



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**STUDY FIELD of LAW**

at Mykolas Romeris University

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Report language – English

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## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Law<sup>1</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Law and Pretrial Process<sup>2</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Law and Customs Activities</i></b>
State code	6121KX004	6121KX005	6121KX006
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years
Credit volume	210	210	210
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Law	Bachelor of Law	Bachelor of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian (from 1997) / English (from 2022)	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	19/05/1997	19/05/2012	24/05/2001

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<sup>1</sup>Programme has four specialisations:

- 1) Law and Penitentiary Activities;
- 2) Law and Fintech;
- 3) Law and International Relations;
- 4) Law and Global Security.

<sup>2</sup>The programme has a specialisation: Law and forensics. The programme is also implemented in Vilnius and Kaunas.

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Law and Penitentiary Activities<sup>3</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Law and Police activities<sup>4</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Law and State Border Guard</i></b>
State code	6121KX007	6121KX008	6121KX010
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years	Full-time studies, 3,5 years / Part-time studies, 5 years
Credit volume	210	210	210
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Law	Bachelor of Law	Bachelor of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	19/05/1997	19/05/1997	24/05/2001

<sup>3</sup>The programme will be terminated after the graduation of the last students.

<sup>4</sup>The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Kaunas.

Title of the study programme	<b>Law<sup>5</sup></b>	<b><i>Administrative Law</i></b>	<b><i>Environmental Law<sup>6</sup></i></b>
State code	6211KX016	6211KX007	6211KX008
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years
Credit volume	90	90	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian/ English	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	25/06/1998	16/06/2000	22/06/2011

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<sup>5</sup>The programme has seven specialisations:

- 1) Criminal Law and Criminology (CrimLC V and CrimL K) (this specialisation is implemented in Vilnius and Kaunas);
- 2) Civil Law (CL);
- 3) International Law (ILs EN) \* - two diplomas (English) with Yaroslav the Wise National Law University (NLU) (Ukraine);
- 4) International Law (IL s LT);
- 5) European and International Business Law (EIBLs) (English) \* - two diplomas (English);
  1. with Yaroslav the Wise National Law University (NLU) (Ukraine);
  2. with Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (IFNUL) (Ukraine);
  3. with Tashkent State University of Law (TSUL) (Uzbekistan);
  4. with American University of Central Asia (AUCA) (Kyrgyzstan).
5. with Narxoz University (Narxoz) (Kazakhstan);
- 6) Tax and Financial Law (TaxFL);
- 7) Law, Technology and Business (LegalTech).

<sup>6</sup>The programme is implemented only in Kaunas.

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Civil and Business Law</i></b>	<b><i>Labour Law</i></b>	<b><i>Labour Law LL.M</i></b>
State code	6211KX018	6211KX010	6211KX028
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1 year
Credit volume	90	90	60
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	19/02/2007	24/05/2001	07/09/2021

Title of the study programme	<b><i>European and International Business Law<sup>7</sup></i></b>	<b><i>European Union Law and Governance<sup>8</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Intellectual Property Law<sup>9</sup></i></b>
State code	6281KX005	6211KX012	6281KX001
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1,5 years	Full-time studies / 2 years
Credit volume	120	90	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	English	English	English
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	21/08/2013	22/06/2011	29/03/2016

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<sup>7</sup>Joint programme with University of Savoie Mont Blanc (USMB) (France). The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Chamberi.

<sup>8</sup>Two diplomas (in English) with the University of Bordeaux (France).

<sup>9</sup>Joint study programme with Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK) (Ukraine). The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Kyiv.

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Mediation</i></b>	<b><i>Mediation LL.M</i></b>	<b><i>Private Law<sup>10</sup></i></b>
State code	6211KX014	6215KX003	6281KX002
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1 year	Full-time studies / 2 years
Credit volume	90	60	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	English	English
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	08/04/2011	27/09/2019	29/03/2016

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<sup>10</sup>Joint study programme with Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK) (Ukraine). The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Kyiv.

Title of the study programme	<b>Health Law LL.M</b>	<b>International Law<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Law and Police Activities<sup>12</sup></b>
State code	6215KX001	6211KX015	6211KX017
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 1	Full-time studies / 2 years, Part-time / 2 years	<i>Full-time studies / 1,5 years, Part-time / 2 years</i>
Credit volume	60	120	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	English	English	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	27/09/2019	17/06/2013	19/05/1997

<sup>11</sup>The programme will be terminated on 30/06/2022. Two diplomas (English) with Yaroslav the Wise National Law University (Ukraine). The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Kharkiv.

<sup>12</sup> The programme is implemented only in Kaunas.

The programme has two specialisations:

- 1) Pre-trial Process;
- 2) Law and Corruption Prevention.



Title of the study programme	<b><i>Law and Technologies LL.M</i></b>	<b><i>Legal Regulation of Public Administration and Human Rights<sup>13</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Public Procurement Law LL.M</i></b>
State code	6215KX002	6281KX004	6211KX027
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies / 1	Full-time studies / 2 years	Full-time studies / 1 year
Credit volume	60	120	60
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	English	English	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	27/09/2019	17/09/2013	07/09/2021

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<sup>13</sup>Joint study programme with Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK) (Ukraine). The programme is implemented in Vilnius and Kyiv.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 19th and 20th of October, 2023.

**Prof. dr. Bertel De Groote (panel chairperson)** *Member Education Quality Board, Head of Department, Ghent University, Belgium;*  
**Prof. dr. Xavier Groussot**, Professor of European Law and Dean for Research at the Faculty of Law, Lund University, Sweden;  
**Prof. dr. Mart Susi**, Professor of Human Rights Law, Tallinn University, Estonia;  
**Ms. Jurga Petniūnaitė**, Lawyer, patent attorney, AAA Law firm, Lithuania;  
**Ms. Vitalija Jakubaitytė**, Vytautas Magnus university, 3rd year Law and Finance student.

## 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Final theses;

## 1.4. BACKGROUND OF LAW FIELD STUDIES AT MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) is a state university in Lithuania, established in 1990 and named after Professor Mykolas Romeris in 2004, a prominent figure in Lithuanian Constitutional Law. It evolved from predecessors like the Lithuanian Police Academy, the Lithuanian Academy of Law and the Lithuanian University of Law. It played a pivotal role in the restoration of the public sector, justice system, and legislation. In this regard, it has alumni that fulfil prominent roles in society.

MRU offers studies in three cycles of higher education, in line with the European Qualification Framework.

MRU, the largest social science university in Lithuania, offers 68 study programs across bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral levels. These programs cover diverse fields such as accounting, communication, economics, education, finance, computing, management, psychology, political sciences, and law. Social sciences are dominant in the portfolio of MRU (95%). The university operates through four faculties: the Law School, Public Security Academy, Faculty of Human and Social Studies, and Faculty of Public Governance and Business.

With 6,000 students, including 694 international degree-seeking students from over 40 countries, MRU demonstrates a commitment to internationalisation. The university has 429

teaching staff and researchers, with 66% of the teaching staff and researchers holding PhD's. MRU invests in international and national studies and research projects. MRU has a particular focus on social innovation (see: EC-supported international study 'Creating Culture of Social Innovation in HE'). MRU is an active member of more than 15 national and international organisations. MRU has a significant activity in fundamental and applied research in social sciences and humanities. The University is also - among others in the field of law - active in joint study programmes and double degrees.

In the field of Law, MRU has a significant presence, offering 6 bachelor's degree programs and 5 specialisations in the 1st-cycle of Law study field.

At master's level (including LL.M.) the following programmes are offered in the Law study field (by the Law School and Public Security Academy):

I. 11 SPs providing the qualification of master's in law:

- **SPs in Lithuanian:** Administrative Law (AL), Environmental Protection Law (EnPL), Civil and Business Law (CBL); Labour Law (LL); Law and Police Activity (LpolA); Mediation (ME).
- **Joint SPs in English:** European and International Business Law (EIBL) implemented with USMB (France); Legal Regulation of Public Administration and Human Rights (LRPAHR), Private Law (PL) and Intellectual Property Law (IPL) with TSNUK (Ukraine).
- **Double degree SP in English:** European Union Law and Governance (EULG) with University of Bordeaux (France).

II. 6 specialisations of the Law SP providing the qualification of master's in law:

- **Specialisations in Lithuanian:** Criminal Law and Criminology in Vilnius (CrimLC V) and Kaunas (CrimLC K); International Law (ILs LT); Tax and Finance Law (TaxFL).
- **Specialisation in English:** Law, Technology and Business (LegalTech).
- **Double degree specialisations in English:** International Law (ILs EN) with NLU (Ukraine); European and International Business Law (EIBLs) (1) with NLU (Ukraine), (2) with IFNUL (Ukraine).

III. 2 Specializations of the Law and Police Activities SP, providing the qualification of master's in law:

- Pre-Trial Proceedings (LpolA PtP);
- Law and Prevention of Corruption (LpolA CP).

IV. 5 LL.M SPs providing the qualification of master's in law:

- **SPs in Lithuanian:** Public Procurement Law LL.M (PPL LL.M); Labour Law LL.M (LL LL.M); Health Law LL.M (HL LL.M);

- ***SPs in English:*** LegalTech LL.M; and Mediation LL.M (ME LLM).

The Criminal Law and Criminology specialisation of the Law SP is delivered in Vilnius and other municipalities, i.e., in Kaunas. The scope and content of both specialisations are identical.

MRU has consistently ranked well in the QS Ranking by subject in Law for five consecutive years. The Law School and Public Security Academy implement the 1st-cycle of the Law study field in two cities, Vilnius and Kaunas, constituting 20.6% of the total 1st-cycle programs at MRU.

One notices a notable decline in the number of students in the 1st-cycle of the Law study field from 2019 to 2022, with a 23% decrease. According to MRU, this decline aligns with the overall trend in the reduction of Lithuanian students.

