

**EXTRACT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES STUDY FIELD EVALUATION REPORT
AT KLAIPEDA UNIVERSITY**

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**STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Klaipeda University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. Peter Jonkers
2. Academic member: Prof. Šimo Šokčević
3. Social partner: Dr. Ingrida Gudauskienė
4. Student representative: Gustė Stakeliūnaitė

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 15 October 2024 hybrid.

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

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

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Klaipėda University (hereinafter: KU, University), founded in 1991, is a centre of science and education in Western Lithuania (with a population reaching over 600 thousand). KU is a multidisciplinary national and Baltic region centre of marine science and studies, integrated into international academic networks, successfully implementing the mission and goals defined in the Statute of the University, in line with the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Strategy, and meeting the needs of the Western Lithuania and Klaipėda city. Currently, KU serves 3 Faculties: the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Faculty of Marine Technologies and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Health Sciences. University teachers and students can use the services of the University Library and of several support centres. The University offers all cycles of studies, from Bachelor to Doctoral, and has a total of about 2700 students from Lithuania and abroad, studying in full-time and part-time study-programmes. In the period of 2020-2024, a total of 108 three-cycle study programmes were implemented at KU. KU carries out over 60 international and national research projects every year; it has research and academic partners in Europe and worldwide, participates in the activities of international foundations, programmes and networks, notably EU-CONEXUS and HORIZON.

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (hereinafter: FSSH, the Faculty) has 7 departments and 5 centres, including the John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies. The FSSH study programmes are implemented in 4 areas of studies (mostly in Social Sciences and Humanities) and 21 fields of studies. In 2020, 18 Bachelor's degree and 19 Master's degree study programmes and a professional pedagogy studies were operative (total of 38 study programmes). The third cycle of study covers the area of Social Sciences and Humanities. Studies take place full-time (based on full-time and session-based distance learning timetables) and part-time. Over 1100 students study at the FSSH.

Overview of the field of study

The John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies (hereinafter: the Centre) traces its origins to 1995. Since 2016, the Centre has been a part of the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences, which merged in 2017 with the Faculty of Social Sciences. Today, implementing the principle of interdisciplinary, not only university teachers of the Centre, but also from the Department of Psychology are employed in the Master's Degree Programme in *Spiritual Counselling and Assistance* (henceforth: the Programme). Since 2019, the Centre has also acquired an ecumenical feature, as a new staff member was hired by the Centre.

Since the approval of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter: CQAHE) in 2010, the Centre offers an innovative Spiritual Counselling Master's study programme in Lithuania in the field of Religious Studies. It results from a letter from the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, expressing a favourable attitude towards the pastoral care of patients, as well as from a decision of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania to establish chaplain and spiritual assistant positions in hospitals. This shows that there is a clear need for training spiritual counselling specialists, in this case in hospitals and nursing institutions, providing spiritual assistance and helping to provide religious services to patients, their relatives and staff. Taking into account the recommendations of the previous Self-Evaluation report in 2014, the title of the Programme was changed to Spiritual Counselling and Assistance (state code - 6211NX054). The volume of the following Programme is 120 ECTS.

Previous external evaluations

Since its implementation, the Programme has been evaluated by international experts twice: in 2014 it was accredited for 6 years and in 2021 for 3 years. Taking into account recommendations provided in the External Evaluation Report in 2014 the title of the programme was changed to *Spiritual Counselling and Assistance*. Such a change emphasizes that the Programme trains specialists who are not only able to advise people, but also to accompany them spiritually. The new title broadened the limits of graduates' competencies. As a result of the recommendations of the External Evaluation Report in 2021, the spiritual aspects of several course units have been reviewed, questions raised in the research have been combined with the

interdisciplinary nature of the programme, the study plan has been updated, emphasizing the spirituality of other religions, and the list of locations for practical training has been expanded (See SER, pp. 11, 24).

Documents and information used in the review

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

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- Course descriptions

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Spiritual Counselling and Assistance
State code	6211NX054
Type of study (college/university)	University cycle studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full time studies (2 years)
Workload in ECTS	120
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	21-06-2010
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The second cycle of the Religious studies field of study is given a positive evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points ^{1*}
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
Total:		24

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

As it is stated in the SER the aim of the Programme is to train spiritual counsellors/assistants, who are able to consult and provide spiritual-pastoral support in today's world to individuals and groups of individuals experiencing spiritual shocks and crises, existential and internal value and family conflicts and difficulties. The Programme focuses on the graduates' abilities to provide assistance to persons experiencing both critical spiritual issues and daily worries or difficulties. It is a unique interdisciplinary Programme in Lithuania, which combines achievements of the science and practice of religion and psychology, and seeks points of contact between the phenomena of faith and psychology (SER, p. 6f.). The Programme is aimed at training specialists who provide spiritual counselling and assistance to individuals or groups during critical moments of their human experience, integrating both spiritual and psychological counselling knowledge. The qualified specialists are equipped to apply effectively the acquired knowledge in various areas, such as health and educational care institutions, as well as in spiritual and pastoral support centres for families, youth, and others. They are also able to pursue scientific research (SER, p. 7).

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

According to the SER, the purpose and content of the Programme align with the strategic direction of the KU, specifically in fostering creativity and community well-being. This alignment is reflected in the University's Strategic Action Plan, which emphasizes the training of highly qualified specialists and researchers capable

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of performing intellectual and creative work. Additionally, the programme supports the University's mission to cultivate a human-centered society by promoting educational, cultural, consulting, and experimental initiatives that contribute to the advancement of both individual and societal well-being (SER, pp. 7, 12). The Centre is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH), the study programmes of which are mostly implemented in Social Sciences and Humanities (SER, p. 5). For such an interdisciplinary Programme as *Spiritual Counselling and Assistance* this is very important, because the same Faculty gathers specialists from the fields of religion and psychology who are involved in the implementation of this Programme.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

First of all, it should be noted, that compared to other Master's study programmes at KU and other universities, the Programme is unique in Lithuania. Its uniqueness lies in its aims and outcomes, achieved through seeking points of contact between the phenomena of faith and psychology (SER, p. 6f.; Annex 4). Discussions during the site visit, especially with the graduates, revealed that the integration between spiritual counselling and psychology during the study process is successful, consistent, and especially necessary in their work as spiritual counsellors. All graduates clearly define their identity as spiritual counsellors and affirm that, on the path of guiding individuals or communities spiritually, knowledge from both the field of religion and psychology is essential.

