



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INFORMATICS FIELD OF STUDY

Mykolas Romeris University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal. On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Steven Bradley (United Kingdom), Professor in the Department of Computer Science, Durham University;
2. Academic member: Doc. dr. Torben Ægidius Mogensen (Denmark), Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Science, University of Copenhagen;
3. Academic member: Doc. dr. Jānis Pekša (Latvia), Associate Professor in the Department of Management Information at the Institute of Information Technology, Riga Technical University;
4. Social partner: Andrius Plečkaitis (Lithuania), INFOBALT association project manager;
5. Student representative: Felix Ferchhumer (Austria), Bachelor student of Informatics, Johannes Kepler University; member of ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool.

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 24 April 2024 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies)
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was a need for translation during the meeting with Alumni and social stakeholders including employers from Korea and a social partner from Lithuanian Game Developers Association.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) is a state university established in 2004 as a successor of the Law University of Lithuania. It offers 68 study programmes (24 Bachelor's programmes, 43 Master's programmes and one professional study programme), primarily (95%) in social sciences, mainly Law, Psychology, Economics, Philology, Education and Management. MRU is part of the ERUA alliance (European Alliance of Reform Universities).

Overview of the field of study

MRU started to deliver programmes in Informatics in 2014 with the Bachelor's degree programme called "Game Development and Digital Animation", which is a joint study programme with Dongseo University (DSU) in South Korea in an arrangement where MRU teaches the two first years of the programme and DSU teaches the last two years. This is currently the only Informatics programme at MRU, Faculty of Public Governance and Business and is the programme being reviewed in this report. Previously, there was a faculty of Social Informatics and the Department of Informatics and Software Systems. There is an intention expressed by the MRU top management to strengthen and extend MRU offers in the field of Informatics.

Previous external evaluations

This is the first external review of the study programme.

Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested/provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- Self-evaluation report and its annexes;
- Final theses;
- Information on students admitted with foreign qualifications;
- Data on gender imbalance.
- University Guidelines on LLM and ChatGPT;
- Data about survey results for the programme;
- DSU internship policy and example of traineeship agreement;
- Video of DSU facilities.

Additional sources of information used by the review panel

- Student [enrolment/graduation](#) and [dropout](#) statistics for MRU Informatics programmes since 2017-2018 study year (SVIS data, in Lithuanian);
- Both before and during the site visit, the review panel requested additional information, which has been provided by MRU.

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	Game Development and Digital Animation
State code	6181BX002
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full time (4 years)
Workload in ECTS	240
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Computing
Language of instruction	English
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	23 April 2014
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	Joint study programme offered together with Dongseo University (South Korea)

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the Informatics field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points [*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	2
Total:		18

1*

1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are substantial shortcomings that hinder the implementation of the programmes in the field.

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

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

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

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

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

- 1.1. Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI

FACTUAL SITUATION

- 1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

The aims, topics and learning outcomes of the 1st cycle study programme Game Development and Digital Animation, with specialisations of Digital Media Design or Game Development and Digital Animation, are clearly defined and well aligned with needs of the society, ICT/digital games and media industry and development of the job market. Information about the study programme is accessible [in English](#).

The aims and the learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of qualification and the degree offered, relevant to the game development and digital media industry, and societal trends. It is important though that the freedom of choice and broad knowledge is adequately balanced with informed choices of students to acquire specific skills required in the job market, by using environments and tasks in the coursework similar to those junior industry employees face, and providing effective internships as well as better opportunities to build a closer interaction of teaching staff and students with digital game and animation industry.

Programme graduate employment opportunities and positions/roles for graduates are well discussed in specific detail in the SER. However, they are not adequately explained in the publicly available MRU sources accessible by current or future students. Notably, in the programme description presented [online](#), there is no mention of specific jobs/positions the graduates would be able to apply for.

- 1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

The alignment of the study programme with MRU Strategic Plan 2021-2023 is clear and visible. The evaluated study programme is designed as Liberal Arts education including non-digital visual arts disciplines as well as those in social, humanities and technology domains. Such programme and study plan design provides students an opportunity to study more broadly themed rather than narrowly specialised, pre-defined subjects which is a distinctive feature of the programme. Another exceptional possibility for students is to expose themselves to a different culture and acquire an international education with a dual diploma from Dongseo University in South Korea.