The last accreditation - i.e. extension of accreditation -was granted in 2016 by SKVC (the LL.M. SP's were accredited in 2019 and 2021). For the 1st cycle evaluation and accreditation by SKVC took place in 2016. The accreditation for 3 years was in 2019 extended by SKVC.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the *law* study field at Mykolas Romeris University is given a **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>27</b>

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

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

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

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

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

The *second cycle* of the law study field at Mykolas Romeris University is given a **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>

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

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

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

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

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



### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND CURRICULUM

*Aims, learning outcomes, and curriculum are evaluated according to the following indicators:*

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

##### **First cycle study programmes**

According to the SER, the Law study field at MRU stands for ‘tradition’ and is, according to the SER, at the same time constantly evolving. There is a focus on the preparation of classical lawyers (guaranteeing foundational legal competencies) and on the preparation of lawyers with concrete aspirations (in specific market areas), requiring specific competencies in view of the activities of specific national/international institutions. Therefore, at MRU 1st cycle studies are organised through separate SPs and specialisations (SER, p. 9).

Characteristic is according to MRU the fact that the content of the 1st-cycle SP’s integrates experiential learning methods, and law and technology aspects, essential for future lawyers. Moreover, free legal aid is integrated in the study process. Studies are implemented with a number of official partners, offering experiential learning from the first year on.

The offer of both a ‘classical and a highly specialised bachelor Law is unique, according to the SER.

MRU refers hereby to the model of Law+ SPs, capturing the specific needs of the institutions/broader market, including an interdisciplinary element and taking into account the most prominent tendencies where employees with legal backgrounds will be increasingly needed (see SER, p. 10).

The SER (p. 10) also refers to the fact that students of the 3,5 years long Law SPs at MRU can enter the labour market faster after their bachelor’s studies (compared to longer integrated studies). Afterwards, having gained professional experience, students can easily come back to complete their master’s studies.

Moreover, the SER states that certain of the offered SPs offer in-depth knowledge and skills relevant to the law enforcement system, particularly needed in the context of reforms in the country.

Nevertheless, employment opportunities for lawyers/junior lawyers prove to be ‘average’ in Lithuania. This is nuanced by MRU, stating that the official employment statistics are calculated according to approved legal positions, while practice shows that a legal education is needed in various other positions requiring knowledge of different legal fields.

MRU focuses its specialised SPs in areas with specific needs, which is, according to the SER, proven by the high employment rates of its graduates.

The Law SP (first cycle) focuses, according to the SER, on real-life cases and legal problem-solving, with an emphasis on experiential learning. This enables the training of qualified legal practitioners with the knowledge and skills that are necessary for classical legal work. The graduates will therefore be able to work in all law enforcement institutions.

One has to note in this regard that the majority of traditional legal professions require a master's level of education.

The 3,5 year bachelor's studies allow graduates to enter employment faster and return to master's studies with practical experience, which allows them to determine their choice for master specialisation in a more targeted way.

Alongside, the SER mentions the existing need for classical lawyers in all traditional legal professions.

According to the SER, in 2021 the content of the SP in Law was upgraded and adjusted to bring it in line with the needs of the contemporary legal market. In view of this, consultations with civil society (representatives of the main legal professions, that are intertwined in the education model of MRU) took place.

In the SER, MRU outlines the needs of the labour market, to which the 1st cycle programmes have to answer for the following specific specialisations:

- Law and Penitentiary Activities
- Law and Financial Technologies
- Law and International Relations
- Law and Global Security (studies in English)
- Law and Customs Activities
- Law and Police Activities
- Law and Pretrial Process
- Law and Forensics
- Law and State Border Guard

The SER (pp. 11 ff.) gives proof of well documented choices in organising 'specialisations', linking study programmes' content to sectoral needs. The specialisations are inspired by a clear vision on competences, in view of specific actual societal/labour market challenges and demands (eg. for the Fintech SP: offering graduates fintech-knowledge and legal skills to contribute to an environment that is attractive for investors in fintech, expressing a vision to respond to challenges that come with globalisation). SP's aim is to offer specific knowledge and

it is worthwhile mentioning that they have a valuable interdisciplinary character. In all of them, MRU wants to express its identity. In organising the programmes MRU takes the opportunity to address specific challenges.

Despite the appreciation for the choices MRU made, the expert team recommends to closely watch the balance between specialisation and the importance of fundamental competencies/skills in the 'classical' legal domains, needed to be graduated bachelor in Law, that can easily and independently adapt to new challenges and address a variety of legal issues. The study programme has to be broad enough to provide for continuing master studies in Law (giving access to the whole range of traditional law professions).

Moreover the specialisations MRU offers are quite demanding in resources for teaching (relatively small groups) and urge to be constantly 'on the watch' as the societal needs of today can seem transitory tomorrow. Tomorrow can bring new challenges that seem to demand 'specific knowledge'. In this regard specialisation, while widening knowledge can also, on the contrary, narrow it down. Moreover, in all of the fields that have to be addressed in the study programmes, the necessary expertise and research has to be present.

According to the SER, when designing SPs, the professional activity areas for the graduates are taken into account.

For 1st-cycle graduates in Law the traditional legal professions, not requiring a master's degree in law, are accessible. At the same time, the specialisations are designed to meet the requirements set by the Constitutional Court for law studies, so that along with the master's degree, they can also occupy positions that require a bachelor and master in law.

In each of the specialist programmes, specific knowledge must prepare graduates to the individual professional fields of activity, where a combination of law and special - often quite technical - knowledge is required.

MRU has for each of the specialist degrees outlined the professional field graduates can work in. The expert team wonders however in how far, taking into account the complexity of the fields the programmes aim at, 1st cycle students rather than master students are the most adequate answer to the labour market needs.

According to the SER, the portfolio of study programmes is developed on the basis of a clear rationale. First, SPs target different potential students and don't compete. Each programme answers specific needs in society. Secondly, only one classical Law programme is offered, next to SPs on the Law+ model. The latter combine law with an interdisciplinary perspective. Thereby graduates have employment opportunities that go beyond traditional legal professions. The model, according to the SER, relies on legal education as a universal education that can be beneficial in different professions. This is in line with national and international developments, where lawyers increasingly need to master additional skills beyond just law.

The expert team shares the opinion that it would be useful to reflect on the role of 'internationalisation' in the study programmes. This opinion is relevant for both study cycles under review. The expert team hereby considers that some of the domains that are covered by

a 'specialisation' tackle also 'transnational' issues and/or have an open labour market. In this regard it is relevant to consider initiatives that give as many students as possible access to an international perspective. In this regard, the expert team recommends MRU as well to seriously consider whether a greater part of the study programmes could be offered (partly) in a foreign language. One may consider that in a highly specialised field, this approach could also facilitate the link between education and research, strengthening one another.

### **Second cycle study programmes**

Regarding the second cycle Law studies at MRU, the SER sees a similar balance between 'tradition' (as since its beginning in 1997 MRU offered them) and a constant referral to needs of the state, private sector and integration in European and global developments.

For the classical master's degrees and the specialisations, the SER states that the objective is to answer actual societal and labour market needs. MRU, according to the expert team, aims to be a forerunner in answering new and complex challenges with a study programme that makes graduates acquainted with the appropriate legal framework.

The expert team recognizes that this 'exercise' is done thoroughly for the following programmes:

- Administrative Law
- Environmental Protection Law
- Civil and Business Law,
- Labour Law,
- Law and Police Activity
- Mediation
- International Law (English – in 2023 transformed to specialisation of the Law SP)
- European and International Business Law (joint SP – English)
- Legal Regulation of Public Administration and Human Rights (""")
- Private Law (""")
- Intellectual Property Law (""")
- European Union Law and Governance (double degree – English)

The same goes for the Specializations of the "Law" SP:

- International Law
- Tax and Finance Law

- Criminal Law and Criminology (Vilnius and Kaunas)
- Law, Technology and Business (English)

Lastly, the double degree programmes as well as the LL.M.'s (Lithuanian – English) are addressed.

In each of these programmes MRU pretends to have sought for a recognizable and well-defined character when addressing the societal needs with an appropriate set of competences. Moreover, actual challenges are addressed (eg. SP Environmental Protection Law).

The expert team supports the fact that the offer of study programmes is oriented towards actual needs of the labour market. Nevertheless, it reiterates the concerns that were as well expressed regarding the 1st-cycle offer. Those concerns are not only of a practical nature (mainly organisational and on the level of resources). The expert team wonders whether new, often complex challenges (not seldomly linked to 'technical' peculiarities), need or are even served best when addressing them with a dedicated study programme. This concern is also driven by the interests of graduates that need the fundamentals to hop to different 'legal environments' as the pace of their career has to be in line with the pace of societal challenges.

Therefore, for both cycles, the expert team recommends the HEI to thoroughly assess its programme offer in view of a sound balance, from a practical and conceptual point of view, between specialisation and the need for a fundamental common ground.

With MRU the expert team recognizes that the programmes that are offered by MRU are well esteemed in rankings and the broad offer of SP's gives MRU a unique position, maybe even outside Lithuania.

Referring to the applicable regulatory framework it is stated that the 'classical' study programmes in the law field give access to the 'traditional' legal careers. Apart from that, the specialised SP's can address specific needs in society on the labour market, which the HEI outlined in detail in the SER under review. With regard to LL.M. graduates, it is mentioned that the LL.M. does not guarantee the right to apply for classical legal professions, unless the legislation governing the professions is changed. Nevertheless, the LL.M. is highly esteemed on the labour market. IT is not uncommon for graduates to seek a second specialised master's degree in addition to the one they already have. Apart from that the specialised competences they gain give LL.M. - graduates have ample opportunities to advance their careers or specialise.

Although the HEI outlines that the number of programmes is 'rational', the expert team recommends to assess the number of programmes it offers, hereby considering as well alternative approaches (that could probably demand less resources and guarantee a common ground in the study programmes that lead to the qualification 'master's in law') or shifting fields from master's programmes to LL.M.'s (eg. TaxFL), to allow for a specialisation and individualization and sufficiently takes into account demands of society. This recommendation doesn't affect the recognition from the expert team for the efforts of the HEI to be careful in implementing the offer and for the fact that all programmes answer specific and complex needs

in society. Moreover, the expert team sustains the idea of the HEI to try to base its study offer more on 'partnerships', especially since this is a lever for internationalisation as well.

The expert team considers all the information in the SER and gathered during the interviews and concludes, for both cycles, that the aims and outcomes of the study properly address the needs of society and labour market.

