CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of PHILOLOGY

at LCC International University

Expert panel:
1. **Prof. dr. Marija Omazić, Expert panel's chairperson,** *academic;*
2. **Prof. dr. Josef Schmied,** *academic;*
3. **Ms Diana Guogienė**, *representative of social partners;*
4. **Ms Viktorija Lankauskaitė,** *student representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Miglė Palujanskaitė*

Report language – English

Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	English Language and Literature	MA TESOL
State code	6121NX005	6211NX003
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 4 years	Full-time, 2 years
Credit volume	240	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor's degree in Humanities	Master's degree in Humanities
Language of instruction	English	English
Minimum education required	High school diploma	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	30 August 2000	17 August 2009

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions 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 4 May 2023.

> **Prof. dr. Marija Omazić,** Expert panel's chairperson; Professor at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia;
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> **Prof. dr. Josef Schmied**, Expert panel's academic member; Professor at Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany;
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> **Ms. Diana Guogienė**, Representative of Social Partners; Head of Translation Agency „Magistrai", Lithuania;
>
> **Ms. Viktorija Lankauskaitė,** Student Representative; PhD candidate in the Art Studies programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.

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.	
2.	

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE *PHILOLOGY FIELD OF STUDY* AT LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

LCC International University is a Christian liberal arts University located in Klaipėda, Lithuania. It was founded in 1991 and was the first private higher education institution in Lithuania. LCC has 725 undergraduate and 56 graduate students, as well as over 2200 graduates. It delivers six BA and two MA programmes, of which two are in the area of philology: BA in English Language and Literature and MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

The LCC's educational model rests on the liberal arts tradition, with a strong focus on critical thinking, communication skills and interdisciplinary knowledge. It is marked by a strong international spirit, with more than 70% of the teaching staff who are expatriates, and more than 80% of students coming from 55 countries other than Lithuania.

The BA in English Language and Literature was registered in 2000 and re-accredited in 2009 and 2015.

The MA in TESOL was registered in 2009 and re-accredited in 2015.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the study field of Philology at LCC International University is given **a positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	2
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	23

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.
2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.
3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.
4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;
5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

The *second cycle* of the study field of Philology and at LCC International University is given **a positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	2
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	23

*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 BA in English Language and Literature aims conform with the needs of the labour market for experts proficient in communication and the use of English. The graduates master the English language at C1/C2 level and can act as skilled multilingual communicators. The programme also develops skills in translation, interpreting, teaching and literature. It includes courses in pedagogy and teaching methodology. Graduates are prepared to work as translators, interpreters or localizers, teachers, materials writers, assessment developers, directors of language programmes or curriculum writers, as well as researchers of literature.

The MA in TESOL focuses on second language pedagogy and research and trains teachers of English to speakers of other languages, language programme managers and the like. The programme is delivered online and in English. It meets the increased demand for teachers of English, both in Lithuania and on the global market. The graduates who wish to become certified teachers in Lithuania can complete a certification with the Vytautas Magnus University Pedagogical Studies programme since 2020.

(2) Expert judgement

Both first and second cycle programmes' aims and outcomes conform with the needs of the society and the labour market, both local and global, especially the MA TESOL programme, which trains highly competent teachers of English. The BA programme in English Language and Literature appears to provide 'all the skills and competences', but in effect it does not really provide all the competences graduates need to become certified teachers or fully competent translators and interpreters. For the programme to really do that, teaching and translation modules and courses offered would have to carry much more weight and include much more specialised content. Currently, the BA programme only offers beginner insights, but does not lead to a professional qualification of neither teacher nor translator/interpreter. The BA programme seems to produce graduates highly proficient in English, who are excellent communicators and critical thinkers, but have only a basic understanding of the professional requirements for the certified profession of teachers or well-rounded translators/interpreters. With teaching being a regulated profession, both BA and MA graduates need to obtain the Lithuanian Pedagogical Certificate to be allowed to teach after graduation. As translation and interpreting are not regulated professions, the graduates may still proceed to practise

translation and interpreting, but the training they receive in the BA programme is only basic. There appears to be some competition between the BA and MA programme, as BA students can also get certified as teachers without the need to complete the MA programme.

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

LCC offers a value-based, liberal arts education and prepares students to contribute to the society and for diverse careers by developing their transferable skills in communication, critical thinking, creativity and ethics. It promotes the Christian worldview, servant leadership, conflict transformation, multiculturalism, effective communication, community building and civic engagement, and multidisciplinarity and critical thinking.

(2) Expert judgement

The field and the BA and MA programmes' aims and outcomes are fully aligned with the mission, objectives, activities and strategy of LCC.

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

(1) Factual situation

The BA in English Language and Literature and the MA in TESOL comply with relevant national legislation regulating study requirements for all study programmes in Lithuania, and the specific study programme requirements for the field of philology.

(2) Expert judgement

The expert panel established that, even though they rest on the academic standards different from the European higher education tradition, the LCC's BA English and MA TESOL programmes have adapted to comply with relevant European standards (like using ECTS to reflect student workload) and the Lithuanian legislation and study programme requirements. The programme and course learning outcomes should be rephrased to align better with the Dublin Descriptors for each study cycle and Bloom's Taxonomy to write effective learning outcomes.

Table No. 1 BA study programme in English Language and Literature compliance to 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	120

ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	n/a
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	28%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	72%

Table No. 2 MA TESOL study programmes' compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes (master)*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	90
ECTS for the study field	No less than 60 ECTS	60
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	n/a
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	26%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	74%

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

(1) Factual situation

The BA programme in English Language and Literature aims to lay a foundation for research, build career skills in teaching, translation and literary criticism and develop critical skills. The Core Curriculum Courses are linked to LCC's institutional learning outcomes. The required English Major Courses develop programme level learning outcomes, and Elective Courses allow for the personalisation of the programme. All courses at LCC are graded on a 10 point scale.

The MA programme in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages is an advanced online programme for teaching and administrative positions, which prepares graduates to teach English all over the world, work in schools or administer language programmes. The aims of

the programme are compatible with the learning outcomes of the programme, the teaching and learning methods, and assessment for this field and cycle study programme.

(2) Expert judgement

The aims, learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods of both programmes are varied, constructively aligned and compatible. The aims and learning outcomes are clear and well-defined. The learning outcomes of particular courses feed into the programme learning outcomes.

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 BA programme in English Language and Linguistics is a four-year programme. During the 1st year, students learn how to write well in English, interpret literature from various English-speaking cultures and traditions and explain the grammar and structure of the English language. During the second year, they learn the basics of being a translator and the stories and cultures from around the world. During the third year students have a chance to train to be an English teacher, become an expert in different kinds of English writing: from business writing to creative fiction and learn to do research on how and why people use language the way they do. During the final year students move on to complete their own independent research project, gain practical experience teaching English in a real classroom, sharpen skills in translation and deepen knowledge of great stories from literature, TV, and film.

