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STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COMMUNICATION FIELD OF STUDY

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: Assoc. Prof. Heidi Ashton (United Kingdom) …….. (signature)
2. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dorte Madsen (Denmark)
3. Academic member: Professor Christian Christensen (Sweden)
4. Social partner: Ms Raminta Stanaitytė-Česnulienė (Lithuania)
5. Student representative: Ms Kateryna Shalimova (Ukraine)

SKVC coordinator: Ms Austėja Pliupelytė

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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: Assoc. Prof. Heidi Ashton (United Kingdom), Director of Education and Deputy Head of School for Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures, University of Warwick;
2. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dorte Madsen (Denmark), Associate Professor at Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School;
3. Academic member: Prof. Christian Christensen (Sweden), Professor at Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University;
4. Social partner: Ms Raminta Stanaitytė-Česnulienė, social partner representative, Co-Founder and Partner at Insynergy4 Ltd., a Management Consulting Company; independent strategic communication consultant; former Chief Adviser to the President of the Republic of Lithuania and Head of Communication Group;
5. Student representative: Ms Kateryna Shalimova (Ukraine), student representative, Bachelor student of Arabic Language and Literature, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv; member of ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool.

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 6 May 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)
- The team responsible for the preparation of the SER
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

The interpreter was present and occasionally used during the meetings with the self-evaluation report team, teachers as well as Alumni and social stakeholders.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VILNIUS TECH) is a state higher education institution operating as a public institution. The university was founded in 1956 and reorganised in 1969. Today it is one of the largest higher education institutions in Lithuania, aiming to become a leader in technical and engineering education and research in the Baltic States. The mission of the university is to inspire and develop talents: socially responsible, creative, forward-thinking people, who bring change to the environment and big university community together, and work towards social, economic, cultural welfare and technological progress.

Overview of the field of study

The university offers first-, second- and third-cycle study programmes with a total of 106 study programmes distributed over 26 different study fields. There are 10 faculties and the Faculty of Creative Industries was established in 2016. It offers first and second-cycle study programmes in the study field of communication.

There are four programmes in this study field: two first-cycle study programmes C*reative Industries* and *Entertainment Industries* and two second-cycle study programmes *Communication of Creative Society* and *Communication of Innovation and Technolog*y. The study programmes are administered by two departments: the Department of Creative Communication and the Department of Entertainment Industries. Each study programme is governed by a Study Programme Committee (SPC). The first cycle programme *Creative Industries* was launched in 2009 and is designed to train professionals with interdisciplinary skills in the generation, management, and communication of creative products and services. The programme is well established having received accreditation in 2016. The first cycle programme *Entertainment Industries* was established in 2012 and aims to train graduates to work in either the entertainment or sports Industries. This programme also received accreditation in 2016. The second cycle programme *Communication of Creative Society* established in 2011 was specifically designed for future graduates of the first cycle programme *Creative Industries*. The aim of the programme is designed to train highly qualified professionals in the public and private sectors of culture. This programme received accreditation in 2013. Finally, the second cycle programme *Communication of Innovation and Technology* is specifically aimed at Bachelors in Technology, Biomedical and Physical Sciences who are trained to become specialists in the communication of innovation. The programme launched in 2018 and received accreditation in the same year.

Previous external evaluations

The previous 4 reports were good overall with some recommendations. For the first cycle programmes, the recommendations included a clearer positioning of the two "sister" programmes (*Creative industry* and *Entertainment industry*) by rethinking the labelling of the programmes as the names can be misleading in order to better communicate the programmes and their differences to stakeholders. According to the SER, the *Entertainment industry* programme will have a new title in 2024. For the second cycle programme *Communication of Creative Society* recommendations included better alignment between the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered. For the second cycle programme *Communication of Innovation and Technology*, it was recommended to incorporate a subject on communication theory, clarify module names to correspond to the course content and incentivise communication research publications.

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;*
- *Examples of final theses;*
- *Examples of module descriptors (course cards)*
- *Information on changes in the Entertainment Industries study programme since submission of the SER;*
- *Information on Citizen Science Community;*
- *Information on Horizon projects in terms of their application and the extent to which teaching staff are involved in them;*
- *Information on the international catalogue of Creative City Initiatives developed together with the Danish Cultural Institute.*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

- *Internal Study Quality Assurance documents available on the VILNIUS TECH website.*

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**Creative Industries**	**Entertainment Industries**
State code	6121JX052	6121JX053
Type of study (college/university)	University studies	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time (4 years)	Full-time (4 years)
Workload in ECTS	240	240
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Social Sciences	Bachelor of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian and English	Lithuanian and English
Admission requirements	Secondary Education	Secondary Education
First registration date	31 August 2009	23 October 2012
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	-	-

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	**Communication of Creative Society**	**Communication of Innovation and Technology**
State code	6211JX069	6211JX102
Type of study (college/university)	University studies	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time (1.5 years)	Full-time (1.5 years)
Workload in ECTS	90	90
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Social Sciences	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	12 May 2011	30 June 2018
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	-	-

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
	Total:	26

The **second cycle** of the Communication field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
	Total:	26

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 study field of communication at VILNIUS TECH consists of two first-cycle programmes *Creative Industries* and *Entertainment Industries* and two second-cycle programmes *Communication of Creative Society* and *Communication of Innovation and Technology,* respectively. The programmes are offered by the Faculty of Creative Industries which also organises third cycle studies.

BA *Creative Industries* - Aims
To train first-cycle university graduates in communication who are capable of working in creative industries, business or public sector organisations and are able to manage creative communication projects. (Annex 1)
This study programme was launched in 2009. It is designed to train professionals with interdisciplinary skills in the generation, management, and communication/publicity of creative products and services. The programme focuses on the external and internal communication of the creative-innovation team in developing a product and its communication in different media: news portal, social network, blog, video channel, virtual reality or even museum (SER p. 7).

BA *Entertainment Industries* - Aims
To train first-cycle university graduates in communication who are capable of working in entertainment industries environments, designing, managing and implementing entertainment projects (Annex 1). This programme started in 2012. It focuses on producing and communicating content that "provides entertainment and sensory experiences" (SER p. 7). The programme is designed to "train the organisation and management of cultural/entertainment processes, including the creation of experiential and emotional and entrepreneurial entertainment in real and virtual environments". (SER p. 7). The programme has two specialisations: Sports Industries, and Entertainment Production.

MA *Communication of Creative Society* - Aims
To train creative communication professionals who can apply communication strategies, monitor, research, analyse and develop creative activities to promote a creative society. The programme was launched in 2011/2012 and was specifically designed for future graduates of the Bachelor of communication. The programme is designed to train highly qualified professionals in the public and private sectors of culture (SER p. 7).

MA *Communication of Innovation and Technology* - Aims
To train specialists in the communication of innovation, who will apply the competencies acquired in the physical and technological sciences to communicate innovation to businesses and the public. The programme, launched in 2018, addresses the challenges for businesses in communicating technological

innovations. The rationale is that engineers often present innovations that only emphasise technical aspects, as opposed to individuals with a non-technical background who typically do not know how engineers think.

Overall, the evaluation panel found that the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programmes in the study field of communication are well represented in the respective study plans. They appear as innovative and timely responses to the fast growth of the creative industries market in Lithuania and the European Union (EU). The broad rationale for the programmes and their aims and learning outcomes are supported and justified by the strategic, legal documents defining the importance of Creative Industries and their development in Lithuania and abroad.

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

The mission of VILNIUS TECH is to inspire and develop talents: socially responsible, creative, forward-thinking people, who bring change to the environment and big university community together, and work towards social, economic, cultural welfare and technological progress (SER p. 6).

This mission is reflected in the respective study programme aims and learning outcomes (Annex 1). The aim of the first-cycle *Creative Industries* programme is to train students to work with creative communication projects in creative industries or public sector organisations. The explicit aim of the second-cycle *Communication of Creative Society* is to educate creative communication professionals to promote a creative society. The *Entertainment Industries* programme is specifically targeted at implementing entertainment projects. The second-cycle programme *Communication of Innovation and Technology* has a specific focus on the communication of innovation.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The aims and intended learning outcomes of the programmes in the study field of communication appear to be as innovative and timely responses to the fast growth of the creative industries market in Lithuania and the European Union (EU). Based on the findings of the visit, it is evident that both the first- and second-cycle programmes within the field of communication effectively address the current demands of both society and the labour market. Stakeholder engagements revealed that many key aspects crucial for meeting societal and labour market needs are adequately incorporated into the curriculum through various study subjects. Furthermore, the content is consistently reviewed to ensure alignment with the latest industry trends. Insights provided by social partners underscored the significance of graduates from these programmes in addressing the needs of the job sector in Lithuania, with graduates regularly securing employment in relevant fields.

