunities, as evidenced by statements from students and employers and community partners. Evidence of the constant analysis of labour market needs and student expectations is the introduction of a new field of study. The newly created SP German philology focuses on business German, the German-speaking world. The validity of these educational outcomes was confirmed by employers and social partners during a visit to the University. Also appreciated by the Expert panel was the new method of teaching modern language described in SER p. 55-56 involving students in active control.

Individual work of students requires constant feedback and not only assessment it is important to introduce various methods such as feedback in written form, but also discussion of student work during consultations, team meetings where self-assessment methods are also possible.

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

(1) Factual situation

The conditions for participation of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs in the educational process were thoroughly described and SER (p.57-58).

HEI provides good opportunities for distance study, in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for Organizing Distance and Blended Studies; uses modern IT tools such as: VMU Office 365 Teams, Adobe Connect, BigBlueButton and Moodle. These tools enable distance learning, monitoring of learning progress, conducting consultations.

During the meetings with both the management team and teachers, satisfaction with the functionality of Moodle in particular was confirmed. During the meeting with staff, teachers expressed views on the usefulness of the tool which has multiple uses such as description of upcoming classes, assignments for students, assessment and feedback.

In 2021 HEI has developed the 'University of Inclusive Opportunities'; procedure, which aims to increase access to study and work by making appropriate accommodations for people with disabilities who have become members of the VMU community. (SER p. 57-58) Students from

socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs can study according to an individual study plan. There is a clear procedure for applying for an individual study program.

Students from socially vulnerable groups (orphans, students from large families and families with a low per capita ratio) are entitled to various discounts on tuition and accommodation (in University dormitories). During a visit to HEI (meeting with faculty administration) it was confirmed that about 10% of students belong to vulnerable groups and require assistance. These are not only those with physical disabilities, but also those with dyslexia and autism. During a meeting with faculty administration an example was given of a good solution to the problem of a student who was in a wheelchair and did not want to participate in the graduation ceremony because he did not want to be helped on stage. The faculty made special adjustments to the platform on the stage so that the student could be on the same level and could easily access it.

During the tour of the University facilities, the Team noted that buildings infrastructure is well adapted for disabled students and members of staff. The building of the Faculty of Philology and in the library there are various types of facilities for people with various disabilities, for example, in the library there is a special room with equipment that allows visually impaired people to read. The expert team spoke with a blind student who was very positive about the support she receives from the university, expert team also had contact with a disabled employee, again very positive about the stair elevators, wheelchair access to lecture halls, disabled toilets, etc.

The non-discrimination procedures described in the SER (p. 60) is regulated in the VMU Code of Ethics. VMU's Gender Equality Plan 2021-2025 sets out actions and measures to promote cultural and systemic change in the organisation, both at the institutional and structural levels, in order to maintain gender balance. Links to these documents are provided in SER (p. 60). During the visit to the University, a group of teachers confirmed that they are aware of the procedures enshrined in the VMU Code of Ethics, and endeavour to use (in their interactions with students, in Lithuanian) inclusive language. A member of the SER Team explained to the panel that the Lithuanian language is sensitive to masculine and feminine endings, that information for students is formulated while maintaining the division of she and he.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Both the SER and the visit to VMU confirmed the use of a number of procedures to enable the study process for various socially vulnerable groups and also for students with special needs. HEI has introduced distance learning methods and used various tools.

The University of Inclusive Opportunities procedure is new from 2021 it is difficult to evaluate its performance in 2023. The expert team recommends monitoring this procedure and responding to its performance and prompt feedback.

Adaptation of the university's infrastructure to the needs of students/lecturers with limited mobility is very good. The Team highly appreciated the adaptation of the university's infrastructure to the needs of students/lecturers with limited mobility and also other disabilities (e.g., vision). The Team also appreciated the infrastructure as conducive to people, building a good atmosphere (places to relax, places for individual work). The team greatly appreciates the use of non-discrimination – including the introduction of gender inclusive/neutral language (SER p.56 first two words).

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER outlines the following regulations introduce the pro-quality system for monitoring Students' academic progress:

1. the VMU Academic Regulations,
2. the UAM Academic Regulations there is also a Description of the Procedure for Monitoring Student Academic Progress, a procedure describing the Student Support at VMU.

The monitoring of students' academic performance and the provision of support is systematic and carefully written in the SER (p.58) includes stages such as:

- 1) analysis of students' enrolment in studies and fields of study;
- 2) analysis of the reasons for students' absences from mid-semester and final examinations;
- 3) analysis of students' grades in mid-semester and final examinations;
- 4) improvement of the organisation of studies and the implementation of measures to prevent students from not achieving the required level of academic progress.

During the visit to the university, the panel asked not only about the final semester grades, but also about the process of monitoring student performance during the semester. Unfortunately, no examples of mid-semester monitoring were given. However, SER team members confirmed that feedback results are analysed at several stages. Class evaluation is done through anonymous online surveys (previously there were paper surveys). Surveys go to the evaluation coordinator and are discussed by the administration, the SP team. The student self-assessment system is describe in the SER (p.59): "Midterm exam grades are published on the Students' portal STUDIS on VMU's intranet and discussed in class within two weeks after the mid-term exam. After the final examination, the exam mark and the final grade are published on STUDIS within three working days and then discussed at a meeting with students".

The panel asked the teaching staff about the methods of conducting self-assessment. The only answer was that self-assessment is conducted through the Moodle platform. Annex 1 indicates that most courses emphasise individual student work where the number of hours of his/her work is more than 50% of the workload (example: AKL2009. Contemporary English Teaching

contact hours 45, Independent work hours 88, another course with the same workload allocations IRK2008. Basics and Development of Translation Theories). Such courses should include a self-assessment system established with a group of students or individually. It is recommended to diversify the modes of students' self-assessment to encourage them to develop and choose the best method of self-assessment from their point of view.