The MA programme in TESOL provides education in applied linguistics and English teaching methodology. It provides working individuals with a flexible schedule to obtain the MA degree on a part-time basis through a web-based, blended learning model. The graduates are prepared to teach English to speakers of other languages, administer and manage English language programmes and do research in applied linguistics. The schedule is structured to allow students to complete the programme in 24 months.

(2) Expert judgement

The three main components of the BA study programme (core curriculum, philology curriculum and electives) are well balanced. The content of the courses is consistent with the type and level of studies. The progression through courses each semester seems logical and feasible and ensures consistent development of student competences.

The MA TESOL courses cover all relevant SLA and methodology courses and an Integrated Skills Practicum. The content of the courses is consistent with the type and level of studies. The progression through courses each semester seems logical and feasible and ensures consistent development of student competences.

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 BA English programme is designed to allow student choice. All BA students take eight English electives (48 ECTS) and six general electives (36 ECTS), which makes one third of the BA programme. Students choose from TESOL, translation, and literature electives. Students can also define a concentration, a package of four to six courses in the field of their interests in their major or outside their defined field. Students can choose topics of research papers, essays and practicum projects.

The MA TESOL programme also allows for personalisation by selecting specific topics for research papers and class presentations, creating original curriculum projects and taking the practicum course.

(2) Expert judgement

The large share of electives, concentrations and choice of topics and projects in the BA programme allows for sufficient personalisation of studies. The MA programme, however, does not offer the electives, i.e. students need to take all the core courses. LCC should consider introducing several specific electives to allow for more personalisation and specialisation, like Teaching English to Young Learners or Teaching English for Specific Purposes.

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

(1) Factual situation

BA students complete a final thesis in philology (15 ECTS) as a year-long research project. All final theses must be in translation, literature, or TESOL. The average grades for LCC theses in BA English ranged between 8 and 9.3 in the past three academic years. The theses are formatted according to the updated thesis handbook. Most students do their BA thesis in literature, followed by TESOL and translation.

MA students complete a final thesis in philology (30 ECTS). The procedure is overseen by the MA TESOL Thesis Director. The theses are formatted according to the updated thesis handbook. MA theses are in the field of language pedagogy, programme management, studies of teachers and learners, followed by sociolinguistics, language assessment, vocabulary acquisition, and analysis of student writing.

(2) Expert judgement

The final theses made available to the expert panel comply with the field and cycle requirements, and some even exceed the standards for their level of study, which is reflected in significantly higher grades compared to BA theses in other LCC first cycle programmes. Most MA theses in the past three years are also of high quality and have received grade 10.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong dedication to the joint mission and vision of the University shared by all (students, alumni, staff, administration, senior and top management).
2. Student-centred approach to teaching, monitoring and assuring student progression.
3. Students achieve and exceed the defined learning outcomes of the programme concerning their mastery of the English language, communication skills and critical thinking.
4. MA in TESOL trains highly qualified teachers of English.
5. All courses are taught in English.
6. Student final theses are of high quality.
7. Students have many opportunities to personalise their studies.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The learning outcomes of the BA programme related to teaching and translation are at the basic or beginner level.
2. Learning outcomes are not defined following Dublin Descriptors and Bloom's Taxonomy.
3. MA TESOL does not offer any elective courses.

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

LCC follows Boyer's interactive model of scholarship, which calls for the pursuit of original research, synthesis of original research, applied research and scholarship of teaching. The number of publications by philology faculty submitted to the Lithuania Research Council ranged between one and nine per year in the past five years, and the number of accepted publications ranged between one and nine. The total number of publications from 2017 to 2021 was 24, of which 10 were published in 2021.

(2) Expert judgement

Even though the number of publications is increasing, there is still a lack of research papers published in high tier scholarly journals. The published research is mostly in the field of teaching, followed by some research in literature and no research in translation. It was not easy to discern the research effort by permanent LCC staff vs. that by part-time staff.

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

(1) Factual situation

The research of the faculty is directly incorporated in study programmes, especially in MA TESOL. The faculty also organise seminars, webinars and courses to disseminate recent pedagogical developments in SLA and teaching on the regional and international levels.

(2) Expert judgement

The research in the field of SLA and teaching methodology is relevant but scarce. There is no funded research with social partners and there are no networking or research projects LCC participates in on national or European levels. This is a serious weakness that needs to be addressed.

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

Student involvement in staff research is sporadic at best. Students do research for their final theses. English philology students launched their own online literary and art journal in spring 2020 titled 'Calliope.'

(2) Expert judgement

This is a serious weakness that needs to be addressed systematically and immediately. More opportunities for student involvement and publication should be created, starting perhaps with organising a student conference or joint publication of research papers with the faculty. Launching the student journal 'Caliope' is an example of good practice in this respect.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:
1. Active conference participation increases visibility of LCC staff and research.
2. Dissemination of knowledge to regional schools.
3. Vision and Strategy for the Further Development of Research Activities (2018-2020).
4. LCC research budget.
5. Launching the online student journal 'Caliope'.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Project involvement and funding, especially at the European level, is still lacking.
2. Research and publication requirements for staff and the results achieved have improved but are still below the expected European standards.
3. Research is not equally developed across all fields.

4. Monitoring research output and quality should be more fine-grained and include standard metrics (citations, impact factors, H-index, journal rank), benchmarks, indicators and regular and systematic reporting.
5. Student and social partner participation in scientific research is sporadic at best.

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

LCC is a privately funded university, and according to SER, a majority of its students are not Lithuanian, or citizens of the EU, so the admission process differs from other Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions that conduct their admissions through LAMA BPO (Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions). Lithuanian applicants can use the service, as they are eligible for state funded places, but, as the SER states, no students who applied for studies at LCC through LAMA BPO got state funded places during the period of 2019–2021. The reason given is the decrease in funding and the increase in student applications.

The application score for LCC consists of: 50% – grades from the secondary school over the last three years in Mathematics, History, Native and English Languages; 20% – English proficiency test scores (TOEFL, IELTS, CPE, CAE, or Duolingo); 30% – interview with LCC admissions staff. The interview, based on a semi-structured interview schedule, takes place with two representatives and lasts for 30–40 minutes. Precaution against bias is taken by training the staff annually. The students also must write a short essay in English and submit it to the admissions staff.