The programmes' aims and learning outcomes are in line with the overarching mission, goals, and strategy of VILNIUS TECH, which are geared towards fostering the development of individuals who are publicly responsible, creative, and competitive.

However, there is room for improvement. It was mentioned during the visit by the lecturers that they would like to be more involved in the implementation of the organisational strategy, to understand better how it directly impacts the communication curriculum, and to find more connections to their everyday work. It is recommended to enhance collaboration not only with stakeholders but also with lecturers.

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

Both first-cycle study programmes are four-year programmes of 240 credits (ECTS). The two second-cycle study programmes are allocated 90 credits (ECTS). In the SER, table 2.1 shows an overview of the distribution of credits in the first-cycle programmes *Creative Industries* and *Entertainment Industries* divided between Study subjects in the study field, Study subjects established by VILNIUS TECH or chosen by a student; Internships and Final thesis as well as the Volume of contact work. For both programmes, one-sixth of the total credits are either modules established by VILNIUS TECH or in-depth modules within the same study field, chosen by the student. Table 2.2 (SER p. 20) shows the distribution of credits in the second cycle programmes *Communication of Creative Society* and *Communication of Innovation and Technology*. The layout is consistent with legal requirements.

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

In the Annexes to the SER, the following documents are provided for the two first-cycle and two second-cycle programmes: Annex 1. Study programme aims and learning outcomes; Annex 2. Study plans for study programmes; Annex 3. Linking the learning outcomes of the study programme to the learning outcomes of the subjects; Annex 4. Alignment of the aims, learning outcomes of the degree programme in the field of communication with the learning outcomes, study methods and assessment methods of the programme subjects; Annex 5. List of Theses; Annex 6. List of Teachers.

Annex 1 sets out the Intended learning outcomes. Annex 2 contains all study plans, however, the *assessment column* contains codes (such as E, E1, C, KS, A) and lacks explanation. In Annex 4 Alignment of the aims, learning outcomes of the degree programme in the field of communication with the learning outcomes, study methods and assessment methods of the programme subjects, the *assessment column* in each course covers a whole range of possible assessment methods, but there is no indication as to which exam format(s) are actually used in the course. In the SER (p. 63), the Principles of the System for Assessing Student Achievement are explained together with the ten-point system and cumulative assessment criteria indicating how “the overall grade for a study subject/module follows the proportions outlined in the subject/module card, which is the sum of the percentage values of mid-term and final grades.” However, there is no mention of the codes used, nor is it evident where the proportions are outlined in the subject/module card.

The “subject/module card” referred to in the SER created some confusion during the visit. During the meetings, it was clarified that subject cards are module descriptors/course descriptions that also include lists of Mandatory readings, as well as Recommended readings. It would have been helpful for the evaluation panel to have an overview of each of the first- and second-cycle programmes indicating the aims, learning outcomes, and course content *together with* the assessment methods actually used in a course, as well as a specification of the exam format. It is not possible to decipher the course assessment codes in the module descriptors without a reference to the *Procedure Description for Individual’s Studying Performance Assessment and Earning Credits at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University* which details credit forms and assessment for the whole university. There is no reference to this document in the relevant section of the

SER, nor was it mentioned during our visit. The document was subsequently located in the "study documents" on the following website.

The SER notes that in the spring semester of 2023, following intensive training by the Academic Support Centre, all subject cards have been systematically updated and approved by the Faculty Study Committees. This update includes assessment criteria for achievement at 3 levels (threshold, typical, and excellent). This is a commendable endeavour that creates some clarity to the criteria for evaluating intended learning outcomes. However, as stated above, the *de facto* assessment methods used in a course are not specified, which does not seem to comply with the requirement of the Methodology for External Evaluation of Study Fields that the Study plan "shall also indicate the form of assessment for each subject/module" (section 20.1).

However, the SER notes (p. 63) how the organisation of the teaching process for each study module is highly dependent on the lecturer. It is the lecturer who plans and organises the delivery of the study subject, considering the learning outcomes of the study programmes submitted by the SPCs. It is also the lecturer who formulates the outcomes of the study subject and chooses appropriate study and assessment methods.

Discussions during the site visit meetings provided some clarity on assessment methods and how they are created. The teachers' meeting was especially informative as regards the interplay between the SPC and the teachers, of who decides what subjects and units are included. Based on the decisions of the SPC, teachers can be creative as to how to reach aims and achieve correlation with the assessment method. Exams can take different forms. And there is a high degree of flexibility in choices. The panel noted some examples of types of exams or exam formats for different subjects and their assessment criteria, for instance, how assessment is based on student's active participation, and the use of specific formulas, for example, the final written exam counting 40% and 60% from cumulative assessment.

For both study cycles, the intended learning outcomes are divided into 1) Knowledge, 2) Ability to carry out research, 3) Special skills, 4) Social skills, and 5) Personal skills. Annex 4 demonstrates for each of the four programmes how the learning outcomes of the study cycle connect with subjects/modules of study. The programme-level learning outcomes are specific, and there is a clear difference between learning outcomes in the first-cycle and the second-cycle programmes.

The site visit and listening to the teachers' descriptions of their careful considerations in flexibly adapting their assessment methods to the needs of each course indicate an attentiveness to alignment between programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods. However, on the basis of the written material available for the evaluation panel, the lack of clarity between *intended* learning outcomes and assessment methods *actually used* in a course, together with a lack of specification of the exam format, makes it difficult to accurately assess the alignment.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

According to the study plans (Annex 2), the two first-cycle programmes, as well as the two second-cycle programmes, classify the subjects into A - Subjects in General University Studies; B - Study Field subjects; C - Specialisation subjects; D - Final thesis (project): preparation, presentation and defence.

BA *Creative Industries*
The study programme is designed with a focus on progression, fundamental subjects in semester 1, and introduction to more specialised subjects in semester 2. In semester 3, the focus is on the analysis of the

media field and students have the opportunity to take optional courses. Semester 5 includes the introduction of sectors of the creative industries as well as optional study subjects, semester 6 introduces creative communication projects, and first preparations of the bachelor thesis (1), semester 7 focuses on professional internships as well as bachelor thesis (2), and finally in semester 8, beyond the study field courses, the bachelor thesis is defended (cf SER and Annex 2 with a range of examples).

BA *Entertainment Industries*
The structure of the study programme by and large follows the same structure as the *Creative Industries* programme during the first 4 semesters and bachelor thesis work starting in semester 6. In semester 5, students have the option to choose between two specialisations: *Entertainment Production* or *Sports Industries*, and besides the Study Field Subjects, there is a range of options for choosing between several different specialisation subjects.

The SER gives a fine overview of the structure of the two second-cycle programmes *Communication of Creative Society* and *Communication of Innovation and Technology* (pr. 25-26). The differences between the first- and second-cycle *Creative industries* and *Communication of Creative Society*, respectively follow a clear rationale and are progressively aligned. The first-cycle *Entertainment Industries* programme, and the second-cycle *Communication of Innovation and Technology* are more recent offsprings of the Creative Industries field and are not as such connected.

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

The university has regulations in place to ensure that students in the study field of communication have several possibilities for personalisation of their study experience. There is also a possibility for students to study according to individual study plans, typically because the student needs to acquire a certain number of credits to study a second-cycle programme or for college graduates who need bridging studies to be enrolled in a first-cycle programme. Further, full-time students may switch to part-time studies.

In the first-cycle *Creative Industries* programme, students can choose, e.g., a foreign language in the first 3 semesters, and in semesters 4 and 5 there are two electives which are chosen from a list of general university subjects; and in semester 3, 5, 7 and 8 there are several possibilities for choosing subjects relevant for the individual student.

In the first-cycle *Entertainment Industries* programme, the first 4 semesters offer electives. And from semester 5 the student can choose between the two specialisations of the programme. Plus a possibility to choose one subject in semesters 5 and 6.

Second-cycle *Communication of Creative Society* offers one option, and there are no options in the Second-cycle *Communication of Innovation and Technology* (which already has specialisations).

Further, as noted in the SER, two years ago the university introduced hybrid and individualised second cycle programmes to meet the demand for customised studies where a student can plan to study two or three courses each semester according to an individual and formalised study plan. Moreover, since September 2022, both second-cycle programmes have been taught in a hybrid mode to facilitate student flexibility.

All in all, the programmes in the study field provide students with ample opportunities to design their own study experience and tailor their studies according to their own interests and needs.

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

The SER contains an extensive and well-organised section that details the requirements for student final theses, the selection or assignment of the Bachelor's final thesis topic, the process of writing the thesis, the Requirements for thesis, and the public defence in the Degree Awarding Commission (DAC).