Societal innovation approach and internationalisation as well as interdisciplinarity, including fine arts, are distinctive features embedded in the programme design.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of qualification and the degree offered, relevant to the game development and digital media industry, and societal trends. Societal

innovation approach and internationalisation as well as interdisciplinarity, including fine arts, are distinctive features embedded in the programme design. The arrangement of a joint study programme with Dongseo University in South Korea is exceptional and has excellent potential, however, also raises challenges in ensuring consistency and alignment of both stages in Lithuania and South Korea and a smooth transfer of students, as well as facilitating graduate internship and employability.

In terms of effectively meeting job market needs, there are no systematic ways for teachers to find out the specific expectations of the employers, and evaluations of employer satisfaction with competences/knowledge and skills of programme graduates as this has not yet been carried out by MRU. Feedback from employers (i.e., Lithuanian Game Developers Association representing potential employers) has been positive but generic.

1.2. Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The composition of the study programmes is in conformance with the General requirements of studies and the Descriptor of the study field (Informatics) for ECTS, as well as with a balance of contact and individual work. Programmes within the field demonstrate compliance relevant to the Cycle Descriptor of Study Cycles in SER. The programme - Game Development and Digital Animation has 240 ECTS.

1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

Annexes 1.1 and 1.2 to the SER generally show a good alignment of learning outcomes and methods with the overall aims of the programme as defined in the SER. During meetings, staff reported that there were adaptations to the means of assessment during the Covid pandemic, but that now the means of assessment has largely returned to the pre-pandemic situation. University guidelines on the use of ChatGPT and other large language models were helpful in guiding teachers in their assessment, and more specific faculty-level guidance is being prepared.

There was overall satisfaction with the teaching and assessment methods used, and these aligned well with the aims of the programme. Widespread use was made of team-based learning and assessment, which is appropriate to the field of study.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The programme of study has an appropriate sequencing of material to develop student competences. Students confirmed that they were generally happy with the relationship between the content of the modules offered, and that prerequisite material was appropriately introduced. However, there are weaknesses in Korean language provision, and some technical content could be more relevant to later study, e.g., in the choice of programming languages covered early in the course.

Given that the most distinctive feature of the programme is that the third and fourth years are delivered at Dongseo University in South Korea, there is not enough preparation in the Korean language to study and find internships in South Korea. Whilst the extra-curricular provision during years one and two in Korean language and culture by the King Sejong Institute was highly praised by students, not all students were aware of it and as the courses became full, they were not available to all. Development of language skills is a compulsory part of the curriculum, but this is only available for English, not Korean. This was a source of frustration to the students, and staff in South Korea as well as current students of the programme at Dongseo University have identified language issues as a barrier to student learning, particularly internships, and employment.

While internships are mandatory as a part of the study programme intended to help students gain the professional experience required for practical work, and these are only done in Korea, several students and alumni reported that internships at companies were hard to get (partly because of language issues) and that these were sometimes replaced by project work at DSU. Remote internships in Lithuanian companies while students are in South Korea are not feasible according to feedback received from the Lithuanian Game Developers Association representative.

1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

There are two main streams within the programme, offering clearly distinctive routes for students. However, there is very little flexibility to change between the streams after semester 1, even though there is no differentiation between the streams before this point. Students also reported issues about the clarity with which the differences between the streams were described, particularly during the application process.

As a minor observation, the specialisation of Game Development And Digital Animation offers a significant number of options in the 5-6 semesters which is very good. If compared to Digital Media Design specialisation, the latter only contains mandatory modules.

1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

Examples of final thesis projects were provided.

Expectations of internship results should be made more clear and, if evaluated separately from the thesis, internship evaluation criteria should include assessment of the artefacts produced during the internship. Industry representatives should be involved in evaluating internship results, whether it is taking place in the company or the Dongseo University. Actual portfolio and internships including summarising and evaluation of actual results with quantification of types and scores for internship, if applicable, have to be explained more clearly in SER.

The description of the internship module is only provided as Dongseo University's Policies for the Internship System, and its outputs are not clearly specified. From Annex 1.1, it is clear that the goal of the internship is to build the student portfolio. However, apart from examples in the SER and the final theses, there was no information provided to clearly explain what are the specific expected outputs of the student internship in terms of scope and complexity. Since the goal of an internship, whether in the company or DSU, is to gain the professional experience required for work, it is not sufficiently clear if/how and by whom the internship process and results are evaluated in case the student does not succeed in landing an internship. Evaluation criteria in the Internship evaluation form in the case of a company internship is mainly about rating the

intern's soft skills and competences. It is not clarified also if the output of the internship (i.e. computer game, or any other artefact) is also actually a part (or all) of the student's final thesis.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

There is an apparent lack of progression and alignment in some courses. For example, the programming language (Java) taught in the programming course at MRU is not used in the game engines taught later at DSU (that use C# and C++, respectively), and some students feel that they were not well prepared for the mathematics used at DSU.