Depending on the score and the results of the admission procedure, the acceptance to the study programmes is flexible in the following ways: according to the SER, students may be "conditionally" accepted, but need additional studies or exams, such as the LCC Skills and Knowledge Test that assesses the applicant's skills in quantitative reasoning, algebra, statistics, reading, and writing. Students who have good grades, and do well in the interview, but could do with improving their English language skills, are given an opportunity to join PRIME (Pre-requisite Intensive Module in English) – a full year programme aimed at building academic English language skills of students in preparation for BA studies. In case the acceptance is difficult to decide, the English philology faculty rate the applicant's essay, and add the results to the overall admissions score.

The table below, provided in SER as well, shows the statistics of the admissions to LCC BA programme.

Table 3. BA Admission data to LCC over years 2019–2021

BA English	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total applications submitted	29	31	40
Total applicants accepted	23	23	21
Total students enrolled	18	13	16

As shown in Table 3, the number of applications over the evaluated period was increasing, while the number of accepted and enrolled students fluctuated. None of the accepted students received state funding.

The admission scores are fluctuating only slightly. The Table 4 below, also provided in SER, shows that the average admission score remains steady, while the lowest score is decreasing, and the highest score is increasing.

Table 4. BA Admission scores during 2019–2021

Admission Scores	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lowest admission score	71	66	61
Average admission score	83	86	84
Highest admission score	94	95	96

The admission to the MA programme differs, as the BA or equivalent study results are included. Thus, the application score for the admission to the MA TESOL programme consists of: 40% – interview, motivation letter, application; 30% – university grades; 20% – 2 letters of recommendation and other supporting documents; 10% – English proficiency test scores (TOEFL iBT, IELTS, ACADEMIC).

After the application is complete, the MA TESOL programme director and admissions staff conduct an interview with the candidate, where, similarly to the BA process, following a semi-structured interview, with the aim to learn about the candidates' academic success, their professional goals, and how they are compatible with the goals of the programme. The candidates are also able to ask questions during the interview.

Additionally, according to the SER, when acceptance is difficult to decide, the prospective students are required to do a read/write task, designed by the MA TESOL faculty and the Director, to test the students' English proficiency further, and more in-line with the requirements of the programme. This way, the selectivity rate increased.

Table 5. MA Admission data to LCC over years 2019–2021

Admission numbers for MA TESOL students in the past three years MA TESOL	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021

Total applications applied	17	17	24
Total applicants accepted	6	8	14
Total students enrolled	3	8	13
% Applications applied/ accepted Acceptance rate (selectivity)	35%	47%	58%
% Applicants accepted /enrolled	50%	100%	93%

As visible from the table, the number of MA applications over the years has increased, as well as the number of accepted and enrolled applicants. None of the accepted applicants received state funding.

The score of the applicants to the MA programme is indicated in the table below (No. 6), the minimum score at LCC is 70%. The lowest admission score fluctuated, while the average admission score decreased, and the highest score increased.

Admission scores for the MA TESOL program Admission scores for the MA TESOL program	**2018-2019**	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**
Lowest admission score	88 %	72 %	75 %
Average admission score	92 %	86 %	83 %
Highest admission score	95 %	94 %	99 %

The information about the admissions procedure, both for BA and MA programmes is available on the LCC website.

(2) Expert judgement

Since the admission process to LCC is different from other HEIs in Lithuania, the university has to make sure that their procedures are as clear to the entrants as possible, and that they are able to avoid bias. LCC seems to do well in this regard. The process and criteria are clear. Additional safeguards when the decisions are difficult also seem to be well thought out and functioning.

The only note for BA studies in terms of admission numbers would be a rather big gap between the accepted students and the numbers of agreements signed. There might be a number of

different reasons for that, but maybe some possible safeguards can be investigated to make sure that the effort of the admission staff does not go in vain. It is understood that the numbers themselves are enough to maintain the desired faculty/student ratio, but the interviews and the markings still take place before the acceptance, and require time and effort, so it would possibly be more rewarding to see the students actually join the university once they are accepted.

For the requirements of the MA study programme, the 2 recommendation letters seem extensive, as the majority of doctoral programmes in Lithuania require 2 letters of recommendation as well, but if it works for the university, and helps to make sound decisions, the practice does not necessarily need to be looked over.

In terms of scores, while it is difficult to compare the admissions scores nationally, the trends (slight fluctuations, decreases, increases) seem to be manageable both for BA and MA studies.

Additionally, for BA students, the availability of the PRIME programme is also commendable, as it allows students to work on their English skills more intensively, and for the university to have better prepared students in the future. Such a model is different from other HEIs in Lithuania, and seems to provide great results.

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 recognition of foreign qualifications for both BA and MA programmes works the same. The internal policy at LCC "AC.5.05 Internal Rules and Regulations on the International Mobility Activities of Students" describes the process of transferring credits acquired in mobility programmes. According to SER, LCC students, prior to mobility, choose the courses at the host institution and agree on their suitability with the Center for International Education (CIE) at LCC. Once returned, the students submit the transcript of records issued by the host institution. The recognition of credits is based on ECTS in the courses at LCC. The number of students participating in mobility programmes and having credits transferred during the years 2019–2021 were 26, 26, and 8 respectively.

LCC also assesses prior learning and is able to recognise non-formal learning acquired through work experience. The procedures for that are explained in the Academic Catalog, and are based on the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science "On the validation of general principles for the evaluation and recognition of non-formal and informal competences in higher education". According to the SER, during the evaluated period there were no applications to recognise non-formal learning received.

(2) Expert judgement

LCC follows clear procedures and criteria.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

LCC provides students with opportunities to participate in exchange programmes for studies, teaching and training; the agreements exist with 78 partner institutions. The mobility of students is managed by LCC's Center for International Education. The exchange programmes available to students include Erasmus+ for mobility in Europe, and LCC's International Exchange Programmes for studies in Chile, China, Georgia, Indonesia, and Japan, South Korea, and North America. The process is outlined in "AC.5.05 Internal Rules and Regulations on the International Mobility Activities of Students".

The information about the mobility opportunities reaches students by email, in informational sessions and presentations, and is also available on the LCC's website, intranet, and social media platforms.

The numbers of students participating in international mobility programmes, however, is low, as only one student went on an exchange in academic year 2018-2019, one in 2019-2020, and no students in 2020-2021. There was only one incoming student in the BA English study programme, coming from Spain in the Fall semester of 2019-2020.

The MA TESOL students study online from various countries around the world, but they are still able to participate in different exchanges. However, there have been no outgoing students in the MA programme, and there have been no incoming students through the Erasmus+ programme, LCC provides an opportunity for students to guest study in the programme, and there is a TESOL Graduate Program Certificate established. Guest students can choose up to 4 online MA TESOL courses for credit and the credits can be included in a degree at LCC, or transferred to another institution. Two students have used this opportunity.