The DAC for the award of the Bachelor's degree is composed of five competent professionals, both scientists and/or recognised artists and professional practitioners. At least three of the members of the commission must hold research degrees or pedagogical titles. The chairperson of the commission must be a practising professional who is not employed by VILNIUS TECH. For the award of the Master's degree, a panel of 5-7 competent professionals - scientists/artists, professional practitioners, representatives of social partners - is formed. The chairperson of the commission and at least two other members of the commission must have a scientific degree and/or a pedagogical title. The composition of the DAC is approved by order of the Rector (SER).

In the first-cycle programmes there are Final Thesis 1 module (3 ECTS) in the 6th semester, Final Thesis 2 module (6 ECTS) in the seventh and Final Thesis 3 module (9 ECTS); in the second-cycle programme there are Master Graduation Thesis 1 in the first semester (3 ECTS), Final Thesis 2 (3 ECTS) in the second semester, and finally Final Thesis 3 (24 ECTS) in the third semester. The panel finds that having thesis modules 1 and 2 prior to the thesis work itself is a commendable way of structuring students' thesis process.

The SER refers to the document Description of the Procedure for the Preparation and Defence of Final Theses, approved by the Order of the Rector of the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University No.10.8-1053 of 5 December 2022 (not available in English).

The evaluation panel has reviewed the list of thesis titles in Annex 5. Based on the titles, the theses are varied and interesting and appear consistent with the contents of the respective study programmes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

Based on the findings of the visit, it is evident that both the first- and second-cycle programmes within the field of communication effectively address the current demands of both society and the labour market. Stakeholder engagements revealed that many key aspects crucial for meeting societal and labour market needs are adequately incorporated into the curriculum through various study subjects. Furthermore, the content is consistently reviewed to ensure alignment with the latest industry trends. Insights provided by social partners underscored the significance of graduates from these programmes in addressing the needs of the job sector in Lithuania, with graduates regularly securing employment in relevant fields.

The programmes' aims and learning outcomes are in line with the overarching mission, goals, and strategy of VILNIUS TECH, which are geared towards fostering the development of individuals who are publicly responsible, creative, and competitive.

The evaluation panel found that all study programmes in the communication field provide consistent development of competences of students and provide students with ample opportunities to design their own

study experience and tailor their studies according to their own interests and needs. The alignment of programme aims, intended learning outcomes, and assessment methods actually used should be made more explicit.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Thesis work and thesis process is well organised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The panel recommends that an assessment strategy is formulated for each study programme in the communication field that shows how the aims of the specific programme, learning outcomes, course content *and* assessment methods align.

For further improvement

1. There is room for improvement in terms of raising awareness and inclusivity among both faculty members and employers within the university community on how the organisational strategy permeates top to down.
2. Consult staff on any plans to increase student numbers as this can have an impact on their innovative pedagogical approaches.

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

Developing research in the faculty has been a strategic aim since 2018 and there has been a rise in research activities since that period with financial incentives for publications (SER). There is a good range of research conducted by staff with the introduction of PhD students playing a role in developing a strong research culture at the national level (visit). The overall quality of research is evidenced through the evaluation results from 2023 which provided a value of 3/5 for this institution (R&D evaluation).

For the research evaluation, 50 faculty members are represented, and the SER presents 92 faculty members which includes industry and artistic specialists. Research activities and outputs include practical art creation and experimentation, monographs, practically oriented research projects and journal articles some of which are in recognised journals in the field, these align well with the modules taught and overall reflect the courses and learning outcomes (SER, Appendix). The volume of research outputs is significant with a demonstrable development of research across the faculty. Alongside recognised publications and publishers are journals that require payment for publication and journals with limited or no international or significant national reach, these are of a significantly lower quality. Some monographs were published with internationally recognised publishers. Some of the publications provided were dated (2012) and therefore outside the period of evaluation.

There has been attendance at conferences and a desire to engage on a more global level, this is supported and incentivised by the institution through the provision of resources such as funding for conference attendance (SER, visit). A further development has been engaging research staff in discussions around the broad topic of ‘creativity’ to further encourage participation in sector and field-specific research (visit).

Research projects are interdisciplinary and collaborative with VILNIUS TECH working with other universities. Horizon and Erasmus are the key funders and this funding stream could be diversified as research capacity continues to grow. Some projects have a more practical focus such as the Citizen Science Hub, Experiment 1 etc. (SER). Other initiatives enable collaborations at an international level.

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

Students have the opportunity to engage with recent technological developments to enhance their learning, the most prominent being the installation of a virtual film studio (visit – seen without the inclusion of motion capture). Students also have access to a range of technological equipment and software to encourage experimentation and link studies to technological developments in practice. First-cycle students have had the opportunity to work with professionals and assist on shoots in the virtual studio environment. It is less clear how this investment links to second- and third-cycle studies at this stage.

The curriculum has a pragmatic focus that leans towards the development of business and practical skills alongside academic studies. This is reflected in the balance between access to developments in science and art and developments in technology. Research is typically more practical and report-based than intellectually driven. This emphasis creates a dichotomy between research as theoretically engaged work in the field and practice related to the completion and competence to complete practical tasks. Whilst this is problematic for linking developments in the field with the curriculum it has provided additional opportunities for second-cycle students to engage with impactful research through initiatives such as the local transport project (SER, visit). Combining this type of research with a theoretical and critical underpinning would support the integration of theory and practice in the field.

Staff create interesting modules that link practical developments to the latest developments in art and technology. First-, second- and third-cycle students all have opportunities to develop projects at the end of their studies to demonstrate their scientific understanding through a research-based project. This is mostly supervised by research-active staff. The SPC reviews the content annually to ensure content is up to date (SER).

Specific links between developments in the academic field of communication were less well established and this is an area that could be developed going forward.

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

PhD students are engaging in research and research dissemination commensurate with their level of study. First and second-cycle students have opportunities to work with practitioners and social partners on specific projects involving some level of research appropriate to their level and both first- and second-cycle students are required to complete research-based dissertations (SER, visit).

There are initiatives for students at all levels to present their research and submit it for internal competitions, these are voluntary and not well supported by the student population (visit). PhD students have some opportunities to engage with research as junior researchers (SER). Students did have opportunities to engage in (practical) production processes.

Students at the level of the first cycle did not have a clear understanding of ‘research’ or ‘theory’. Research is generally understood as any data gathering or production process and theory is understood by first-cycle students as ‘how to do something’ (as opposed to doing it). Second-cycle students and tutors included methodology within the term ‘theory’ (visit) but were not clear on how critical approaches in the field can be used and developed either for the intellectual advancement of the field or in relation to practice.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The research environment overall shows demonstrable growth and expansion as a result of the research strategy and inclusion of PhDs. Alongside this, there are interesting initiatives emerging that could potentially bring researchers together and provide an opportunity for staff to engage with the latest intellectual developments in the field (the Creativity group). In order for these to flourish staff also need time to develop their research this includes time to read, think, apply for funding and engage with intellectual debates and discussions (see evaluation area 5).

The collaborative research projects highlighted provide opportunities for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and developments with the more practical projects creating opportunities to link theory and practice. These aspects of collaboration and research would benefit from further development to balance the current focus on practical outcomes and foster greater intellectual curiosity and critical engagement at a conceptual and theoretical level.

For all stakeholders, there was a reluctance to engage critically with research concerns. The expert panel was advised that global issues such as environmental concerns were embedded throughout the modules, however, the critical perspectives from research in the field were not understood by practice-based tutors (visit) which could hinder students' grasp of the importance of theory for practice. First-cycle students in particular were very unsure of what research and theory are and this created a gap between their practical skills and their ability to question assumptions and engage with the latest developments in research, art and technology in a meaningful and critical way (visit). It is not just about making things but thinking about the impact these things might have on the world.

It is suggested that researchers also use their research findings, theoretical perspectives and conceptual developments in collaboration with social partners to bridge the gap between practice and research. This would be of mutual benefit as empirical work can develop our thinking and challenge our ideas whilst at the same time providing critical perspectives and thought-provoking questions for the partners. This would also assist students in understanding the relationship between theory and practice beyond methodological concerns and assist with finding relevant and innovative ways to connect the new virtual studio with the 2nd and 3rd study cycles.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel was impressed by the collaborative engagement with social partners and how collaborations worked effectively to involve students in important and meaningful projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Balance the focus of studies across practice and theory. What is theory and why does it matter in practice? Who is benefiting from technological or structural changes and who is marginalised? What are the challenges facing global creative industries and how might theory help us to reframe or rethink our solutions? Integrate developments in critical perspectives and research in the field into the curriculum more securely so that students and social partners are aware of how they inform 'real

world' problems. This could be achieved through round table events with social partners, staff seminars to impart new findings etc. The aim should be to securely embed this in the curriculum.