Among the many methods of exchanging information on grading and monitoring academic progress, it is worth noting that the end-of-year meetings in June (information obtained during the visit to the University) are important for students and teachers to discuss (what can be improved and done better). There is also a procedure known to students (confirmed during a visit to the university) for publishing grades on the STUDIS student portal on the VMU Internet and then discussing them. SER states that in class (p. 59) Mid-semester exam grades are published on the STUDIS student portal on the VMU intranet and discussed in class within two weeks after the mid-semester exam. After the final exam, the exam grade and final grade are published on the STUDIS portal within three business days and discussed in a meeting with students. The data was positively verified during a visit to the University. The Team found out that teachers prefer feedback sent via Moodle platform or email. This method does not suit all students (information collected during the meeting with students. Students indicated that the grade itself entered in the IT system does not satisfy them because they do not know the mistakes they made. Pointing out errors and correct solutions is also a learning experience).). It is the panel's opinion that it is worth introducing different methods of feedback for students, not only the grade itself and corrections on the work. An important element is personal contact and conversation about the results of an exam or essay.

An important issue, which was voiced during the meeting with Teaching staff, is the systematic solution of the problem with students who do not attend classes and do not submit work. Each case is treated individually. Students who do not attend or do not hand in their examination papers are contacted by telephone. The administration of the department acts as intermediary between the student and the teacher, clarifying the positions of both parties and seeking the most appropriate solutions.

(2) Expert evaluation/analysis of indicators

The panel assesses that the system for evaluating students and giving feedback is generally based on European standards. Individual matters such as the systematic use of course evaluation of its methods and progress throughout the course require improvement. Not only the evaluation of assignments and papers in the middle of the semester is necessary. It is recommended to introduce a process of monitoring the effects of the course during the semester. It is recommended to introduce a broader system (not only Moodle) of student self-assessment when the SP indicates a large amount of independent student work. Student self-assessment is a method of skill acquisition and encourages students to take the path of self-development. Self-assessment methods should be determined by the SP board together with students. Students should seek the best self-assessment method from their point of view. The

feedback system on evaluations should be formalised in all SPs. It should be adapted to the students' working conditions and take place both on-line and on-site in SP council and student meetings, during courses and in individual meetings.

The panel's impression from the meetings was that feedback is primarily provided informally, through personal communication between teachers and students. This is made possible by small groups of students, and close contact between teachers and students is generally a positive feature, but it should be emphasised that this does not eliminate the need for formalised evaluation channels. The technical systems that are available at the University for data collection are not routinely used for student surveys (e.g., mid-module assessments, end-of-module assessments).

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

(1) Factual situation

In order to ensure the quality of its studies and integrate career planning models into its operations, the University has established a system for monitoring the employment and career paths of its graduates. The VMU Career Center conducts an online survey once a year of VMU alumni who graduated the year before. Through the survey, it obtains knowledge about Graduates' employment, satisfaction with their chosen career path, and the effectiveness of their completed degree program. The survey also returns attention to the reasons for lack of work, difficulties in the labour market. The results of the surveys are published in the Lithuanian version on <http://karjera.vdu.lt/apie-mus/apklausu-rezultatai/> and public folders 'Career Monitoring'.

The panel obtained a wide range of opinions from the graduates (English, German, Francophone philology) present at the meeting. Their evaluation of both the study program and the learning outcomes is positive. They are involved in the evaluation of the study program and remain in contact with their teachers. The panel notes that those present at the meeting are recent graduates (1 or 2 years). There is no data for a longer period after graduation. One person on the team of social partners emphasised that she too is a graduate (more than 2 years) of the department.

It is noteworthy that the University notes that the better employability of graduates of Francophone studies and Iranistics is due to the originality of this field of study, compared to the greater universality of English studies, also due to the greater number of graduates of this field – it is noted that they have a harder time in the labour market. In an analysis of statistical data, HEI indicates that the number of graduates from the analysed undergraduate programs who find employment in their specialty is particularly high in the second year of study. In a meeting with employers and social partners, the record in SER (p. 60) was confirmed that graduates finding jobs mainly in translation agencies, publishing houses, business companies, public schools and private language schools - indicating the merit of choosing a pedagogical specialty.

(2) Expert evaluation/analysis of indicators

The panel assesses that the information provided on the employability of graduates and tracking the careers of graduates in a particular field of philology, float European standards. The nationwide system of rump career analysis is supplemented by an internal system where career data is analysed 1 year after graduation. There is no data on longer-term indicators. During the meeting with employers and graduates, the team gathered positive information and opinions about the qualification of graduates and the systematic contact of graduates with the university.

However, the panel notes that the current ones are recent graduates (1 or 2 years). There is no data on a longer period after graduation. We do not know if this is necessary. Perhaps as an experiment, information can be obtained from graduates who have been on the job market for 3-5 years. Knowledge of changing working conditions, new tools and change management skills can be useful in shaping an SP that meets the needs of an ever-changing labor market.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a policy to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. It states, among other things: The principles of academic integrity are formulated in the VMU Statutes, Code of Ethics, VMU Procedures for the Prevention of Plagiarism, VMU Academic Regulations. It is also worth noting that there is VMU Gender Equality Plan for 2021 2025, which outlines actions and measures to support cultural and systemic change within the organisation, both at the institutional and structural levels, in order to maintain gender balance (SER p. 60). The regulations describe procedures to be followed in the event of: dishonest student behaviour observed during an exam or class; plagiarism. The SER focuses on describing the procedure to be followed in the event of dishonest behaviour on the part of a student observed during an exam or other assessment, and the procedure for preventing plagiarism at VMU. In order to prevent plagiarism, non-postrenal measures have been implemented in classes where students are informed about proper citation styles, requirements for using sources and academic ethics. Procedures and requirements with relevant examples are also included in the course descriptions on the Moodle platform, so they are widely available. HEI does not state in the SER the cases considered of violations of the principles of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination, and decisions made during the last 3 years of study.