(2) Expert judgement

The process of mobility for students is clear, there seem to be a lot of opportunities provided, yet, the numbers of students participating in the exchanges are low. One of the reasons for this, as revealed during the site visit, is that a lot of students at LCC are already international students, who possibly feel like they are on an exchange already. However, this should not discourage students from international mobility. On the contrary, the experts think that in the spirit of the international university, LCC should promote the opportunities for exchange more, and encourage students to step outside their experience in Lithuania. Even if that is not the main goal of the university or the evaluated programmes, the numbers of students participating in exchange programmes should still be higher.

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

Academic support is firstly available in the PRIME (Prerequisite Intensive Module in English) programme, aimed at improving academic English language skills before the first cycle studies. The students learn academic writing, reading, note taking, and other language-based skills.

Academic support is also provided by LCC's Student Success Center (SSC). The centre welcomes students for tutoring in different subjects, such as mathematics, Lithuanian language, writing, and other individual topics, as necessary. The tutors are student peers and trained volunteers. Students can register for private tutoring sessions in advance over the open link. BA English faculty conduct workshops for the tutors, and help to consult students. The teachers are also available for consultations, and any academic support when needed.

Financial support is available in a number of ways. Firstly, the Student Financial Services Office manages 14 merit-based scholarships available to well performing students. According to SER, one outstanding student in the BA English programme can get a scholarship to cover 50% of the tuition fee. The students can also apply for the Presidential Leadership scholarship that covers 100% of the tuition fee. Needs based aid is also available, and the Student Financial Services Office distributes around 340 000 Euros to students in need. Students can also apply for Global grants, as well as Middle East Scholar grants. Lithuanian students can also apply for Lithuanian government funding. A more specific financial help comes from McQuaig Deferred Payment Plan that offers interest-free funds to students, as well as Micro loans from LCC for summer work and travel. According to SER, about 56 students take loans every year, and overall, about 62% of all LCC students receive financial aid. LCC also provided all students with a 10% tuition discount in 2020-2021 because of the COVID pandemic. When it comes to the MA study programme, alumni of LCC who study in the MA TESOL program are granted a 10% discount.

Students are also encouraged to apply to work and travel programmes to earn funds, as well as apply to be employed on campus, in positions such as receptionist, library assistant, or assistant. During the evaluated period, 15 students of the BA programme were employed.

Social and personal support is available to students through a number of programmes, such as the Residential Life Program, aimed at community building in the dormitories; the spiritual Life Program, offering opportunities to explore faith, and experience Christian community and its spiritual activities; the Intercultural Program that encourages intercultural communication and community building among students with different events and activities; and the Leadership Development Program that allows students to improve their leadership skills.

The psychological support is provided through individual counselling. Three trained specialists are available for all graduate and undergraduate students on campus, to consult about personal, emotional, developmental, and social issues, as well as to provide trauma care if necessary. Additionally, the staff and students can participate in stress, anxiety, depression management, mindfulness, and resilience workshops.

Additional practical support is provided in terms of migration and employment matters, as the Migration office provides help to international students with legal documents, and the Career centre provides consultations and guidance in career development, and employment, such as CV and motivational letter writing, and career coaching.

MA students get additional support in the Summer Residency Sessions that are aimed at introducing students to the community of LCC, and the academic skills necessary for the studies, such as Moodle, academic writing, and Thesis preparation.

(2) Expert judgement

The support provided to students at the university and the evaluated programmes is commendable. The students are well taken care of in a variety of ways. Mental Wellness week mentioned in the evaluation meetings is especially impressive, as well as the Student Success Centre, where students can improve not only academically, but personally as well.

LCC and its attention to students' wellbeing should be an example to all the universities in Lithuania.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

At the beginning of their studies, the students of LCC are introduced to the study process in the following ways: 1) a three-day introductory programme "first year orientation" takes place before the first semester begins. There the students are introduced to the university facilities, resources, and life at campus. 2) incoming students join a one-semester First Year Seminar, based on peer education where older students meet groups of new students, and introduce them to the university learning process, provide them with self-development skills, as well as encourage their learning outside the classroom. Academic advisors, usually also instructors in the programme, attend training sessions each year, to be able to advise students in the best capacity. Students are also able to consult their professors directly.

The sufficiency of the study information and study counselling is measured in Senior student surveys, where they get a chance to respond about the sufficiency of advising. According to the SER, the results show that the majority of students are satisfied with the available counselling, although a decrease can be seen in 2020 and 2021, which is explained by a number of services moving online because of the pandemic.

(2) Expert judgement

The students, as stated in the SER, and discussed in the evaluation meetings, have sufficient academic support, have enough study information, and student counselling available. The teachers and other staff seem to put in a lot of effort to take care of the students both in terms of their studies, and in their personal development.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Different types of support available to students, and focus on students' well being.
2. PRIME programme.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Low international mobility numbers.

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

In accordance with North American liberal arts traditions, the BA SER provided by LCC promises to "go beyond … traditional in European universities" (p. 32). All modern language learning and critical thinking concepts are mentioned and referenced in an exemplary textbook style that would be ideal for any modern university programme: high-engagement, student centred; demonstrate not only knowledge and comprehension, but also higher-order thinking such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, empower, facilitate, share teaching methods that actively engage the students' minds, etc.

To ensure these principles in practice, "The Department chair reviews all syllabi, and regularly discusses assignments and assessments with the faculty". Even more: "A chart of how each SLO is assessed in each of the BA English courses is provided in the Appendix 5 entitled: *Assessment Methods of Student Learning Outcomes of required English courses."* (SER, p. 33).

Self-critical problem awareness is demonstrated in the BA SER (p. 33): "grading can be subjective; therefore, time tested, well defined, holistic, and analytical rubrics are used to validate the given assessments".

The principles described in the BA SER are similar (partly identical) in the MA TESOL SER. This Program is taught basically online except during the Summer Residency Sessions, where faculty and students meet in person, in classrooms. This is the opportunity when North American senior professors come not only to teach, but also to discuss program revisions and development issues.

Formative and summative assessments are monitored centrally in the online learning management system (in Moodle).

(2) Expert judgement

Experts agree that the concepts presented in the SER are a wonderful theoretical basis for teaching and learning, which should ensure a modern learning process at LCC despite the differences between on-site and online staff and individual preferences in the rapid teacher and learner turn-over.

The exemplary positive evaluation of the teaching and learning process was enthusiastically confirmed by the students in site and online during the site visit.

The list of national and international post-graduate study programs BA English graduates have enrolled in (SER p. 33-34) shows the success of the program and the good monitoring of the LCC administration.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER sections on ensuring access to all refer rightly to the Bologna 2020 Documents and the National Program for Social Integration of Disabled People. The concrete conditions were inspected on the tour through the LCC premises.