Secondly, regarding the relevance of the Programme to society and labour market in Lithuania, it should be noted that the need for specialists trained in this Programme has significantly increased recently. The Programme prepares the specialists for various fields of work: graduates work in hospitals and health care institutions, nursing homes for elderly, psychological support centres, "Caritas" organizations, Order of Malta Ambulance Corps, diocesan family centres, academic pastoral care, youth organizations, addiction treatment facilities, etc. (SER, p. 7). Recently, graduates have also started to work as spiritual counsellors of prisoners. Discussions with the Programme management, teaching staff, social partners, graduates, and students (some of whom have already joined the labour market) revealed a growing demand for spiritual counsellors in Lithuania. Everyone's experience is unanimous: the labour market for these specialists is currently particularly dynamic and open. The KU leadership fully recognizes the uniqueness of this Programme and the positive contribution of its graduates to sustainable societal development. Most of them agreed on the need for a joint effort by various institutions (such as the University, relevant State and Church institutions, and organizations) to promote the creation of new job opportunities for spiritual counsellors in Lithuania.

Thirdly, the Programme management and teaching staff are aware that the specialists trained by the Programme do not necessarily have to be oriented toward confessionally defined workplaces, whether in individual or group spiritual counselling. Indeed, the Centre implementing this Programme is Christian/Catholic; however, the training of specialists in the Programme is perceived universally – as spiritual counsellors regardless of confession. Furthermore, as revealed during discussions, Programme implementers, graduates, and students are conscious that spiritual counselling can also encompass non-believers. Respect for other confessions, religions, or any other aspects of human identity prevails in the Programme's aims and outcomes as fundamental principles of a spiritual counsellor's practice. This is entirely positive and aligns with the needs of today's society.

Discussions with the University's administration revealed that the KU views the activities of the Centre very positively. Through the implementation of the interdisciplinary Programme and the research conducted by the teaching staff, the Centre is fully integrated in the University and the Faculty, and the Programme's aims and outcomes conform with the mission and strategy of KU. The Programme remains unique within the University and strengthens its mission and strategy indeed because of the Programme's distinctive character.

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

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The Programme is designed and implemented in accordance with the *Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework*, the *Descriptor of Study Cycles*, the *General Requirements for the Studies* and with the requirements of the *National Education Strategy*. Its aims and outcomes are based on the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Religious Studies* in Lithuania (SER, p. 8). Its graduates are awarded a Master's qualification degree in Humanities, which corresponds to the second cycle studies of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, seventh level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework according to the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, and seventh level of the European Qualifications Framework (SER, p. 8). Learning outcomes of the Programme are in accordance with the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Religious Studies* in Lithuania. These outcomes are developed for competencies of different level and are divided into 5 groups: knowledge, its application; research skills; special abilities; social abilities; personal abilities (SER, p. 8; Annex 4).

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

During the studies, the following practical abilities necessary for counselling are acquired: a) ability to identify weaknesses and strengths of a person by distinguishing psychologically-religiously sensitive issues, and the ability to determine the level of weaknesses; ability to identify mental health disorders, and, if necessary, refer the client to another specialist; b) mastering basic skills of spiritual counselling: making and maintaining contact, structuring conversation, active listening, application of counselling techniques and procedures, analysis and assessment of one's own work; c) ability to develop an individual and group counselling programme, create prevention and correction programmes by maintaining a dialogue between faith and science; d) ability to provide spiritual and religious assistance to clients, their relatives, and colleagues; e) ability to work in teams that provide comprehensive assistance in the event of a crisis; ability to call upon volunteers and specialists – experts, and religious communities while providing assistance; f) practical application of methods for cognition of a person (monitoring, conversation, interview, questionnaire) (SER, 22). These abilities are in correspondence with the learning outcomes of the Programme (Annex 4). Students are introduced to information related to the implementation of the Programme through the University's Academic Information System. In this System the Programme outcomes, course descriptions, the outcomes for each course, and their connection to the Programme's study outcomes are provided and specified. Here, students can review course topics, the number of academic hours, and the study methods applied (SER, 23). In order to ensure active work of students throughout the study semester, their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, and objectively assess learning outcomes, the University applies a cumulative evaluation system. When applying this system, learning outcomes are evaluated by interim assignments (test, individual work, written work, etc.), and the final evaluation is the sum of cumulative grades and an exam grade. Knowledge is graded, with 5 being the minimum pass grade and 10 – the maximum pass grade; from 4 to 1 means failed. The Programme is completed by the evaluation of the graduate's education – defence of the Master's Thesis (SER, p. 9).