(2) Expert evaluation/analysis of indicators

As a result of the SER analysis and the meeting at the VMU, the panel took away positive information regarding academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination procedures. It was noted that HEI is emphasising plagiarism prevention by introducing methods of citation,

footnoting, etc. into teaching, as well as giving wide access to IT tools to help assess what is and is not plagiarism.

The panel takes into account that due to high standards, HEI cannot demonstrate statistics on violations of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. But it can probably analyse individual cases and solutions applied in the field of violations of the principles of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as decisions taken in the last 3 years of study.

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

(1) Factual situation

HEI has procedures for filing and handling appeals and complaints at various levels of university operations, starting with the Regulations, Regulations for Appeals of Learning Outcomes Assessment, Assessment Procedures, Procedures for Prevention of Plagiarism SER (p. 61) provides links to documents describing these procedures. A visit to the university confirmed the use and functionality of these procedures and the familiarisation of both students and academics with them.

(2) Expert evaluation/analysis of indicators

HEI has standard procedures for submitting and handling appeals and complaints regarding the assessment process or Evaluation of Learning Outcomes. It is recommended to indicate the number of appeals or situations requiring reassessment of the student's work. The introduction of a double assessment system not only for bachelor's theses but also for larger theses/final essays increases the sense of reliability and neutrality of the student's work assessment.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Adapting study programmes and other conditions to the needs of students (not only the lack of barriers related to mobility),
2. Use of modern IT tools for monitoring student learning progress, their assessments and feedback from teachers,
3. Good evaluation of the competence of graduates by employers and social partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Monitoring graduate employment lasts a tick for 1-2 years after graduation. If this time area provides satisfactory data then it is not a weakness.
2. The procedure for assessing student performance should be formalised and unified: students should have a clear idea of how they will receive their feedback e.g. a written grade, corrected errors and short written commentary on evaluation criteria provided

in an approved document template through Moodle and a possibility to discuss their work in person during the office hours with the professor. Various methods of self-evaluation should also be introduced not only through moodle but also personal meetings and team meetings should be taken into account.

3.

The monitoring of learning outcomes should take place in the course, and that is probably the facts. So it is not necessary to monitor learning outcomes in student surveys.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The SPs are delivered by the staff who meet national legal requirements (the Law on Higher Education and Research), the University's Statute and the 'Description of Minimum Qualification Requirements for Academic Positions of VMU Teachers and Researchers in the Humanities' (SER, p. 63).

Teaching and research staff are recruited by public tender on a competitive basis, whereby qualifications, subject expertise and research activities are considered. In addition, teachers are recertified every five years.

According to the SER (pp.63-64) and Appendix 3 (List of the Teaching Staff in the Study Programmes) the SPs in the field of Philology by Language are implemented by 39 teachers. 69% of the teaching staff hold a scientific degree in the relevant fields, 12 are Professors (31%), 9 - Associate Professors (23%), 5 Lectures with PhD degree (20%), 6 Lecturers (1 PhD student) and 7 Assistant Lecturers (1 with PhD degree, 1 PhD student), four of whom are foreign assistant teachers/trainees.

The qualifications and skills of the teaching staff are regulated by "General Requirements for Conducting Studies at HEI", which stipulate that "at least 50% of undergraduate subjects at the university must be taught by scholars" (SER, p.63). This requirement is more than fulfilled.

Considering the nature of language studies, it should be noted that 12 members of staff are foreigners, native speakers of relevant languages. In addition to language courses, many other courses in the SPs are taught by visiting teachers and trainees from foreign universities and foreign-funded institutions (e.g. German Academic Exchange Service, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, etc.).

The members of the academic staff implementing all four SPs are highly qualified specialists in relevant fields and many are active researchers with a wealth of research experience, members of national and international professional associations with research output published in Lithuanian and foreign academic journals.

During the period under evaluation (2018-2022), there were no significant changes in the teaching staff delivering key courses in the SPs.

The student-teaching staff ratio (6 students per one member of staff) in the SPs is favourable for students' studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The academic staff implementing the programmes are highly competent and well qualified, and the number of suitably qualified staff is sufficient to ensure a smooth implementation of the BA programme and the achievement of its learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The international contacts of the teachers are an important addition to the staff contributing to the quality of teaching, supervision, assessment, and research. There is extensive cooperation with other institutions within Lithuania and abroad. The SER states that "approximately 60% of the teachers who teach specialised courses" have used mobility programmes to visit universities in the countries of their studies (SER, p.66). This was confirmed during our meeting with staff. They are well informed about existing exchange opportunities, and many improve their professional and pedagogical competences, as well as enrich their research activities by participating in academic exchanges via ERASMUS+.

The staff of the study field also benefit from traineeships outside ERASMUS+ programme, in Lithuania and abroad (e.g. training sessions the Lithuanian Translation Unit at the Director-General for Multilingualism of the Court of Justice of the EU, traineeship in Germany, etc.). During the meeting the teachers shared their experiences of such traineeships and gave very positive feedback on how these opportunities enhanced the quality of the courses they teach and their own competences.

Another aspect of academic mobility is the 'inward' mobility, i.e. the consistent efforts of the SPs management and teachers to create opportunities for inviting foreign lecturers and researchers to teach on SPs courses. During the period under evaluation 53 foreign lecturers and representatives of various international institutions participated in the study process of all SPs.

Since 2018, the Department of Foreign Language, Literary and Translation Studies has been active in the application process for funding visiting lecturers through Lithuanian Education Exchanges Support Funding. As a result, 2 professors from the USA taught on a variety of courses within the English Philology programme. Such 'inward' mobility helps to establish contacts with other institutions and colleagues, fostering professional relationships, building international research environments, and enabling collaborations.