(2) Expert judgement

The conditions ensure access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. The tour round the premises with the LCC Rector made it clear that continuous funding and subsequent investment also for students with special needs are deeply enshrined in LCC philosophy and the concrete plans are admirable.

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 systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress at LCC is guaranteed by the WeCare team (SER p. 34), which deals with various student concerns in a confidential manner.

Students confirmed during the site visit that they receive weekly newsletters with support and advice.

(2) Expert judgement

The expert panel noted the strict LCC quality control, as the support is coordinated and managed by the Registrar and the Student Success Center.

The experts found the country-specific explanations of treatment of mental and developmental problems (SER p. 35) insightful and appropriate. They noticed the careful awareness of war-

affected students (Afghanistan, Russia, Ukraine) and commend LCC on the commitment to counselling services offered at LCC.

The automatic placement on Academic Probation if a student's average falls below the minimum and the resulting tutoring (SER p. 35) deserve special mention.

The strict Quality Assurance at LCC can also be seen in the systematic monitoring "to identify new instructors who are not teaching effectively" (SER p. 36).

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

(1) Factual situation

LCC mainly relies on data from Strategic Analysis Centre regarding graduate employment and Lithuania's official education management information system ŠVIS68 offering information on BA English and MA TESOL graduates' employment in Lithuania within 12 months of graduation (SER MA TESOL, p. 35; SER BA English, p. 36). In addition, programme alumni surveys are sent out to previous year graduates of both BA English and MA TESOL programmes and they include questions about employment. However, graduates often avail themselves of their right to be forgotten and do not respond.

The employment data in the SER for BA English show that the employment areas of the graduates are diverse. They go on to work as English teachers, administrative assistants, media coordinators, etc. or opt for postgraduate studies (SER BA English, p. 36). The employment data in the SER for MA TESOL indicates that the majority of the graduates are employed as teachers, and some opt for administrative jobs (SER MA TESOL, p. 35).

The SER for BA English provides employment data that covers almost exclusively Lithuanian students, with two exceptions. The SER for MA TESOL, however, provides data on a more international graduate community, and points out that almost 80% of their graduates are international students.

Neither of the SERs include evidence of graduate employment being regularly tracked at 6 months, 12 months and 3 years after graduation.

(2) Expert judgement

While data on graduate employability of LCC graduates from both study programmes is patchy, information on the opinion of the graduates on their professional training and the competences acquired following the studies is collected and provided. It was clear from the site visit meetings with alumni, employers, social partners and students that both BA English and MA TESOL programmes offer significant potential for students to succeed in the professional environment after graduation and ability to learn easily on the job. Their proactive approach, great communication skills and their goal-driven mind-set were particularly emphasised during the

meeting with the employers as the career advantages that make the graduates of the two LCC study programmes stand out among the rest.

There is no official data regarding the employers' opinion on the training of graduates or the acquired competences. However, both SERs refer to informal meetings with employers and alumni which resulted in some improvements to the study programmes subjected to evaluation (SER MA TESOL, p. 55; SER BA English, p. 55). Moreover, the site visit meeting with employers and social partners clearly showed that both employers and social partners keep in close informal touch with LCC on the matter.

Even though the basic data on graduate employment in the case of local students seems to be available, both programmes would clearly benefit from more effort to regularly collect and analyse employment data on international and local graduates equally. Yet another additional tool enabling to continuously improve both programmes would be regular employer opinion surveys, which would in particular be useful for the BA English programme in terms of improving graduate employability.

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

(1) Factual situation

All details about policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are well explained in the SER and were confirmed during the site visit.

(2) Expert judgement

Knowing the LCC principles, neither students nor staff nor experts were surprised that no violation of the "Code of Academic Ethics" and no breach of integrity was detected during the period reported, although the market-leader program Turnitin has been utilised at LCC since 2016 to ensure rigid control.

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

All procedures are monitored centrally by LCC and all possible appeals and complaints could be handled professionally and effectively.

(2) Expert judgement

All procedures seem in place – although no problems were reported in the SERs nor during the site visit.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:

1. Successful integration of graduates, especially those of MA TESOL, into the labour market.
2. Extremely positive, mainly informal, feedback on employability from graduates, social partners and employers.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Insufficient focus on regular formal graduate employability and employer surveys involving both national and international former students, with the aim to (further) improve their employability (that of BA English students in particular).

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 teaching staff working in the study field of *Philology (English Language)* at LCC International University fulfils the legal requirements. In the BA English program, 20 sections (out of 36) were taught by faculty with doctorate degrees and five (5) out of nine (9) full-time faculty hold doctorate degrees, both amount to 56% of the BA English faculty in fall 2021. In the MA English program, 11 out of 12 courses are taught by faculty with doctorate degrees, and 7 out of 8 faculty hold doctorate degrees, i.e. 91% and 87% respectively (SER BA/MA p. 41). All is above the legal 50% for BA and 80% for MA programmes.

However, LCC is unique in several ways, because it is modelled on a North American Liberal Arts College and the teaching staff is firmly rooted in this tradition.

The BA SER does not list names of teachers and indicates that eight out of sixteen are permanent with at least 3 years at LCC. Most of the junior assistant professors or instructors (including those met during the site visit) come directly from a North American liberal arts background to Klaipeda, since they can combine a European base with the Liberal and Christian North American philosophy. Most of the teachers experts met during the site visit had only joined LCC recently.

The MA TESOL SER (p. 39) lists eight faculty, all with more than 15 years of pedagogical experience. These full professors have a clear base as full-time staff at North American institutions and come to LCC only for the Summer Residency Sessions, combining teaching and program consultations. The senior staff (with one native Lithuanian exception) were briefly interviewed online and complemented the discussion with the junior staff present at the site visit on May 4th.

The MA TESOL SER lists three senior researchers: Dr. Lanteigne, who "is given research time in her faculty load and funding for research" and Dr. Ewert, who is not. "Dr. Paulauskiene is a BA (!) instructor and researcher who publishes in the field of philology related to literature. She is given research time in her LCC faculty load and funding for research". The teaching focus at LCC can also be seen in phrases like "Alongside the researchers, we have a wealth of practitioners (SER p. 40).

(2) Expert judgement

LCC is fully aware of the dynamics of researchers and practitioners and staff turnover (SER p. 42). New faculty on campus praised LCC during the site visit for making the transition so easy by helping with housing and even schooling for teachers' children and by ensuring that all became part of the community (through a buddy system).

As all faculty is hired primarily for excellence in teaching in the small community context, research in this context is certainly not easy; the central quality assurance system (represented during the meetings by the Director for Institutional Effectiveness) also encourages teachers to do research. But doing this in the European context is difficult, because most of the staff and administration links, including funding, are clearly directed towards North America.