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

#### **First/Second cycle study programmes**

Based on its mission, the MRU Strategic plan 2021-2022 focuses on social innovation. Moreover, it aims to answer the needs of a multinational global market, to enhance lifelong learning and to increase the University's visibility/reputation.

According to the SER, the objectives of the SPs are consistent with MRU's mission and strategic goals.

With regard to the mission, the SER points at the preparation of highly qualified lawyers in a wide range of law areas, contribution to a democratic state, the rule of law, justice and human rights. For the second cycle, referring to joint initiative with a partner university in Ukraine, it refers to the promotion of principles of democracy in Ukraine and the education of Ukrainian academic society.

The SER also points at clear links between the broad range of SPs and the mentioned strategic goals. Social innovation can be linked to competent professionals that guarantee a balanced and sustainable legal environment, the principles of the rule of law and justice when searching for innovative solutions and creating new regulation in response to innovations in social life. In this regard, pointing at the 'specialist' Law SPs, answering acute societal issues, requiring an interdisciplinary, innovative approach is crucial.

With regard to responsiveness to the national/global market SPs under review provide a clear answer. They train individuals who are ready to work against the background of national and global challenges.

The SER contains the conviction that all programmes focus on lifelong learning as well. This is for instance due to the fact that many SPs are conducted part-time. Thereto comes that the SPs provide for the opportunity to further specialise (in view of a narrower profile of professional activity). SPs (eg. Law and Fintech) can as well implement a component, related to lifelong learning (eg. students are offered an additional model of micro-credentials, namely the certification course for specialists in the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing). Regarding the master's programmes and LL.M.'s, individuals in practice of having just completed their bachelor's studies can deepen their knowledge in a specific area. LL.M.'s are specifically meant for practitioners and allow for exchange of knowledge between academia and practice.

With regard to sustainable internationalisation, the SER mentions the participation of students and staff in exchange programmes as well as international partnerships on the one hand and the development of specifically targeted SPs on the other hand (one may refer to SPs that cover a topic from an international point of view, or study programmes in English, or study programmes that are jointly developed as well as double degrees). Moreover, some of the study programmes under review attract a significant number of incoming degree students. In this context, MRU can expand its international (research) network, develop exchange opportunities and be growingly embedded in the international research community. Lastly, partners abroad offer internships to MRU-students.

Lastly, the law studies increase, according to the SER, the visibility and reputation of MRU as reputation research links the university strongly to 'law studies'. Investing in them consequently is in line with the goal of maintaining/enhancing the University's reputation.

Taking all relevant elements into account, for both study programmes, the aims and outcomes of the study programmes under review are sufficiently related to the strategic options and mission of the HEI.

Nevertheless, the expert team invites the HEI to closely explore the possibilities to address 'internationalisation' in the study programmes - whereby the expert team is aware of the fact that some of the topics dealt with in the study programmes are, at least at first sight, less suitable in this regard. This not only concerns the opportunities there are to gain international experiences but definitely also how many students make use of them. In case of clear fields for improvement, the expert team expects the HEI to establish and implement a plan of action.

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

#### **First cycle study programmes**

The 1st-cycle study programmes are in line with the applicable regulations, as set out in the SER.

The LOs correspond to the 6th level of the Lithuanian/European Qualifications Framework. There is as well compliance with the 1st study cycle of the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The 1st-cycle studies of the Law study field comply with the national Descriptor of the Study Field of Law. The programme comprises 210 study credits and at least 160 of them are allocated to achieve the LOs in the field of law (including practice and the preparation of the final thesis and the final exam). 15 credits go to the internship and 15 to the bachelor's thesis and the final exam. More than 30% of the SP is contact work.

#### **Second cycle study programmes**

Also the 2nd-cycle study programmes are compliant with the applicable regulatory framework. The LOs refer to the 7th level of the Lithuanian/European Qualifications Framework and to the

2nd cycle of the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The 2nd cycle studies of the Law study field at MRU comply with the national Descriptor of the Study Field of Law requirements for the structure of postgraduate (2nd cycle) SPs in law, as the University's master of Law SPs leading to the master of Law qualification consist either of 90 or 120 study credits, at least 60 of which are allocated to achieve the LOs of a law degree, and 30 study credits for the preparation and defence of the master's thesis.

Accordingly, the postgraduate SPs for the LL.M. degree in law consist of 60 study credits, at least 50 of which (including the final examination) are allocated to achieve the LOs of a law degree.

As the University also offers joint SPs, the requirements of the structure must not only comply with the national requirements of the Lithuanian legislation, but also the requirements of the countries with whose universities MRU collaborates. The SER clarifies adjustments made to joint SPs as a consequence of changes in requirements in the regulation applicable to the co-offering partner institution (i.e. in Ukraine).

According to the expert team both the 1st-cycle and 2nd-cycle study programmes under review, offered at MRU meet the regulatory requirements regarding structure and minimum number of credits for various required components and the balance between contact hours and self-study hours.

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

##### **First cycle study programmes**

The expert team doesn't point out issues regarding the conformity of the pedagogical approach with the aims and outcomes of the programmes.

Regarding workload, proper use of the ECTS system of 'credit' is made and leads to a logical structure of semesters and years.

The ECTS-descriptions contain the necessary information in this regard. Students take a maximum of 7 subjects per semester. The usual volume of each study subject is from 3 to 6 ECTS credits. Internships carry a higher number of credits (15 ECTS). The working hours of a student on each study subject are classified into contact and self-study hours. Contact work may also be carried out remotely (i.e., by electronic study tools). Contact work has a minimum of 20% for the study load, the scope of learning with direct participation of teaching staff and students (non-distance contact hours) minimum 10%, and individual minimum 30 %.

Knowledge and skills laid down in the LOs of the study field Law and consequently of the study programmes under review are developed by a variety of teaching, learning and assessment methods, used in the different course subjects. The outcomes of a subject are defined in the course description and are matched with teaching, learning and assessment methods.



The student reaches the objectives via work, be it in group, in the classroom or carried out independently, according to the SER. Nevertheless, the programmes are advised to document the assessment and teaching approaches for the different course subjects very well. Moreover, it is recommended to make their use in the different subjects very explicit to the students. It could enhance the awareness the expert team noticed with the students in this regard.

Special attention is given to teamwork, projects and problem-solving tasks. Case studies are combined with more traditional study methods.

Studies are supported by an electronic learning environment. Literature required for studies can as well be found in electronic databases.

The SER refers to recent measures to ensure that the teaching methods contribute to the achievement of the LOs (so that students are able to apply the law in line with the recommendations of social partners from the legal community). These measures include experiential learning methods like a mentorship program and the integration of free legal aid provision - which can be seen as community servicing as well - in the study process.

To ensure active involvement as well as the ability of the student to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, objective assessment and to avoid plagiarism, MRU uses 'cumulative assessment'. Students are duly informed about the evaluation criteria and the weight of the grading components. For each subject the assessments are determined separately, taking into account the study methods and the objectives of the course. According to the SER, assessment methods must especially be effective to assure that students are able to creatively search for possible solutions and generate original ideas whilst solving various complex situations of legal issues.

## **Second-cycle study programmes**

The expert team is convinced that the programmed content is in line with the LOs. Nevertheless, the expert team has some concerns, regarding the highly specialised approach of the study programmes. As these programmes open access to 'regulated' legal professions – that require according to the team a broad scope of competences in a variety of fields – the expert team highlights the need for a 'platform' of courses that guarantees sufficient in-depth knowledge in a range of fields in law that is broad enough. Especially in view of 'specialised' bachelor and master programmes, valuable as their 'focus' may be in itself, that can be combined, the risk of an imbalance in approach of outcomes can't be excluded, even so if bachelor graduates continue their master studies after having gained professional experience. The expert team recommends the faculty management to address this remark with ample reflection.

The latter general consideration doesn't jeopardise the conclusion of the expert team that the LOs in the different 'master programmes' fit the subject knowledge that is required for the specific field each programme aims for.

Moreover, according to the expert team, legal-technical knowledge as well as a more generic set of skills and competences are aimed for. The latter remark fits, according to the expert team, as well for the first cycle studies.

In this regard, the expert team refers to the ambition expressed by the programme management in the SER. It reads as follows:

“The objectives and expected LOs are clearly formulated in the SPs of postgraduate studies in Law, the content of the programmes is logically structured, the study subjects complement each other organically, and the structure and scope of the SPs ensure that the LOs can be achieved.”

The expert team also considers that in some of the (joint) programmes at stake ‘internships’ are embedded. Though they are said to help students in acquiring practical skills and consolidate acquired knowledge, for the expert team it is clear that, in view of the place of a master’s degree in the qualification framework, in doing so, the internships undoubtedly have to guarantee an added value from an academic perspective. The assignments and the way in which students have to report on the internships have to address this academic perspective.

For the LL.M. - studies, according to the expert team there are no inconsistencies, in view of the outcomes the programmes strive for, to be mentioned in the curricula. The concerns raised in the first paragraph of this section are less predominant for the LL.M.s as the expert team takes their specific objectives and place in the legal framework (i.e. regarding access to professions) into account.

The expert team reads in the SER that the programme aim, the programme LOs and the LOs of the course units are aligned. In this regard the management refers to the ECTS descriptions. The expert team addresses that it is valuable to clearly visualise this alignment matrix-wise, as it is helpful to reflect on the programme and its components.

Regarding workload, the expert team sees neither in the second cycle any irregularities. Proper use of the ECTS-methodology (whereby 1 credit stands for a work volume of approximately 27 hours) is made. Information on the study volume/length is duly available. Some peculiarities (eg. imbalance in subjects per semester) are for instance related to the ‘joint’ character of a study programme or linked to an internship. They are not characterised by the expert team as a concern. For the balance between individual study hours and contact hours, the regulatory requirements seem to be met. Study plans and ECTS are regularly updated.

According to the SER, the knowledge and skills manifested in the LOs of Law study field SPs are developed by combining a variety of learning and assessment methods. The LOs of the SP, the LOs of the subject, as well as the learning, and assessment methods are all defined in the description of each study subject, where each LO is matched with certain learning and assessment methods.

The SER refers to the use of study methods the programme management does not qualify as ‘traditional’. The expert team qualifies these methods as highly valuable and advises to systematically document the use that is made of these methods, as well as to make them ‘explicit’ to the students, especially since during the interviews with the students experiences with ‘alternative’ study approaches did not spontaneously pop up.