'Outward' and 'inward' exchange visits within the academic and project-based activities create favourable conditions for the teaching staff to enhance and expand their competences, which in turn, inform their teaching and development of SPs. The SER (pp.66-67) and the information gleaned during the meeting with teaching staff provided concrete examples of how such activities translate into development of courses with the SPs and, therefore, benefit the students.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel concluded that there is very clear evidence of a variety of mobility opportunities for staff, who use them actively.

There is a strong sense at the Department of the connection between academic mobility and effective teaching, learning and research, and evidence of a vibrant academic community. As a result, the quality of both teaching and research is high by international comparison, giving students a very beneficial intellectual and social environment in which to develop.

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

As it is described in the SER (pp. 67-69) and confirmed during the meeting with teaching staff, the University provides ample opportunities for professional development of teaching staff. Such opportunities are carried out by the University's Professional Competence Development Centre and are regulated by the "Description of Principles for Professional Development of Academic and Non-Academic Staff of Vytautas Magnus University". Professional development activities are grouped into three types of competences:

1. general competences (in foreign languages, intercultural communication and cooperation, management)
2. professional competences (didactic, digital, research-focused subject related, etc)
3. personal competences (personal development, time management, etc.) (SER, p.68)

The range of topics and areas of training activities indicate that teaching staff of the SPs have sufficient conditions to improve their competencies. Indeed, it is commendable that a number of training sessions on distance learning, video lecturing tools and using Moodle were well attended by the teachers of the four Philology programmes (approximately 67%).

Academic staff are expected to spend at least 20 hours (for 1 full-time position) per academic year on professional development activities. The scope and variety of professional

development programmes and training events is vast, and staff have opportunities to develop appropriate skills and subject knowledge to enable them to support, encourage and monitor students effectively. However, the courses and activities offered by the University are not mandatory and there is no system to keep track record of staff training. Moreover, it became apparent during the meeting with staff, that often they feel overwhelmed by various responsibilities and the lack of time to fulfil their training obligations effectively.

However, it deserves a special note, that most members of staff were very complimentary regarding professional skills development during ERASMUS+ training visits (Staff mobility for training). 14 teachers working in the four SPs participated in such visits between 2018 and 2022.

It was also noted during the meeting, that the practical professional competence of the teaching staff is improved by gaining in giving public lectures, presentations and engaging in cultural and educational projects.

Staff research competences are mainly improved by presenting at national and international conferences and conducting their field related research projects, writing and reviewing articles, publishing and editing books, serving as members of editorial boards, etc.

Every 5 years the competences of the teaching staff are assessed as part of the recruitment process, but the main assessment criteria are research based.

It is a major concern of the panel that there is no clear, varied and universal system of academic research sabbaticals to enable all eligible staff to fulfil their research obligations and training, particularly, taking into account heavy workload of the teaching staff.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the University provides good conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff, who partake in many training events and activities, despite heavy teaching and administrative load.

However, the Team notes that the following improvements might be considered:

1. To reduce additional load, a streamlined points system of events might be implemented. Some training courses could be obligatory, some optional and available via online staff training platform, which staff can access according to their availability.
2. A clear system of varied sabbaticals for research active staff should be also considered to provide much needed research time, and, therefore, further develop their research competencies and output.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The academic staff implementing the programmes are highly competent and well qualified, and the number of suitably qualified staff is sufficient to ensure a smooth implementation of the BA programme and the achievement of its learning outcomes.
2. There is a strong sense at the Department of the connection between academic mobility and effective teaching, learning and research, and evidence of a vibrant academic community. As a result, the quality of both teaching and research is high by international comparison, giving students a very beneficial intellectual and social environment in which to develop.
3. The University provides good conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of all four SPs.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is no clear flexible sabbatical system for all eligible staff.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The university has a variety of facilities available to staff, teachers, and students. According to SER (p. 71), the general courses usually take place in the central buildings of the university. In terms of the field of studies, most of the related courses take place in the Faculty of Humanities. The faculty is located in a recently built building, providing students with up-to-date infrastructure.

The university has 46 computer classrooms (from 6 to 31 working places), as well as 13 classrooms for video conferencing. The rooms have the necessary equipment, such as computers, projectors, and other multimedia equipment. During the pandemic, Adobe Connect, Microsoft Teams, and Big Blue Button have been included as part of the available resources both on campus, and for students to use from home. For the study field programmes, 20 licences of *SDL Trados Studio 2017 Professional* and 20 licences of *SDL MultiTerm Extract* software are available at the faculty.

The main learning platform used at the university is Moodle. For providing information about the studies, the students' portal and the teachers' portal are used.

The buildings of the university are adapted for students with disabilities. Special lifts, and wheelchair elevators are available, as well as close parking spaces. Libraries have specially equipped workplaces; lecture halls are equipped with special furniture. Dormitories have special rooms and provide a caretaking service, if needed. More specifically, at the library, the students can use JAWS 14 for Windows, Win Taker Voice 1.6, SuperNova Magnifier, a tactile printer ESYS 40 e-Braille, TOPAZ XL XD 24 stationary video magnifier, and other equipment. Additionally, keyboard, computer mouse, height adjustable desks, and ergonomic chairs are available (SER, p. 72). The concerned students, as revealed during the evaluation visit, especially value such support and accessibility.

In terms of learning and practising outside the university, the social partners are engaged in this process. The companies the university is in contact with provides internship opportunities. The SER notes the use of the translation software, as well as other material resources available in different companies as one of the benefits of such practical learning.

The students of the field programmes have two modern libraries available in different buildings. The main library is located in the faculty's building, and has 637 workplaces (196 of them – with computers, others – for using personal computers). The libraries also have a variety of working spaces in terms of group and individual work, discussions, and rest. According to SER (p. 72), some of the library sections are open 24 hours during the exam sessions.

