

**TRANSCRIPT OF LAW STUDY FIELD EVALUATION REPORT AT KAZIMIERAS
SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY
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CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of LAW

at Kazimieras Simonavičius University

Expert panel:

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Law</i>	<i>European Union Law</i>
State code	6011KX004	6011KX005
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Integrated studies	Second cycle studies
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 5 years	Full-time, 1,5 years
Credit volume	300	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Law	Master of Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	English
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	2003-08-27	2016-06-21

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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 2 October, 2023.

Dr. Archil Chochia (panel chairperson) *Senior Researcher, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia;*
Prof. Dr. Hans-Joachim Reinhard, *Professor at Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany;*
Dr. Donatas Murauskas, *Litigation Lawyer at „Ellex Valiūnas” Law firm, Lithuania;*
Ms. Raminta Sangavičiūtė, *Master student in the Criminal and business law programme at the Faculty of Law, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document

1.4. BACKGROUND OF LAW FIELD STUDIES AT KAZIMIERAS SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY

Kazimieras Simonavičius University (KSU) is a private university established in 2003 and located in Vilnius, with a methodical student counselling centre operating in Klaipėda. Throughout the period of 2003-2011, institution was registered as Vilnius Academy of Business Law, a public institution, however from 2012, it has been operating as a private university. KSU consists of three faculties, also called institutes with the KSU structure: Law and Technology Institute, Creative Economy Institute and Business Innovations School. Additionally, KSU has the following three units: Big Data Excellence Center, the Next Society Institute and the Digital Aviation LAB. Total number of students at KSU is 432.

Faculty responsible for studies in the field of law at KSU is Law and Technology Institute, which is the oldest faculty at the university. As of March 2023, there were 217 students at the faculty of law. Effectiveness of Law in the Environment of Global Challenges is approved research programme at KSU, which serves as a basis for research activities at the Law and Technology Institute. Faculty of Law and Technology at KSU actively participates Erasmus+ programme for staff and student mobility.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *integrated studies* of the *Law* study field and at Kazimieras Simonavičius University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	20

*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 and at Kazimieras Simonavičius University is given a **negative** 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	1
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	1
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	1
	Total:	14

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

Factual situation

Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of KSU's graduates were in employment within 6 months. The EU estimates that Lithuania ranks among the countries with a very low number of lawyers per 100,000 inhabitants. The integrated Law study programme and the master programme European Union Law seek to cope with this challenge and offer high quality education in the Western tradition of universally recognised key areas of Law. The focus also includes research.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As member state of the European Union Lithuanian institutions have to apply European Union law. Vice versa in European institutions the Lithuanian language is not yet very widespread. It is for sure that Lithuania needs legal experts both on national law and on European Law. Thus, it is obvious that there is a good labour market for trained experts.

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

Factual situation

KSU wants to respond to future trends, satisfy innovative technology, digitalisation and market needs. KSU has the intention to focus on an international view, too. A market need is seen in the demand for Lithuanian and European law specialists. The European Law study programme is in English and is performed in a double degree programme in cooperation with Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The double degree is a chance to attract foreign students and to internationalize the study programme. It is also an opportunity for outgoing students to broaden their view and knowledge. It was not quite clear for the panel experts to what extent there is really a double-way cooperation. It seemed that the majority of Ukrainian students only got some courses from Lithuania, but less Lithuanian students got law courses in Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine is not yet a member state but only a candidate for membership. This means that at the moment in practice European Union law must not be applied. As a consequence, it was not so obvious for the experts panel how Lithuanian students living in a EU-member state could profit from a cooperation with a non-EU member state. The profit is more for Ukrainian students in getting

better preparation and understanding for future developments in their country. Expert panel believes that this is a fundamental shortcoming in the concept and the usefulness of a double degree that prevent the implementation of the programme. The presence of this weakness indicates that the EU Law programme does not meet the minimum requirements and should be assessed negatively.

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

Factual situation

Table No. 1 Study programme's in Law compliance to general requirements for *integrated cycle study programmes (master)*

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	300 ECTS	300 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 225 ECTS	278 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 75 ECTS	22 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning for study part that corresponds to the first cycle part and no less than 10% of learning for the study part that corresponds to the second cycle part	20,58% in total (23,36% in study part that corresponds to the first cycle part, 14,3% in the study part that corresponds to the second cycle)

Table No. 2 Study programme's in European Union Law compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes (master)*

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	90 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 60 ECTS (not including final thesis)	60 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	24 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS

Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	10,92 %
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	89,08 %

Experts' judgement/analysis

Both programmes comply with the Lithuanian regulations and laws and award a master's degree.

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

Factual situation

The integrated Law study programme aims at training legal professionals. The aim of the European Union Law study programme is more specified and oriented towards training legal professionals who understand both national legal systems and the EU and international context. The programme was updated once again in 2021 and is in line with the recommendations and proposals for training European lawyers by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (SER p. 15).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In the integrated Law Study programme, the teaching programme is compatible with the intended outcome of preparing students as legal professionals for the labour market.

European Union Law is in its concept very different from national law. European Union Law does not only set standards for changes in national law. Very often it has the task has to coordinate existing national laws (e.g. in social security law or labour law), an aspect that should be more in the focus of the European Union Law programme. It is very ambitious to teach the complexity of European Union Law and the interactions among the various European institutions within three semesters. This might overstrain some students.

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

Factual situation

The integrated Law Study comprises several subjects that are based on each other. Each section in the studies has a focus on different requirements so that students increase their competences. In the European law programme, majority of subjects cover at least one competence from each group of competences. Students must present their result in English language. Students can choose individually optional subjects to deepen their knowledge.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It is appreciated that in the integrated Law Study programme students may increase their competences constantly.

It is also a reasonable concept in the European Union Law study that students must at least cover one competence from each group of competences. It was not quite clear whether these are special courses for students in the European Union Law or mixed courses with students from the integrated Law Study programme. It is presumed that these students normally have a better foreknowledge. In case of mixed course with different levels of knowledge there is always a danger that less trained students fall behind or for them the requirements are lowered.

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

Factual situation

Students may choose to attend alternative courses and choose freely from a list a topic for their master thesis. They are also free to look themselves for a place for internship throughout the European Union or even in international organisations. They can also develop their own study plan.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students have several opportunities for making their own study plan. It is important to mention that the development of individual study plans allows students to adapt studies to their individual needs regarding their work schedule and leisure, and also ensure efficient and planned achievement of study results.

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

Factual situation

In the Law study programme, the final thesis is completed over three semesters. At least one member of the evaluation committee must be a practitioner.

In the European Union Law study programme, the period is two semesters. The thesis must be written in English and for the double degree in the European Law one of the two supervisors must be from each participating institution.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The periods for preparing the thesis seem to be quite long. In particular, in the European Law Study programme which covers only 3 semesters 2 semesters are foreseen for writing the thesis. As a consequence, students have to start with their thesis just after having finished the first semester. There are doubts whether students are really prepared in such a short time.