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

As indicated in SER, p. 9, the principles of forming KU study credits correspond to the *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ECTS* and the volume of the Programme is 120 ECTS (see also the study plan and the distribution of credits across semesters 1–4; Annex 1). Main course units of the Programme are the following: Christian Anthropology, Personal Religious Development, Guilt and Forgiveness in the Bible, Marital Life Crisis Management, Psychology of Crisis and Spiritual Trauma, Pastoral Care of Sick. In the second semester, students can choose religious course units: Ethics of Life and Death, Contemporary Forms of Spiritual Help, Christian Ethics of Sexuality (5 ECTS per course unit). In the third semester, students can choose psychological course units: Stress Coping Strategies, Health Psychology (4 ECTS each course unit). 45 ECTS are allocated for the development of practical counselling competencies. This group includes the following theoretical course units: Phenomenology of Religious Experiences, Process of Counselling, Non-Christian Spirituality, Solutions to Spiritual Problems in the Family, and practical course units: Psychological Spiritual Counselling and Professional Practice in the real work environment. Teaching of the Process of Counselling course unit is based on teamwork: members of the John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies and

Department of Psychology teach together. Professional Practice is supervised by teachers of the John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies and is carried out in medical institutions, psychological aid institutions, religious communities, and organizations. 30 ECTS are allocated for scientific work: Master's Thesis (4 sem.), which is completed by the defence of the thesis and its evaluation.

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

As indicated in SER, p. 10, students' possibilities to individualize studies are regulated by the KU official documents. The following study individualization options are provided: creation of an individual study plan, possibility to include more (fewer) course units during the study semester; change time for examination sessions, final thesis defence (advance or postpone); performance of internships (practical training) that are not provided in the study plan; choice of the internship location; selection of topics for final theses; possibility to complete studies in a shorter study period. Students who have finished their Master's used the following options: postponed their final thesis defences, chose their internship locations, selected topics for their final theses.

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

The principles of preparing the final theses, forming the Committee, and defending the theses are regulated by the KU official documents (SER, p. 10). The topic of the final thesis must be relevant, i.e., important for science and practice and corresponding to the field of Master's studies. In determining its relevance, the starting point is the scientific hypothesis, i.e., the result is expected after carrying out research. The topic must be related to the theory and practice of the field of science, and a close connection between them is necessary. Since the final theses can be theoretical or applied, the former are to solve theoretical or methodological problems, and the latter focus on the problem of practice. Topics are formulated by taking into account the Programme and the research topic of the Centre: *Christian Contexts of the Human Spiritual Well-Being*, which develops the scientific project carried out by the Faculty: *Diversity of Welfare Society in the Baltic Sea Region: Lithuanian Imperative*. Students writing their theses are now advised not only by the supervisor from the Centre, but also by university teachers from the Department of Psychology working in the Programme (SER, p. 11).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The Programme complies with the legal requirements. The course units of the Programme are logically and consistently arranged during the semesters (Annex 1). Beginning with the course units related to religion sciences (1 Semester, 30 ECTS) the Programme provides theoretical basis for spiritual counselling. In the second semester integrating the studies of psychology and theology, there is a movement towards the preparation for spiritual counselling (2 Semester, 30 ECTS). During the third semester, continuing to integrate the studies of psychology and theology (3 Semester, 20 ECTS), students deepen and apply the acquired knowledge in professional practice (3 Semester, 10 ECTS). The fourth semester is dedicated to write the Master's Theses (4 Semester, 30 ECTS). Course units are in accordance with the Programme's aims and outcomes, and are well arranged; their dynamic and content correspond to the main aim of the Programme (SER, p. 6f.). According to discussions with social partners, graduates, and students, the arrangement of the Programme meets their expectations for becoming spiritual counsellors in practice or to preparing for further studies and research. Some social partners believe that in the arrangement of the Programme more attention should be given to preparing for group counselling.

The abilities listed in SER 24 are compatible with the Programme's aims and outcomes (Annex 4). This compatibility is achieved through well-integrated interdisciplinary studies. The study dynamics from the 1st to the 4th semester, starting with theological courses, then moving to integrating theology and psychology studies, and finally undertaking professional practice and preparing a Master's thesis are solidly founded. This ensures the gradual acquisition of skills essential for spiritual counselling and the fulfilment of the Programme's aims and outcomes. The learning outcomes of individual course descriptions aligns well with the Programme aims and outcomes.

Discussions with graduates and current students highlighted their positive view of the compatibility between the Programme and the course outcomes, with particular emphasis on: a) good integration between religious and psychology studies; b) an appropriate amount of theological and psychological knowledge to achieve study outcomes; c) the fostering of respect for individuals, regardless of their religion or other beliefs; in particular, teaching approaches that respect diverse religious beliefs and practices, promote interfaith dialogue, and prepare students to work inclusively with people of different faith backgrounds; d) the ecumenical aspect in the curriculum.

The descriptions of the subjects reflect the variety of methods used in the study process. The dominant methods include discussion, formal lecture, group work, literature analysis and literature review presentation, practical exercises (tasks), one-to-one tutorials, case analysis (case study), simulation (engineering, technology, or process simulation), problem-based learning, scientific paper analysis. These methods are oriented toward achieving different levels of the Programme's outcomes (according to the classification of the outcomes into five categories; Annex 4). In summary, it is reasonable to believe that these study methods are suitable for both knowledge transmission and the development of practical skills needed by spiritual counsellors.

The assessment methods are also various (examination, paper, group work, reporting on practical work, etc.), depending on the content of the subject being taught and its learning outcomes.

In general, the Programme's curriculum ensures a consistent development of students' competences. As it is noted in 1.3, course units in accordance with the Programme's aims and outcomes are well arranged, their dynamic and content correspond to the main aim of the Programme. The core structure of the Programme is clearly defined within the dynamics of the study process.