As per data provided, in 2021 the library held a collection of 1 million printed documents. Almost 300,000 of them are available in the open-shelf collections. Apart from that, there are almost 890,000 electronic resources (454,000 e-books, 37,000 e-journals, 398,000 conference proceedings, audio recordings, and other documents) and 62 licensed databases available, accessible through the University computers or EZproxy service at home. The resources relevant to the field study programmes include around 120,150 documents on the premises, and 96,740 electronic documents. Additionally, for the study field, the faculty also has a collection of BA theses, and books, and periodicals related to Philology. Academic and fiction books in Italian, German, and English (Department of Foreign Language, Literary and Translation Studies), and French (VMU Centre of Francophone Countries) are available to students and staff.

The university, in terms of databases available, provides access to Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Cambridge Core, De Gruyter, Ebook Central, Science Direct, EBSCO eBook Academic Collection, JSTOR (Arts & Sciences, collections I, II, III, IV), KTU Press electronic books, Oxford Journals Collection, SAGE Journals Online, Scopus, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, VGTU Press electronic books, Wiley Online Library (Social Sciences and Humanities collection), and others. Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), In Cites Benchmarking & Analytics (Clarivate Analytics), In Cites Journals and Highly Cited Data (Clarivate Analytics) citation-based research analytics tools are available, as well as Endnote and RefWorks reference management tools. The library also provides training on their use.

For recording and disseminating their own research, the university uses their own Research Management System CRIS, opened in 2019. According to SER (p. 73), the system at the time comprised of more than 69,000 publications, over 21,000 digitised diploma theses and dissertations (ETD), and almost 35,000 e-documents.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis:

The infrastructure, facilities, and resources available to students are outstanding. The panel agrees that the library services available, with their collections, and support for researchers and students, are a great asset to the university. Highly commendable are the efforts to adapt the facilities and processes to students and staff with disabilities and special needs. Different available work places, furniture, and equipment, especially the tactile printer, are impressive, and valued by the people using them. The evaluation visit revealed that the processes implemented work not only on paper but in practice as well.

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

According to SER (p. 76), the university upgrades computers and purchases new projectors every year (and about 20 % of all computers are upgraded each year), based on the yearly plans.

The necessary updates of the needed informational resources are found out through applications submitted to the libraries by the teachers. The teachers and subject librarians are communicating with the faculties, departments and teachers regularly. The website of the library allows for teachers to request new material.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Large collection of resources available.
2. Infrastructure adapted to people with disabilities and special needs.

(2) Weaknesses:

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3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

(1) Factual situation

As it is described in the SER (p. 79), the University has a structured quality assurance (QA) system with assigned staff and resources for its performance, monitoring and implementation.

The University follows major European standards and guidance, national legislation and university level documentation in order to carry out QA processes which lead to changes and improvements in the study field. The QA procedures and documentation are presented on the university website¹ and, as evidenced during the meetings with the SER group, teaching staff, administrative staff and students, the stakeholders are aware about the possibility to participate in the QA process.

It is specified in the (SER p. 79) and in the Quality and Recognition section of the HEI's website (see the link provided in the previous paragraph) the QA process is carried out according to a QA procedure approved by the VMU Senate. The major structures and assigned staff involved in the QA and decision making in relation to the quality in the study field include the **Faculty Council** (supervises the QA over the entire study field, discusses QA matters and approves development and improvement plans once a year, during spring semester), the **Study Programme Committee** (coordinates the implementation of the study programmes and ensures the quality in regards to study content, meets twice a year), the **Dean of the Faculty** and the **Head of the Department** (supervise the quality from the administrative point of view, approve study schedules, oversee the use of facilities, dissemination of information, manage the workload of teaching staff, oversee student registration, and documentation of studies).

One of the most important structures in the QA process, as described in the SER (p. 80) and confirmed during the meetings, is the **Study Programme Committee (SPC)**. Alongside its main function – the implementation of the study programmes – the SPC is responsible for internal evaluation and evaluation of study quality. It also prepares and implements the quality improvement plans. The committee usually includes teaching staff, social partners, students and sometimes alumni. As it was confirmed at the meeting with the SER group, the student representative is recommended by the student body depending on the academic achievement of the candidate and how active they are. To be considered for the inclusion into SPC, the student is expected to have an average grade above 8. It is considered that they can give substantial feedback if they study well. Other candidates are suggested by the Head of the Committee, and approved by the Dean. Social partners are included in the SPC by invitation. The committee holds meetings once per semester, usually at the end of the semester. The QA functions of the SPC include internal assessment, implementation of developments or improvements of the SP, and monitoring of the QA process.

The SPC performs an **annual analysis** of the SP by looking at the information from surveys, focus groups and interviews with the stakeholders, and examining the results of the external assessment. The surveys and other methods for feedback collection are organised on various levels (university, faculty, SP) and focus on various aspects and target audiences (first year students, exit surveys, employer surveys, alumni surveys etc.). The SPC then discusses the results of their analysis with other stakeholders (students, alumni and social partners) and, based on the analysed information and the discussions, prepares and implements the **annual SP improvement plans** (provided to the Team upon request for additional information). The plans are approved during the meetings with the Faculty Council (usually in spring semester)

¹ <https://www.vdu.lt/en/about-vmu/quality-and-recognition/> (accessed 14 06 2023)

and the implementation of those plans is discussed during the SPC meetings (once per semester as mentioned above). The improvement implementation is also coordinated with the administrative staff. In addition, the decision making in relation to the QA involves other departments such as the Study Department, International Relations Department, Library and others when necessary.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the QA process in the study field, in the opinion of the panel, is structured well, with clear procedures and documentation published on the website and easily available to the stakeholders and the public. It has a clearly defined management and decision-making bodies. However, the panel found that the process of SPC formation could be made more transparent by introducing a clear set of criteria for different groups of stakeholders and by putting in place a clear procedure for the SPC formation. Although this is not an essential shortcoming, the panel believes that this enhancement will significantly contribute to the overall smooth flow of the QA process and its outcomes.