KSU has provided (SER Annex 2) a list of topics for approved master theses. It is remarkable that not all thesis deal with question of European Law (e.g. 4 “The Comparative Analysis of Legal Professional Status in the USA and Ukraine Legal Professionals” and 7 “Shareholder

Agreements in Ukrainian Law”; also 2 “Alternative Dispute Settlement Mechanisms” at first view does not reveal its connection with European Law). As well, it was striking for the expert panel that all final theses were valued with the maximum of 10 points. Even if the students are extraordinary in their performance, it is not understandable that all of them are highest-level and achieve the maximum of points. This result is against all experiences in statistics and teaching. It is also a strong discrepancy to the parallel integrated Law study programme where the full range of scores was used, which is a more realistic outcome. During the visit the expert committee had a look at some theses. Of course, the panel could not read them in detail but even from a short browse the experts had some doubts whether all the theses presented really rewarded score 10. The expert committee refrained from having a close look at all theses, read them intensively or evaluate them again. This is not its task. But the expert committee at least got the impression that the abundance of highest scores should make the double degree more attractive.

Expert panel believes that this lack of undifferentiated impartial evaluation of theses is a fundamental shortcoming that prevents the implementation of the programme. The presence of this weakness indicates that the EU Law programme does not meet the minimum requirements and should be assessed negatively.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Programmes are well aligned with market needs, hence students will have good chances on the labour market.
2. English as working language prepares students well for attractive posts in the EU and on international level.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. It is not really clear what is the profit of the double degree with the Ukrainian University for Lithuanian students.
2. Master thesis in the European Union Law study programme do not always cover topics of European law.
3. The evaluation of thesis in the European Union Law programme (10 points each) is not realistic and not really differentiated in outcomes.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

Factual situation

KSU has approved specific research programme, Effectiveness of Law in the Environment of Global Challenges, which serves as a basis for the research activities in the field of law. Research

activities at KSU are funded by university's own funds, funds provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and international programmes. Main research focus in the field of law for the years 2023-2027 has been established as Challenges of Transformation of Law in the Digital Age. In December 2022, the Rector of the university has approved order The Procedure for Establishing, Calculating and Paying Remuneration for Priority Research Outputs, which in details describes additional bonus payments for the staff for their research outputs, for different types of output. KSU staff has continuously published articles and presented their research outputs at the conferences locally and abroad.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The current Rector of KSU has served as a Vice-Rector for research at KSU prior to her current position and since becoming the Rector has implemented several activities to increase the quantity and quality of the research output at KSU. The Rector's order titled The Procedure for Establishing, Calculating and Paying Remuneration for Priority Research Outputs, clearly describes the remuneration system and it was evident to the expert panel that staff of KSU was well informed about the system. However, the information provided in the self-evaluation report (SER, pp 22-23) focuses on classifying publications according to the local or foreign language, as well as co-authorship with a foreign colleague, instead of focusing on quality of the publications based on their type and where they have been published, which would be more useful and in-line with KSU's aspirations, as well as logic established in The Procedure for Establishing, Calculating and Paying Remuneration for Priority Research Outputs. The same is true for the conferences, where division is based on local and international conferences, instead of the level of the conferences and type of published conference papers. KSU is involved in some Erasmus+ Capacity Building, as well as local projects, however general project activities remain low, especially when it comes to the research projects. During the period of 2018-2020 KSU participated in the international project "Alliance for Children on the Move: Standard Operating Procedures for Guardians", and despite being a very positive research output, it was not a Horizon2020 project, as mistakenly claimed by the SER (p. 24).

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

Factual situation

The content of the courses offered at KSU in the field of law is regularly updated. The teachers involved in the study programme are members of different professional associations, involved in evaluation committees, working for the public and private sector. The university offers access to relevant databases (*e.g.*, Infolex, Emerald, EBSCO, Taylor&Francis) and additional materials to its academic personnel and students, via university library and with library staff available for assistance. Furthermore, Digital Technologies and Tools is offered as part of the studies in order to assist KSU students in developing necessary skills to use information technologies in their studies. University actively communicates with local partners in order to update content of the studies offered. Different open lectures and seminars are organised to introduce KSU academic personnel and the students to the latest developments in the relevant field.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Many of the member of the academic personnel at KSU in the field of law have strong practical background or currently work as practitioners, which has a very positive influence on the relevance of the studies offered, and inclusion of the latest developments in the field. Research output of the academic personnel of KSU, university's active cooperation with the social partners in order to update the content of the studies offered in the field of law are sufficient. However, this is mainly related to the integrated study programme. The lack of such link concerning the European Union Law programme is evident. The link between the focus of the information provided in the self-evaluation (SER, pp 22-28) and the content of the programme of the European Union Law is weak. The extremely weak link between the content of the studies in the European Union Law programme and the latest developments in the field is also evident from the provided list and the content of the final MA theses, as the latest developments in the field have not been sufficiently reflected in those final theses. In the meantime, all 17 final MA theses defended in the European Union Law programme have received a maximum final grade – 10.

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

Factual situation

KSU offers regular opportunities for its students, in the field of law, to be involved in the scientific activities, via different relevant project, academic conferences, etc. Relevant activities are also offered as part of the studies in the relevant courses. University library offers relevant materials and support for the students to be more active in research activities. The students also participated in the visit to the Vilnius District Court, as well as took part in Moot Court competition, participate in the student conference Future Creators. 18% of students in the Law programme at KSU have produced academic publications and 28% of total number of students have participated in the university's Students' Scientific Society. In 2021, six students of KSU in field of law have published articles in peer-reviewed journals, the number doubled the following year.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It has become evident to the expert panel that the students of two programmes, integrated Law programme and the second cycle European Union Law programme, have very different involvement in the scientific activities at KSU. Activities of the Scientific Society are largely limited to the Law integrated study programme students. Resources are not equally distributed between the students of two programmes, as well as the level of student activities was clearly different. The primary reason for this, in the opinion of the expert panel, based on the meeting conducted, is the limited courses the European Union Law programme students take at KSU. The students of the European Union Law programme take one semester at KSU, while they take two at Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University in Ukraine, while most of the graduates interviewed have taken courses only online.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Majority of the academic personnel has a strong practical background.
2. The Procedure for Establishing, Calculating and Paying Remuneration for Priority Research Outputs is well composed, and academic personnel is sufficiently informed about the system.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low level of the project activities at the university, especially the international projects, and projects related to the content of the study programmes offered at KSU.
2. Low level of the latest developments in the field included in the content of the study in the European Union Law programme.