The first Semester is dedicated to religious sciences: Christian Anthropology, Psychological Spiritual Counselling, Personal Religious Development, Marital Life Crisis Management, Guilt and Forgiveness in the Bible. These subjects ensure the theoretical basis for spiritual counselling. According to the descriptions of these courses, the essential topics of theology / theological anthropology (in accordance with the Programme's aims and outcomes) that guide students to different contexts of spiritual counselling are addressed. In the second and third Semesters, the studies of psychology and theology are integrated (subjects of the study field: Process of Counselling, Non-Christian Spirituality, Solutions to Spiritual Problems in the Family, Psychology of Crisis and Spiritual Trauma, Phenomenology of Religious Experiences, Pastoral Care of Sick; optional subjects: Christian Sexual Ethics / Ethics of Life and Death / Modern Forms of Spiritual Help, and Stress Coping Strategies / Health Psychology). The descriptions of these subjects demonstrate a balanced integration of theology and psychology. During the discussions with the graduates and current students, it became clear that they are very conscious of this integration and make a fundamental distinction: theological studies provide the foundation for the content of spiritual counselling (what), while psychology studies provide the basis for conveying that content in different contexts and situations (how). During the professional practice in the third Semester, students deepen and apply the acquired knowledge, and finally, in the fourth Semester, devoted to writing the Master's Thesis, they deepen their research skills. It should be noted that, although the Programme subjects provide a solid knowledge base necessary for spiritual counsellors, some relevant topics may remain neglected or underdeveloped. For example, issues related to migrants, spiritual counselling for prisoners, as well as important topics related to optional subjects.

Students have sufficient opportunities to personalize the structure of their studies, particularly by choosing their professional practice location and selecting optional subjects. In general, during the site visit, it was evident that the needs of students, especially regarding the balance between studies and work, are taken into consideration.

The principles of preparing and defending the final thesis are clear and serve to strengthen students' research abilities. The previous evaluation noted that the research questions of most theses were indeed related to the focus of the Programme, but only a minority of them combined a theological and a psychological perspective. The expert panel recommended the supervisors to pay closer attention to the interdisciplinary character of the theses, since this is an important characteristic of the Programme and a vital aspect of the work of the graduates as spiritual counsellors. It should be noted that, the thesis list for 2021–2023 (Annex 2) reveals how significantly this situation has improved.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *The uniqueness and relevance of the Programme in Lithuanian society.*
2. *The well-defined interdisciplinary character of the Programme.*
3. *The combination of theoretical knowledge (theology and psychology) and practical skills.*
4. *Good dynamics of the study process – from the theoretical basis for spiritual counselling to the integration the studies of psychology and theology and moving towards the preparation for spiritual counselling during the professional practice.*
5. *There is a logical and realistic balance between the Programme's aims and outcomes and the learning outcomes of the course units.*
6. *The focus of the Programme is not only on Catholicism and its spirituality.*
7. *The graduates are highly motivated for their professional activity as spiritual counsellors.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. *Although the multireligious nature of the Programme is well-defined from a religious perspective, this aspect needs to be further strengthened.*
2. *More attention should be paid to preparing students for group counselling.*
3. *It is recommended to include topics in the curriculum that are particularly relevant to the current context (e.g., the topic of migration).*
4. *Those responsible for the implementation of the Programme should make an effort to influence state and ecclesiastical institutions regarding the creation of new job opportunities for spiritual counsellors.*
5. *More students should also be oriented towards academic work to ensure a successful turnover of the teaching staff in the future.*

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

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

In the 2023 MOSTA evaluation, the Programme, which integrates theology and psychology, received a positive assessment. However, it was noted that the theological component faces limitations in research capacity due to a small teaching staff, which restricts the development of a doctoral programme in this area. Although doctoral studies cannot currently be offered, the Programme was commended for its integration of applied psychology and theology. The psychology component received higher ratings, demonstrating its relevance and research quality. Nonetheless, the Programme was advised to increase international publications and strengthen collaborations (SER, p. 12). The Programme successfully integrates scientific research into its curriculum. Both teaching staff and master's students are actively involved in relevant research projects, particularly in the fields of spiritual and psychological counselling. Research activities are embedded in the curriculum through seminars, conferences, and student thesis publications in journals like *Dialogues Between Science and Faith*. This ensures students gain practical exposure while contributing to ongoing academic discussions directly related to the Programme's focus (SER, p. 12, Meeting with students). Teaching staff also collaborate with external partners on projects like *Christian Aid for Families Affected by Crises* and *Sustainable Family – Sustainable State*, enhancing the Programme's connection with national and international networks. This collaboration supports the practical application of research in social and health services, which aligns with the Programme's emphasis on spiritual counselling (SER, p. 13). In terms of financial support, the Programme benefits from national and international grants that fund research within its scope. These resources support the continuation of research activities by the teaching staff, particularly in interdisciplinary fields such as theology and psychology, aligning with the educational goals of the Programme (SER, p. 13; Meeting with SER team and teaching staff).

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

The Programme includes content that reflects recent developments in theology, psychology, and spiritual counselling, as demonstrated through various academic activities undertaken by the teaching staff. According to the SER, Programme teaching staff publish 8-9 research articles annually, including English-language monographs, contributing significantly to both the theological and psychological fields at KU (SER, p. 13). This academic output is intended to keep the curriculum aligned with current research and practices within these disciplines. In addition to publications, teaching staff regularly participate in international conferences, such as *Christianity and Innovations* and *The Dialogue between Science and Faith*. These conferences address contemporary issues within theology and psychology, bringing recent academic insights to the Programme's core areas, such as spiritual identity and counselling methods. These topics are directly integrated into courses like *Spiritual Counselling* and *Psychological Spiritual Counselling*, providing students with content that reflects current theoretical and practical discussions within the fields of theology and psychology (SER, p. 14). The Department of Psychology teaching staff involved in the Programme also engage in interdisciplinary research projects and contribute to international journals. These activities support the inclusion of recent psychological research in the Programme's curriculum, with a particular focus on spiritual and psychological counselling. Faculty also supervise master's theses, incorporating both theological and psychological perspectives, which reflects an interdisciplinary approach within the curriculum (SER, p. 15; Meeting with SER team and teaching staff). In addition to academic research, teaching staff engage in various research promotion activities aimed at increasing public awareness and engagement with theological and spiritual topics. These activities include public lectures, seminars, media appearances, and consultations for educators. Staff members are involved in initiatives such as the Synod Year events and create accessible

theological content on platforms like YouTube and the national channel LRT, which serves to popularize theology and strengthen community connections with the Programme's areas of focus" (SER, p. 15). The Programme's curriculum thus includes topics and materials that reflect the latest academic and applied developments, with teaching staff actively involved in both research and academic collaborations that inform the educational content provided to students (SER, p. 13-15).