There is also some discrepancy between how courses are described in the curriculum and their actual content. For example, while the curriculum indicates a choice of languages for the mandatory language course, in effect only one language (English) is available, and this is essentially at the same level as English in secondary education. And while the Psychology course was supposed to be about differences between European and Korean culture (which is only tangentially about psychology), it was in reality about making presentations (which is even less so). Thus, the programme should be updated to be more up-to-date and to have consistency between course descriptions and contents.

Korean language is available as a non-credit course at MRU, but the number of seats is too small to ensure an opportunity to learn Korean for all students, particularly given the increasing enrolment in the last two years.

Many students do not get industry internship placement. Some mechanisms for making this easier should be implemented.

The description of the internship and final thesis modules should outline the expected outputs and skills to be acquired more clearly.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. This is an innovative and distinctive interdisciplinary programme, with international study at Dongseo University in South Korea as a core part of the offering.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Development of Korean language skills should be made a part of the core curriculum in years one and two, to ensure that students are able to access all teaching and internship opportunities in South Korea.
2. A substantial improvement needs to be made in the support and availability for student internships, defining their contents and evaluation in terms of specific skills required in the workforce.
3. The descriptions and actual contents of courses should be substantially better aligned.

For further improvement

1. More attention should be dedicated to supporting students in their job orientation and monitoring the actual employment
2. Better alignment with game development and the digital media industry and its trends would be helpful.
3. Potential entrants and students should be given clearer guidance on the different streams within the programme, and more flexibility to change between streams once distinctive content has been introduced.
4. Careful consideration should be given to the choice of programming languages used earlier in the programme, to ensure that they are the most relevant to support later parts of the programme.
5. There should be more focus on providing the competences needed for later courses, e.g., at DSU.
6. The expert panel recommends that the Korean language is made mandatory in the two first years of the programme (at MRU) to better prepare students for studying and internships in Korea. The course in English can (if possible) be shortened to accommodate this without increasing the total workload.

AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

- 2.1. Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

FACTUAL SITUATION

2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

MRU researchers have published no research specific to game development and animation, and only a few in Informatics. DSU has a much better output in closely related areas, but few specifically about games and animation.

Plans for increasing international research collaboration are mentioned in the SER, but no results of this are evident at this time.

2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

Courses in animation and game development at MRU use technologies and tools that are also used in industry, including generative AI and game engines. There was no evidence of virtual reality equipment or game controllers being available for students. Courses at DSU additionally include recent research in, e.g., graphics in their teaching, and they have more modern equipment for motion capture and virtual reality.

Some students and alumni feel that the programme at MRU has not sufficiently kept up with the changes in the field of game development and animation.

2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

Students have excellent opportunities to engage in research, particularly in the final two years at DSU, through festivals, shows and lab collaborations. There is evidence of students publishing and sharing their work with the broader research community.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

Research at MRU within areas closely related to the programme is strongly lacking, and the programme is not continuously updated to follow the rapidly changing field. The situation is better at DSU. The programme and course contents should be continually revised to keep up with the changes in the field.

Students have excellent opportunities to engage in research.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Research-close teaching at DSU.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. MRU researchers should perform and publish more research in Informatics, in particular about game development and animation or closely related areas.

For further improvement

1. International research collaboration should be increased. There are steps towards this, but the results are not yet evident.
2. The programme content at MRU should continuously follow the advancements in the field of computer game development and digital animation.
3. Virtual reality equipment and game controllers should be made available to students, and instructions for their use should be provided.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1. Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

The admission procedure is described on the MRU website, with selection criteria clearly stated, both for international and Lithuanian students. The total number of students admitted to the first cycle programme has increased markedly over recent years, countering national demographic trends. Average admission scores have also increased.

3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

Learning outcomes are credited for study exchanges and subjects taken at MRU in previous studies. For all other recognitions, an extensive verification process is performed to ensure equivalence of course contents: according to the *Procedure of MRU for recognition of study credits*, up to 75% of the study can be accredited, excluding the final thesis.