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

Factual situation

Admission to Law integrated study programme is organised by way of competition according to the “Description on ranking of best graduates of the secondary education programme” approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania. Requirements for admission to state non-funded with scholarship and state non-funded places are the same. There are no special requirements for the enrolment to Law study programme. Applicants must have a high school graduation certificate and fulfil the conditions for admission to the University. Admission to the Law integrated studies is carried out in two ways: through the LAMA BPO (Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions) general admission system and by direct enrolment to the University.

The requirements for the Law integrated study programme include the results of the state maturity exams of History (0,4 of the competitive score), Mathematics or Information Technology or Foreign Language (0,2 of the competitive score), other subject not coinciding with the first, second or fourth subject (0,2 of the competitive score), Lithuanian Language and Literature (0,2 of the competitive score).

The number of first priority applicants during the assessed period in Law full-time-sessional studies was 0, 1 and 2; in Law full-time-online study form was 1, 6, 10. The number of direct admission to the KSU applications is decreasing mayorly in Law full-time-sessional studies. During the evaluated period the numbers were 34, 23, 14. The numbers are decreasing in Law full-time-online studies – during the evaluation period numbers were 31, 39 and dramatically decreasing in 2022/2023 to 20. However, there is an increased interest in European Union Law as the numbers during the evaluated period were 14, 9, 18.

During the evaluated period, there were 11, 10 and 8 students who were admitted to the first year of study in Law full-time-sessional studies; 25, 27, 11 in Law full-time-online studies; 10, 7, 13 in European Union Law full-time-online studies. Study shows that students choose studies online drastically more often than on-site studies regarding their profiles as the majority of them are already working in the field.

Admission to the second cycle of the Law study programme is organized by direct enrolment to the university. All direct applicants participate in the motivation interview with the Admission Committee. During the interview the academic preparedness and motivation of the student, arguments for the selection of the programme, career plans, etc. are evaluated. In order to ensure the objectivity of the assessment, at least 3 members of the Admission Committee, who can fully assess the applicant's readiness for studies, have to participate in the motivation interview. An additional point from 0 to 2 is added to the applicant for the motivation interview by the decision of the Committee. The requirements for the second cycle of the Law study programme include the results of the arithmetic average of the grades of the final exams and/or final thesis (FA), the arithmetic average of the grades in the diploma supplement (without the grades of final exams and/or final thesis) (DA), evaluation of the motivational interview (from 0 to 2 points is awarded by the decision of the Admission Committee) (MI). Competitive score formula: $CS = FA \times 0,5 + DA + MI$.

The information regarding admission procedures is available on LAMA BPO website, as well on the website of Kazimieras Simonavičius University. The information, according to SER, is also shared with potential students in various meetings and study fairs.

During the period under review, all students admitted to law field study programmes were enrolled in non-state-funded study places, but some of the academically strongest students had the opportunity to study free of charge because to the advancement scholarships granted by Kazimieras Simonavičius University. During the evaluated period university has also provided for and put in place a tuition fee discount scheme intended to attract talented students, which would enable them to enter and study for free or by paying only part of the tuition fee. In the period under review, applicants to the integrated Law study programme with a competition score of 9 and above were granted a 100% discount on the tuition fee.

These admission results and trends are influenced by the offer of convenient study forms for applicants – full-time-sessional and full-time-online forms of Law studies were mainly opted for by those who were already working or who were planning to work during the study period, and the convenient study timetable was one of the factors in their choice; the offered relevant content of the study programmes and the ensuring of individual attention of the teachers to each student were also important. The university's international cooperation and the engagement of a network of partners in the process of selection and attracting prospective students were crucial to the success of forming the group for the European Union Law study programme launched in spring 2021.

The total number of admitted students remains steady with slight fluctuations. During the analysed period, the lowest admission score has been increasing. Although there is a big gap between lowest and highest competitive scores. Summarizing the results, in 2020/2021, the

lowest competition scores were: 3.01 in full-time-sessional studies and 2.77 in full-time-online studies, with average competition scores of 5.01 and 5.04 respectively; in 2021/2022, the lowest competition scores were: 2.61 in full-time-sessional studies and 3.14 in full-time-online studies, with average competition scores of 5.5 and 4.62 respectively. In 2022/2023, there has been an overall increase in the competition scores of those enrolled in the Law programme, with both the lowest scores (4.16 in full-time-sessional and 5.17 in full-time-online studies) and the average competition scores of 6.14 and 6.52 respectively, as well as the highest scores – 9.97 and 9.26, significantly different from the previous years.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The university follows the national guidelines and procedures for student admission that are clear and well outlined. The requirements for the admission score are also in line with the national regulations and the goals of the study programme and pose no specific issues to the applicants. The information is available on the KSU website.

However, the most concerning aspect of the study programme is that the lowest admission scores of 2.61 in Law full-time-sessional studies in 2021/2022 and 2.77 in Law full-time-online studies in 2020/2021 show that some students might have been less academically ready than others since there was a big gap between the lowest and highest admission scores (for example in 2020/2021 lowest competitive score in Law full-time-online studies was 2.77 and highest competitive score was 8.57; in 2021/2022 the lowest competitive score in Law full-time-sessional studies was 2.61 and highest competitive score was 8.24).

Moreover, the low and decreasing number of students (especially in 2022/2023) is also a concerning point for the university. The low student numbers influence a lot of other aspects of the wellbeing of the students, as well as the rest of the community, such as student mobility, and the participation in research and other activities.

Although, the university could consider adding additional points for applicants of the second cycle studies for their scientific activities, participation in research and other activities in university.

It has become evident to the expert panel that the students, and the graduates, of the European Union Law programme take, or have taken, very limited courses from the programme at KSU and from the personnel presented in the self-evaluation report. The graduates of the European Union Law programme, interviewed by the expert committee have taken one semester at KSU, most of them online.

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

Factual situation

Over the period of 2020/2021 - 2022/2023 (autumn semester), 38 applicants to law studies had their foreign qualifications assessed and recognised. The procedure and implementation of these processes are planned and based on the orders and validated descriptors of Minister of

Education, Science and Sports regulating the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies, and previous non-formal and informal learning, and descriptions of the procedure for assessment and recognition of competences acquired abroad and the procedure for assessment and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning approved by the university and published on the website.

The studies of all outgoing students of partial studies are formalized before the beginning of studies by concluding and signing a tripartite partial study agreement with the university and the host higher education institution, which coordinates the study field and the part (content), and scope of the study programme. In all cases, the partial studies completed by students at the university are credited without restrictions.

Individuals who are credited with part of the subjects of their chosen study programme have the right to study at the university according to an individual study plan and to complete their studies sooner or study in lower intensity.