The QA process includes regular data and feedback collection through various stakeholder surveys, focus groups, interviews and other methods depending on demand. The panel confirmed the stakeholder awareness and participation in the QA mechanisms described in the SER.

The annual improvement plans, made by SPC and approved by the Faculty Council are detailed with assigned responsibilities, clear connections to the surveys, well defined timelines and described results. However, the SER didn't specify how these plans are communicated to the stakeholders and, as the panel observed during the meetings, the students were not aware of how this part of the QA process is organised.

The timeline of internal assessment (annual analysis of the SP), SPC meetings for improvement implementation and QA monitoring (twice a year) and annual Faculty Council meetings for major decision making (once a year) is clearly described. However, the panel found that there were no mid-term surveys and that it would be a good additional measure in order to ensure flexibility and high quality standards in the SPs.

It was evident from the SER and during the site visits, that the HEI has allocated adequate attention and necessary resources to the effective management and development of the study field. Therefore, it is fair to say that the HEI seems to be providing efficient and effective quality maintenance oversight for all evaluated SPs. The panel evaluates this area as adequate.

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

(1) Factual situation

As it is described in the SER (p. 81-82) and confirmed during the site visits, the stakeholders can participate in the QA process through participating in various **surveys**, focus groups, interviews and other data collection methods put in place by the HEI, and through their work in the **Study Programme Committee** (SPC).

All the groups of stakeholders the Team has interviewed during the site visit were aware of various surveys (i.e. first year student survey, exit survey, alumni survey, employer survey etc.) and some confirmed that they were encouraged to participate. The HEI covers a wide array of questions relevant for the QA in these surveys as described in the SER (p. 81–82) and as confirmed by the information published on the HEI’s website.² In addition to surveys, HEI employs other forms of data gathering, such as focus groups, interviews, meetings and round-table discussions.

Student surveys, as it is specified in the SER (p. 81-82) and confirmed during the meetings with students, are conducted at the end of each semester and focus on teaching and learning quality e.g. organisation of the teaching process, clarity of the study material presentations, clarity of evaluation criteria, quality of the academic feedback, the use of Moodle in the study process, student involvement aspects, and ethical compliance. The students are also asked about their workload and time management issues e.g. timely completion and submission of course work and assignments, attendance, and self-evaluation. In addition to the general QA surveys, the HEI has put in place the first year student survey (conducted at the start of the second semester and asking about the student motivation behind the choice of programme and their expectations) and the exit survey (conducted at the end of study programme and asking about the final papers and readiness for the labour market). The results of these surveys are summarised and published online. During the on-site visit, the Team was able to confirm that the students participate in student surveys and that there are different types of questionnaires for different purposes.

During the on-site visit, the **teachers** identified the Department and the Faculty meetings as their main channels for providing feedback and suggestions in regards to QA and improvements. The HEI has also launched a survey for teachers at the university level in 2020³ which covers the teaching process, professional development, student involvement, and teaching conditions. The survey has since been improved, and from 2021 it is conducted by two methods – a questionnaire and a non-structured interview. However, the Team found no evidence of the SP-specific survey for teachers. In the opinion of the Team, it would be a beneficial improvement in the QA process as it would allow the teachers to provide SP-specific feedback that would hopefully result in a better teaching-research and work-life balance.

² <https://karjera.vdu.lt/apie-mus/apklausu-rezultatai/>
<https://www.vdu.lt/lt/skelbiami-vdu-studentu-apklausu-rezultatai/>
<https://www.vdu.lt/lt/skelbiami-vdu-studiju-kokybes-apklausu-rezultatai/> (accessed 14 06 2023)

³ <https://www.vdu.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/De%CC%87stytoju%CC%A8-apklaunos-rezultatai-2021-2022.pdf> (accessed 14 26 2023)

Information from the **social partners** is collected through various surveys, during the University Career Days, and discussions around student practice, cooperation, common projects etc. During the on-site visit, social partners confirmed their active involvement in the QA process with very positive outcomes.

The **alumni** are able to contribute to the QA process through alumni surveys (conducted 12 months after graduation) and the activities of Alumni Societies. The Team has been able to confirm that the surveys are a common method of data gathering during the meeting with alumni. They were aware of the existence of the Alumni Societies. Unfortunately, none of the alumni who attended the meeting were directly involved.

In addition to various surveys and other data collection methods, one of the most important ways to get involved in the QA process for the stakeholders is through SPC. It is usually composed of the teaching staff, social partners, students and sometimes alumni. The HEI provided the current composition of each committee by SP (SER p. 80).

The **head of the SPC** oversees the QA management and organises the annual internal assessment of the SP. They promote the development and improvement by outlining the process of change and monitoring implementation of development plans.

The **teaching staff** is looking after the research field and didactics, and making suggestions for development and improvement of SPs in these areas.

As it was mentioned in the SER (p. 80) and confirmed during the meetings, the **social partners** are also actively involved in the QA process. They take part in the assessment of the SPs in regards to the compliance with the labour market needs, and provide their recommendation on the development and maintenance of the SPs. The HEI provided a list of their social partners in the SER (p. 82) and the Team had a chance to meet and discuss the details of their involvement. The social partners participate in the discussions with students on their thesis and participate in thesis defences. They are also active in providing additional support to students – provision of the innovative information, consultations of career opportunities and internships, invitations to their corporate and institutional events.