Only a few students with foreign qualifications were admitted, and there were no recognitions of additional foreign qualifications (outside of exchange programmes).

For the recognition of non-formal and informal learnings (including work and independent learning), overly high qualification requirements are set, leading to significant barriers for students: all candidates must, for example, have at least 3-5 years of work experience in the field to accredit any course (including e.g., introductory programming courses). In the three year period observed, no requests for accreditation were made.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The accreditation procedure seems very tedious with little support from the University. Due to exorbitant requirements for recognizing non-formal and informal learning, including work and independent learning, it is not realistically feasible. These requirements, such as mandating at least 3-5 years of work experience in the field to accredit any course, create significant barriers for students.

3.2. There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

Since the programme is partly held at Dongseo University, there are ca. 10 outgoing students for a two year period to South Korea each year. Given the already complex situation with a mandatory 2-year stay abroad as part of the studies, students are not interested in further exchange opportunities: no student of the programme made use of other academic mobility offers.

Nevertheless, students do in theory have all the usual opportunities to go abroad via the Erasmus+ programme, as well as via bilateral university agreements. International projects run by faculty members to facilitate internships and studies also exist. Information about mobility opportunities is published online and in print, members of the International Office also present the programme in lectures.

There have been 18 incoming full-time students within the last three years, with an upward trend. There were 9 incoming exchange students (3 months and longer) in the same period.

3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

The MRU has a wide variety of career support offers, including mentorship programmes with alumni and a dedicated Career Center.

Personal support is provided via Group Coordinators (trained peers facilitating informal communication among student groups). Support structures for virtual and distance learning students exist in the form of dedicated Moodle courses and the Information Technology Centre.

Financial support also exists in the form of state-supported loans (for tuition, living expenses and partial studies abroad) and tuition fee exemption. Different scholarships are provided as well and recognise best-performing students, particular achievements and students in difficult situations. All Lithuanian and Ukrainian students are eligible for state-funded studies.

There are no mobility scholarships for the mandatory two-year move to South Korea. State-funded students also receive support during their time in South Korea, but they must pay the difference in costs not covered by their sponsorship out of pocket.

The Community Welfare Centre supports students with disabilities regarding finances and coordination of the study with teaching staff members. The Psychology Service provides mental health support (the first consultation is free for MRU members) and has had an increasing number of consultations, with 452 in 2021-2022.

Sports and cultural activities are offered.

There is support for finding internships through DSU, but this is not always successful.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

An extensive *Freshman's study guide* booklet is provided to all new students. It contains information on many relevant topics (such as finances, studying with a disability, exchange programmes) and contact points. Students consider it helpful and sufficient. Students were well-informed about opportunities for disability support through emails and other contact points. While support for adjusted exam modalities exists in this case, it is not explicitly mentioned in any guidelines or policies. It could be expanded to include other accommodations beyond just oral/written modes, such as extended time, Braille support, etc. A broader definition or additional examples would help better inform readers of what is already practiced.

Freshmen are also informed at the institute level: a student manager assists with any practical issues and answers questions. In a meeting with the programme director, students are informed about the modalities of their joint degree study.

Students are aware of the more complex financial situation in their studies before signing up, though not all requirements connected to visas in South Korea are known ahead of time, e.g., not all students know about the mandatory significant personal funds required to go abroad.

Students are informed about the specific modalities of their dual study programme at the start of the programme and are provided with assistance throughout their study.

Students are able to choose a specialisation when signing up for their studies: Digital Media Design or Game Development and Digital Animation (6181BX002, both marked as Annex 1.1 to SER), with different course modules starting from the 5th semester (i.e., when students continue their studies at Dongseo University). Many students were unaware of the differences between the offered specialisations and mistakenly chose a different specialisation than they had planned through the centralised admission system LAMA BPO. Since the specialisation only starts in South Korea, many were unaware of the consequences of their choice until later when they felt that changing their specialisation was no longer possible. While staff assured the expert panel that a change in specialisation is facilitated, it appears that students either had a different experience or there was some communication issue involved. If requests for a change are always granted by default, it is particularly unclear why students have to choose the specialisation before they start their studies. Notably, this choice of specialisations is not clearly articulated in the programme description presented online either: On the MRU's [website](#), the different specialisations are instead presented as fully stand-alone programmes and make little to no mention of the actual nature of the programme or the possibility to change specialisations later on.