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

Students in the Programme are given numerous opportunities to engage in scientific research. The Programme actively encourages students to participate in research activities and publish their best work. During the evaluation period, several master's students published their theses in the university's scientific journal *Dialogues Between Science and Faith*, which supports the Programme's focus on integrating spiritual and psychological counselling (SER, p. 15). Additionally, students are regularly informed about opportunities to participate in conferences, seminars, and summer schools. They are involved in the preparation of scientific articles and research projects alongside their supervisors. For instance, students conducted research at the *St. Francis Oncology Centre* on providing spiritual support to cancer patients, gaining practical research skills that are directly applicable to their studies and future careers (SER, p. 16). The Programme also provides platforms for students to present their findings at scientific conferences and supports their involvement in research. This integration of research activities provides students with opportunities to engage in advanced academic or professional roles, supporting their development in the fields of spiritual and psychological support" (SER, p. 15-16; Meeting with students).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The *Spiritual Counselling and Assistance* programme at KU has demonstrated a strong connection between scientific activities and its academic focus in theology and psychology. While the Programme has a smaller teaching staff in theology, which limits the potential for expanding doctoral-level studies, the integration of applied research in psychology is highly effective and positively evaluated. The Programme involves both teaching staff and students in meaningful research projects, embedding research activities through seminars, conferences, and publications. Psychology, in particular, is a well-developed aspect of the Programme, whereas the theological research component, though solid, could benefit from further expansion and increased output in high-impact international journals. The diverse range of thesis topics from 2021 to 2023 demonstrates the Programme's commitment to an interdisciplinary approach, combining theological and psychological perspectives. Topics such as spiritual and psychological support for individuals in crisis, religious experiences, and the role of Christian spirituality in coping mechanisms reflect both academic depth and relevance to contemporary issues (Appendix 2). The efforts of individual theology teaching staff contribute to maintaining equilibrium within the Programme. The Programme is successful in aligning the content of its studies with the latest developments in science. The teaching staff are active in research, regularly publishing work that informs the academic content, ensuring that students are exposed to contemporary issues and research. Through participation in international conferences and research projects, the Programme effectively integrates modern advancements into its curriculum, meeting this objective fully. Moreover, the Programme provides ample opportunities for master's students to engage in scientific research. Students are encouraged to publish their work, participate in real-world research projects, and present their findings at conferences. These opportunities allow students to gain practical experience, preparing them for further academic or professional development. Encouraging students to enter doctoral studies is essential to providing for the future teaching staff in this Programme.

In summary, the Programme demonstrates a well-structured approach to integrating research with educational content, ensuring that students are exposed to the latest developments and given substantial opportunities to engage in meaningful research. While the Programme performs very well, especially in psychology, there remains potential to further enhance the theological research component and expand its international reach.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *The Programme successfully integrates research into the curriculum, providing students with exposure to cutting-edge developments in theology and psychology.*
2. *Students are actively involved in research and encouraged to publish their work, contributing to their academic and professional growth.*
3. *The Programme effectively aligns its content with the latest advancements in science, ensuring relevance in its study field.*
4. *The Programme excels in the field of psychology, demonstrating strong research quality and relevance both nationally and internationally.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. *Expanding the theological research aspect and increasing faculty resources would enhance the Programme's overall research capacity.*
2. *Encouraging students to enter doctoral studies is essential to providing for the future teaching staff in this Programme.*
3. *Increasing publications in high-impact international journals would further elevate the Programme's international academic profile.*

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Master's Programme in Spiritual Counselling and Assistance adopted the LAMABPO centralised admission system in 2022, enhancing the transparency and accessibility of its admission process. Admission criteria are publicly accessible on the university's website, providing applicants with clear and structured information. As outlined in SER 52, the scoring formula is based on the applicant's previous academic performance, with 60% given to coursework and 40% to final projects or exams. Additional points are awarded for published academic articles, reinforcing the Programme's emphasis on both academic and professional engagement.

Applicants to the Programme are required to hold a bachelor's degree, and those from non-theological or non-psychological backgrounds are encouraged to strengthen their foundational knowledge through optional preparatory courses in psychology and theology. Although these courses are fee-based and not mandatory, they provide valuable support for students aiming to meet the Programme's academic demands (SER, p. 17). Also, feedback from students suggests that these preparatory options effectively address any initial gaps, allowing students to enter the Programme with confidence and readiness for the curriculum.

According to SER, p. 21, the Programme's openness to applicants from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, such as law, social work, and the humanities, creates an enriching interdisciplinary environment that is well-suited to the holistic nature of spiritual counselling. Students stated that they appreciate the varied perspectives this approach brings to the learning experience, fostering a well-rounded and inclusive academic atmosphere. This diversity not only enhances classroom discussions but also prepares students to work effectively in a wide range of real-world counselling contexts.

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

The Programme at KU has established a clear procedure for recognizing foreign qualifications, partial studies, and prior non-formal or informal learning outcomes. This process is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), ensuring that qualifications and credits earned abroad are compatible with European standards. To facilitate recognition, the university requires that foreign institutions be accredited by the relevant authorities in their country, while decisions on credit transfers are overseen by the Programme's Head of the Center, with final approval from the Faculty Dean (SER, p. 18).

For students planning to undertake partial studies, the university uses Erasmus+ learning agreements to formally specify that credits earned abroad will transfer back to their degree programme. This agreement provides students with assurance and transparency, allowing them to confidently plan international study opportunities. Even for students who complete studies without a pre-arranged agreement, the university offers a flexible crediting process. This process involves a detailed evaluation of course content to ensure alignment with the Programme's competences, making it easier for students to continue their academic journey without interruptions.