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 SER lists provisions for faculty mobility (SER p. 42) and a (pre-pandemic) mobility in America and Europe (SER p.43). The 2022-2023 list of Productivity and Mobility made available during the site visit also shows a focus on American and Christian publications; the conference presentations included several European, but also TESOL Tashkent and many Klaipeda or online "Popularisation events and recent ERASMUS+ mobility with a partner university in Hungary. Possible criticism that "faculty have not participated often in European faculty mobility programs recently" (SER p.43) is explained by the full-time basis of faculty abroad and the pandemic.

(2) Expert judgement

The SER section "5.2.2 Systems for improving faculty competences" was noticed and appreciated by the expert panel. Although the SER distinguishes three areas for promotion, teaching, research, and service, the site visit discussions could not establish individual proportions of these activities for teachers easily, as research seems to be attempted separated from daily activities in the summer.

Overall, conditions at LCC seem excellent.

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

(1) Factual situation

The MA SER (p. 43) quotes extensively from the Ministry's "Guidelines for the improvement of competences of higher education teachers" and then presents a table as "an analysis of how the philology programs and LCC as a whole strive to boost the mentioned competencies", which is a modest beginning that states the obvious.

The BA SER includes similar plans but no publication table.

(2) Expert judgement

It remains to be seen whether the publication efforts will be more successful than the (SER p. 20) "strategic plan for increased research, entitled Vision and Strategy for the Further Development of Research Activities: A Two-Year Plan (2018-2020)": Prof. Paulauskienė's Fulbright fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley (USA) for most of her sabbatical (with no obviously related publication in Table 9, which includes 12 publications over 5 years) or the ongoing "12 Week Research Writing Workshop", networking and international mobility.

Considering these excellent conditions, the expert panel strongly encourages faculty to make a new decisive effort in increasing their publication lists (although Table 8 includes an increase to 9 publications by Philology faculty in 2021).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. All LCC faculty members are committed to excellence in teaching and the focus on personality development, which is made possible by the staff hiring practices and by the good student–faculty ratio.
2. LCC provides explicit professional development plans and support for its staff in competence workshops and even funding.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Participation in European faculty research is limited.
2. Related funding opportunities are not utilised enough (despite the strong North American background and outlook).

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

LCC's premises are spread around several well-renovated buildings, completed from 1999 to 2003, such as DeFehr Center, Neufeld Auditorium, and Michealsen Center. The premises meet

all hygiene and safety at work requirements and host comfortable classrooms and teacher offices. The staff and students of both BA English and MA TESOL can make use of numerous classrooms equipped with sound systems and web cameras, including lecture halls and auditoriums equipped with smart boards, adequate multimedia and office equipment, and 2 computer laboratories (HP Compaq 6200 and other).

The SERs say all campus buildings are covered by WiFi and LAN, however WiFi services to dormitories appear to be insufficient to meet demand during peak times of the day (SER MA TESOL, p. 45; SER BA English, p. 46-47). Since 2020, LCC has used Microsoft 365 software in offices and classrooms and SPSS statistical software in computer labs and faculty offices. No translation software is available on campus. English language and literature courses make use of Moodle.

Students can access teaching facilities and dormitories with the help of photo ID cards. Each student and incoming faculty member are provided with an individual email account. In addition, LCC operates two web-based portals with restricted login access for LCC students, staff and faculty.

On the whole, instructional facilities, equipment, and software have proved adequate for BA English programme, in particular, to achieve its programme aims and student learning outcomes. The MA TESOL students benefit from smart boards and web cameras with proper sound systems as they mainly study online.

LCC's library provides and manages learning resources in both printed and electronic format. It currently holds tens of thousands of printed volumes and titles, including a dozen thousand copies of textbooks. About a thousand new titles are added every year. There is also access to a wide range of databases, eJournals, eBooks and eMaterials, which are fully accessible to LCC students and faculty members (SER MA TESOL, p. 48; SER BA English, p. 49).

Efforts are made on the part of LCC to assure a comfortable learning and living environment for all students, including those with various special needs. LCC is continually adapting its facilities to serve these students better. Student Life staff work with these students individually to identify areas for improvement in terms of facility access. Most primary academic facilities are accessible for persons with special needs as there are lifts and wheelchair ramps on campus. Faculty offices and most administrative offices are accessible only by stairway, but the LCC library's accessibility for persons with special needs has improved recently through installation of an elevator and some special equipment (SER MA TESOL, p. 47; SER BA English, p. 48).

(2) Expert judgement

The premises for studies are perfectly adequate in terms of size and quality. The buildings are adapted to suit the needs of teaching and learning. Premises are suitable both for traditional lectures and seminars, and also for practical classes. There are several self-study spaces in the library and elsewhere on campus, including dormitories. Nonetheless, during the site visit

meeting with the students and alumni it was pointed out that WiFi connection is still a problem as mentioned among the areas for improvement in the SERs, as it definitely hinders the learning and self-study process. More self-study spaces in dormitories would be highly appreciated, too. This particularly has been noted by the site visit meeting with students.

The teaching and learning resources meet the needs of the study field's programmes, including those of students and teachers, and are largely suitable for achieving the intended learning outcomes. There is a sufficient number of lecture rooms and computers available for the training of language specialists and professional teachers, but the entire LCC community would clearly benefit from some hardware updating (more modern smartboards, computers, etc.).

Modern language learning and translator training software would be of benefit, too. Even though TRADOS could be an option for translator training (their Academic Partner programme is free…), such CAT tools as memoQ, Phrase, MateCat and OmegaT could be opted for as more accessible, but equally enabling to hone better translation skills among graduates (accompanied, ideally, by an increase in time dedicated to CAT tool teaching). Given the highly multilingual nature of the LCC student community, some modern online language learning tools like Duolingo, Mondly language learning apps and the like could come in handy.

The LCC's library resources are amazing and clearly serve as an example of excellence.

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

(1) Factual situation

Both SERs point out that plans and decisions to upgrade the LCC's existing facilities and build new ones are made by the LCC Rector's cabinet based on the input of faculty and the facilities maintenance staff. The IT Department assesses the needs of the faculty, students, and staff, and in consultation with the LCC administration decides on the necessary acquisitions and upgrades. Academic departments decide on the acquisition of new textbooks in line with their annual budgets and based on the advice from individual faculty members. Decisions about acquisition of books for the lending collection are made by the department chair upon recommendations of department members. Journal and database subscriptions are reviewed on a yearly basis to determine current or potential usage by students, faculty, and staff.