Nevertheless, and for the expert team clearly positive, ‘moot courts’ were mentioned and this definitely positive. All in all, the expert team notices sufficient attention for case studies,

teaching in which practical content is involved, projects etc. All of these approaches contribute relevantly to competences that are closely linked to the field of law. One may notice that in LL.M.s teaching and study methods take into account that students are mainly practitioners with practical experience in the concerned subject field. Teaching and learning methods are also based on the knowledge the students bring with them and can share to accrue their knowledge.

Regarding assessment, the principle of 'cumulative' assessment is used, whereby final grades are composed of the grades of interim assessments and examinations. The expert team is convinced of the advantages of this approach and is at the same time aware of the intensity of the efforts it asks from teaching staff.

Students are timely informed of the assessment methods and criteria. The assessment approach is determined for each course unit separately and has to be aligned to the outcomes at stake. The expert team sees – at first sight, since a detailed analysis is impacted by the high number of study programmes under review, each having their own outcomes - no issues that jeopardise the quality of education in this regard.

By way of conclusion, for both cycles, the study programmes and their content guarantee sufficiently the aims and outcomes of the study programme and the aims of the study field. Their teaching and assessment approach help to reach and guarantee the outcomes aimed for.

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

#### **First-cycle study programmes**

Crucial in understanding how competences are aimed at in the 1st-cycle programmes is p. 25 of the SER (1st-cycle). The expert team cites the following:

“In 1st-cycle Law SPs and their specialisations, co-university subjects (e.g. Logics and Artificial Intelligence, Professional Foreign Language, Social Psychology) and more general legal subjects (e.g., Legal Theory, Legal Career) dominate the first academic years. Later, students are taught the main subjects of national law (e.g., Criminal Law, Civil Law, Administrative Law), and only after acquiring the basics of Law, subjects of a broader nature (e.g., European Union Law, International Public Law, etc.) and subjects necessary for consolidating the knowledge acquired during studies (Fundamentals of Scientific Research Methodology, Internship) are introduced. Of course, each SP and specialisation has its own peculiarities.

In the Law SP, unlike in the specialisations, studies are further deepened in the following subjects: Roman Law and Latin Legal Terminology, Law and Technology, Family and Inheritance Law, and The Basics of Mediation. In the last courses, in order to prepare students for the successful completion of studies and integration into the labour market, alternative subjects that consolidate knowledge (Practicum of Criminal Law and Procedure) are taught. After the study subjects common to all lawyers, specific specialisation subjects are gradually included.”

Furthermore, the specialisations are outlined, making reference to dedicated course subjects that have to guarantee that the specific objectives of the Law+-programme are met.

The expert team considers that the 1st-cycle programs under review lead to the degree of bachelor in law. This has, especially combined with the master qualification, serious impact regarding access to regulated legal professions.

This perspective requires a serious reflection on the balance between specialised course subjects and subjects that give undergraduate students a strong knowledge of law, going beyond the fundamentals, in a wide enough range of fields. The expert team tends to conclude that this balance could be fitter. Apart from that, the expert team recognizes changes made by the management of the programmes (SER, nr. 90), answering to expert recommendations, challenges the study programmes encountered, societal needs etc. The expert team especially mentions 'Lawyer's Career', 'Legal Argumentation' and the integration of free legal aid in the study process. The latter contributes to the authenticity of the learning approach. The expert team learns as well that special attention is given to AI, which is justified. Moreover, the alternative subjects 'Practising Civil Dispute Resolution' and 'Practising Criminal Law and Procedure' are introduced. Worth mentioning is also the attention (additional 16 hours) given to 'Fundamentals of Research methodology', linked to the thesis. One may wonder however whether the need of 'general' domains (Economics, History of Law,...) as well as topics like Family and estate law (i.e. providing more detailed insight in different fields of private law in dedicated subjects (eg. law of goods, torts, (special) contracts,...)), Company Law/Trade Law/Insolvency, Social Security Law, comparative law,...should not be assessed. In this regard the number of subjects and credits students in the 1st-cycle studies have in common is important.

## **Second-cycle study programmes**

As the expert team reads in the SER, MRU's 2nd-cycle Law study field SPs, which lead to the classical master of Law qualification, usually last 1.5 years (full-time studies) or 2 years (part-time studies with 90 ECTS credits), except for some joint SPs (*EIBL*, *LRPAHR*, *IPL*, *PL*) which last 2 years (full-time) and have 120 ECTS credits. Upon completing the studies and defending the master's thesis, the student is awarded a master of Law qualification.

For each of the study programmes, the expert team finds no evidence to state that the programmes are not based on insight in the study field, do not take the LOs into account or do not strive for a consistent approach. The sequence of subjects and the way they relate to one another are defensible and justified. There is a difference in level regarding undergraduate studies, which is in line with the framework of qualifications.

According to the expert team the SER and the other information it could rely on, demonstrate that the study programmes are 'well maintained'. On a regular basis course units or their name/weight are slightly adjusted, whereby the management tries to 'improve' the study programme or enhance its alignment with the 'environment' of the programme.

For the expert team, once more, this leads to the question whether the 'energy' the maintenance of such a broad, niche-driven, portfolio requires can be justified in the long run.

One hereby has to consider that each of the programmes needs a strong basis in research (within MRU). Moreover, the expert team reiterates its concern regarding that niche-approach, when considering the fact that the programmes (apart from the LL.M.) give access to the 'legal' labour market, especially taking into account the rather specialised Law+-approach in the first cycle. According to the expert team, a lawyer needs a strong and profound basis in a wide range of legal fields in which he must be able to orient himself professionally. Against this background, the expert team invites the management - when formulating its offer - to consider looking for inspiration in the design of its study programmes that integrate in depth-studies of general subjects (or subjects that every lawyer needs to be able to rely on). Symptomatic for the concern the expert team addresses is that one may wonder whether one still has the competences, being a lawyer, to assess a study programme in detail without being a specialised correlated field of specialisation.

In some of the study programmes the number of optional subjects is relatively high, which forces the programme management to consider whether there is enough common content to qualify the offer as a programme, aimed at a set of common outcomes.

The choice for full-time and part-time studies the management made is reasonably justified. For the evaluation of the addressed competences adapted evaluation methods are used.

All in all, based on the data it took in consideration, the expert team sees proper alignment between programme content, educational approach and programme outcomes.

In view of all the information the expert team disposes of and against the background of the interviews with the internal/external stakeholders, it is concluded for both cycles that the study programme is sufficiently aligned with the outcomes that are aimed by the study programmes.

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

##### **First-cycle study programmes**

In total, 6 SPs and 5 specialisations are offered in the 1st-cycle of the Law study field. Students can for instance choose for Law or Law and Police. Individualisation is possible by choosing alternative and optional courses.

Also, every student has the opportunity to choose the topic of the final thesis (the topic can be chosen from the proposed list or the student can propose a topic). Students can also freely choose the place of internship (placement). The expert team expresses a caveat and recommends the management to duly consider. Against the background of the relevancy of the law degree in terms of labour market access, the relevance of the degree in term of continued studies, the combination of the 1st-cycle degrees with highly specialised second-cycle degrees and the necessity for a lawyer to dispose of a broad field knowledge to be able to navigated in, attention for the balance between specialisation (even if driven by concerns of opportunities

for students to individualise their study programme) and generalisation must be a primary focus of the management of the study programmes.

Internships (even abroad) or exchange programmes, as well as thesis' subjects allow students to individualise their study track. It is therefore a pity that students seem not to exploit all available options. The expert team advises the management to take all reasonable steps - be it regarding communication, study programme regulation, etc. - to stimulate students to take the opportunity to go on an exchange. These efforts at the same time contribute to the international character of the study programmes.

### **Second-cycle study programmes**

Regarding the opportunities for personalization, the expert team considers the study offer as a guarantee. As was already mentioned, the expert team shares the opinion that the management must stay aware of the need of a broad skill set (regarding fields that are addressed) and the costs of maintenance of the portfolio. Moreover, within the study programmes the 'optionality' may not endanger the programme's identity.

The master thesis is a valuable tool to allow students to delve in a subject of their interest. Choosing the place of internships, alternative/elective subjects – the expert team hereby reminds of the concerns the management must stay aware of – or language courses also allow individualization. The expert team repeats his advice to offer compulsory courses in a foreign language (whereby the subject can be picked in view of suitability) on a systematic basis in the 1<sup>st</sup>- and especially the 2<sup>nd</sup>-cycle programmes. Lastly, exchange programmes allow for individualization.

The expert team sees enough opportunities for 1st-cycle and 2nd-cycle students, to integrate personal interests in their study career.

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

### **First-cycle study programmes**

The comprehensive character of a master's thesis, overarching academic competencies and skills, inspired the expert team to address this field primarily for the 2nd-cycle programmes.

Only when the SER contains major differences, the 1st-cycle will be addressed specifically. For the thesis in the 1st-cycle, which is justified, a calendar plan for the preparation of the thesis is foreseen. Theses in the 1st-cycle in the PSA (Public Security Academy) are in Lithuanian, therefore the methodological instructions are drafted only in Lithuanian as well. Fundamentally, there are no differences in standards, composition of the jury and evaluation (eg. defence).

In the 1st-cycle as well, the student hands in the thesis with a declaration on the compliance with ethical standards (eg. plagiarism).

The principles for grading the thesis are as well comparable to those for grading a master's thesis.

As in the 2nd-cycle the expert team recognizes the value of the involvement of social partner in the thesis process (eg. proposing topics). This adds to the impact and societal value/relevance of the theses.

Bachelor's theses' subjects are related to the Law study field. Topics are related to the indicated LOs in a specific SP or specialisation, enabling students to delve into a specific topic of interest to them. Though to a lower extent, the expert team advises the programme committees to monitor the grades. They may not lead to inflation but have to, as the SER states it, demonstrate high-quality knowledge and produce relevant research and the student's ability to analyse and critically assess ongoing issues in the relevant area of law. It is the expert team's opinion that this is quite an important bar for an undergraduate student to jump.