During 2019/2020 - 2021/2022 period 92 students of the Law study programme and 17 students of the European Union Law study programme were credited with the study results achieved in other higher education institutions and their studies at the university were organized according to the individual study plan created for them. There were also 63 cases when an individual study plan was agreed upon for a student of the Law study programme who resumed his studies after an academic leave or returned to study after being expelled from the university. The development of individual study plans is carried out by the Head of Studies and Science at the Law and Technology Institute and coordinated by the staff of the Studies Department.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KSU follows clear procedures for recognising foreign qualifications, prior qualifications, partial studies and non-formal and informal learning.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Factual situation

Regarding the academic mobility of students, meetings are organized with the staff of the International Relations Department at the beginning of each academic year, during which first-year students are introduced to general information about international mobility opportunities (lecture “Study and Internship Opportunities Abroad”) and the semi-annual meetings for senior students actively ensure the continuity of access to information by presenting them with more detailed information on international mobility opportunities, innovations, requirements, and other relevant aspects specific to their studies. All information about international mobility opportunities for students is provided and publicly available on the KSU website, current news is published on the social network accounts used by the university and sent to students by e-mails. Students are also regularly given the opportunity to consult on issues related to international mobility with the staff of the International Relations Department live, by e-mail by telephone or on Zoom platform.

During the analysed period students did not use opportunities for academic mobility properly. The main reasons for that were work or family related commitments and circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The European Union Law programme, which is conducted in English, allows international students to come for full or part-time study. Currently, 13 Ukrainian students are studying in the first year of the programme, also some of the subjects of the programme are offered for studying under the contracts of free listeners and are successfully attracting the interest of applicants. In the spring semester of 2021/2022 two citizens of foreign countries (from China and Azerbaijan) studied in the programme under the contracts of free listeners, and in spring semester of 2022/2023 programme has attracted three free listeners (2 from China and 1 from Ukraine).

During the period under evaluation, there were 14 outgoing students, in comparison with 91 incoming students. The numbers dropped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The students appear to have enough opportunities for mobility, yet they are not as active as it would be beneficial to the university, the programmes and the students themselves. In the European Union Law study programme, the number of outgoing students should increase, in particular for internships in European institutions in order to get more practical experiences.

It is understood that the fluctuation of incoming and outgoing students was influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, but as the data show a slight increase in the years after the pandemic, there should be no issue in restoring the numbers. However, they could be higher, especially when the numbers of incoming and outgoing students are compared. More effort should be put in promoting not only possibilities to study abroad, since the majority of the students are already working, but also to participate in short-term projects, activities, internships etc. Since the university is able to attract quite many incoming students, it also should bring more effort in encouraging students to get more international experience in the field.

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

Factual situation

Organisational support is provided by the Coordinators and the Head of the Studies Department, who individually communicate with students, consult, and help solve their current problems with the study process. Students are advised on academic and methodological issues by the administration and lecturers at the Law and Technology Institute. Information and advice on issues related to international mobility are provided by the staff of the International Relations Department. Subject descriptions, methodological material, study tasks are uploaded to the electronic space using the Moodle system.

To ensure the psychological counselling for students when the need arises, the university participates in a project implemented by the Lithuanian Students' Union, funded by the State

Public Health Promotion Fund and administered by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. Students can seek psychological counselling on personal issues, issues related to mental health, on study related areas. Also, from the spring semester of 2022, university students have been given the opportunity to have psychologist consultations free of charge.

The university provides financial assistance to students. In order to improve student progress and reduce social exclusion during the period under review the university has 44 times applied one-semester tuition fee reduction for students in the law field programmes for their good study results (100% of semester price) and 6 times the tuition fee was reduced for students belonging to social risk groups (50% of semester price).

Information about studies is provided on the University website, University social network accounts, meetings with the academic community, social partners and the University Students Association.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The students appear to be well taken care of. The academic, social, financial, and personal support is sufficient, and meets the needs of students. It is clear that students, teachers and other staff members have very close relationships with each other. Students feel heard, understood and valued. Even though, students and other faculty members have close relations, but the majority of the students study online or according to their individual plan of studies, thus it shows that students themselves do not have that close relationships with each other. It may affect the community of the university itself.

The evaluation visit also revealed that the students are well informed about the types of support available to them, as well as know whom to ask for additional information. It is important to note that free psychological help is offered to the students, which is an admirable form of support for the students of KSU.

Although, students claim that they study on their own and it is not mandatory to attend any classes, as many students tend to do that, but at the same time, senior management and faculty administration claim that students must attend classes. Misunderstanding arises on this matter.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

Factual situation

The university develops individualisation and tutorship culture of studies, with a particular focus on individual educational and consultation work and enhancement of academic communication ethics. These are the fundamental provisions of the assessment of the quality of studies. Student consultations procedure consists of student notification tools, consultation supply of the study process and consultation services for career planning. Consultation tools: information and consultations by phone and e-mail, on-line meetings on Zoom platform, individual teaching staff acceptance hours, administrative staff consultation.

In the beginning of the studies, students are introduced with the general information related to studies: University procedures, the most important aspects of the study and the ongoing proceedings, their rights and duties. Students are consulted on the process of studies by the Head of the Studies Department, by the coordinators of studies and by the administrative staff from the International Relations Department.

During the first lectures lecturers introduced students with the aims and requirements of their subject, forms of assessment, assessment system and sources for studies. Study subject lecturers advise students on tasking issues, recommend literature, prepare individual tasks, take part in non-formal education process on value and worldview issues directly and in the digital Moodle environment. Communication of lecturers and students in various forms is encouraged: live and on-line meetings, e-mail, telephone, tour lectures.

The effectiveness of counselling provided to the students is performed by the Head of Studies and Science at the Law and Technology Institute during regular meetings with the students of the programmes, and the feedback on the effectiveness of the student counselling system was collected by the staff of the Studies Department in the surveys conducted.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The introduction to the university, the faculty, and the study programme before the start of the studies is sufficient. The students also seem to be happy with the available student counselling and the guidance provided by teachers and staff members. The students receive adequate introduction to their studies at the university, as well as to their study programmes. As the studies progress, the students are able to consult with their teachers and other responsible staff on a variety of issues.

Overall, the students seem to be well guided in the study process, both in the beginning of their studies, as well as further along the way.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Free psychological help for the students in need.
2. Ability to attract incoming students under international mobility programmes.
3. Close relationships between students, teachers and staff members.
4. Development of individual study plans.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low student numbers in the programmes of law field.
2. Big gap between the lowest and highest admission scores, showing that some students are less academically ready than others.
3. Inability to attract outgoing students under international mobility programmes.
4. Unclear implementation of the study process: students claim that they can miss lectures, while the administration and lecturers assured the Panel that attendance is compulsory.