In 2019, LCC conducted an institution-wide needs assessment process regarding its major facilities, which resulted in the launch of the Flourishing Community Capital Project to provide funding for new classroom space, new Student Centre, cafeteria, new library with abundant self-study space and new faculty offices, and to make the new facilities handicapped accessible. To enable the implementation of the project, LCC plans to raise EUR 6 million in donations and grants (SER BA English, p. 50).

In addition, LCC is investing in a major upgrade of the WiFi connection on campus from their reserve funds.

(2) Expert judgement

There is evidence in the SER of strategic forward planning and upgrading of resources in general, including those needed to carry out the field studies. Library resources are regularly kept up to date and are outstanding.

LCC has an overall goal of upgrading ICT and software regularly, but would definitely benefit from reflecting the changing student needs better in terms of internet connectivity, and language learning and translation software. During the site visit, teachers asked for more new smart boards to replace the old ones that are not really helpful, and students confirmed that the WiFi connection is still rather poor. This shows that the entire community would benefit from quite a bit of technological upgrading.

The efforts to raise EUR 6 million in donations and grants to build new teaching/learning and library premises with abundant space for self-study are highly commendable. The site visit meeting with the head of LCC revealed that the amount needed to enable the capital project have been successfully collected and the construction works are about to start.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:
1. The teaching and learning premises meet the needs of the study field's programmes, students and teachers, and are suitable for achieving the intended learning outcomes.
2. Continuous improvements are made to create equal study opportunities for people with special needs.
3. The fund-raising efforts with the aim to further improve the teaching and learning facilities are commendable.
4. Management of planning and upgrading the resources is really good.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Teaching and learning resources (ICT, smart boards, virtual learning environment tools) used for the purpose of the study field's programmes would definitely benefit from an upgrade.
2. No modern language learning and translation software is available to teach and learn within the framework of the study programmes.
3. Spaces for student self-study and leisure with a reliable WiFi are clearly lacking.

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

On the institutional level, quality assurance procedures and policies are the responsibility of the LCC Rector's Cabinet (SER for MA TESOL, p. 51; SER for BA English, p. 52). LCC's institutional policies and commitments cover a wide range of quality assurance procedures, including programme improvement, solicitation of student and stakeholder opinion, academic policies, etc. Students and other stakeholders also have a role in QA.

Study programme committees are not a permanent establishment at LCC, even though there was a one-off successful attempt to form a study programme committee for the BA English programme, which resulted in some solid advice regarding the balance of theory and practice, and some overlaps in programme content. A similar attempt to form a study programme committee for the MA TESOL programme failed (SER for BA English, p. 54). Nonetheless, on the programme level, much of the quality assurance work is undertaken by department faculty under the leadership of the department chair. The SERs point out that department chairs oversee staff recruitment and performance, review course syllabi and regular student course evaluations, etc.

LCC uses a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the purpose of internal quality assurance. The KPIs are evaluated on an annual basis and the Board of Directors is presented with the results. The KPIs serve as a basis for LCC's strategic decision making. The department heads are encouraged to regularly analyse any changes to the KPIs and identify the reasons for it.

Lithuania's official education management information system SVIS is used as external quality assurance metrics alongside with the SKVC methodology for self-evaluation.

The site visit meeting with the administration revealed that LCC has a position of the Director for Institutional Effectiveness, who coordinates the compilation, analysis, and dissemination of institutional effectiveness data. This serves as an exceptional example in terms of QA at LCC.

(2) Expert judgement

The QA policies and procedures for these study programmes are, in the opinion of the panel, effective, proactive, embedded and well understood by students, faculty, and managers. They provide effective quality maintenance for the study programmes subjected to this evaluation on all levels. The programmes examined here are subjected to regular QA on the institutional and programme level. LCC clearly demonstrates willingness to examine their weaknesses and address them, including opportunities for improvement. There were no expert recommendations from the previous external evaluation report to act on in the field of QA. The SERs demonstrate that the quality assurance and quality maintenance mechanisms are appropriate and meet the requirements of the programmes.

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

(1) Factual situation

As mentioned before in this report, a study programme committee was formed for the BA English programme. The SPC involved students and other stakeholders, such as social partners, who analysed the study programme and gave feedback on its goals, curriculum and graduate preparation for the labour market. (SER for BA English, p. 54). However, a similar attempt to form an SPC for the MA TESOL programme failed. Still, perhaps more important than these formal links are the informal advice and support provided by social partners.

Nonetheless, the SER refers to regular course evaluations by students, which include questions about the quality of instruction, etc. The fact that teachers take their own informal polls and surveys during the semester is highly commendable (SER for MA TESOL, p. 55; SER for BA English, p. 55). Student surveys provide additional information allowing to improve the programmes. The results of both student and alumni surveys inform the programme, instruction and resources and are reviewed by programme directors, Director for Institutional Effectiveness and the Academic Vice President with the aim to make further improvements.

According to the SERs, students suggest improvements regularly. The opinion of social partners and alumni is also solicited in various ways, including informal contacts. The feedback is analysed each semester with the aim to improve the quality of studies.

(2) Expert judgement

LCC makes an active effort to involve students, alumni and social partners in internal quality assurance. They are all given opportunities to express their opinions and suggestions to improve the programmes. The site visit also confirmed that suggestions made by the students and the social partners have been successfully incorporated by LCC on numerous occasions.

The immense effort on the part of LCC to establish and maintain strong connections with their social partners and employers of their graduates through active participation in various joint programmes, projects and extracurricular activities (e.g. competitions, summer schools, etc.) is highly commendable. The active involvement of external stakeholders was attested by the various groups during the site visit meetings with the expert panel.

It is therefore the finding of the panel that the student and stakeholder involvement is admirable and is a strength of the programmes worth both maintaining and deepening.

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

(1) Factual situation

On the whole, general information about the structure of BA English and MA TESOL programmes and relevant admission requirements is published on the LCC website, whereas

the Academic Catalogue is there to provide additional detail on the programmes, including learning outcomes and other programme-specific data.

Information about accreditation status and results is also published on the LCC's website. Students verified that their opinion is formally and informally surveyed. The teaching staff also verified that they receive student survey results and are involved in programme revision and other programme improvement-related matters. Employers and alumni attested to being asked for their opinion during informal meetings and in the form of surveys.

No social partner, teacher or student mentioned being inadequately informed about programme data.

(2) Expert judgement

LCC appears to be generally open in the distribution and consideration of regular student surveys and external assessment and accreditation outcomes. Students and alumni seem to be well informed about the overall structure and delivery of the programmes. Still, the LCC community would highly benefit from the collection and analysis of data on international and local graduate employment.

Examples are provided in the SERs on how the information collected on the delivery and evaluation of studies is used to improve the field's studies. Improvements made on the basis of suggestions by stakeholders were attested by students and teachers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the collection, use and publication of information on the studies meets expected standards and is appropriate to the study programmes.