Students are expected to provide their feedback on QA through their representative in the SPC. The student representative helps to collect the feedback and data from their peers and communicate it to the SPC. They are also expected to communicate the outcomes of the SPC work to their peers through student bodies and/or to their course mates during common classes. The Team observed contrasting trends in regards to the student participation. For example, during the meeting with the SER team, the student representative didn't seem to be aware of their role in the SPC. However, a first-year student of English Philology at the meeting with students confirmed that they get information on how the QA system works and that they communicate this information to their peers. They confirmed that they are asked to participate in anonymous surveys and that teachers also ask for feedback on an ad-hoc basis. Some other students of English Philology voiced their concerns in regards to the QA process as their

suggestions for the improvement of distance learning quality hasn't been taken into account and there was no feedback from SPC or the teachers as to why. The students of Language and Culture of Francophone Countries confirmed that they are satisfied with the reaction to student suggestions. None of the students the Team met were aware of the annual SP improvement plans. Therefore, student participation in the QA raised some concerns within the Team. There are a few possibilities of this shortcoming – the expectations from the student representative are not clearly set, the communication between the student representative in the SPC and their peers is not organised and not clear, or the student participation is rather theoretical and doesn't generate expected outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, there appears to be strong involvement of stakeholders in the QA process, especially on the part of social partners, with some very positive outcomes. However, the panel has observed that there is only one SPC that includes an alumni (Language and Culture of Francophone Countries). Which leads to the point that the alumni engagement is quite low. The panel thinks that a more active and stimulating alumni community would introduce certain benefits to the QA process and various other aspects of SPs.

There has been a positive improvement in the QA process with the introduction of the survey for the teaching staff. However, they also need additional mechanisms for SP-specific QA, especially in regards to their workloads.

Although the panel has received mixed signals in regards to student participation in the QA, the system and the mechanisms are in place. The process lacks clear, more structured communication in regards to student role in the SPC and the improvement plan implementation. Clear expectations from the student representative in SPC should be communicated to them, so they are aware of their tasks and are able to fulfil their representative role. The annual SP improvement plans and their implementation with results should be made available to students in some form, so they would be aware of the implemented changes and confirm whether their feedback is taken in consideration. This would increase the motivation of students to be more active in the QA process, which would lead to the improved stakeholder participation standards and overall study quality.

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

(1) Factual situation

The QA policy and procedures are published on the HEI's website under the Quality and Recognition section (<https://www.vdu.lt/en/about-vmu/quality-and-recognition/> accessed 14 06 2023). It also includes a structured Quality manual and its concise version. So the initial university level information is provided clearly. The Team couldn't find public information on

SP-specific QA processes at the faculty level. There was no information about the QA on the humanities faculty website either.⁴

Anonymous student surveys seem to be the main source of data for the QA process. However, there are additional methods of feedback organisation e.g. discussions, focus groups, and individual conversations. The annual teaching and learning student survey results, first year and exit survey results can be easily found on the HEI's website. However, the SP-specific student survey results (or simply result summaries) are not available publicly.

In the **annual teaching and learning surveys**, the students are asked questions about the teaching and learning process, its quality and their satisfaction. Teaching is evaluated according to student response to statements (10-point rating scale) in the survey e.g. teacher clearly delivered the course, teaching was well-organised, teacher gave constructive feedback etc. The evaluation of learning is focused on the performance of the tasks provided by teachers, the attendance and general self-evaluation e.g. how many classes you attended, how many tasks given by the teacher have you completed (all, most, some, or none) etc.

Other questions are open. Therefore, the students are able to provide their positive comments and suggestions for improvement.

First year student surveys focus on student motivation, their expectations and induction, while **exit surveys** ask for information about learning outcomes, student satisfaction and employment.

The information about the studies – SPs, campuses, admission requirements, learning outcomes, and qualifications – can be easily found on the HEI's website. It was confirmed during the meetings, that this information is also presented during education fairs, career days and other similar events. Although there are VMU senate approved procedures for study QA and feedback organisation (SER p. 86), SP-specific QA related information isn't made public – there is no guidance on the QA process on the faculty website and the students confirmed that they are not quite sure as to how the QA information is evaluated, decisions made and improvements implemented within the study field. They did verify that they are formally and informally surveyed, but mentioned that they don't have any feedback on how the information is used further in the QA process. The teaching staff has verified that they have access to the student surveys and confirmed that they are involved in the QA process in terms of programme revision, delivery or other study quality matters.

The HEI provides a variety of examples of the use of collected information to improve the studies (SER p. 83–84). Some of them were confirmed during the meeting with the SER team and the teaching staff. For example, the HEI's SER team explained that English Philology SP was radically updated in 2017 to include linguistics, literature and language teaching components. The areas became more distinct. The Language and Culture of Francophone Countries SP followed recommendations of the self-evaluation performed in 2015 to expand the SP. The SP

⁴ <https://hmf.vdu.lt/> (accessed 12 06 2023)

was previously focused on France, and it was recommended to include the literature and culture of other francophone countries.

During the site visit, the students mentioned that the feedback about the QA outcomes and implementation of changes is provided on an ad-hoc basis. None of the students were aware of the annual improvement implementation plans.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

On the whole, the information about the studies appears to be well disseminated at the University level. All the stakeholders verified that they are formally and informally surveyed and that they are involved and may contribute to the improvement process. However, there is a lack of consistency and transparency in procedures in relation to SPCs on the SP level: the process and criteria on how SPC members are chosen, student roles and responsibilities in the QA process, annual improvement and implementation plans need to be structured and communicated better. This could be achieved by creating a QA section on the faculty website, providing SP-specific structure of the QA procedure (QA handbook), generating survey result summaries and providing data on the website, specifying and communicating student roles and responsibilities in the QA process. Although the panel acknowledges that this is not a major shortcoming, addressing this issue would enhance the efficiency of the QA process and increase stakeholder satisfaction.

It is the impression of the panel that SP-specific surveys of teaching staff could also be a useful method in identifying staff support measures that would contribute to the higher quality standards in the study field.