5. The number of outgoing students should increase. Maybe it is a means for the European Union Law programme to make an internship or stage outside Lithuania compulsory for all students.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Factual situation

The teaching in the study field of Law is organised in two study ways: “Law integrated studies are offered on a full-time basis, allowing students to choose between two different forms of lecture schedules: full-time–sessional and full-time-online” (SER, p. 40). The EU Law study programme is carried out in “full-time - online form. For its organization, it was planned to apply the same study organization model as described in the case of full-time – online form studies in Law”(SER, p. 40-41).

The programmes are focused on working students, students in “Law” programme spend 20,58 percent of their study time in classroom activities. Whereas “EU law” programme students spend 10,92 percent in their classroom activities (SER, p. 40).

Both study programmes have clear fixed cumulative score assessment system: “45 percent of the final student’s subject grade usually consists of assessments for his/her mid-term examinations, work, and presentation of completed assignments, written assignments, research, individual and team projects during lectures and seminars. The remaining part of 55 percent of the final student’s subject grade is obtained during the final assessment-exam.” (SER, p. 41).

During the panel meetings with both staff and students, a recurring theme emerged that underscored the adaptability of teaching staff to cater to the diverse needs of their students. It was apparent that lecturers exhibit flexibility in employing various teaching methods, ensuring a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Furthermore, the assessment methods employed in courses were found to be diverse, often varying from one lecturer to another, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of student performance. In the staff meetings, there was a notable emphasis on the significance of nurturing critical analysis skills, fostering collaborative teamwork, and cultivating critical thinking abilities among students. Some of the staff representatives also drew attention to the vital role of communication skills in the development of well-rounded and effective learners.

On the students' front, their feedback highlighted their appreciation for the modern and practical teaching methods adopted by the teaching staff. These methods included innovative approaches such as movie analysis and moot courts, which contributed to a richer and more engaging educational experience. The students also expressed gratitude for the practical knowledge and experiences shared by their instructors, underlining the importance of bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world applications. This feedback suggests that a student-centric and adaptable approach to teaching, combined with the integration of innovative methods and practical experiences, can foster a more comprehensive and effective educational experience for all involved.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The SER includes modern teaching and learning concepts that consider individual student needs, enabling them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

During the site visit, the significance of practical experience among the teaching staff became evident during discussions on teaching methods. Some of the students emphasized the value of receiving practical insights from experienced lawyers, particularly given the working status of most students. This real-world guidance was seen as highly beneficial for their educational experience.

The panel is pleased to note that some of the students shared the practical impact on development of their professional career. Some of examples included already working students deepening knowledge in a particular field of law, expanding their knowledge, and applying it in practice.

The administration indicated focus of the HEI to find a place among competitors, focusing on the specific needs of the market. The panel considers such goal grounded, taking into account the size and flexibility of the HEI and current structure of law programmes in Lithuania. The HEI focus on some niche market demands seems to be promising and needs to be developed more. Although the HEI representatives indicated niche fields such as aviation law in connection with their social partners and data economy law in connection with their international partners, it seems that these areas need to be more included into study programmes. Neither teaching staff, nor students underlined abovementioned developing specific areas during the site visits.

The independence of the study has advantages in terms of flexibility. However, it also implies certain risks regarding the involvement of students into the studies, cooperation activities and group work with the peers and the quality of their knowledge. The fact that students may keep their job and have more than 6 study subjects at the same time (reference to the facts shared by some students during the site-visit) may indicate risks related to the quality of assessment criteria and their implementation.

The EU Law programme offers a unique opportunity for students through a dual degree collaboration with Kiev Shevchenko University. This programme aims to equip Ukrainian students with a solid foundation in EU law, which holds particular relevance in the current

geopolitical landscape. However, it is evident that the programme, despite its noble objectives, currently lacks the necessary structural framework to effectively realize these intended goals. As such, there is a need for comprehensive enhancements and adjustments to better align the programme with its mission and the evolving demands of students seeking a deeper understanding of EU law in today's world and be prepared for the labour market.

There are no references to social partners who may express interest in students who have successfully completed the EU Law programme. While the programme's goals are potentially future-oriented, there is a need for a more robust alignment with the current demands of the job market. Moreover, the site visits did not yield any clear indications that the programme has had a noticeable impact on students' skills or their employment status in relation to the competencies acquired through the EU Law programme. The assessment of master theses also appears to carry certain risks concerning the thoroughness and quality of evaluation. Additionally, there is a conspicuous absence of evidence suggesting that graduates of the EU Law programme adequately meet the demands of the Lithuanian labour market, let alone the broader international market. It is essential to address these concerns to ensure the programme's effectiveness and relevance. Expert panel considers abovementioned aspects as fundamental shortcomings of EU Law programme that prevents the implementation of the programme and that needs to be eliminated.

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

Factual situation

The institution is aware of socially vulnerable groups and attempts to consider their needs. For example, the institution provides 50% discounts on the tuition fee, which is applied for persons who do not have both parents or guardians, for students from orphanages, and for persons who have a certain level of the working capacity of 45% or less, or a severe or moderate level of disability, such discounts were applied 6 times during the analysed period (SER, p. 42).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The needs of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are given due consideration by the HEI. The institution demonstrates a clear focus on catering to the needs of families and working individuals. The teaching staff and administration exhibit flexibility by promptly delivering necessary information and adapting to the requirements of their students, particularly those who are balancing work and studies. Online teaching proves to be particularly advantageous for working students, offering them greater accessibility and convenience.

Moreover, the HEI takes proactive steps to support students who may have missed classes by providing recorded lectures. These video resources prove instrumental in helping students catch up on missed content and maintain their learning progress. During the site visit, the HEI's teaching staff illustrated their commitment to inclusive education by providing examples of integrating weaker and stronger students in groupwork activities. This approach not only

fosters a more supportive learning environment but also offers weaker students valuable opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge in collaborative settings. Such practices contribute to a well-rounded and inclusive educational experience at the HEI.

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

Factual situation

The SER includes explanation of study monitoring system, including information about working with students who struggle during the studies.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The HEI offers students the flexibility to schedule individual consultations with the teaching staff. This accessibility was confirmed by students during the site visit, underscoring the value of one-on-one interactions for addressing their specific academic needs.

While the HEI has a progress monitoring system documented in their SER, it was observed that students often prefer to approach individual members of the HEI staff with their concerns and issues. This suggests that the progress monitoring system is closely tied to specific individuals rather than being firmly integrated within the institutional framework. This points to a need for a more structured and centralized approach to addressing students' academic progress and concerns.

Regarding the assessment of master theses within the "EU Law" programme, there is a notable absence of comprehensive evaluation, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the supervision and assessment processes. The predominance of high grades and positive assessments for programme graduates suggests the need for a more rigorous and balanced grading approach. However, the practice of allowing students to suggest their own thesis topics reflects the HEI's flexibility in catering to individual student needs and career aspirations. This adaptability can be a valuable asset in providing a personalized educational experience for the students.