While support from the MRU exists, students did not feel well-informed about career options and struggled to find internships in South Korea.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Due to the mandatory time abroad via the joint degree programme with South Korea, student academic mobility is quite present in the study. Support systems for students exist, but they are limited in scope. Information provided is generally good on a university-wide level but is sometimes lacking in regards to the specific programme.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 3	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Students are well-informed about support structures, especially in regard to disability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Ensure that students are aware of any potential barriers to the successful completion of their studies before registration. This especially concerns visa regulations for South Korea.
2. Clearly communicate the structure of the programme, its specialisation options and the possibility to change specialisations early on (including awareness before admission, e.g., programme descriptions published online), or move the time a specialisation has to be picked to a later point in the study.
3. Provide stronger support for students searching for internships and inform them earlier about career options.
4. Rework hard requirements for the recognition of non-formal and informal learnings and instead base recognition decisions on factual qualifications.

For further improvement

1. More explicitly mention-how students with disabilities can be assisted with changed exam modalities in guidelines.

AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.1. Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

There is a mixture of lecture, classroom and individual work, the latter being over 60%. This fits well with the theme of game development and animation, as the methods and tools used are best learned by using them for projects. There is a good deal of interaction between students and teachers, both verbally and through Moodle. The first 2 years of studies are the same for both specialisations, and are supposed to build strong foundations.

4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

Well-organised and transparent support structures for students with special needs exist, both regarding infrastructure and specialised software. Students can fill out an online form and receive individual counselling. Financial support is offered to students from socially vulnerable groups or students with special needs. Students were well-informed about where to get support for disabilities and what kind of support is offered.

Students with disabilities can receive support in the form of modified exam modalities. Teachers are regularly offered training to assist vulnerable groups. Assistance for students with children exists in the form of a playing area in the library.

Gender balance among students is comparatively good for studies in the field of informatics, with ca. 32% female students.

There have been specific cases in terms of support for students who are not eager or cannot afford to travel to South Korea after 2 years of study. Support for students approaching that period should be more systematic, both in terms of facilitating scholarships and providing clear alternative paths of transfer to other universities with a similar study programme to those completing the first 2 years but not making it to Dongseo University.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

There is commendable interaction between students and teachers and support for vulnerable students is excellent, but the programme should prepare better for the second part of the studies at DSU, such as teaching the programming languages used in the second part, strengthening the mathematics, and making courses in the Korean language mandatory.

4.2. There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic

Students' individual work is presented and discussed in classrooms, and resubmission based on feedback is often possible. Midterm exams help with self-assessment, and students cannot fail these. During and at the conclusion of internships, MRU staff are available for discussion of issues and achievements. Overall, feedback and self-assessment possibilities at MRU appear excellent.

There is clear and adequate data on dropouts in SER submitted by the MRU team which confirms it is properly monitored and analysed.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

Graduate employment is properly monitored, and respective numbers are provided in SER. However, given the low graduate numbers in recent years (6 students in 2021, 18 in 2022, and 0 in 2023 which is likely because of the pandemic no students were able to go to South Korea in 2021), the actual employment statistics do not fully reflect the outcome of employability which could be estimated to be around 50%. This is lower than usual in the digital industry in Lithuania, the official goal set by the MoESS is 85% in 12 months past graduation.

However, there could be a more specific follow-up of alumni and insight on what roles are actually taken by the graduates in the industry, extending into feedback to the study course modules to strengthen the relevant competences since the information presented on the types of jobs graduates have got is limited only to percentage of those requiring HE (50-67%).

While there was a wish, expressed by the SER team, to have the graduates employed in Lithuania, there is also no information on current employment geography to reflect whether this is actually happening.

Stronger connection with industry in Lithuania is an untapped potential for MRU staff, including teachers, considering a growing segment (2500 employees, 100 companies/ studios, 300m € annual revenue²).

4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

There is much focus on informing students about academic integrity. During and after COVID, plagiarism detection tools in Moodle were used. No cases were found. Policies for using large language models (LLMs) for individual work exist.

There are policies against discrimination, and cases can be reported. A survey of employees showed that 11% of non-academic staff felt they were discriminated against, mainly regarding salary. Details of the supposed discrimination are not available, but 11% is too high a number if there is substance behind this.

² Data by Lithuanian Game Developers Association <https://www.lzka.lt/en/>.