2. Provide scientific (conceptual/theoretical) updates for practice-based staff to keep them informed and encourage wider dissemination of intellectual concerns. This could also lead to joint research initiatives.

For further improvement

1. Diversify grant income and seek to gain funding with international partners.

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

A list of programmes taught in English/Lithuanian and general information on the admission procedure are published on the VILTECH website.

The application of first-cycle applicants who are citizens of Lithuania is conducted through the LAMA BPO system. The competitive score description is presented on the LAMA BPO website. In addition to maturity exam(s) and other subjects' results, supplementary scores are also taken into account. During meetings with focus groups, it was noted that students have experienced being awarded supplementary scores for their previous informal learning achievements (e.g., studying at art school) and publishing.

EU/EEA applicants can be provided with both private-funded (requirements are the same as for international students) and state-funded positions. Application steps and a list of required documents are detailed on the "Bachelor's degree studies for EU/EEA citizens" and "Master's degree studies for EU/EEA citizens" webpages.

International bachelor's applicants' entrance score consists of three subject grades from the secondary school (formula and details are on the website). They must also prove language proficiency. No additional entry examination for communication studies applicants is needed.

Application procedure for second-cycle students (citizens of Lithuania) is done via the VILNIUS TECH application system.

International Master's applicant requirements are a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field (Social Sciences, Business and Public Administration, Education Sciences, Law, Humanities, Arts for MA *Communication of Creative Society* programme; Mathematical Sciences, Computing, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Technological Sciences, Health Sciences, Agricultural Sciences for MA *Communication of Innovation and Technology* programme) with minimum 60% CGPA, language proficiency improvement, recorded interview that is further evaluated by the director of a chosen study programme. Country-specific requirements for international applicants are presented on the university website.

In practical terms, these programmes seem to become a bit less attractive to applicants. Though the number of admitted students for the first-cycle *Creative Industries* programme was mostly stable: 153 in 2020, 104 in 2021 and 158 in 2022, the number of admitted students for the first-cycle *Entertainment Industries* programme is decreasing: 126 students in 2020 and 72 in 2021/2022 (decrease is noticed in the amount of state-funded students). There is also a decrease in the number of part-time admitted students for the *Creative Industries* programme: 24 in 2020, 11 in 2021 and only 7 (all state-funded) in 2022.

The data presented in the SER (as for the MA *Communication of Creative Society* programme) shows that 2020 and 2021 brought the same number of 22 students, and 2022 brought 21 students. Considering the MA *Communication of Innovation and Technology* programme, it is noted that 2020 brought 16 students; 2021

brought 14 students, and 2022 brought 13 students. In 2021 and 2022 all enrolled students for the *Communication of Innovation and Technology* programme were state-funded.

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

Recognition of foreign qualifications at VILNIUS TECH flowchart document as well as non-formal/informal studies applicants requirements, fees, and list of documents are publicly available on the university website.

Faculty management along with SPC and the International Studies Centre (ISC) assist candidates eager to acquire competences through non-formal and informal learning. Such students should submit a written recognition request to the Dean of the Faculty (*Application for Assessment and Recognition of Competences Acquired in Non-formal and Informal ways* example document is uploaded on the website). After conducting non-formal/informal studies, candidates have two months to prepare a portfolio and then are interviewed by the assessors (lecturers of the subjects assigned to the department concerned) in order to assess students.

The volume of credits that can be awarded for competencies acquired by the candidate in an informal and non-formal manner shall not exceed 70% of the volume of the selected study programme.

During the period under evaluation, there were 5 students conducting non-formal/informal studies.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The website of VILNIUS TECH is very helpful in the context of submitting an application. Application requirements are transparent and categorised in accordance with the level of study, applicants' citizenship and former qualification. Application procedure for bachelor's applicants is standardly conducted via LAMA BPO, whilst application procedure for the second cycle applicants is organised online. Both state-funded and private-funded options are available on each level of study.

In terms of the popularity of the programmes, there is a noticeable gap between the amount of BA and MA students in these programmes. During the meetings with the focus groups, the possible reasons were mentioned: national-level socio-economic factors, students' quick employment (students are less interested in further education at the university), and inability to juggle studies with private life. However, interest increased once hybrid learning was implemented. Thus, more efforts could be taken to attract students to apply for the BA *Entertainment Industries* programme.

Alumni were motivated to continue studies at VILNIUS TECH because they liked the bond built between students and faculty staff, however, some chose different universities for master's because of the bigger variety of courses.

Foreign qualifications, non-formal and informal learning recognition processes are very well organised at the university. Students are supported by the faculty staff and SPC. Information for applicants having former foreign qualifications and for students applying for informal/non-formal studies, including details considering marks recognition is clearly explained on the university website.

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

The faculty offers the opportunity to participate in a double degree programme (with Kiel University of Applied Sciences), Erasmus+ programs, ATHENA European University Alliance joint courses, internships, different international conferences and other events. In addition, a mentor program is launched to support each international student coming to study at VILNIUS TECH. In order to popularise student academic mobility, lots of actions are taken: online/offline events organised by faculty staff as well as consultations with the Vice-Dean for Internationalisation. Information on academic mobility is spread via posters and flyers, advertisements on social media, and university website. Detailed instructions regarding the procedure of applying for Erasmus+ studies/blended intensive programmes/internships (in EU/non-EU countries), a wide range of partner universities, Erasmus+ student charter (which helps Erasmus students to get to know about their entitlements, obligations and duties before, during and after the academic mobility) and contacts of International Relations Office are available on the university website.

According to the statistics presented in the SER, there is a noticeable increase in the number of students heading for internships and studies at partner universities (the majority is presented by first-cycle students). The numbers of those leaving for studies are as follows: 14 in 2020 (lower due to the pandemic), 41 in 2021 and 65 in 2022. Numbers of students leaving for internships are as follows: 3 in 2020, 5 in 2021 and 10 in 2022.

Students confirmed that there were no problems related to their participation in Erasmus+ academic mobility programmes, process of application and grade recognition was standard. They also pointed out the great support received from the academic mobility coordinator.

VILNIUS TECH shows good results not only in encouraging students to study/intern at partner organisations but also in attracting international students to come to VILNIUS TECH to study for a semester (or two) or to conduct full-degree studies. For instance, in 2022 there were 105 international students at the faculty (11,05% of the total number), among which there were 33 Bachelor's degree students and 6 Master's degree who have come to study in the Erasmus+ exchange semester, 9 Blended Intensive Programme participants and 55 persons were English-taught Creative Industries full degree students. During the last three years, this number has tended to increase. The *Erasmus+ Charter of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University* (available on the university website) explains the university's principles and commitments as an Erasmus partner.

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

To individualise support and make studies enjoyable, students can ask for special academic support and are recommended to turn to faculty management (or university services, centres) personally to solve any upcoming problems.

In order to greet and support students at the beginning of their studies at VILNIUS TECH, there is an introductory week. In addition, first-year students are provided with the *Introduction to Studies* session. For international students, there are international days organised in order to present the countries they are

coming from. There is also a mentor programme launched so that each student group is supported by the Student Representation, senior student tutors and lecturers-mentors.

Lecturers upload all the information needed related to the subject on Moodle and offer free individual and group consultations (both online/offline) in order to support student learning and eliminate gaps in knowledge. Bridging courses and hybrid studies helps students to continue their studies according to their experience/special circumstances.

The Academic Support Centre organises *Career Days*, consultations and seminars to inform students about employment opportunities. Career/internship opportunities can be reached on the university website.

The university and social partners provide a wide range of scholarships and other types of financial support for both state and non-funded students at all levels of study: for achievements in studies (e.g., *Scholarship of Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas*), sports, art; participation in conferences, international events etc. Information on state and university scholarships (including details on the application procedure, required documents, selection criteria, and deadlines) is available on the university website. In addition, in some severe cases, students may be partially or fully exempt from paying a tuition fee: the application is done through the dean of the faculty (thus, the % of exemption is decided on).

Psychological support is given via free consultations and seminars (on topics related to mental health, e.g., how to deal with stress etc.), however, no one from the focus group meeting with students had attended these events recently. There are surveys conducted to ascertain the number of students who have special needs. Each student group has a teacher-mentor they can contact from the beginning of their studies. Students can also reach out to the Disability Students Coordinator.

VILNIUS TECH also supports refugees from Ukraine by offering them short-time (Erasmus+)/full-time positions, internships, psychological and financial help.

Students are also offered opportunities to engage with different sports.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

VILNIUS TECH's website is full of information about lots of different aspects of studying at the university (starting from the admission process explanation and ending with employment opportunities).