KU also has a well-structured process for recognizing non-formal and informal learning, which allows students with significant professional experience or non-traditional education backgrounds to gain credit. This assessment process includes a review of portfolios, interviews, and evaluations in realistic scenarios, conducted by two dedicated commissions: the Candidate Admission Commission and the Commission for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Achievements (SER, p. 18).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The selection and admission process is structured to be both accessible and transparent, allowing prospective students to clearly understand the Programme's expectations. By intentionally welcoming students from a variety of academic backgrounds, the Programme strengthens its interdisciplinary framework which can be viewed as an asset for a field like spiritual counselling that benefits from diverse perspectives.

While the optional preparatory courses in psychology and theology offer valuable support for students who may lack prior experience in these areas, they are currently fee-based and optional. To promote consistent academic readiness, it may be beneficial to formalize these courses as recommended preparation. This approach would help ensure that all students begin with the foundational knowledge needed to fully engage with the Programme's content, while still maintaining accessibility for a diverse range of applicants.

KU's recognition procedures are well-implemented, fully aligning with European standards and supporting both international mobility and inclusivity. The approach to recognizing non-formal and informal learning is thorough, ensuring that students with diverse experiences can integrate smoothly into the Programme.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

KU supports academic mobility through partnerships and participation in the Erasmus+ Programme, offering students opportunities to study or train abroad at over 250 partner universities across Europe. Before departure, students formalize their studies abroad through Erasmus+ agreements, ensuring credit transfer upon return. Although these options are available, participation in mobility Programmes remains low, largely due to work, family commitments, and the Programme's mature student demographic (SER, p. 18f.).

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

According to SER, p. 19f. KU offers a range of support services tailored to students' academic, financial, social, and personal needs. Academically, students have access to electronic databases and resources through the university library, as well as regular consultation hours with faculty, ensuring they can engage deeply with their studies and seek guidance when needed. Financial support includes state-funded scholarships, one-time grants, and tuition fee reductions, which are particularly beneficial for students with disabilities or those facing financial challenges. Socially and psychologically, students benefit from ongoing counselling services and spiritual guidance, providing crucial support for those preparing for roles in spiritual counselling. KU also encourages engagement in community events and volunteering opportunities, which foster connections, reduce isolation, and strengthen students' sense of belonging. Through these combined resources, KU effectively ensures that students have a well-rounded support network that promotes both academic success and personal well-being.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

According to SER, p. 20 KU provides students with comprehensive information and counselling services to support their academic journey. At the start of each academic year, students attend introductory sessions covering Programme expectations, assessment methods, and available resources. Detailed course syllabi are provided at the beginning of each course, outlining essential topics, assignments, deadlines, and grading criteria. Additionally, faculty members hold regular consultation hours, offering students easy access to academic guidance and support throughout the semester.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

KU provides a solid framework for student mobility, aligning with international standards and facilitating

credit transfer through Erasmus+ agreements. While academic mobility is encouraged, the Programme could benefit from promoting shorter, flexible mobility options to accommodate students with commitments that limit extended study abroad. This adjustment could make the international experience more accessible to a broader range of students within the Programme.

KU provides well-rounded support services that effectively address students' varied needs. Access to academic resources and personalized consultation opportunities fosters a strong academic foundation. Financial assistance options, along with social and psychological support, enhance students' well-being and ability to focus on their studies. The combination of these resources promotes a holistic support structure, contributing to a positive and inclusive environment for students. Overall, the support provided is comprehensive and well-suited to the Programme's student demographic.

KU's approach to providing study information and student counselling is thorough and well-structured, giving students clarity and support at each stage of their studies. Overall, the availability of study information and counselling services is sufficient and well-suited to student needs, promoting a positive academic experience.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *The Programme's admission process is clear and inclusive, welcoming students from various academic backgrounds, which enriches the learning environment.*
2. *Comprehensive student support, including academic, financial, social, and psychological resources, is well-tailored to meet student needs.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. *The optional preparatory courses in psychology and theology are fee-based, which may limit accessibility for students who could benefit from foundational knowledge.*
2. *While academic mobility is encouraged, the Programme could benefit from promoting shorter, flexible mobility options to accommodate students with commitments that limit extended study abroad.*

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

4.1. Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Programme is structured to support students' diverse needs while enabling them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The Programme is delivered in a session-based format with classes organized four times per year, allowing flexibility in the teaching and learning process. Various instructional methods are employed, including lectures, group discussions, practical observations, and online interactions through the Moodle platform, which provides lecture materials, assignments, and resources for independent study (SER, p. 21-22). The Academic Information System (AIS) further supports students by offering centralized access to essential information on course requirements, assessment methods, and feedback opportunities. This system is designed to foster self-assessment and planning, enabling students to track their progress effectively. Assessment within the Programme uses a cumulative approach, combining interim and final evaluations to provide a comprehensive measure of student achievement against each course's learning outcomes (SER, p. 23-24). According to Annex 4, the Programme specifies competences for students across areas such as theoretical knowledge in theology and psychology, research skills, and counselling abilities relevant to spiritual and psychological support. These competences include independent research skills, knowledge in addressing spiritual crises, and proficiency in counselling methods, aligning with the intended learning outcomes.