### **Second-cycle study programmes**

There is an outlined, principle-based procedure for the preparation and evaluation of the final thesis. The master thesis allows outreach to partners in society and on the labour market, who can suggest topics for research. Students can suggest topics themselves as well. For the master's thesis, methodological instructions are established and available to the students. A student who submits a thesis has to provide a declaration regarding compliance with research ethics. Rules are established and followed regarding the composition of the jury. The mark of the final thesis shall be determined by averaging the marks of the jury members. The final mark consists of a mark for the quality of the paper and the defence (60/40). The most important general principles of assessment are validity, impartiality, clarity, and usefulness.

A good number of theses deal with themes that are proposed by social partners of the MRU. As stated, this approach creates a highly valuable link between academia and society/labour market. Importance in this regard is the relevance for the topics and consequently, the research done by the thesis students, for society and practice.

The master's final thesis address fields of law within the scope of the study programme the student wants to graduate in. This goes as well for subjects that are proposed by societal partners. The topics, not seldomly multidisciplinary, address actual doctrinal discussions and mostly address a debated issue in society. This contributes the impact of the master's thesis. The approval of the topics guarantees their compliance with the law study field.

According to the SER, students defending their master's thesis must demonstrate the ability to think creatively, to identify and evaluate problems complexly, to manage scientific and practical information, i.e. independently to select, evaluate and structure a specific legal situation with appropriate information, to formulate conclusions, and to offer adequate solutions to recognized problems. Students should also be able to point out possible problems, their alternatives, and solution methods, and apply current social science research methods. As 40% of the final thesis' assessment consists of the quality of defending the final thesis, the student must be able to demonstrate the diverse skills acquired during their studies. The expert team took notice of the spread of the marks for the master's thesis. The expert team recognizes the high number of students with the highest grade and the low number of students with a satisfactory grade, but thinks that awareness for possible inflation of grades is relevant. The

expert team fairly recognizes that the existence of a system of 'pre-defences' somehow mitigates this risk.

According to the expert team there is an overall conformity of the final thesis with the field of studies and the thereto connected outcomes. Moreover, there is a link to society and clear procedures for the theses are established and in place.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. For both the first and second cycle of study programmes the expert team recognizes the clear and documented vision MRU gives proof of in offering 'specialised' study programmes to bring study programmes in line with labour market needs and complex, actual societal challenges. Answering with the development of new/update study programmes to needs in society the HEI gives way to innovation. This specialisation also stimulates a multidisciplinary perspective on the conception of study programmes.
2. The specialised approach of developing study programmes, with a strong focus on societal challenges, leads to a strong theoretical basis, combined with a link to practice. The labour market, with which strong and fruitful ties exist, values the specialised profiles in law the programmes (Law+) educate. Practitioners are duly, and for the moment evenly balanced, involved in the study programmes.
3. The HEI invests in the development of joint degree programmes and double degree programmes. It gives students extra insights, and is a lever for institutional cooperation (eg. in research) and internationalisation of staff and student.

#### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. The role of 'internationalisation' could - in both study cycles - be better dealt with when conceiving the study programmes as the domains that are covered by specialisations not seldomly tackle transnational issues and could open up to a global labour market. Practical thresholds form an impediment for an exchange experience for instance.
2. The undisputable choice for specialisation in the study programme leads to concerns of a practical nature. They are linked to the resources it takes to maintain the portfolio of programmes as well as the inevitable organisational challenges. The choice can bear a more fundamental weakness as well. One may doubt whether even often 'specific' challenges are necessarily best addressed with uniquely dedicated study programmes. It contains the risk of jeopardising the value of a more generic educational approach to address a fast changing world.
3. Regardless of the efforts to create well balanced study programmes, 'study suspension' seems to be a problematic issue.
4. Despite the HEI's efforts, students are in favour of more dedicated attention to legal research and writing (especially in the undergraduate studies), as it would for instance prepare students for writing their bachelor's thesis.



### 3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

*Links between science (art) and study activities are evaluated according to the following indicators:*

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

There is an increase in the number of academic publications since 2018. 126 publications in 2021 (13 monographs and 54 peer-reviewed journals) and 148 publications (16 monographs and 95 peer-reviewed journals). There is an increased internationalisation of research in the law field and an increased broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. A balance is achieved between national and international research. MRU is working with 9 new postdocs who are delivering research related to the 2022-2026 research program. Several doctoral dissertations are in progress. The HEI has adopted a very good strategy in terms of dissemination of scientific activities, internationalisation and publication. There are no deficiencies to be noted. Also, the HEI clearly aims for progression in the future as to developing its scientific activities at both national and international levels.

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

The SPs are related to the research output. A new research program (2022-2026) focusing on key research areas and prepared in accordance with national regulation which indicated the integration between research and studies and the principle of research-based studies. Some of the research activities of MRU are aimed directly at the impact of the latest technologies on the law study field. The “Modernising European Legal Studies’ (MELE) is another example of the integration of the latest developments in science, art, technology. The HEI provides a strong link between the content of the studies and the latest developments in law.

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

In the 1st cycle of the Law study field, there is an increase of instruments to encourage students to get involved in scientific activities such as workshops on academic research and participation in conferences. In the 2nd cycle of the law study field, the incorporation of participation in scientific events is used as a study method. In all SPs in the Law Study fields, students are encouraged to participate in the latest scientific research. There is a special attention given to involving students in scientific activities. Students are helped by academics in organising research events in order to improve their research skills. The conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle is very good.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. The HEI displays a high level of internationalisation and a strategic awareness which is essential in order to be able to progress.
2. The HEI has a very good track record in terms of publication at national and international level.
3. A balance is achieved between national and international research.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. More students are needed to be involved in research at HEI.

### **3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT**

*Student admission and support are evaluated according to the following indicators:*

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

The admission process for students entering 1st-cycle study programs in the Law field is centralised and managed by LAMA BPO. To apply for admission to 1st-cycle study programs in the Law field, applicants are required to have at least a secondary education certificate. Applicants have the option to apply for state-funded study places or self-financed (non-state funded) study places. In some cases, state scholarships may be provided to self-financed students. Additionally, specific purposeful financing may be available for students in programs such as Law and Police Activity, Law and State Border Guard, and Law and Penitentiary Activities. The allocation of specific purposeful financing is determined by quotas set by the Ministry of Interior and the Prisons' Service, who inform Mykolas Romeris University.

Applicants for the Law and Police Activity and Law and State Border Guard study programs are required to receive a referral confirming the applicant's adherence to the requirements for an officer from an organisation supervised by the Ministry of Interior. These requirements are outlined in the Statute of Interior Service and in the Order of the Minister of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.

Students who are admitted to these study programs sign a tripartite agreement, which outlines the responsibilities of all parties involved. In this agreement: MRU commits to providing students with suitable conditions for their studies and ensuring the quality of teaching, the student agrees to pursue their studies diligently and, upon obtaining a Bachelor's degree in Law, to work for at least 5 years in either the Lithuanian Police or the internal division of the State Border Guard Service. The institutions representing the Ministry of the Interior undertake to employ the Bachelor of Law graduates, taking into consideration the students' education and profession. This agreement formalises the commitment of the student to serve in law enforcement roles upon graduation and the commitment of the relevant institutions to provide employment opportunities in these fields.

Applicants for both state-funded and non-state-funded positions have the opportunity to receive additional points based on various criteria, such as significant achievements in

international and national contests and competitions, participation in military service, volunteering activities, involvement in national academies, and other relevant achievements and experiences. These additional points can enhance an applicant's chances of being accepted into their desired programs and reflect a holistic assessment of their qualifications and contributions in various areas.

Admission to the second cycle of studies in the field of Law follows the guidelines outlined in the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Research and Higher Education No. XI-242. This law specifies that individuals holding higher education qualifications are accepted into postgraduate study programs (SPs) based on the procedures set by the respective higher education institution. Additionally, adherence to the Rules for Admission of Students to MRU is mandatory, with these rules being regularly reviewed and endorsed by the MRU Senate on an annual basis.

The process of admission to MRU Law studies is available on MRU website.

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

Qualifications acquired abroad are evaluated and academically recognized according to the Procedure for the Evaluation and Academic Recognition of Educational Documents Issued Abroad, which was approved by Senate Resolution in 2018. Information about it is public and accessible. MRU maintains transparent, explicit, and consistently applied criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications. When an applicant applies to study a degree programme at MRU, they are required to submit an application for admission along with all the necessary documents. If the applicant has completed their previous education abroad, the academic recognition of their foreign qualification is automatically included as an integral part of the admission process. MRU also annually submits a report on the recognized qualifications and provides copies of educational documents to the SKVC within the specified deadline. This practice ensures that the process of recognizing qualifications is closely monitored and reported in accordance with established guidelines.

In the admission years from 2019 to 2022, foreign qualifications of applicants to the 1st-cycle of the Law study field were not submitted for recognition. This was because there were no study programmes in English at the bachelor level until autumn 2022. However, in the admission year 2022-2023, several students from Narxoz University in Kazakhstan applied for the Law and Global Security study programme and required the recognition of their documents and qualifications to meet Lithuanian requirements. The recognition process involves candidates providing their final grade marksheets, diplomas, and examination results. In this specific case, the candidates did not provide examination results, which resulted in their qualifications not being recognized for students, as this information is required for the admission process.

In the admission years from 2019 to 2022, foreign qualifications of applicants to the 2nd-cycle of the Law study field 43 applicants for the admission years 2019-2022 were not recognised: in 29 cases due to failed entry exams, in 14 cases due to inadequate qualification for master's study at MRU. On the side, 72 cases of applicants had their qualifications deemed suitable for

studies. However, it's noteworthy that 51.4% of those who were invited to pursue studies faced challenges in making it to Lithuania.

MRU recognizes learning achievements acquired in the non-formal adult education system following a defined assessment process. This process is regulated by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on "The common principles for the assessment and recognition in higher education of non-formal and informal learning competences," MRU Study Regulations and the MRU Procedure for the Recognition of Study Credits. This recognition includes learning achievements acquired in various contexts such as paid or unpaid work, voluntary work, and independent learning (internships, courses) during leisure time. Candidates seeking this recognition must meet specific requirements, which include: having at least a secondary education, possessing at least 3-5 years of work experience in the field that will be considered for the recognition of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, providing evidence of learning achievements acquired in the system of non-formal adult education, certifying that these achievements align with the Learning Outcomes (LOs) of the relevant study subjects.