It is possible for students to consult with the Academic Support Centre, International Relations Office, faculty administration, lecturers, mentors, Disability Students Coordinator, and university psychologists for free. Communication between students and teachers is built via Student Representation. Students and alumni confirm their good relations with lecturers, professional support and cooperation continues through the years.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Students of VILNIUS TECH are supported mentally, financially, academically and professionally throughout their studies. From the focus group meetings, the expert panel learnt that participation in seminars on mental health is not mandatory and students are more inclined to be consulted personally. Individualised study opportunities are available for communication students. Different university departments along with

lecturers and Student Representation work towards achieving a high level of satisfaction among students and staff.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Hybrid learning is provided for second-cycle communication programmes which makes studies more attractive for already employed applicants.
2. In addition to an existing variety of academic mobility opportunities, VILNIUS TECH offers double-degree studies at Kiel University of Applied Sciences.
3. Partial/full exemption from tuition fee is available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified

For further improvement

1. It would be useful to attract students to not only be consulted individually but also to participate in group sessions and events related to mental health.

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

VILNIUS TECH organises and delivers student-centred studies across its programmes. The first-cycle programmes, as well as the second-cycle programmes, emphasise active student participation. The study process includes lectures, practical classes, independent work, and internships for BA students. Independent work involves preparing for exams and completing tasks like homework, course papers, and complex projects. Students can consult lecturers individually or in groups, with lecturers providing two hours per week for consultations throughout the semester. There is also a designated consultation week at the end of the semester, during which lecturers are available either in person or via videoconference. Before exams, additional group consultations are scheduled. Lecturers play an important role in organising the teaching process for each study subject or module, considering the learning outcomes set by the SPCs, the study timetable, and VILNIUS TECH applicable procedures. As subject matter experts, lecturers formulate learning outcomes and choose appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Each subject has a description detailing its content, teaching methods, and relevance to the study programme.

VILNIUS TECH offers full-time, part-time, two-year bridging programmes, and additional one-year studies that serve as pathways to a Master's degree. The organisation of studies is governed by the *Regulations of Studies*, with the study calendar approved annually and, in specific cases, by the Rector's orders or decrees from the Vice-Rector for Studies or the Dean.

The final timetable for students is published on the *Mano VILNIUS TECH* platform at least one month before the start of the final examination session. Schedules for resits are also published before the examination session. Students who fail or miss the final examination are allowed three retakes. In exceptional cases, an examination may be conducted in a commission at the beginning of the following semester, during the spring session, or in the last week before the academic year starts, in the presence of an evaluation commission established by the department. Students with no more than two academic debts can continue their studies within their original group and have the option to repeat failed courses with a lower-year group as per the *Procedures for the Assessment of Student Achievements and Organization of Examinations*.

The criteria for evaluating student achievements are defined in the document *Description of the Procedure for the Evaluation of the Achievements and the Organisation of Examinations of the Students of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University*, approved by the VILNIUS TECH Senate on 1 July 2022. Students' knowledge and skills are evaluated using a ten-point system regulated by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science No. ISAK-2194 of 2008. The cumulative assessment criteria are directly related to learning outcomes. Internships, regulated by Order No. 10.8-857 *On the Description of the Procedure for the Organisation of Internships for Students of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University*, further apply and improve the knowledge and skills acquired by students.

The cumulative assessment system at VILNIUS TECH encourages student participation throughout their studies. During the first lecture of each subject, lecturers present the subject/module program,

recommended literature, intended learning outcomes, and details of examinations. Each subject/module concludes with a final examination or a pass/fail assessment. The overall grade is the sum of mid-term and final grades, with mid-term assessments accounting for 30% to 70% of the final mark. Mid-term assessments can include coursework essays, course papers, laboratory works, homework, colloquiums, tests, and reviews. Interim and final assessments are credited if they meet the threshold level of achievement. Lecturers can increase the final mark by up to 10% for active participation or exceptional quality work.

Since 2022 VILNIUS TECH has offered opportunities for lifelong learning by allowing final-year Bachelor's students, graduates, and students from other universities to try out Master's studies in *Creative Industries* and *Communication of Information and Technology*. This initiative includes a free *Audiovisual Media Discourse* course, available in the spring semester. Additionally, VILNIUS TECH provides various professional development courses as part of its lifelong learning services.

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

VILNIUS TECH infrastructure meets the requirements of students with individual needs (sanitary facilities, elevators for the disabled).

The university website includes *For students with individual needs* page where the link for a survey, aiming to get to know about the number of students who have special needs, is located; Disability Coordinator contacts; detailed information on the list of those who can get support, fees exemption, and financial support. In addition, there is a *Student Support Recommendations* document that should be prepared by the student with the help of a Disability Coordinator and these recommendations are further transferred to teachers to optimise study process/assessment methods and adjust them according to the student's individual needs. Student groups have their teacher coordinators they can contact to make requests.

As for financial help, students with individual needs are exempt from a registration fee during the admission process and are additionally financed in the light of *Assurance of Study Accessibility for Students with Disabilities*. Erasmus+ programmes guide for participants with fewer opportunities is available on the university website. Erasmus+ participants who have physical, mental or other disabilities can apply for an additional individual grant.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

Through the SER and the interviews, VILNIUS TECH successfully met aim 4.1.1. by showing that teaching and learning processes address student needs. The university promotes active student participation through lectures, practical classes, independent work, and internships, and these forms were noted by students (and faculty) as being particularly useful and beneficial. Students are supported by lecturers who provide both individual and group consultations, with additional consultation sessions before exams. This engagement, also reflected in both student and teaching comments during interviews, clearly helped students. In addition, lecturers at VILNIUS TECH play an important role in organising the teaching process for each subject, considering programme learning outcomes and appropriate teaching and assessment methods. The approach was clearly systematic, with each subject including a detailed description of its content, teaching methods, and relevance to the study programme. And, the use of a cumulative assessment system (mid-term and final grades contribute to the overall grade), clearly encouraged regular student participation and engagement throughout the semester.

VILNIUS TECH also ensures access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs, thereby achieving Aim 4.1.2. The university's infrastructure is designed to meet the requirements of students with individual needs, with things such as accessible sanitary facilities and elevators. The VILNIUS TECH website features a dedicated page *For Students with Individual Needs* providing detailed information on available support, fee exemptions, financial assistance, and contact information for the Disability Coordinator. Surveys are conducted in order to get to know about the number of vulnerable students and their needs. Furthermore, financial support is available, including exemption from registration fees during the admission process. VILNIUS TECH also provides information and guidance for participation in Erasmus+ programmes for students with fewer opportunities, ensuring that all students have equal access to educational and professional development opportunities.

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

At VILNIUS TECH, monitoring of study progress occurs at multiple levels: university, faculty, and programme. To bolster student achievement, VILNIUS TECH has implemented a *Plan for Monitoring and Improving Student Achievement*, which encompasses specific objectives and measures. The objectives and corresponding measures include analysing student progress by increasing student participation in research activities, registering cumulative grades in the VILNIUS TECH Information System, collecting and analysing reasons for study termination, observing academic classes with a focus on problematic lectures, and analysing examination session results to suggest improvements. Moreover, VILNIUS TECH provides academic and social support to students by organising additional lectures in core subjects for first-year students and enhancing student information tools. The university also emphasises promoting academic integrity by monitoring cases of academic dishonesty, informing students about cases of academic dishonesty, and introducing a plagiarism-checking system. Additionally, VILNIUS TECH analyses survey results and implements feedback by organising and analysing surveys, then making decisions based on the results and holding meetings with students to inform them of decisions.

Regarding student completion rates, in the first-cycle studies, completion rates vary across programmes, with *Creative Industries* and *Entertainment Industries* showing average completion rates of 70% during the self-evaluation period. Dropout reasons often include personal factors and unmet expectations. Second-cycle studies exhibit varying completion rates, with improvements noted in the *Communication of Creative Society* programme. Challenges and measures for *Communication of Innovation and Technology* include facing challenges due to its specific nature and admitting students without a background in Social Sciences. Measures to improve completion rates include additional seminars on research methodology, intensive individual consultations, and regular communication with students.

An issue that emerged during the interviews was that students were still somewhat unsure about the relationship between theory and practice, and the role that BOTH play in education. This is an area that could be thought through in both curricular development and teaching (see area 2 above).

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

The university reports that most graduates are employed within their respective study fields. It relies on periodic interactions with alumni and partners to gather feedback on graduate employability. Additionally, the university conducts regular meetings with stakeholders, both formal and informal, and collects national data on employment metrics. Moreover, the university administers surveys on the quality of students and the demand in the labour market, along with specific questionnaires targeted at faculty and social partners. These efforts aim to gather comprehensive insights into the alignment between academic programs and the needs of the labour market. However, during the visit, it was observed that the university lacks structured measures or monitoring systems for tracking graduate employability and career progression. A recommendation would be to develop a structured system for tracking alumni career progression and employment outcomes to gather data that would make a better impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum.