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

As this report has repeatedly noted, the student survey mechanism is the primary method to measure and analyse student opinion.

There are clear mechanisms to elicit and analyse student opinion by way of formal and informal opinion surveys. Students have opportunities for formal and informal feedback directly to their teachers. The student response rate in the case of BA English is high. Several courses have been designed as a result of student input (SER for BA English, p. 56). Meanwhile, the SER for MA TESOL says that LCC students are not involved with the National Student Survey as 80% of the whole student body are international students (SER for MA TESOL).

Alumni surveys are performed on a regular basis. Such surveys provide valuable insights and opportunities for programme graduates to contribute to the improvement of the study programmes.

(2) Expert judgement

There is a commitment on the part of LCC and the study programmes to elicit student opinions, comments and concerns. There is ample evidence of regular student commentary mechanisms, most notably the student surveys and informal polls. Other, less formal, mechanisms include informal discussions led by instructors or on an individual or case-by-case basis.

There is a really strong institutional and study programme commitment to act upon student ideas, comments and concerns and the site visit meetings with the student community clearly attested to that.

The expert panel therefore finds that the opinion of the field students about the quality of their studies is well solicited and acted upon, which perfectly meets all expected standards.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. There are effective QA mechanisms in place, including institutional and programme level QA initiatives.
2. There is a strong commitment to surveying students and alumni.
3. Strong strategic planning is in place.
4. The proactive position of the Director for Institutional Effectiveness allows for an additional advantage in taking quality improvements on board.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Study programme committees are not a permanent establishment in LCC, thus a more formal regular soliciting of opinion on the part of employers, social partners and alumni seems to be rather cumbersome.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

1. Diverse outreach and service activities, active community involvement which proves that LCC understands and fulfils its social role exceptionally well

2. Strong dedication to student support and student experience (student-led clubs, tutoring services, student centre, mental wellness weak, alumni mentorship programme…)

3. Team spirit and shared values at all levels: students, teaching staff, senior and top management, administration and alumni

4. Outstanding fundraising abilities to build new teaching/learning and library facilities with abundant space for self-study

5. Clearly proactive position of the Director for Institutional Effectiveness allows for an additional advantage in taking quality improvements onboard

6. Dedication and engagement of both senior programme management and top management

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	● Rephrase learning outcomes at programme and course level using Dublin Descriptors for different study cycles and Bloom's Taxonomy. ● Introduce specialist electives in the MA TESOL programme.
Links between science (art) and studies	● Consider incorporating research in your mission and vision. ● Make an action plan to join/apply for more ambitious European research and networking projects like COST, Erasmus+, Jean Monet or Horizon Europe. Monitor the implementation of the action plan. ● Introduce a more fine-grained monitoring and assessment of research output, with benchmarks, targets and measurable indicators (metrics). ● Revise the research criteria for academic promotion and make them more ambitious to stimulate more publication in high tier scholarly journals indexed in relevant databases like Web of Science or Scopus, and to increase visibility and impact of your research. ● Balance teaching vs. research vs. service workload to allow more time for research. ● Include students in research more systematically; create more research and publishing opportunities for students.
Student admission and support	● Promote and encourage international student exchanges more. While LCC is already an international university, the students could still benefit from studying abroad more.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	● Regularly collect and analyse employment data on both local and international graduates equally, in particular for BA English programme. ● Perform regular graduate employability and employer surveys, in particular for BA English programme.

Teaching staff	● Increase the number of publications, especially by the local teaching staff. ● Intensify the competence workshop program in teaching and research. ● Encourage teachers further to participate in European scientific conferences with focus on the dissemination of research results.
Learning facilities and resources	● Try out modern online language learning tools (e.g. Mondly language learning app, Duolingo, etc.). ● Try out modern translation tools (e.g. Trados, MemoQ, Phrase, MateCat, etc.). Join Trados, MemoQ and/or Phrase academic programmes to get free access to their CAT and MT tools for staff and students. ● Provide more spaces for student self-study with a reliable WiFi in the dormitories and elsewhere on the campus. ● Update older smart boards, virtual learning environment tools and computers to accommodate the changing needs of the staff and the students stemming from working online more often than before.
Study quality management and public information	● Make an effort to introduce study programme committees as permanent establishments within the framework of each study programme to facilitate the soliciting of opinion on the part of the stakeholders.

VI. SUMMARY

The Expert Panel has prepared the External Evaluation Report based on the detailed SERs prepared by LCC, the very extensive supporting documentation provided as evidence in support of claims made in the SERs and the engaging and informative discussions during the site visit, for which we thank everybody involved.

After analysing the SERs and the supporting documents and conducting the site visit, the expert panel has identified many strengths of LCC. This refers particularly to the clarity of mission and vision of the top and senior management, which is agile in responding to challenges and weaknesses by putting mechanisms in place to tackle them immediately in effective and creative ways, which spills over to all other tiers – teaching staff, students, administration and alumni. Furthermore, LCC has a diverse student body that ensures an international and intercultural study experience. Both students and alumni have expressed great satisfaction with their studies and overall experience at LCC in terms of academic achievement, skills needed in the labour market, support and residence life on campus. The integration of graduates of MA TESOL into the labour market is highly successful. The feedback of stakeholders and employers on the employability and skills of the graduates is extremely positive. At the same time, management of planning and upgrading of resources is very good. The QA policies and procedures for the study programmes are highly proactive and effective. Moreover, the fundraising efforts with the aim to further improve LCC's teaching and learning facilities are commendable, just like the immense effort on the part of LCC to establish and maintain strong connections with their social partners and employers, and survey their students and alumni. In addition, there is a strong strategic planning in place.

However, the strong orientation towards teaching excellence overshadows the research effort of LCC. This is also evidenced in the absence of research from the LCC mission and vision statements. Greater dedication to research, stronger involvement in the European research area and participation in networking and research projects (like COST, Erasmus+, Jean Monet or more ambitious Horizon Europe projects) would add value to the programme and allow for more student involvement in research and delivering research-informed teaching.

Greater focus on graduate employability and employer surveys would be of benefit for both programmes, just like the upgrading and introduction of online teaching and learning resources to better meet the needs of online teaching and learning. Spaces for student self-study with a reliable WiFi in the dormitories and elsewhere would clearly facilitate their independent learning. Moreover, the currently non-existing study programme committees as permanent establishments in LCC would definitely facilitate the regular soliciting of opinion on the part of stakeholders.

Overall, LCC delivers strong BA and MA programmes in philology and trains highly qualified graduates in English studies and TESOL.

Expert panel chairperson signature: **Prof. dr. Marija Omazić**