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

Factual situation

The HEI conducts comprehensive analysis of graduates' employment status after the graduations – three surveys within three years: immediately after graduation; after one year; after three years (SER, p. 43).

According to SER, "the data from the second survey revealed an active movement of graduates in the labour market: 36.36% of the respondents who graduated in 2020 and 37.5% of graduates of 2021 were working in a different job or position one year after graduation than at the time of graduation, but their fields of activity remained the same, i.e. they did not find themselves working in a different field than the one they studied for" (SER, p. 43).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The data on graduates' employment from the "Law" programme indicates career advancement post-graduation. Employability of graduates is monitored at both central and programme levels, gathering information on graduates' opinions regarding their professional training and the competences they acquire during their studies.

The HEI maintains a robust connection with social partners operating in various legal domains, including bailiff's offices, courts, notaries, and in-house legal departments, among others. Additionally, a significant portion of the teaching staff also actively practices law, which facilitates the HEI's capacity to tailor its programmes to meet the career needs of its students. The strong collaboration with social partners is evident, and the HEI further nurtures relationships with its alumni.

During on-site meetings, alumni shared their positive experiences with the HEI and highlighted the added value of the "Law" study programme. This feedback underscores the effectiveness of the institution's connections with both industry professionals and graduates. To build upon these strengths, the HEI can consider further opportunities for alumni engagement and leveraging their insights to continuously enhance the programme's relevance and quality.

However, there is a notable absence of employment data for graduates of the "EU Law" programme, and students do not seem to have specific expectations regarding their prospects after completing this programme. Career-related inquiries are currently managed by the staff members of the competence centre, which primarily focuses on enhancing the competences of the teaching staff. The transfer of career-related matters from the former career centre to the competence centre may be rooted in the need to strengthen the institution's management, but there is room for further prioritization of career-related support within the HEI.

During the site visit, it was evident that students lack a clearly defined institutional framework to assist them with career-related questions. Instead, they tend to seek advice from specific administrative or teaching staff members. To address this, the HEI should adopt a more comprehensive approach to graduates' career support, centralizing and enhancing career services to provide students with a more structured and effective guidance system. This would better equip graduates with the resources and support they need for successful career development.

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

Factual situation

According to SER, "communication between lecturers, administrative staff, and students during their studies is regulated by the Code of Ethics of Kazimieras Simonavicius University" (SER, p. 44). The HEI provides with examples of consideration alleged academic ethics violations by the Academic Ethics Commission (SER, p. 44).

During the evaluation period, there were 2 cases under consideration of the Academic Ethics Commission of the University. One of them was found to be justified and student in consideration was given a warning. In another case, a teacher was considered and the complaint was rejected as unjustified (SER, p. 44).

According to the SER, academic integrity is ensured through a range of means: the academic writing courses, monitoring the fair performance of tasks, using of plagiarism detection software.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The interpersonal dynamics and communication style at the HEI lean towards informality, which has notable benefits as students perceive a genuine willingness and readiness on the part of the staff to assist them. However, the informal nature of communication can pose challenges when it comes to the effective application of impartial academic ethics procedures.

During the site visit, students mentioned specific staff members they would approach in the event of potential academic ethics violations. This indicates that students may not be fully aware of the formal and impartial internal procedures in place to safeguard academic integrity. To address this, it is crucial for the HEI to enhance students' awareness of these procedures and establish a clear and accessible mechanism for reporting academic ethics concerns.

While the informal and approachable nature of communication at the HEI fosters a supportive learning environment, it is essential to strike a balance by ensuring that students are well-informed about formal and impartial procedures for upholding academic integrity. The institution should consider implementing clearer guidelines and educational initiatives to enhance students' understanding of these procedures, ultimately reinforcing academic ethics and fairness within the academic community.

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

Factual situation

Procedures and conditions for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints “is regulated by the approved regulations of the Kazimieras Simonavičius University Appeal Commission, which provide the procedure for the formation of the Appeal Commission, its work, and the submission and examination of appeals” (SER, p. 45).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The HEI should promote a better understanding of the formal appeal mechanisms. Presently, students tend to interact with HEI staff in an informal manner, which does have its advantages in terms of enhancing the quality of education. Nevertheless, it is imperative that students are well-informed about crucial procedural aspects, such as the deadlines for submitting appeals and the fundamental features of this process.

This awareness is particularly vital for law students in both programmes due to the specific nature of their field, where procedural accuracy and adherence to legal guidelines are of utmost importance. To address this, the HEI should implement measures to ensure that students receive clear information about appeal procedures, timelines, and any other relevant details. Enhancing students' understanding of formal appeal mechanisms can contribute to a more transparent and equitable academic environment, fostering a sense of procedural fairness and trust within the institution.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A wide spectrum of student-centred teaching methods used by teaching staff that develops students' skills for the labour market.
2. Examples of successful integration of graduates into the labour market.
3. Flexibility of administration and teaching staff regarding students' needs, specially, those who are already in the labour market.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Students lack knowledge about formal internal procedures.
2. Too much flexibility of the study disengages some students who may not be present during the classes.
3. Lack of grounded concept related to labour demands of graduates the study programme "EU Law".

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

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

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

Factual situation

KSU has currently 7 professors, 10 associate professors and 8 lecturers whereof 2 study in doctoral studies. The percentage of qualified teacher is above the figures required by Lithuanian legislation. Lecturers have international experience and the majority are proficient in English. In particular, in the programme European Union Law, which is completely taught in English, teachers from abroad support the staff. The turnover of staff is low and KSU tries to keep staff in the long run despite the fact that the number of students is not always sufficient. Some of the teachers had or have outstanding posts in important institutions outside KSU.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In SER (p. 49) KSU mentions a ratio of teaching staff to students that is on average 1 teacher for 8,68 students. This ratio is adequate. The provided information on skills in English language

shows sufficient proficiency to perform the programme in EU Law programme in English. The low turnover guarantees a stable and continuous teaching and learning. It is also worth to mention that KSU has created a core of staff so that students will get their teaching constantly on the same level by skilled teachers.

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)

Factual situation

KSU supports staff mobility, e.g. the University has agreements with Erasmus partners to provide mobility opportunities for lecturers. The number incoming staff has increased but now remains stable. The number of outgoing staff has dropped remarkably but the figures 2022/2023 were not available for the whole year.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In recent years the figures for outgoing staff increased to a relatively high level of 19 persons. On the basis of the interviews the expert panel is convinced that the break in the current period will not be a permanent one and that in near future there more outgoing staff will resume qualification abroad.