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

VILNIUS TECH outlines its framework for ensuring academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The institution follows the *Code of Academic Ethics*, which outlines principles for quality in study and research activities, promoting responsible behaviour, transparency, and accountability.

Academic integrity is supported by several regulatory documents. The *Regulations of Studies* define procedures for various study cycles, quality assurance, funding principles, and student rights and duties. The *Description of Procedure for Student Achievement Assessment* specifies dishonest behaviours and their sanctions, while the *Description of Procedure for Final Theses Preparation and Defence* addresses plagiarism, employing the Turnitin tool since 2019 for detecting plagiarism in final theses and other written works. Preventative measures against academic dishonesty include educational seminars for lecturers on assignment design and assessment methods to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In 2020, a group formed by the Rector recommended strategies to ensure integrity in written assignments. During the pandemic, distance learning necessitated training courses focused on maintaining academic integrity online, with lecturers sharing practices and recommendations.

VILNIUS TECH addresses tolerance and non-discrimination through the *Gender Equality Plan for 2022-2027* and the *Declaration on Equal Opportunities*. The university applies a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, aiming to provide equal opportunities and address gender issues. The plan seeks to create structural and cultural changes, promoting an inclusive environment, challenging stereotypes, and preventing discrimination.

Student initiatives also play a role in promoting academic integrity. The *Cheat Legally - Use Your Brains!* campaign 2013-2017 aimed to reduce exam cheating, resulting in a 20% decrease by 2015. The 2021 *Illumination* campaign, organised with Vytautas Magnus University students, included surveys on academic dishonesty, honesty pledges, and educational videos. Additionally, VILNIUS TECH's policy on personal data security, based on the 2019 *Policy on Protection of Personal Data*, outlines the handling of personal data, impacting academic integrity and other university processes. These combined measures illustrate the university’s efforts to create a responsible and inclusive academic environment.

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

VILNIUS TECH has established procedures for students to appeal against assessment outcomes and lodge complaints regarding the study process. Students can appeal the assessment of their achievements or breaches in assessment procedures. These appeals and complaints are forwarded by the Vice-Rector of Studies to either the Faculty or University Appeals Board for consideration. The University Appeals Board handles cases involving assessment breaches or performance evaluations conducted by high-ranking officials such as the Dean, Vice-Dean, Rector, Vice-Rector, or Department Head. It also addresses cases assessed by a board, appeals against Faculty Appeals Board decisions, admission test decisions, and executive actions, excluding complaints about study programme content, academic ethics, or employment relations.

The Faculty Appeals Boards handle performance assessment appeals and breaches of assessment procedures not under the University Appeals Board's jurisdiction. These boards are formed within five business days of receiving an appeal, as decreed by the Faculty Dean, involving the relevant department. The appeal procedures are detailed in the *Description of Procedure for Resolving Student Appeals and Complaints at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University* (2020), which covers performance assessments, breaches of assessment procedures, and the organisational structure of the Appeals Boards. Appeals and complaints are directed to the appropriate Appeal Commission by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

In 2018, for example, FCI recorded a significant number of appeals, with seven cases concerning procedural violations during final thesis defences. Of these appeals, three were rejected, and four were upheld. To address and prevent such irregularities, the final thesis defence procedure was thoroughly revised, and regular discussions with defence committee chairs were instituted to ensure compliance with the established requirements.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

For Aim 4.2.1, VILNIUS TECH monitors student learning progress and provides feedback to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning. The university employs a *Plan for Monitoring and Improving Student Achievement*, which includes analysing student progress, tracking cumulative grades, and identifying reasons for study termination. Student satisfaction with this process was noted in the interviews, as was faculty knowledge and commitment. VILNIUS TECH also enhances student support by organising additional lectures, monitoring academic integrity through a plagiarism-checking system, and conducting regular surveys to gather feedback. These measures ensure student progress is monitored.

For Aim 4.2.2, graduate employability and career monitoring are effectively implemented at VILNIUS TECH. The university maintains periodic interactions with alumni and partners to gather feedback on employability. Additionally, regular meetings with stakeholders and national data collection on employment metrics help align academic programmes with labour market needs. Despite the need for a more structured tracking system, the current practices of gathering insights through surveys and stakeholder engagement demonstrate the goal of enhancing graduate employability.

For Aim 4.2.3, VILNIUS TECH ensures academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination through a defined framework. The *Code of Academic Ethics* and various regulatory documents support academic integrity, detailing procedures for assessment and addressing dishonesty with tools like Turnitin. Preventative measures, such as educational seminars and strategies for maintaining integrity in online learning, further reinforce this aim. The *Gender Equality Plan* and zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination promote an

inclusive environment, aiming to create cultural and structural changes within the university. Campaigns like *Cheat Legally - Use Your Brains!* and *Illumination* also contribute to fostering a responsible academic community.

For Aim 4.2.4, VILNIUS TECH has established procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints regarding the study process. The university's clear appeal and complaint procedures involve the Vice-Rector of Studies and the respective Appeals Boards.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Student progress is well monitored, and the teaching tools employed clearly help the students to achieve their goals.
2. University buildings are fully equipped, and financial and personal support are provided to make study conditions equal for all students.
3. Course evaluations were systematic, and the students made clear in interviews that faculty were open to contact and communication.
4. Procedures for appeal are working well and are clear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified

For further improvement

1. Develop a more structured system for tracking alumni career progression and employment outcomes to gather data that would make a better impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum.
2. Develop teaching strategies and curricular developments that will allow for the relationship between practice and theory (critical theory and not the theory of making media) so that students better understand the relationship between the two, as this is a central function of a university that engages in practical work.

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

The number, qualification level and competence of staff complies with the national regulations. Staff hail from a range of backgrounds and specialisms including academic, professional (artistic) and didactic. This means that there is potential for all learning outcomes to be sufficiently accommodated (SER/visit). The number and turnover of staff is difficult to fully ascertain because staff are moving from fractional to larger fractional or full-time positions and have a range of teaching obligations depending on other activities such as research (SER). The staff/student ratio is acceptable at current levels, however, student numbers are rising without plans to increase staff numbers at this time (visit).

For first-cycle programmes the SER states a total number of 92 teachers for 800 students in 2022 - in 2021 there were 101 members of staff with 703 students. Whilst this demonstrates a successful cycle in terms of recruitment care should be taken to adjust staff workloads and to ensure students and staff can manage the work required to achieve learning outcomes effectively. The SER states that approximately 60% of first-cycle teachers hold a PhD which complies with the General Requirements for the Delivery of Studies but is on the lower end of the spectrum.

For second-cycle studies, there are a total of 19 teachers for 74 students with 94% of teachers holding a PhD. This also complies with the General Requirements for the Delivery of Studies with a more comfortable ratio on both accounts.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The staff-to-student ratio is at an acceptable level but as this includes practitioners as well as academic staff there is potential for the courses to over-recruit which would impact the ability of staff to ensure the quality of the course and appropriate fulfilment of learning outcomes.

It is suggested that the institution considers the impact of moving to a ‘mass education’ model of provision within the existing workload and pedagogies and staffing provision, specifically for first-cycle courses. Staff should be consulted on whether or not a lecture/workshop or seminar model of delivery is the most suitable for their module and if not work with them to address any issues that arise from increased student numbers. Current delivery is imaginative and is working well for both students and external partners who are also embedded within student learning outcomes for some modules.

The panel found the staff to be experienced, committed and enthusiastic (visit) and aim 5.1 is fully met.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

There is an incentive (points) scheme to encourage staff to participate in Erasmus + exchange programmes which prioritises those who have not had the opportunity previously. The remit for applying for funds to research or teach abroad is wide ranging and covers all trips that aim to develop educational competencies. A list of approved international conferences is provided to incentivise participation and funds are given to support attendance (SER, visit). 15/92 staff participated last year.

The COVID-19 pandemic naturally impacted upon mobility but numbers have increased and participation. The Department of Communications involved 12 visits abroad and the Department of Entertainment Industries recorded 25 visits abroad, the number of faculty members participating is not provided (SER). The institution is working to increase its international reach through research and teaching mobility (visit).

These strategies provide opportunities for mobility but could be extended to include research trips that seek to develop international research collaborations and funding bids. Currently, the number of staff participating in mobility activities is limited.