The relevant regulations governing this recognition process are publicly available, ensuring transparency and consistency in the recognition of non-formal adult education learning achievements at MRU.

### *3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students*

MRU places a strong emphasis on encouraging its students to take part in a variety of university, national, and international exchange programs. The primary programs available to MRU students include Erasmus+ programme to Programme Countries, mobility for studies under bilateral MRU agreements, international traineeships in Lithuanian schools or Lithuanian communities in the whole world, summer schools under cross-border contracts. Students at MRU also have the chance to become involved in international projects led by faculty members. These projects offer students the opportunity to engage in concentrated international studies or internships, enhancing their global perspectives and practical skills.

To continue with specifically Erasmus+ selection, once it begins, students are promptly notified via email with all the essential details. Information pertaining to Erasmus+ opportunities, exchange possibilities based on bilateral agreements, cross-border programs, or short-term mobility projects is readily accessible on the official MRU website. In addition, this information is disseminated through the MRU Erasmus+ Facebook and Instagram account, @mru.erasmus. The administrators of MRU's social network profiles on Facebook and Instagram also share this information at the commencement of the selection process.

To participate in Erasmus+ mobility, students must complete an application form within their electronic records book called "My studies." Once the selection process is concluded, these applications are forwarded to the respective faculty. The selection board at the faculty level evaluates the applications and decides which students will be allowed to partake in Erasmus+ mobility. Following the selection, students are duly informed about the outcomes. If selected, they proceed to complete the necessary documents for the mobility program.

Is the information about mobility opportunities is accessible to students concludes the survey (2020-2022), in which approximately 68.97% of the respondents fully agreed with this statement, and an additional 6.9% partially agreed with it (survey was done with 1st cycle Law study field students).

In the 2020-2022 MRU had 11 outgoing 1st cycle Law field students that went abroad under Erasmus+ mobility programme. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on international outgoing mobility in the 1st-cycle Law study field during 2020-2021. In the subsequent years, outgoing mobility in this field increased as the situation improved. However, there are some difficulties going under Erasmus+ mobility programme: not all courses are recognised and when students come back to continue their studies at MRU, they are in academic debt and have to repeat some courses - that is the main reason why student participation in such a thing is quite low (besides COVID-19 pandemic). And the expert can conclude that is the main reason we think the first cycle is only good and not very good. The MRU needs to ensure or find ways how course credits that are gained in mobility is recognised.

In 2019-2023 MRU had rising number of students coming from abroad for full-time 2nd cycle studies in the Law field. In 2019 there were 52 admitted students, in 2023 - 89 students - the numbers are consistent and noticeably increasing. The numbers of outgoing students are quite high as well: in 2020 there were 87 students (that went abroad for less or more than 3 months), in 2021 - 83 students, in 2022 - 67 students.

In the 2020-2022 MRU had 136 Erasmus+ students that arrived to university (incoming students). MRU's wide range of courses taught in English makes it an attractive choice for incoming students in the 1st-cycle of the Law field. This offering allows students to pursue their legal education in an international and English-speaking environment.

Commendable area: MRU's Internationalisation fostering plan for 2022-2025, which promotes international mobility and includes the integration of mobility opportunities into national study programs, will contribute to enhancing the internationalisation of the university and provide more options for students to engage in mobility programs. This plan reflects the university's commitment to creating a globally diverse and interconnected learning environment.

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

MRU provides comprehensive support to its students, addressing various aspects of their academic and personal lives. This multi-faceted support is essential for ensuring that students have the resources and assistance they need to succeed during their time at the university.

MRU provides individual career consultations and collaborates with students to help them explore their career opportunities and provide guidance on their career path. This personalised approach can be very valuable for students as they plan their future. In 2021, the Community Welfare Center was established at the University to coordinate support services, enhance their relevance, and promote the well-being of MRU community members, including students, in response to the challenges and needs of the university community.

Students at MRU have the opportunity to apply for various scholarships. These scholarships, including incentives and one-time incentives, are available to both state-funded and non-funded students. Incentive scholarships are granted to students who excel academically and in other areas such as research, sports, culture, and social activities. One-time incentives are awarded to students for exceptional achievements in academic, cultural, sports, and other activities, as well as for promoting MRU's name. Notably, students pursuing a 1st-cycle degree in Law received a significant number of these scholarships in recent years, with 48 awarded in 2020, 46 in 2021, and 101 in 2022. MRU also has Memorial scholarships of Professor Mykolas Romeris which can be awarded for outstanding (in exceptional cases) study results and exceptional achievements in sports, cultural, scientific or social activities. Social scholarships are available too. They are dedicated for students facing financial hardship, those who have experienced the loss of a parent, illness, natural disasters, or other extraordinary circumstances. In the 1st-cycle of the Law study field, a total of 21 social scholarships were granted: 3 scholarships in 2020, 12 scholarships in 2021, and 6 scholarships in 2022. Also, students can receive reductions in their tuition fees by up to 50%, or in some cases, they may be fully exempt from paying tuition fees. These decisions are made by the Rector based on proposals from the MRU Student and Staff Support Commission.

MRU offers a wide range of sports and cultural activities to cater to the interests of its students and staff. Engaging in sports and cultural activities not only promotes physical and mental well-being but also contributes to building a strong and vibrant campus community.

MRU offers psychological services and spiritual support to help students with various challenges they may face during their academic journey. These support services can be invaluable for students dealing with personal and emotional issues.

In 2021, the Community Welfare Center was established at the University to coordinate support services, enhance their relevance, and promote the well-being of MRU community members, including students, in response to the challenges and needs of the university community.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

All students are actively involved in the introductory week at the beginning of their studies. During this period, they receive comprehensive information about their upcoming academic journey, including introductions to the LS and PSA administration, SPs managers, library resources, the timetable system, Moodle system, and more. Additionally, SP supervisors meet with students during the initial weeks and maintain regular communication through various channels to provide support and guidance throughout their studies.

The specialisation in Law and Global Security is noteworthy as it includes international students and is limited to the first year of study. A virtual meeting with the SP supervisor and students occurs in the initial study week. Throughout the first two months of the program, regular contact is maintained with students who have arrived in Lithuania and those who are studying remotely due to visa or other issues.



Every student is provided with an electronic record book called "My studies," which includes essential information about their studies, such as the study schedule, calendar, course descriptions, and study plans. Also, meetings with SP supervisors are also provided. At the start of their studies, these supervisors meet with students, whether in person or through remote means, to introduce them to the study environment, address their expectations, and respond to their queries. SP supervisors also help students and answer their questions throughout study years.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. MRU's plan for internationalisation from 2022 to 2025 underscores the promotion of international mobility. This initiative involves integrating opportunities for mobility into national study programs, which is a commendable idea.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Not all courses/subjects (while going under Erasmus+ programme) are being recognised. Students come back with academic debts and have to repeat some courses. Study programmes (especially 1st cycle) are not adapted to mobility.

### **3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

***Studying, student performance and graduate employment are evaluated according to the following indicators:***

#### ***3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes***

The Procedures of study process are described in MRU Study Regulations and other MRU legal acts regulating the studies. Full-time studies are organised by arranging study subjects over the course of the entire semester, students have classes for all subjects every week, and exams for all subjects are held during the exam session at the end of each semester. In the part-time studies, students are invited to the sessions twice per semester, the first visit takes place at the beginning of the semester and lasts for around 2-3 weeks (this is an introductory part for the semester); the second part lasts for around 4-6 weeks (students continue work with lectures, workshops and take exams).

Studies in the Law study field are organised in two forms: full-time and part-time. 1st-cycle of Law study field SPs are implemented in Lithuanian, except Law SP specialisation Law and Global Security, which is conducted in English.

Contact work may be carried out remotely (i.e., by electronic study tools). Contact work in the 1st-cycle studies comprises at least 20% of the total SP, including at least 10% of direct participation of the lecturers and the students (non-remote contact work).

A student-centred approach is applied in the overall study process of the Law study field.

Law studies are advanced, with the inclusion of experiential learning methods (together with partners from main legal professions) and incorporation of mentorship programmes for students starting from the 1st year of studies. The mentorship programme is a career and professional development programme for students offering them a unique opportunity to communicate individually with experienced professionals in their field (mentors), to check the knowledge acquired in the study process, to learn to apply it, and receive useful practical skills and advice from them.

All subjects are completed by an examination (except for the bachelor thesis which is assessed by the commission at the public defence meeting, and final exam which is assessed by the commission). The principles of cumulative scoring are presented in the assessment rules. This allows students to consistently pursue the set goals and self-assess the level of acquired knowledge and skills throughout the semester.

During a survey (a questionnaire regarding the SP) students were questioned about the appropriateness of study methods used by teaching staff to engage students in active learning. The results of the survey showed that the vast majority (86.3%) of students highly favour the study methods used at MRU, and the study methods used by the teaching staff involved them in active learning, 9.09 % of respondents indicated that they partially agree, 4.61% had no opinion, and the remainder did not answer the question or tended to disagree with the statement.

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

MRU ensures that studies are accessible and adapted to the special needs of students.

The internal legal acts in force at the MRU take into account potential individual financial needs of students, for example the Regulations for granting scholarships and study support regulates the conditions for awarding of social support, the Rules for the use of Student Houses regulates the fee exemption/fee reduction for orphans and students with disabilities.

MRU website has a section dedicated to information for persons with disability and individual needs which provides all the necessary information about "Organization of Studies. Studies Environment", "Financial support to students with disabilities", "Memo for students and academic community", etc.

Students with special needs or from socially vulnerable groups can study individually. For example, conditions are created for studying according to an individual plan for pregnant



women with complicated pregnancies, single mothers, parents of large families, parents raising small children, etc.

For students studying subjects individually, distance learning is organised by providing individual or small group consultations with lecturers in the MRU virtual learning environment and/or via other means (Microsoft Teams, etc.). Students with special needs have full access to the MRU Library.

Students with special needs or from socially vulnerable groups are actively integrated into the life of the academic community: they participate in scientific events, conferences, student organisations, and MRU cultural activities.

The results of the survey carried out in 2020-2022 showed that more than half of the students consider that MRU premises and other study conditions are properly adapted for persons with special needs (30.93% agree and 13.32% partially agree). A significant part (32.47%) stated that they do not have an opinion on the issue.