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

Factual situation

A strong motivation for teaching staff to improve its competences are the qualification requirements. KSU has an approved procedure for awarding pedagogical procedure. Pedagogic staff participates in different training and project activities. In SER p.50 KSU admits that the participation rate of pedagogic personnel in training programmes was very low. In future, KSU will pay more attention on the motivation for staff to make use of these training programmes. Since autumn 2022 has been developing the Methodology of Innovative Education including a cycle of didactic training and various innovative educational tools. KSU also encourages teaching staff to attend scientific conferences and visit the lectures of invited guests.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KSU makes some interesting efforts to improve the competences of the teaching staff. It is noteworthy that there is a focus on pedagogic and methodology. Unfortunately, the staff's interest seems to be very limited. This is really a pity since knowledge in the subject might be good but many teachers have no qualification and experience in didactic issues and methodology when they start teaching. Thus, KSU should think about more incentives to make staff participate in training courses or make such courses mandatory.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The number of outgoing teachers was relatively high in the past and during the interviews there were indications that this will continue in future, despite the fact that in the current period the number has dropped substantially.
2. KSU intends to give stable contracts for teaching staff so that a continuous quality in teaching is secured.
3. Teaching staff has good proficiency in English and invited staff from outside Lithuania can support with additional views and aspects.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Although KSU makes various offers for didactic or issues and methodology, participation of teaching staff seems to be low. KSU should increase incentives or even make didactic issues mandatory for future teaching contracts.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

Factual situation

The building is relatively new. Rooms are equipped with multimedia tools. The University has 100 Mbps wireless Internet, covering all University premises (SER, p. 53). Efforts are made to create equal opportunities for people with special mobility.

Lecturing staff use the databases to conduct their research and update study programmes. They ask for new books to be purchased and the library timely responds to their requests. The HEI adequately adjusted to COVID pandemic times and acquired equipment to conduct hybrid teaching.

The HEI uses updated Moodle system and is constantly searching for other ways to improve learning experience – the Panel underlines the efforts of the HEI to submit an application “Design Wings” to the Lithuanian Council for Culture in 2022 (SER, p. 53).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Facilities are adequate to conduct studies. The HEI puts efforts to ensure available software to students and staff. All university students, administration employees and lecturers have free access to Office 365 cloud services. They include Office Pro programmes package license, Teams, SharePoint and other programmes (SER, p. 53).

The Panel observed that the HEI's facilities have the potential to be more openly accessible to students, which would encourage them to utilize the rooms during non-lecture hours. These facilities already contain essential elements to support both academic work and leisure

activities, yet there is room for improvement in creating more relaxed and comfortable study spaces.

The HEI currently provides its staff and students with access to basic scientific databases, and it appears that these resources meet their needs adequately. However, the availability of commercial databases is somewhat limited. To enhance the HEI's research and study resources, consideration should be given to updating the library's collection with newer books while archiving older ones. Additionally, expanding the subscription to INFOLEX, and possibly exploring other specialized databases, would offer students and staff access to a wider range of valuable legal resources. This broader access to information would contribute to a more enriching academic environment and facilitate more comprehensive research.

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

Factual situation

The HEI does not indicate plans regarding upgrading resources. The HEI indicates that the library is upgraded on demand. During on-site visit the administration provided information regarding the planning of resources.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

While the HEI's goal of upgrading ICT and software is commendable and aligns with the digital age's educational demands, there is a parallel need to more effectively reflect the evolving requirements of students in terms of teaching and learning resources. Updating printed resources in the library, adding basic pieces of relevant books in crucial legal fields would contribute to more comprehensive collection of resources to be used by students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The teaching and learning premises are modern and well-renovated.
2. The premises are kept well, the HEI puts efforts to allow flexible use of the rooms when they are not used for the lectures.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Teaching and learning resources used for the purpose of the study field's programmes need quite a bit of updating, especially student books.
2. There could be more convenient space for student self-study and leisure on the premises of the HEI.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

Factual situation

KSU has established an internal quality assurance system of the studies, in accordance with local and international practices. Quality assessment is based on level of compliance with learning outcomes of the courses offered in the field of law, as well as the quality of the competences acquired by the students of KSU. On the faculty level, quality assurance is coordinated by the Study Programmes Committee, a permanent body of KSU. The Study Programmes Committee is responsible for reviewing and updating the study programmes, before each academic year, based on the feedback received, changes in the field of the study, communication with the social partners. Furthermore, this Committee evaluates resources, involvement of the social partners in the study process, cooperation with public and private institutions, study process, etc. Feedback from the students is regularly collected via online and physical meetings, after each academic semester, second month of each semester, after students have completed internship and at the end of their studies, after graduation. There are specific Moodle courses offered to the academic personnel of KSU to improve their skills and the study process in general.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The internal quality assurance system of the studies at KSU is supported by strategic development and structural organisation. The academic personnel of KSU is aware of the system, and of the Study Programmes Committee's role and involvement. It has become evident to the expert panel that plagiarism checking software is regularly used to check final submitted theses and students are also aware of the process. However, interviewed students demonstrated lack of knowledge on university structural bodies for providing additional feedback, submitting complaints, etc., while they prefer turning directly to the Head of Studies and Science at the Law and Technology Institute. Even though effective, such practice raises potential risks related to the transparency, anonymity and objectivity.

Based on the reviewed final theses' topics and content, as well as maximum grades for all defended MA theses for the European Union Law programme, it is unclear how effective the internal quality assurance system is across the two study programmes in the field of law at KSU. Expert panel believes that this shortcoming is fundamental, and it prevents the implementation of the programme. The presence of this weakness suggests that the programme does not meet the minimum requirements and should be assessed negatively.

Furthermore, some of the students interviewed by the expert panel, claimed they were on individual study mode, when they do not have any regular communication with the teachers, they obtain materials at the beginning of the course and then come to the final exam. It is unclear how quality assurance is managed in such cases.

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

Factual situation

The representatives of various stakeholders are involved in the Study Programmes Committee and therefore in the internal quality assurance process. The students of KSU, besides providing regular feedback via surveys, participate in direct meetings with the university administration via focus groups, being involved in quality assurance process. Several representatives of the social partners of KSU are involved in the study process in the field of law, delivering courses and (co-)supervising final theses. Furthermore, representatives of social partners (e.g., State Data Protection Inspectorate, Lithuanian Young Lawyer's Association, Judicial Assistants' Association, etc.) have been regularly invited to KSU to deliver special presentations on the developments in the field, opportunities and relevant issues (SER, p. 56).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The stakeholders interviewed by the panel, have demonstrated a relevant knowledge and experience of participation in the internal quality assurance process at KSU, in the study field of law. Social partners are motivated to contribute and have been regularly informed about the changes implemented, based on their involvement. Adding the representative of Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University to the Study Programmes Committee, after the European Union Law programme has been established helps bring the gap closer when it comes to ensuring quality for both offered programmes equally. However, based on the amount of studies conducted at KSU and in Kyiv by the students of the European Union Law programme, interviews conducted with the social partners and other stakeholders, it remains unconvincing to the expert panel how internal quality assurance and involvement of different stakeholders in this process is equally applied across both study programmes offered in the field of law.