5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

There is an evaluation system that utilises KPIs to evaluate staff competencies on an annual basis, this is a flexible system that enables staff to focus on either teaching or research although research receives a higher weighting for promotional purposes (visit). Staff are offered a range of continual professional development courses (see below), and are encouraged to engage with them through incentives, goal setting and yearly targets

Training provision is wide-ranging. The library offers seminars on academic information literacy and the development of scientific management skills (SER). Other development opportunities include courses delivered on Moodle and seminars delivered by the Academic Support Centre, Group of Educational Competencies, E-learning Group, Psychological Support and Disability Affairs Group. This ensures a wide ranging provision and support for teaching related development and staff can choose which best serves their need from a published list. In addition, seminars can be tailored to the needs of the faculty. The required number of hours depends on the years of employment but ranges between 4 and 8 hours per year. There is also extensive provision for learning English and opportunities to develop leadership and team-building skills for those entering leadership roles (visit). (SER, visit).

The teaching workload is based on a 50/50 research/teaching model with training opportunities taken from the research element (visit). The focus of training leans towards teaching competencies, this is appropriate for new staff particularly but a shifting focus towards developing research skills and competencies for developing grant bids and writing for publications would be advantageous.

There is a system through which staff can accrue points for training which translates into additional pay and promotion and for newer members of staff there is a minimum requirement of training hours to gain sufficient proficiency and relevant qualifications for teaching at HE level (visit).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The workload model as stated in the SER is 50% teaching-related and 50% research-related with training taken from the research element which could hinder development in research areas. A model that linked training to the element of the contract that it serves would be more equitable with leadership taken from teaching. Care should also be taken to ensure that early career researchers have the same time allocation for research as their colleagues to provide equal opportunities for development across all aspects of their professional careers.

The previous report suggested the need to develop opportunities and support for increased scientific publications which has resulted in a points system linked to the level of the journal and specific training opportunities. The effectiveness of these approaches needs to be evaluated as there is still a need to develop opportunities and training for staff to ensure that conference papers can be translated into articles for reputable, international journals. Research has shown that a KPI system, whilst appearing transparent, can generate a negative organisational culture and therefore it is important to involve staff in decision-making to fully understand where there might be barriers to developing research fully.

It was clear to the panel that staff had aspects of their workload that were potentially hidden from KPIs and more qualitative in nature including engagement with social partners, aspects of research (such as reading) and the administrative work of teaching across 4 programmes and PhD provision. The trajectory of student numbers suggests that staff development strategies are working well in terms of attracting students. Staff training however cannot mitigate a situation in which there are greater student numbers than anticipated particularly when staff are preparing interesting and engaging sessions.

It is evident that workloads are taken seriously, and steps are taken to include staff development in the usual working hours but this will not assist if numbers grow without the chance for staff to adapt and develop a different approach to teaching and assessment, one that can be managed both practically in terms of matching the pedagogical approach with the number of students in a session and within working hours.

There is however a clear system of evaluating staff competencies, incentives and requirements to engage in professional development and mobility programmes and a good range of development and training opportunities particularly in relation to teaching activities. This provides a good foundation for further development and the panel is satisfied that aims 5.1 and 5.2 are fully met.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. The growth of research and publications that show full engagement with the evaluation process.
2. An institutional commitment to increase international reach and staff mobility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified

For further improvement

1. Link training to the area it serves so that research is not marginalised particularly as staff undertake significant time and work to build and maintain partner relationships. Ensure that access to research time is equitable across career stages and is supported by the institution's equality strategy.
2. Evaluate the impact that a KPI and mobility incentives approach is having on staff to identify any barriers to participation and maintain a positive organisational culture, and consult staff in generating and implementing these types of initiatives.
3. Ensure that staff have sufficient *time* to develop the quality of research outputs and engage with the latest developments in the sector beyond methodologies and consider how this fits into the institution's equality framework.

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

It is noted that the institution implements its communication study programmes with appropriate facilities and resources. The FCI has extensively renovated its classrooms, integrating modern audiovisual technology and maintaining a teaching laboratory that adheres to hygiene and safety standards. The faculty's total available space measures 6,816.68 m², providing an average of 8.5 m² per student. This space is allocated among classrooms, offices, auxiliary rooms, and common areas. Notably, significant renovations occurred between 2019 and 2023 in buildings SNR-II and SNR-V, with building V officially handed over to the faculty in 2021. By the end of 2022, the faculty had renovated 16 classrooms, all equipped with internet access and power sockets, with upgraded projectors in four classrooms.

The FCI also collaborates with the Faculty of Architecture, which has a renovated classroom equipped with new media, computer facilities, and sound equipment. In 2022, the faculty maintained 16 classrooms with a total area of 288 m², consistent with previous years. These premises are well-suited for study sessions, research activities, and administrative functions. Building II underwent renovation in 2022, and ongoing renovations are noted in the Assembly Hall of Building III and the Meeting Room in Building II. The FCI at Trakų Str. 1 comprises 20 teaching rooms with around 500 workplaces, including spaces for individual and group work and designated rest areas. All buildings are accessible to disabled persons, and equipped with lifts and ramps, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity.

The Faculty of Computer Science and Informatics provides facilities for both theoretical and practical classes, featuring classrooms equipped with multimedia projectors and computers. Two computer labs, K2 and K3, each with 30 places, support the intended learning outcomes with the necessary software. The Saulėtekis building houses additional facilities, including a large lecture hall and three smaller lecture halls. The faculty conducts surveys among lecturers before each semester to identify the need for computer and software updates. Regular software updates include the Adobe and Microsoft packages, accessible remotely via *studsoft.vilniustech.lt* (VPN required). The computer classrooms meet modern safety and hygiene standards, with annual reviews and recent renovations. Students also have access to working rooms and rest areas for independent work.

Since 2022, the FCI has adopted a hybrid approach for Master's studies, equipping classrooms with advanced technical solutions such as directional microphones and wide-angle cameras. Some equipment was funded through projects. The Linkmenų Fabrikas also offers valuable facilities, including a photography studio, sound studio, and 3D printers. The main building of the university provides additional classrooms and an upgraded computer room for faculty use. In 2022, the faculty continued to upgrade its equipment, acquiring new desktop computers, upgrading video cards, and preparing classrooms for hybrid work.

The university's infrastructure includes over 2,000 stationary computers, with approximately 1,050 in classrooms and reading rooms. A total of about 2,100 computers support study and research purposes. The

university boasts 60 computer classrooms, each equipped with teacher workstations and video projectors. Wireless Wi-Fi covers nearly all premises. The data centre features substantial processing power and memory capacity. Over 200 software titles are employed in the study process, accessible both on-campus and remotely via the VILNIUS TECH cloud service. Software like MATLAB/SIMULINK, featuring over 100 modules, is widely used and available under the TAH licence for all university members.

The self-service portal *mano.vilniustech.lt* and its mobile version provide comprehensive organisational information and tools for the study process. The university allocates an annual budget of approximately €350,000 for IT infrastructure upgrades. Accessibility for students with reduced mobility is ensured through ramps, lifts, and specially adapted entrances and facilities across the campus. The library provides workspaces equipped with tools and software for students with special needs, including a Braille printer, video magnifiers, and specialised software.

The library's extensive collection includes over 98,000 titles of printed publications and more than 493,000 e-books and e-journals. Managed using the Aleph system, the library offers virtual access to a wide range of documents. An annual budget of over €425,000 is allocated for acquiring publications, with new titles regularly added based on faculty recommendations. The library is open 24/7, providing numerous study spaces and computerised workstations. Subscription-based electronic resources are accessible both on-campus and remotely.

Ongoing efforts to upgrade and maintain the university's infrastructure and resources are evident. Departments continually adapt to market developments, planning and budgeting for necessary upgrades each year. The availability and accessibility of literature for communication and other study programmes are regularly assessed and updated, ensuring effective support for student learning.

In conclusion, the Faculty of Creative Industries and the Faculty of Computer Science and Informatics at VILNIUS TECH are equipped with modern facilities and resources. They demonstrate a commitment to maintaining high standards in their educational offerings, supporting both students and staff. The infrastructure is inclusive, regularly updated, and aligned with the evolving needs of higher education, ensuring that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

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

The faculty implements a systematic approach to ensure that the necessary educational materials and resources are available. Each year, the library collaborates with lecturers to identify and acquire essential textbooks and literature, both in print and electronic formats. Lecturers are encouraged to contribute to methodological aids, with the university developing a publication plan to support this effort.

With the introduction of blended (hybrid) Master's degree studies, faculties identified the required equipment to support high-quality hybrid learning. The necessary hybrid equipment sets were determined based on the anticipated student enrolment in each programme. These hybrid classrooms are vital not only for second-cycle studies but also to accommodate the growing number of international students, some of whom face visa delays and participate in hybrid learning. Due to the success of these blended studies and the increasing international student population, there are plans to expand the number of blended learning classrooms in 2023.