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

The monitoring of students' progress is carried out and analysed systematically.

The progress of students in the field is monitored in accordance with the Study Regulations of MRU. The monitoring of students' study progress takes place from the very beginning of their studies. The supervisor of SP actively participates in this process and is usually also one of the leading teaching staff of the supervised SP, so the monitoring of study progress is continuous.

During studies, teaching staff provide summative feedback, which typically falls in the middle and at the end of a semester, along with midterm assessment and exams. In the case of oral presentations, assessment is given in the classroom, and in the case of assignments that are placed on Moodle, individual feedback is given on Moodle to inform the student of their progress. During and after internships, students are consulted on difficult issues, and at the end of their internship a more in-depth discussion of their achievements and problems is conducted.

Students are also provided with teaching staff/supervisors' feedback in the process of writing a bachelor thesis.

Information about students' progress is available on an electronic study platform; teaching staff summarise the cumulative grade in sheets during the semester and in the Moodle environment next to the uploaded work, and discussions take place during seminars.

1st-cycle Law study field students survey (2020-2022) regarding the quality of teaching the subject of studies showed that 83.22% of the respondents answered that they fully agreed that sufficient time is allocated for commenting on the work done by student; 13.64% partially agreed, 9.09% had no opinion, 4.55% indicated that they tended to disagree.

MRU constantly analyses the situation and is looking for solutions to reduce the dropout rate by investigating the reasons why a student decides to terminate their studies. One of the main reasons for dropout/suspension of studies is failure to write bachelor thesis on time. During the suspension of studies, the thesis supervisor takes consultations with the student. With the cooperation of the SP supervisor, the vice-dean for studies, the supervisor of the thesis and the student, there are several cases of successfully completed studies after suspension, and we are continuing efforts in this direction.

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

MRU monitoring of further studies and careers of MRU graduates through the Career Management Information System *karjera.lt* tools. Staff of the MRU Career Centre, supervisors of SPs, and other administrative staff have access to the system.

Career Centre has operated at MRU since 2015, the purpose of which is to familiarise students with professional career opportunities and to provide informational, methodological, and counselling assistance to students on the labour market and employment issues. Additionally, to the work of the Career Centre, faculty administrative staff (vice-deans, advisors to the dean, etc.) provide ad hoc advisory services to students and disseminate information of the social partners about career opportunities.

According to SODRA (State Social Insurance Fund Board) statistics, in 2018, MRU graduates ranked first among Lithuanian HEIs in terms of the percentage of those employed 6 months after graduation (77.6%). In 2019, the employability of graduates 6 months after graduation was 73.1%. In 2020, this figure reached 75.1%. In 2021, this number was 75.22%.

Since 2020, MRU has established a position of the dedicated advisor, who deals with issues of mentorship initiatives/programs and maintained relations with alumni, constantly communicating with potential and existing mentors and students who want to take advantage of the mentoring program. This contributes to more targeted career planning, testing professional areas and creating a professional network from the first study courses at the University. Around 150 mentors and approximately 180 students participate in the program annually.

Statistical data of SODRA, the Career Management Information System *karjera.lt* and Student Register is limited to the Lithuanian labour market and does not include all possible forms of employment. The main reason is that some of them are self-employed (work under business licenses, self-employment certificates, authorship agreements), some have departed to live and work abroad, which is not reflected in the data of mentioned tools.

According to the data of the Centre for Strategic Analysis of the Government STRATA, the employment of 1st-cycle Law study field graduates after 12 months following the graduation was 75.19% in 2019.

In 2020, the percentage of employed MRU 1st-cycle Law study field graduates was 76.29%. In 2021, the percentage of employed MRU 1st-cycle Law study field graduates was 79.37%.

The results of the surveys of the 1st-cycle Law study field graduates (who graduated in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022) demonstrate that graduates favourably evaluate most of the characteristics that ensure the quality of studies: the organisation of studies, the smoothness of the study process, the professionalism of the teaching staff, the objectivity of the evaluation system, active and experiential study methods, and the academic support provided. The results of the survey showed that the majority of graduates (50.69%) assess favourably the benefits of the knowledge and skills acquired during studies in the field of Law at MRU. 36.5% of respondents also believe that the acquired knowledge and skills are sufficient for future career.

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

MRU places great emphasis on academic integrity. The Code of Academic Ethics adopted in 2015 is based on the basic principles of the Magna Charta Universitatum. For violation of the principle of fair competition, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty related to the assessment of LOs, students must be expelled from MRU, as for the serious violation of academic ethics, without the right to enter MRU for up to five years. The implementation of academic integrity is facilitated by the infrastructure of ethics at MRU which consists of MRU Supervisory Commission on Ethics and Ethics Commissions of the academic units. The MRU ethics infrastructure defines effective procedures to resolve ethical conflicts and fosters a culture of academic ethics.

Additionally in 2011, MRU became a member of the International Academic Integrity Centre, and it acquired the right to apply the “Academic Integrity Assessment Guide” developed by this centre.

The Student Council of MRU (MRUSA) has an academic and social affairs committee which annually organised both information posters on academic integrity and public lectures with heads of MRU departments on the principles of academic integrity, prevention, and statistics.

MRU pursues a non-discriminatory studies and research policy, as set out in the Code of Academic Ethics. Gender equality is ensured in accordance with the national recommendations on how to ensure equal rights for men and women in Lithuanian higher education institutions.

A survey of MRU employees shows that 83% (in 2021) and 86% (in 2022) of academic staff and 90% (in 2021) and 89% (in 2022) of non-academic staff did not feel discriminated against within MRU. The main reason why the remainder felt discriminated against was related to salary.

During the reviewed period, a total of 20 cases of alleged dishonesty by bachelor’s students were investigated. The highest number of suspected cases was plagiarism of a bachelor’s thesis (12 cases, i.e., 60%). In 3 cases, the investigation was terminated. 14 students were expelled (70% of the investigated cases), most of them (11, i.e., 55%) - for plagiarism of their bachelor’s thesis.

No cases of breach of the principles of tolerance or non-discrimination were reported during the period under analysis.

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

According to the Appeal Regulations of MRU, students may file an appeal against decision on: 1) errors in the calculation of the competition score, procedural violation of the admission to MRU and verification of knowledge and skills; 2) violations of the admission procedure to the 3rd cycle of studies; 3) procedural violation of the final assessment, continuing attestations, final examination, course work or defence of the final theses; 4) final assessment, certification in continuing subjects or evaluation of course work; 5) crediting of the results of studies achieved at another HEI or in other SPs at MRU; 6) recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal education; 7) the decision of MRU not to grant a degree; and the 8) rejection of an external applicant's or a doctoral student's request to defend a thesis.

All students are introduced to the legal regulation of assessment and appeals during introductory week.

Appeals can be filed in Lithuanian or English. The right of appeal is granted to: an applicant to MRU studies; a MRU student and a free listener; a person seeking recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal means of studies at a University.

A person can further challenge the Appeal Commission's decision to MRU's Permanent Dispute Resolution Commission in line with the procedure established in the work regulations of MRU's Permanent Dispute Resolution Commission.

There were 72 appeals or complaints during the last 3 years of study in the 1st-cycle Law study field: 1 appeal was submitted due to the violation of the bachelor's thesis defence procedures, 16 appeals - due to the assessment of the study subjects, and 38 appeals – regarding the procedure for taking the final exam (during the pandemic period, due to technical issues).

In all cases, the appeals commissions did not find grounds for satisfying the appeals.

#### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

##### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Strong community; involvement of stakeholders (alumni, social partners and employers) in activities of MRU, such as study quality assurance and its improvement, by participating in the decision making processes.
2. The teaching and learning process is based on clear principles, taking into account the needs of students.
3. Implemented systematic monitoring system of student progress (cumulative scoring) and systematic feedback system (summative feedback), encouraging and helping to achieve learning outcomes, as well as further planning of study progress.
4. High employability of graduates.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Drop-out rate of students during completion of their bachelor's thesis.

### **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

***Study field teaching staff are evaluated according to the following indicators:***

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

The 1st-cycle of Law study field is delivered by a team of researchers and practitioners. In total, 183 teaching staff (from MRU and partner institutions) were involved in the implementation of the 1st-cycle Law studies in the 2022-2023 academic year. Of these, 100 (54.6%) hold a scientific degree in the field of Social Sciences. Study field subjects are delivered by 164 teaching staff, 92 (56.09%) of whom hold a scientific degree in the field of Social Sciences (Law). In the 2nd-cycle of the Law study field, 10 programs/specialisations are implemented in English. All teaching staff (97 persons) of the EIBL, EIBLs, ILs EN, EULG, PL, IPL, LRPAHR, LegalTech, LegalTech LL.M., and ME LL.M. SPs have at least B2 level in their foreign language; 82.5% of the teaching staff of these SPs have proficiency in English language (C1, C2); and 4 lecturers are native speakers or coming from foreign universities with excellent English language skills. The SOs that are given in English involve teaching staff from abroad. The high majority of the teaching staff in the HEI is made of the permanent personnel. The professionals used in the teaching of both cycles have extensive experience. Overall, the level of qualification and competence is very good.

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

There are various international mobility programs. The teaching staff conducts short and long term-visits to foreign countries. In the 2020-2022 period, the total number of outgoing visits in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle amounted to 50. The proportion of outgoing staff in 2021 was of 18 members and in 2022 was of 23 members. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle during the same period, the total number amounted to 72 visits with 36 visits in 2022. In both cycles, the international mobility of teaching staff is pointed out as an area of improvement.