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

According to the SER, the Programme provides specific conditions to support access to studies for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. The Programme implements a range of measures, including flexible study schedules and the provision of remote learning options through digital platforms like Moodle. This approach enables students who may face physical or logistical challenges to participate in lectures, access course materials, and submit assignments from a distance (SER, p. 21-24). Furthermore, the Academic Information System (AIS) provides accessible information about course requirements, evaluations, and deadlines, allowing students to manage their studies effectively even if they cannot attend in person. The Programme has also developed specific support measures, such as offering alternative learning assessments and personalized consultations, to accommodate individual learning needs, thus ensuring equitable access to the Programme for all students regardless of their social or health-related circumstances (SER, p. 22-24, Meeting with students).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The Programme is structured with session-based classes and flexible instructional methods to accommodate diverse student needs. The Programme's teaching methods—ranging from lectures and group discussions to practical observations—allow for active student engagement, supporting students in achieving the intended learning outcomes. The use of the Moodle platform for accessing lecture materials and resources for independent study, combined with the Academic Information System (AIS), enables students to monitor their academic progress and engage in self-assessment, fostering an organized and transparent learning environment. The cumulative assessment approach, which includes interim evaluations, provides students with consistent feedback, reinforcing their learning outcomes and helping them identify areas for improvement (SER, p. 21-24). In addition, the competencies outlined in Annex 4 indicate a focus on key knowledge areas in theology and psychology, research skills, and counselling abilities, aligned with the

Programme's goals. This approach allows students to build relevant skills in spiritual and psychological support, integrating theoretical understanding with practical application. The structure of competencies reflects the Programme's emphasis on preparing students for graduate studies or professional roles, enhancing both their academic and practical abilities. For socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs, the Programme incorporates specific measures to ensure equitable access. Flexible study schedules, remote learning options via Moodle, and centralized access to course information on AIS provide essential support. Additionally, the Programme offers individualized study assessments and consultations, enabling students facing personal or health challenges to participate fully in their studies. This individualized approach aligns with the Programme's goal of inclusivity, addressing students' unique circumstances and ensuring integration into the academic community (SER, p. 22-24).

The Programme effectively meets the requirements for structuring a teaching and learning process that supports diverse student needs and ensures accessibility for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. Through a session-based format, flexible instructional methods, and cumulative assessment, the Programme encourages active student participation and progress toward achieving learning outcomes. The integration of the Moodle platform and AIS enhances accessibility to course materials and allows students to self-monitor their progress. Additionally, individualized support measures, such as remote learning options and personalized consultations, foster an inclusive environment that accommodates students facing personal or health challenges, ensuring their full integration into the academic community.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

Based on the SER, the Programme has established a structured and transparent system for monitoring student progress, assessment, and providing feedback to encourage self-assessment and academic planning. The Academic Information System (AIS) plays a central role, enabling students to access information on their progress, grades, and feedback across various assignments and exams. This transparency helps students identify their academic standing and areas for improvement (SER, p. 23-24).

The Programme's cumulative assessment model integrates both interim and final evaluations, allowing for ongoing monitoring of each student's performance and understanding throughout the course. This systematic approach, coupled with timely feedback, supports students in setting academic goals and planning their studies. Additionally, through regular consultations and feedback sessions, students receive personalized guidance, which further supports self-assessment and academic development (SER, p. 23-24). This structured system ensures that student progress is monitored continuously and that students have access to tools and resources to assess their learning, plan effectively, and align with the Programme's intended learning outcomes.

The Programme has established a transparent and structured approach to providing feedback that promotes self-assessment and academic planning for students. Through the Academic Information System (AIS), students receive detailed information on their assessment results, including grades and feedback on assignments, which helps them understand their progress and areas that require improvement. This feedback process encourages students to self-reflect and make informed decisions about their study paths and objectives (SER, p. 23). Furthermore, the cumulative assessment system provides ongoing feedback throughout each course, combining interim evaluations and final assessments. This method ensures that students receive timely insights into their academic performance, allowing them to adjust their efforts in alignment with course requirements and intended learning outcomes. Personalized feedback sessions with teachers further enhance this process, supporting students in setting academic goals and fostering continuous improvement in their studies (SER, p. 23; Meeting with students).

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

According to the SER, the Programme has a system in place for evaluating the employability of graduates and tracking their career paths. The Programme utilizes graduate feedback as well as national employment data to gather information on the career outcomes of alumni in fields related to theology, psychology, and counselling. This data provides insights into employment trends within relevant fields, allowing the Programme to observe general employability rates and outcomes for graduates (SER, p. 23). Additionally, the Programme engages with local organizations and stakeholders to maintain awareness of potential career opportunities for graduates. This approach offers information on the alignment of graduate skills with labour market demands and supports tracking of career trajectories (Meeting with alumni, employers, and social partners).

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

The Programme has policies in place to promote academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. It outlines expectations for respectful behavior and inclusivity, with guidelines covering ethical standards in academic work and non-discrimination. Teaching staff play a role in upholding these policies, and students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding tolerance and respect within the academic setting (SER, p. 23-24). Measures to prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are also included, with the Academic Information System (AIS) supporting transparency in assessments and feedback. This system is intended to clarify evaluation processes and promote accountability among students.

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

The Programme has established procedures for submitting and examining appeals and complaints related to the study process. These procedures provide a structured process for students to submit concerns, with formal reviews conducted by appropriate academic or administrative bodies. Information about these procedures is available to students through the Academic Information System (AIS) and other university resources, detailing the steps for submission and expected timelines for resolution (SER, p. 23-24; Meeting with students).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The Programme largely meets the criteria for effective student assessment, progress monitoring, and support for academic integrity. The use of the Academic Information System (AIS) and cumulative assessments provides students with a comprehensive framework to track their academic progress. Although feedback mechanisms are functional, there is room for improvement through a more structured system of personalized feedback sessions, which would give students clearer guidance on their academic development and planning. Regarding employability and career tracking, the Programme collects some information from graduate feedback and national employment data. However, the lack of an organized alumni association limits the Programme's ability to maintain long-term engagement with graduates and to systematically integrate their feedback into curriculum development. Forming an alumni association could facilitate ongoing networking and input from alumni and employers, ensuring the Programme remains aligned with evolving industry needs. In terms of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, the Programme has defined policies and drafted reports, which demonstrate that there have not been any cases of academic misconduct or appeals over the past three years. While this suggests a stable academic environment, continued attention to maintaining these standards is essential to uphold the Programme's values and address potential issues proactively should they arise.