4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

Procedures are in place and informed about, but no complaints have been received in the last three years.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

Monitoring of and feedback given to students is extensive, and there are policies for and focus on integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The employee survey indicates that there might be problems regarding equal salary. Employability in the field of studies should be higher.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 4	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. The forms and amount of feedback given to students' individual work is excellent.
2. Assistance for students from socially vulnerable groups is extensive.
3. Dropout monitoring and analysis take place effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Actual job orientation and actions for better readiness in terms of employment should be strengthened, along with systematically offering predefined alternative study pathways in other Lithuanian universities with recognition of prior learning to adequately redirect performing students who are not able to make it to DSU in South Korea.

For further improvement

1. Continuously monitor the gender balance of the programme to ensure effective support can be offered if it decreases.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1. Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

There are 28 academic staff involved in teaching informatics programmes offered by MRU (including staff at DSU), and there are 81 students enrolled. All of the staff hold at least a Master's degree, but not all within Informatics and only a minority hold a PhD in a directly related field. Some staff have recently published relevant academic research. A minority of the academics listed work for the university more than 0,5 WTE. No breakdown of staff numbers by gender or other diversity characteristics was provided. While this is not a requirement of the self-evaluation process, it is out of line with other European countries and is particularly challenging in disciplines like Informatics which have a history of gender imbalance.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The staffing levels, qualifications and competence meet legal requirements and provide a baseline sufficient to support students in achieving learning outcomes specified within the programmes. However, a lot of staff are part-time, which could undermine the support mechanisms available to students. More could be done to identify and address a potential lack of diversity within the teaching staff.

5.2. Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

FACTUAL SITUATION

Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Staff have opportunities for mobility under the Erasmus+ scheme. Despite the challenges arising from the Covid pandemic, these opportunities have been taken up by a reasonable number of staff. Some staff have also visited DSU, providing a further opportunity for mobility.

Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

Pedagogical development courses are offered and often taken up by members of the teaching staff, both internally and through Erasmus+. Staff are required to engage with the Edu-Kit/Master programme which helps them to progress and stay up to date with pedagogical requirements. Competencies are monitored through student evaluation questionnaires.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

Teaching staff are provided with good development opportunities, both internally and through Erasmus+. Staff often engage with internally provided training and development courses and numbers accessing Erasmus+ are smaller, but still significant.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 5	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Good opportunities for international mobility through links with DSU.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. There should be less reliance on part-time staff in the delivery of core content at MRU.

For further improvement

1. Diversity within the staff group should be monitored and any plans developed to address any imbalances.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

There are several classrooms with computers, and wi-fi (Eduroam) is available everywhere. Auditoriums, however, lack sufficient power outlets for students' own laptops, and modern gaming equipment such as VR glasses and game controllers are not provided.

The library facilities are good. There is little use of them though, after the pandemic students did not return on-campus to the previous volume. There is a playing area for children in the library, but no baby-changing station.

There are many well-equipped study spaces for students, both for individual and group work. Online access to textbooks and research papers appears to be fine.

Not all parts of buildings are wheelchair accessible. If a module has mobility-impaired students, teaching is relocated to the ground floor, but this is hardly sustainable. Some social areas are not wheelchair accessible. There are plans to improve accessibility. There is support for students with sensory impairment, e.g., magnifiers and Braille keyboards.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

There are plans to improve accessibility to the parts of the buildings where this is currently an issue.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The buildings are generally pleasant and there is sufficient space for student activities, both for individual and group work and social activities. However, not all parts are wheelchair accessible. Given the focus on game development and animation, modern tools such as VR equipment, game controllers and motion capture could be provided.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 6	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Good facilities for students' individual and group work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Extend wheelchair accessibility to cover all teaching facilities.

For further improvement

1. Provide sufficient power outlets for laptops in auditoriums.
2. Provide modern gaming equipment for student projects.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

- 7.1. The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

A single study field committee (SFC) governs the programme and has representation from teaching staff at MRU and DSU and students. Staff confirm that there are strong links between the teaching staff at MRU and DSU and they share the same understanding of the role of the SFC. Most issues that arise are dealt with informally and quickly through discussion between the students and the teaching staff. While some examples were given of effective development of the programme through SFC review, students did not always feel that they were listened to and provided the expert panel with a letter that they had written addressing certain issues they identified, and that had apparently not been considered by the SFC.

7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

The main platform for internal quality assurance in the MRU is SFC. It consists of at least two students (approved by the student representatives), two lecturers, an external social stakeholder, a graduate student and the study field programme supervisor.