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

The improvement of competences at MRU is organised at both the central and faculty level. There is no specific information in the SERs as to the number of teaching staff who has participated in the proposed activities. The 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of law underlines the need to improve the engagement of teaching staff in upgrading knowledge and skills in law and technologies and

other areas which are needed in modern legal education such as sustainability. Overall, the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff are very good.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. High qualified teachers adapting their teaching to the needs of the Lithuanian society and the professional practice.
2. The teaching staff to student ratio provides conditions for appropriate pedagogical workload.
3. High level of internationalisation in Cycle 2.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Low staff academic participation in the activities proposed to improve the competence of the teaching staff in Cycle 1. The participation of the teaching staff in developing their skills in 'new areas of law' such as Law and Technology, AI or Sustainability must be improved.
2. Outgoing international mobility should be increased in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

## **3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

### ***Study field learning facilities and resources are evaluated according to the following indicators:***

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

The campus in Vilnius is a modern facility with plenty of classrooms and library space. There are many workspaces in shared space for the students and the faculty. All campuses are declared to have sufficient IT services. Infrastructure in all campuses is adapted for people with mobility and visual impairment. The committee was able to confirm that what is written into the evaluation report accurately reflects reality. However, the committee also noticed that there were no private offices for professors or members of the academic staff. The committee notes with concern the discrepancy between from one side well-equipped facilities and from the other side not providing conditions for individual intellectual work in the format of private offices - the latter after all is at the core of any academic university. During the meeting with the faculty there were mixed views - some said they are accustomed to work in the privacy of their homes, while others said they would like to have an office of their own at the campus. The committee emphasises that presence of academic staff on campus is an important element in building the sense of academic community, and therefore these requests have to be taken seriously.



The library sources include more than 190 000 copies of more than 67 000 titles. Around 2 000 titles are added annually. Access to relevant databases appears adequate, however, it is organised mainly via the Lithuanian Research Library Consortium. Only a few databases are subscribed directly from publishers. There is access to more than 235 000 e-books and more than 35 000 electronic journals and other periodicals. The previous report recommended several steps to modernise the library at Kaunas, and the budget for library acquisitions should be considerably increased. The report claims that it is done. The committee was impressed by the library facilities, collection and organisation of work.

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

The report contains information about finances for library acquisitions. In 2022 10 000 euro were allocated for the purchase of printed books. Additionally, 65 000 euro were allocated to databases, and as of October 2022 the library additionally received publications worth of 34 424 euro. The financial resources are used according to the needs of the academic community. However, it is not clear how the selection procedure actually works. The institution has a goal of updating ICT equipment and software every five years. The report does not include information about how this goal is realistic. The committee discussed the allocation of financial resources in the course of several meetings and was also shown renovations which have been undertaken in the recent years'. The committee is satisfied that financial resources are adequately and purposefully used. However, the committee got the impression that it is not quite clear to the members of the academic staff what exactly is the procedure to decide about library acquisitions.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. The infrastructure is modern and creates a good learning environment.
2. Needs of persons with special needs are taken into account in infrastructure planning.
3. The library collection seems sufficient and is constantly updated.

#### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. The procedure for library acquisition decisions is not transparent.
2. Academic staff wishing to have a presence in the campus do not have private offices.

## **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

*Study quality management and publicity are evaluated according to the following indicators:*

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

The system has an extensive regulatory basis. In 2023 spring the Study Programme Committees were organised into Study Field Committees, allowing also to involve stakeholders more. There are concrete deadlines and tasks which the Committees undertake. From the basis of the report, it was not clear how the students are involved in the system development and in what stages?

The committee got the impression that the Study Field Committees are operating on a continuous basis and have necessary involvement of the academic staff. However, most of the students had never heard of these committees, nor were they aware that students could participate there. This is a shortcoming that needs to be immediately addressed.

Yet it was not fully clear to the committee how the feedback concerning individual performance of teaching staff is helpful to improve the quality of studies. The chain of responsibilities was not put concretely in front of the committee.

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

The quality of the study field and its SPs is ensured using annual SPC (SFC) discussions on the LOs, on the need to upgrade the study plans, on the feedback from the faculty councils, students and other stakeholders, including employers, consultations with legal community and representatives of legal profession, as well as through the monitoring of the achievements of students, the data of graduates' employment, and the opinions of alumni. The results of surveys are consistently analysed and lead to action – for instance the university does not renew contracts with the teaching staff who had recurring negative evaluations. Employers are involved in activities through Bachelor thesis defence, and also in the SFCs. The report claims that social partners participate actively in the quality assurance system, and it puts forward quite an extensive list. Alumni have the opportunity to express their opinion. It is not clear, from the basis of the report, how the suggestions are put into practice and monitored.

The committee got confirmation during the meetings that social partners have a genuine interest towards academic quality assurance. Representatives of the social partners gave several examples of how the study program has been adjusted to take into consideration the changing needs of the labour market. For instance, the Public Prosecutor General expressed very detailed views on the topic of how the university considers it important to consult with the law enforcement institutions in program development. On the other hand, the committee has the impression that consideration of stakeholders' recommendations mainly happens on ad hoc basis, there is no clear procedure for that purpose.

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

Student feedback about the studies is collected each year and discussed with respective lecturers. The monitoring system appears to be vertical. Regular meetings with students are held from the side of the Dean and the supervisors of the SPs. If needed, consistent monitoring and consultations are in place. Regular consultations with the stakeholder community are held each year. Their opinions are taken into account in improvement decisions.



The committee addressed this topic during the meetings and is satisfied that what was reported in writing also operates in reality.

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

Around 85% of the students have assessed favourably the quality of the study programs. 73% have completely agreed that the methods used for assessment were suitable. The previous accreditation report recommended that the results of students' opinions would be made openly accessible. This has now been accomplished. The majority of alumni seem to agree that they obtained information during the studies which is relevant for their profession. It is not clear if qualitative satisfaction surveys are conducted, or if there is consistent feedback from the social partners. The previous accreditation report recommended that the faculty would be more involved in the analysis of the survey results. Through the SFC this is now accomplished.

The committee is satisfied that the system of evaluation of the opinions of the students is adequately planned and implemented.

#### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

##### *(1) Strengths:*

1. There is an adequate system in place for the evaluation of the internal quality assurance system.
2. The university has exhaustive information concerning quality publicly available, for instance about the study process, accreditation conclusions, and students' opinions.
3. The overall satisfaction of students with the academic quality of the institution remains high.

##### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. There appears no concrete mechanism to follow the implementation of the recommendations of the stakeholders.
2. There appears no practice of peer-to-peer support of the faculty facing quality assurance issues.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Despite the appreciation for the choices MRU made, the expert team recommends to closely watch the balance between specialisation and the importance of fundamental competences/skills in the 'classical' legal domains, needed to graduate in law and be flexible in career and further studies. The expert team hereby takes into account that most of the programmes under review lead to the qualification of bachelor/master in law (relevant to grant access to 'traditional' legal professions). According to the expert team MRU has to assess the balance in its programme offer between specialisation and a fundamental common ground.</li> <li>2. The expert team recommends MRU to address the role of 'internationalisation' in the study programmes under review (first cycle and second cycle), as well as the opportunities students have and take to gain international experience during their studies. In this regard, it has to be considered whether and where the amount of courses to be taken in a foreign language could be expanded. In view of internationalisation, the expert team recommends exploring the suggestion to base the study offer on partnerships.</li> <li>3. The expert team recommends MRU to carefully assess costs and benefits of the programme portfolio it offers and hereby address the question whether the competences specific topics/challenges in society require are always best guaranteed with a specific study programme.</li> <li>4. Apart from duly documenting the alignment between pedagogical/assessment approaches and objectives, it is recommended to raise students' awareness of this alignment and of the use of non-traditional pedagogical methods by expliciting their use to them.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a need to improve the involvement of students in research.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stick to the Internalisation plan 2022-2025 and try to improve as well as adapt study programmes to mobility opportunities.</li> <li>2. Make studies more flexible, so that students have an opportunity to find a balance between studies and work.</li> </ol>

	3. Some program schedules need to be reviewed, especially those that have practical/ physical training, so the students could have enough time to take shower/hygiene breaks.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The expert team recommends ensuring a systematic review mechanism for each programme involving all stakeholders (social partners, employers and alumni) in order to better hear and listen to each other and respond to community needs</li> <li>2. Take the necessary measures that MRU employees do not feel discriminated against due to the salary they are paid.</li> </ol>
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The participation of the teaching staff in developing their skills in 'new areas of law' such as Law and Technology, AI or Sustainability must be improved.</li> <li>2. The outgoing international mobility should be increased in both the first and second cycles'.</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The university should provide private offices to members of the academic staff who express their respective wishes.</li> </ol>
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that students are involved into the Study Programme Committees.</li> <li>2. Initiate peer-to-peer counselling of academic staff on the basis of satisfaction surveys.</li> </ol>

## V. SUMMARY

For both the first and second cycle of study programmes the expert team praises the clear and documented vision MRU gives proof of in offering 'specialised' study programmes to bring study programmes in line with labour market needs and complex, actual societal challenges. This appraisal comes with some concerns. They are of practical nature and linked to the resources it takes to maintain the portfolio of programmes as well as the inevitable organisational challenges. More fundamentally it is not fully clear to the expert team whether complex – event often specialised – challenges are necessarily best addressed with uniquely dedicated study programmes. According to the expert team the value of a more generic educational approach may not be neglected to address a fast changing world.

The HEI has adopted a very good strategy in terms of dissemination of scientific activities, internationalisation and publication. There are no deficiencies to be noted. Also, the HEI clearly aims for progression in the future as to developing its scientific activities at both national and international levels. The HEI provides a strong link between the content of the studies and the latest developments in law. The conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle is very good.

Student support is carried out in a systematic and good way but the expert team found some areas that could be improved - mobility and schedules of specific programs that have physical training. Bachelor students expressed their dissatisfaction with how credits are not recognised for mobility and this is one of the reasons that holds back from going abroad. This issue was not found in masters' cycle programs.

The high majority of the teaching staff in the HEI is made of the permanent personnel. The professionals used in the teaching of both cycles have extensive experience. Overall, the level of qualification and competence is very good. The conditions to improve the competences of the teachers are very good as well. In both cycles, however, the international mobility of teaching staff is pointed out as an area of improvement.

It is the expert team's opinion that the role of 'internationalisation' could - in both study cycles - be better dealt with when conceiving and implementing the study programmes, especially since the domains that are covered by specialisations not seldomly tackle transnational issues and could open up to a global labour market.

The expert team acknowledges that the MRU established a strong partnership with the social partners and employers. Students graduated from the programme (law plus) to be well prepared for qualified jobs in the public and private sectors. Graduates from MRU are valued in the labour market by various employers, having good law knowledge in addition to specialisation.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. dr. Bertel De Groote

(signature)