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

(1) Factual situation

During the discussion with the panel, students mentioned that they are generally satisfied with the quality of studies. They were pleased with the possibility of secondary specialisation (e.g. major in English, minor in psychology) and flexibility they have. The SPs are practical and useful, the teaching staff are highly qualified, inspiring, strict but also understanding. Some students pointed out that the environment, atmosphere and infrastructure are excellent. Most of the students were particularly pleased with the international aspect of the study field – they claimed that there are many possibilities to use the opportunities for study abroad, participate in academic events in other countries, collaborate with external stakeholders. According to some students and alumni, accessibility standards are really high with dedicated accessibility consultants in the study field.

However, students raised some concerns during the site visit. One of the most important issues for students was the study-work balance: some students mentioned that the schedules could

be improved (some days are overloaded, some empty), that it is difficult to allocate time for extracurricular activities, such as student organisations and societies. Study-work balance was also flagged in the HEI's SER (p. 85), as it creates challenges not only for students but also for teaching staff.

The panel was made aware that there was also a room for improvement in the way the student practice is structured e.g. according to some students there is around 80 hours of observation and only 3 hours of actual teaching in language teaching practice. However, they were quite happy with the information about practice placements, possibilities for internships and study abroad opportunities.

The QA process, implementation of improvements and related information seemed to be another concern expressed by students in some SPs. Although the mechanisms seem to be in place, the students were not well aware of the QA procedures – what happens after they fill in the surveys, which suggestions for improvement are taken into account and acted upon, and why.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

None of the concerns raised presented major problems. The panel finds that there is strong institutional and study programme commitment to eliciting and acting upon student needs, feedback and concerns.

The panel recommends to analyse and address the study-work balance issue at an institutional level. One of the suggestions could be to consider creating a pilot part-time SP and/or reviewing lecture and seminar schedules to avoid concentrated workloads (such as some days with too many lectures, or too many evening classes and seminars).

There is room for improvement in optimising the QA process and communication around it in relation to students. This was discussed in this report section 3.7.3 (1) and (2). However, the general mechanisms put in place seem largely successful and clear.

The panel, therefore, finds that the opinion of the field students about the quality of their studies meets expected standards.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is a strong commitment to surveying students and hearing student opinions.
2. There is an active and productive involvement of external stakeholders.
3. There is evidence that some suggestions for improvement were successfully implemented and raised the quality of studies in the study field.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There seems to be a lack of transparency and clarity of the criteria in the process of the formation of SPCs.
2. Publicity and communication about centralised QA and SP-specific QA processes – structure and procedures, roles and responsibilities, and improvement implementation plans and execution – could be improved. While the centralised procedures and mechanisms are in place, the student awareness of the whole process is low.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The main elements of personalisation in the four SPs, discussed above are appropriate and valuable. One element, namely, *Academia cum laude* is an example of excellence, which promotes independent further academic and future profession related research and independent critical thinking within undergraduate study programmes.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all SPs. ● There is an insufficient amount of time for active teaching practice for those who chose to study teaching methodology. Increase active teaching hours within the allocated amount of time. ● Introduce a compulsory use of an anti-plagiarism software during various stages of students' work on the theses. ● Raise awareness of ethics considerations as a part of the theses research proposal and
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement a better structure for allocating time for staff research activities. The Panel strongly recommends the implementation of a clear and varied system for research sabbaticals for all eligible staff. ● Encourage fundraising, by raising awareness of Project Implementation Unit to help staff with applications for external funding. ● Implement strategies to avoid too strong a dependency of the teaching and the content of the courses on one person (the teacher).
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rethink and implement better structured practices for guiding students in their elective selection process to better suit their needs. ● Actively search for additional ways to support students financially.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experimentally explore a broader time horizon, e.g., 5 years to monitor the careers of graduates ● Propose a system for frequent monitoring of learning outcomes using a variety of tools, not just electronic ones.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement a clear and varied system for staff research sabbaticals.

Learning facilities and resources	N/A
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate teaching staff surveys and their suggestions into the QA process and include SP-specific questions; • Improve communication about the SP-specific QA process, especially focusing on election of Study Programme Committee, annual improvement and implementation plans and student roles and responsibilities within the QA process. For example, place the SP-specific QA handbook with clear structure and procedures on the faculty website, summarise and publish anonymous SP-specific student survey results.

VI. SUMMARY

The evaluation visit to Vytautas Magnus University, during which the Expert panel met with the administrative staff of the Faculty of Philology, the senior management and faculty administration staff, the self-assessment team, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and social partners, took place on 15.05.2023. Overall, the visit was very well organised and presented ample opportunity for the Expert panel to become acquainted with the day-to-day management of the Study Field of Philology by Language, its curriculum design, staff and students. The Expert panel would like to express its gratitude to everyone involved in the preparation of the Self-evaluation Report, which was very detailed and clear; to everyone who gave us their valuable time during the meetings, answering our questions and showing us around the University; and to students who were eloquent, open and honest.

The panel's consensual view is that the SPs Philology by Language are of high quality. This is ensured by highly qualified, experienced and competent staff. The volume, structure and content of the programmes are closely linked with the learning aims and outcomes, and reflect staff research input. It is flexible and responds well to labour market needs. There is a genuine commitment amongst staff members, which was commended by students, who particularly noted the friendly and collegiate atmosphere in the department. The student support system is generally also very good. The library and other facilities are excellent.

The Faculty demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing the needs of society and a strong awareness of the societal value of research and engages proactively with the culture and environment of Kaunas as a city.

The Programmes' main shortcomings stem from a lack of strong emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all SPs; an insufficient amount of time for active teaching practice for those who choose to study teaching methodology; a very wide choice of optional modules and the lack of an adequate support system to monitor students' choices and self-study work; absence of sabbaticals to support staff research activities. Therefore, it was recommended that emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all SPs be strengthened and active teaching hours within the allocated amount of time increased; better structured practices for guiding students in their elective selection process be implemented; and a system for staff research sabbaticals be considered.

Other minor suggestions and recommendations could be found on p.39-40 and within the relevant sections of this report.

Expert panel chairperson signature:
Irina Moore