The SFC discusses changes to the study programme, student surveys and more and advises teaching staff members. Teaching staff contribute to the development of new subjects.

In the case of this programme, the SFC is made up of representatives from both MRU and DSU in equal parts: no changes to the DSU's side of the programme can be made without approval from MRU.

Students regularly receive questionnaires about their subjects and teachers. Student feedback is discussed individually with each lecturer. The MRU does not renew contracts with teachers with recurring negative evaluations. Students can also express wishes and suggestions with staff of the dean's office at the beginning and end of each semester.

Students don't feel like surveys carried out by the university are valuable. They do not feel represented in committees and feel like their opinion is often not heard.

While lecturers are open to informal feedback, there is a lack of structural processes to ensure it is being handled: committees do not have clear voting structures that guarantee students' voices are being heard.

Student representatives of the field have created their own student surveys to gather more effective feedback.

While alumni are part of the SFC and surveys do exist, they do not perceive their involvement in the development of the study as strong.

7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

No external evaluations of the study field are publicly available on MRU's website, however, it was explained that no external evaluation of the programme or field has been carried out since the programme was introduced in 2014. Improvement processes are partly available on the University's [website](#), but some parts are missing in its English version, e.g., information on [study field committees](#). Results of student quality surveys are clearly analysed by the study field and are presented [here](#).

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Student surveys are voluntary, anonymous and performed digitally. Their results are aggregated, published and discussed in the SFC. According to the SER, analysis shows that student satisfaction is high and increasing, with some areas of improvement (e.g., usage of consultations and involvement with social partners).

Survey results are only available on a very high-level basis, and students cannot see feedback on individual courses and lecturers.

The SER also reports on the findings of a recent alumni feedback form with four respondents, three of which were satisfied with the study. The low number of respondents is there because students could not travel to South Korea due to the pandemic.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Overall, stakeholders are involved in the development of the study and quality assurance as a whole. All relevant stakeholders participate in the SFC.

Notably, however, stakeholders such as students do not seem to have a formal say in the development of the studies, given the SFC's purely advisory role. The SFC is not equipped with the power to ensure advice is also implemented.

Surveys are not perceived as valuable by students and their publicly available results are not detailed enough to draw value from them. Therefore, surveys, their guidelines and outcome publication require revision so that decisions are made transparently with outcomes effectively communicated, thereby fostering a more effective feedback loop.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 7	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

No commendations were identified

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Procedures must be improved substantially to ensure that complaints by students and other stakeholders are transparently handled and results clearly communicated.
2. The Study Field Committee must have clear voting structures that guarantee students' voices are being heard.
3. Surveys and their publication guidelines need to be reworked in cooperation with students to ensure they are perceived as valuable.

For further improvement

1. Details of Study Field Committee composition and this external review of the study field should be published on all versions of the University's website.

V. SUMMARY

The programme “Game Development and Digital Animation” at MRU is unusual in several aspects:

- It is an international collaboration between MRU and the Korean Dongseo University (DSU), where MRU provides the first two years of teaching mainly fundamental courses and DSU provides the last two years of teaching mainly specialised courses on-site in Korea.
- The Faculty of Public Governance and Business at MRU does not have a tradition for STEM programmes.

While the construction offers unique opportunities for students to experience different university and national cultures and to draw on the strong research at DSU, it is not without issues:

- The two first years at MRU seem a bit fragmented and the curriculum is not up to date with respect to both actual course content and the fast-paced development in the field.
- A lot of teaching at MRU is done by part-time teachers, since in-house qualified teachers are few.
- Related to this, research in game development and digital animation is virtually non-existent at MRU.
- Expected qualifications for studying at DSU are not always met through the courses at MRU.
- Ensuring industry internships for all students is an issue.

The facilities for students and teachers at MRU are good, though lacking a bit in up-to-date equipment for game development and animation. Communication between students and teachers is good, though mostly informal. Students find it hard to get influence on the study programme, as formal channels for this appear to be non-functional. The involvement of alumni and employers in affecting changes to the programme appears to be minimal. Structures involving students, alumni, and employers with clear and formal mandates to affect the programme should be established. Employability in the games and animation industry could be higher.

In spite of certain shortcomings, students are happy that the programme exists and highly value the opportunities it provides to them.

The expert panel finds the organisation of the site visit at MRU well-prepared and we benefited greatly from discussions with all involved parties. We thank MRU for providing good-quality information both in the self-evaluation report and when additional material was requested.