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

Factual situation

KSU regularly gathers data from various stakeholders and conveys it through established means. KSU boasts a user-friendly and well-organized website that provides pertinent study-related information in Lithuanian, English and Russian languages (<https://www.ksu.lt>). The published information encompasses details about study programmes, admission criteria, administrative bodies, career and internship prospects, as well as research and project activities of the university and the feedback received from the students. KSU adheres to the principle of transparency and accessibility, which is based on active engagement with all stakeholders participating in the educational process and is integral to the distribution of information. The information is also shared via www.aikos.lt, website managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The main information sharing channel is the website of KSU and it is well-organised, informative and easy-to-navigate, available in three languages. Furthermore, it has become evident to the expert panel that information is sufficiently shared directly with the different stakeholders via emails and newsletters. The interviewed representatives of different

stakeholders have demonstrated they are well-informed about the relevant information, including changes implemented, as well as means how to become involved in the process of quality improvement, via direct meetings and the Study Programme Committee of KSU. However, stakeholders' knowledge concerning the improvements and changes largely focused on integrated study programme in Law, rather than the European Union Law programme.

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

Factual situation

KSU regularly collects feedback from the students. For the evaluation period, this has been the main source of the feedback, as National Student Survey has not been conducted by the Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for the given period. As also indicated above, the student's feedback is collected via direct or online meetings after the second meeting of each semester. Furthermore, at the end of each semester, the online student survey is organised, and an additional one is conducted after the internships. Finally, after the graduation, alumni of KSU are surveyed about their opinion on overall quality of the programme, including process of developing and defending final theses. During the evaluated period, despite conducting regular collection as described above, it was not always possible to collect sufficient data from the students. Overall, collected data from the students show their high satisfaction with the studies at KSU in the study field of law. For satisfaction with the academic personnel and the quality of their work was accessed based on 17 evaluation criteria in the study field of law, overall rating was 9,38 out of 10.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KSU has a well-established system to collect the feedback from the students and it has become evident to the expert panel that the students are aware of the system and has taken part in it. Student activity for certain semesters to give feedback has been low, however. Students have rated very highly the quality and the system to consult the Head of Studies and Science at the Law and Technology Institute on various matters, however, even though a very positive aspect, it has become evident to the expert panel that the students lack knowledge on alternative methods to reach out, submit a complaint, etc. Such environment carries potential risks related to transparency, anonymity and objectivity.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The level of engagement of various stakeholders, especially social partners.
2. Fast and direct communication with the management.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Overall low activity of the students in the surveys.
2. Insufficient internal quality assurance system for the European Union Law programme.
3. Focus of the involvement of different stakeholders is on integrated study programme in law and not equally covering Master programme in the European Union Law.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make clear the profit of the double degree for Lithuanian students. • Ensure that topics for master thesis in the European Union Law are somehow related to European law or European issues. • Differentiate better the outcomes of the master thesis by using a broader spectrum of points for evaluation. • Consider closing down the European Union Law programme, or have a clear plan for resource distribution, to ensure relevant quality.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve participation in the international research project activities by providing more resources to the Project Centre. • Project Centre to organise project planning sessions, where relevant calls will be identified and team composed to work on the proposals to be submitted under these calls.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a strategy to attract more students to the programmes of law field. Increase promotion activities for the study programme to attract more students. • Tighten the evaluation of the applicants since some students are less academically ready than others. • Investigate the conditions of mobility for students to make sure they meet the students' needs. Promote more short-term mobility possibilities for students. • The university could consider adding additional points for applicants of the second cycle studies for their scientific activities, participation in research and other activities in university. • Increase number of outgoing students.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop the teaching structure that includes disengaged students more into joint activities at the HEI. • To ensure that all students more actively participate in the lectures (in-person or online), using lectures video only if necessary. • To survey the need of "EU law" programme and adjust its contents and structure to the market needs, alternatively, to consider substantial restructuring of the programme.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase incentives for teaching staff to participate in seminars on didactic issues.
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider acquisition of new volumes of handbooks, monographs in the most relevant fields of law. • To consider creating more convenient and inviting space for students for work and leisure activities.

Study quality
management and
public information

- Establish and promote university's Academic Ethics Committee.
- Ensure equal quality assurance management over both programmes offered in the field of law.
- Require regular meetings, attendance, or mid-term assignments for all courses offered, to avoid situation when students have no contact with the teachers after they have taken the course until they come to the final exam.
- Find system to raise students' participation in the surveys.
- Ensure a balance of internal quality management, as well as involvement of the stakeholders, between two offered programmes in the study field of law.

V. SUMMARY

This External Evaluation Report has been composed by the expert panel based on the detailed analysis of Self Evaluation Report and additional materials provided by Kazimieras Simonavičius University, as well as based on the observation and interviews conducted during the panel's site-visit. The expert panel would like to thank KSU for their efforts in providing all necessary information and engaging in honest and open discussions during the site-visit.

KSU offers two programmes in the study field of Law. While it has become evident for the expert panel how in all listed sections KSU has performed positively concerning the integrated programme in Law, the same cannot be said concerning the Master programme in the European Union Law. There is a major difference in almost all aspects between the two programmes, including quality of the study process, engagement of the social partners, opportunities offered to the students and their involvement in scientific activities, etc. Assessment of master theses also raises questions about the thoroughness and quality of evaluation. The consistently high grades may suggest a need for a more balanced grading approach and a clearer understanding of the programme's impact on students' skills and employment status.

Communication within the university is generally informal and approachable, fostering a supportive environment. However, there is a need to ensure that students are well-informed about formal procedures, particularly in academic ethics and appeal mechanisms. While the university has a well-organized information-sharing system through its website and other established mechanisms, stakeholders' knowledge about improvements and changes appears to be more focused on the integrated study programme in Law, rather than the European Union Law programme. Efforts to improve stakeholder involvement and awareness are recommended.

The university demonstrates efforts to support students, including those with special needs, by offering flexibility in scheduling, online teaching, and access to psychological support. However, there are concerns about the low and decreasing number of students, affecting various aspects such as student mobility and participation in research activities. The university's facilities and ICT infrastructure are deemed adequate, but there is room for improvement in creating more accessible and comfortable study spaces. Additionally, updating the library's collection and expanding access to specialized legal databases could enhance research resources for both students and the academic staff.

The university's internal quality assurance system is acknowledged, but questions arise about its effectiveness across different study programmes. There is a clear need for more transparency and equal application of quality assurance measures, as evidently such measures are not on the same level for the European Union Law programme, as they are on integrated Law programme.