The teaching laboratory inventory at the FCI is continually enhanced, with high-quality cameras and microphones added annually to improve the study process. Lecturers frequently use the photography and sound editing studios at Linkmenų Fabrikas for teaching. These facilities are also utilised by students for complex projects. Future plans include collaboration with the Faculty of Fundamental Sciences to develop virtual and augmented reality environments.

The most recent external evaluation provided several recommendations, which have been addressed as follows:

1. The First Cycle of Study (*Creative Industries*):
- Recommendation: Improve material resources such as the library stock and create more independent and group workspaces on campus.
- Actions: Methodological and scientific literature is ordered annually, and subscription databases are accessible. Group workspaces have been created in buildings SNR-V and SNR-II, near the Assembly Hall and the Atlantis Hall.
2. Student Work Facilities:
- Recommendation: Enhance student work facilities, including informal spaces like relaxation rooms.
- Actions: New premises (SNR-V and SNR-II) now host a significant portion of student activities. The Saulėtekis campus provides a lecture hall and three smaller lecture halls, all accessible to disabled persons.
3. Library Collection Improvement:
- Recommendation: Ensure students know how to access databases and increase the number of English-language books.
- Actions: The library's stocks are regularly updated, and study subject cards are revised at the beginning of each academic year. Training sessions on database usage are conducted regularly, with special sessions for first-year students during their initial days at the university.

Linkmenų Fabrikas remains a crucial facility, providing advanced resources such as photography studios, sound studios, and 3D printers. The planned expansion and upgrades in the FCI and other faculties aim to enhance the educational experience for all students, ensuring they have access to modern resources and learning environments.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

VILNIUS TECH facilities, informational, and financial resources are sufficient to fully meet achieving learning outcomes (6.1.1) and continuous planning and upgrading (6.2.2.). The university's infrastructure (classrooms, computer labs, media labs) is well-maintained and equipped with technology to meet the needs of students and faculty. The Faculty of Creative Industries and the Faculty of Computer Science and Informatics use adequately-equipped spaces for teaching and research. The classrooms and labs have the necessary audiovisual and computer equipment, including software packages that are updated. The centralised system for monitoring and upgrading hardware and software ensures that all educational tools are up-to-date and functional.

Recent investments in the Media Research Lab and other specialised facilities indicate a commitment to providing high-quality resources for practical learning experiences – including the acquisition of new professional video and photo equipment, enhancing the quality of hands-on training for students in communication and related fields.

The university library supports the academic needs of the students and faculty with a decent collection of printed and digital resources. The library provides 24/7 access to a wide range of electronic databases and digital tools, ensuring that students and faculty can access necessary academic materials both on-campus and remotely. The library's resources are continuously updated based on faculty recommendations, ensuring the availability of current and relevant materials.

Financial resources are effectively managed to support the ongoing improvement and maintenance of the university's infrastructure. Annual budgets are allocated for IT infrastructure upgrades and the acquisition of new publications and resources, ensuring that all necessary materials and tools are available to support the academic programmes. Facilities are adapted to accommodate students with disabilities. This includes elevators, ramps, and specially equipped study and living spaces, ensuring that all students have equal access to the university's resources.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Very good physical facilities including the virtual studio and library with 24/7 student access.
2. Good selection of databases for both journals and e-books.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified

For further improvement

1. Consider creating flexible classroom spaces in which students can work collaboratively, collectively (in the existing linear style) or individually.

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

VILNIUS TECH has specific procedures to support quality assurance on various levels from study programme committees to central university bodies according to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Responsibilities for the development and approval of study programmes, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, and ongoing monitoring of study programmes are clearly defined at the university level, faculty level, department level and study programme level. The document *Description of Internal Study Quality Assurance* of May 2020 (available at the following website) provides details on ongoing monitoring and periodic review of study programmes (cf. also SER table 8.1.).

The SPC for each programme is the main body that monitors the quality of study programmes, e.g., by initiating, analysing and approving new study subjects proposed by the department, and by conducting ongoing monitoring of a programme.

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

Students are involved in the decision-making process via student representation and personal communication with faculty management and the programme-making committee. They make proposals which can improve study programmes and later are able to study external evaluation reports to see which actions were taken according to their recommendations and requests. The self-evaluation group for preparing the SER included a student.

Social partners are actively involved in the process of implementation, evaluation, and improvement of the study programmes in Communication. Social partners are members of the SPC, the Faculty's Study Attestation Committee and the Faculty Council. They participate in considering the evaluation and improvement of the study programmes and they submit proposals. Every programme committee has 1-2 members from the "outside" and they meet at least once every 1-2 months to discuss the study process and more general issues of the university.

Employers are involved in the degree awarding commission and evaluate theses. Social partners also provide internship opportunities.

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

The document *Description of Internal Study Quality Assurance* of May 2020 dedicates separate and detailed chapters to Information Management (X) and Public Information (XI) in line with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, such Indicators of student

achievements and progression, graduates' employment indicators, students opinion on the teaching quality and quality of the study programme, indicators on material resources and student support, etc.

Information is collected, analysed and stored in the university study information data collection and management system *Alma Informatica* and in the university information system IS.VGTU which consists of several subsystems in order for staff to review and perform changes in study plans, module descriptors, etc.

In general, information about the programmes of the communication study field seems well presented and widely available online via the VILNIUS TECH website. Learning outcomes and modules are outlined for each programme, and the pages are easy to navigate.

Public information is coordinated by the Public Communication Office, including the university's Facebook account.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Students' feedback at VILNIUS TECH is mainly gauged via mandatory surveys (twice a year) on students' satisfaction with the relevance of the material, lecturers' professionalism, level of difficulty of exams etc. These surveys for students are published on Moodle (grades cannot be seen if the questionnaire is not filled in), afterwards faculty staff can analyse all results during faculty meetings. The questionnaire for last-year students in May includes questions about the whole study programme. There is also a survey for international students and another one on career opportunities created for recent graduates.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The evaluation panel found that the internal quality assurance system is very well specified, with a division of responsibilities and a strong commitment to evaluation. Information about the programmes of the communication study field is well presented and widely available online.

Students contribute to study programmes in the field of communication at VILNIUS TECH via Student Representation, meetings with faculty management and study programme committee. Student feedback is collected mainly via mandatory surveys.

During the meeting with labour market representatives, concrete examples of successful collaboration in various public and private sector programmes were provided. Joint publicity campaigns were highlighted as evidence of this strong partnership. It was apparent that the network is extensive, with close and long-term collaborations. To make this even more effective, it is recommended to enhance industry collaboration by establishing regular industry advisory boards. These boards would hold regular meetings to ensure continuous feedback from employers about the skills and knowledge they expect from graduates.

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					
Second cycle					

COMMENDATIONS

1. Strong bonds and cooperation between students and faculty management ensure that students' voice is heard.
2. The surveys are provided not only for full-time students but also for international students coming for a relatively short period of time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified

For further improvement

1. Enhance industry collaboration by establishing a regular industry advisory board.

V. SUMMARY

The panel would like to thank everyone at VILNIUS TECH for engaging in the evaluation process. It was particularly useful to engage in dialogues with all the groups and we thank them for their participation in this evaluation. The work and hospitality provided made the task much easier.

Overall, the evaluation panel found that the four programmes in the communication study field are innovative and timely responses to the fast growth of the creative industries market in Lithuania and beyond. The programmes effectively address the current demands of both society and the labour market, and the content is consistently reviewed to ensure alignment with the latest industry trends.

The following brief points are provided as a guide to support future developmental initiatives.

In terms of alignment of intended learning outcomes with assessment methods, it could be made more clear how intended learning outcomes and *de facto* used assessment methods are aligned. It is recommended therefore that an assessment strategy is developed for each of the four programmes, which might also add to the distinctiveness of their profiles.

The research culture is developing well and is set on a path of growth. This could be strengthened through providing staff with sufficient time and resources to develop particularly in the quality of outputs, both journal articles and research bids. A move away from more practical concerns to a more academic focus (even if this is then applied to practical concerns) would be beneficial for all. This development requires time not only to write but also to read, think and update oneself with new publications, and theoretical and conceptual developments. This in turn will provide more opportunities to engage students in critical thinking and new (and existing) theoretical ideas in the field thereby enhancing their skills. Practice based lecturers would also benefit from engaging with the theoretical elements and perspectives that have a significant impact on their work. Overall, this will assist in critical thinking and engagement more broadly.

Students are well supported through the programmes and importantly feel ‘heard’ demonstrating a positive learning culture overall. Regularly consulting staff, particularly in relation to increasing student numbers will help to maintain this connection and positive environment.