Overall, the Programme fulfills key standards for student assessment, progress monitoring, and academic integrity, though certain improvements could strengthen its structure. Establishing an alumni association, fostering collaboration with alumni and employers, and refining feedback practices would enhance the Programme's alignment with both academic and professional expectations.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *The Programme's session-based format, flexible instructional methods, and use of AIS create a supportive learning environment that allows students to manage their studies effectively and actively engage with course material.*
2. *The cumulative assessment model provides students with regular, structured feedback, fostering self-assessment and supporting academic progress.*
3. *Specific measures, such as flexible study schedules and remote learning options, ensure accessibility for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. *Create an organized alumni network to support career tracking and provide curriculum feedback based on graduate outcomes aligned with the demands.*
2. *Introduce regular personalized feedback sessions to provide students with clear guidance on academic progress and improvement areas.*

For further improvement

1. *Formalize channels for alumni and employer input in curriculum planning to ensure alignment with society trends and skills requirements.*
2. *Use the alumni network and employer collaborations to systematically gather data on employment trends, allowing for targeted adjustments to the Programme.*
3. *Regularly review and update policies on academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination to ensure they remain effective and responsive to emerging needs.*
4. *Although flexible study schedules and remote learning are available, these support mechanisms may need periodic review to ensure they continue to meet the needs of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.*
5. *A more systematic approach to analyzing employment data could better align the Programme with industry demands, enhancing curriculum relevance and graduate employability.*

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1. Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

There are 6 employees at the Centre, five of whom participate in the study process, and one only in scientific activities (priest of the Lutheran Church assoc. prof. dr. Darius Petkūnas). Out of six employees, two are professors and three associate professors, three of them have completed their studies in various Pontifical Universities in Rome (Italy), have solid international experience in studies and research, are priests of the Catholic Church, and thus supplement the taught course units with practical experience in pastoral ministry in Christian communities. All six teachers are Doctors of Science, and their qualifications and competences correspond to the required expertises of the Programme. The Head of the Centre and supervisor of the Programme, dr. Arvydas Ramonas, also works as a senior research fellow. There are 5 teachers from the Department of Psychology: two professors with long experience in pedagogical work and three assistants. The latter employees are practitioners with long experience in consulting clients (SER, p. 25; Annex 3). Teachers combine work at the University with work in pastoral-catechetical areas, Pedagogical-Psychological Services, in a mental health centre, or with an individual psychological counselling practice. Scientific activities of teachers correspond to the taught course units (SER, p. 25). During the analysed period, there were 12 university teachers working in the Programme. In 2021–2022, there were 8 students in the Programme; in 2022–2023 – 12 students; in 2023–2024 – 7 students. SER, p. 25 claims that the ratio of university teachers to students is optimal to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The teaching staff composition is strong from scientific, didactic, and professional perspectives. Many teachers bring valuable pastoral and psychological counselling experience to their courses, which enhances their teaching within the Programme. The teaching staff considers this link between theoretical and practical work to be especially significant in training future spiritual counsellors, a view also confirmed by graduates and current students during discussions.

The research field of all teachers relates closely to the course units they teach, as evidenced by their most significant research works over the past three years in the fields of theology and psychology. Among the core teaching staff there is a tendency to link theological studies with the practical field of spiritual counselling, this aligns with the Programme's aims and learning outcomes.

It is stated in SER that all teachers, except one, have at least 0.5 workload in various positions (SER, p. 25). Comparing this information with what is provided in the Annex 3, a question arises regarding the core teaching staff workload. For teaching, excluding the 1.0 workload for the Senior Research Fellow, a total of only 1.65 workload is allocated for all of them. This raises concerns about the feasibility of meeting both teaching and research requirements under the current structure of the Programme. During the discussions, the Administration responded to this question by stating that it depends on the number of teaching hours for a 1.0 workload, which is mandatory at the University, and which is quite high. Inevitably, this high teaching load is detrimental to the time the teaching staff can spend on their research.

The ratio of qualified university teachers to students is adequate to achieve the expected learning outcomes and allows for teaching that is tailored to the student's needs.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

The process of teaching staff mobility is regulated by the official documentation of KU. Participation of the teaching staff in the Erasmus mobility programmes depends on cooperation agreements with foreign universities/institutes, their departments of theology, philosophy or psychology. Common destinations for academic mobility are: Italy, Croatia, Malta, Spain (SER, p. 25f.). It is noted that the vast majority of university teachers who apply to participate in teaching and learning mobility activities under the Erasmus programme receive funding for academic mobility (SER, p. 25f.).

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

The professional development of teaching staff is encouraged by the requirements set by the KU and the conditions created to fulfil those requirements. According to the *KU Statute*, every 5 years but for a period of not more than one year university teachers may be exempted from pedagogical work in order to conduct scientific research and improve their research or pedagogical qualification. The *KU Research and Study Promotion Fund* supports teacher participation in international scientific events and conferences, and teachers also have an opportunity to improve themselves by participating in research forums organized by FSSH once a month (SER, p. 26; see also 30-41). From 2021 to 2023, all field study programme university teachers improved their qualifications. From 2020 KU has a *Research and Study Promotion Fund* that fully or partially pays for participation in scientific conferences and publication fees for scientific articles (SER, p. 26). The main non-motivating problem to “strive” for qualification is the inadequate salary of employees, i.e., insufficient salary of university teachers, excessive workloads and quite a lot of bureaucratic work (SER, p. 26).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

In the previous evaluation, experts recommended more frequent use of academic mobility. It should be noted that this aspect was enhanced by several teacher mobility events during the period from 2020 to 2024. Discussions with the teaching staff revealed that they are open to mobility exchanges, so it is essential to continue seeking connections with universities, especially those that offer programmes for training spiritual counsellors.

In general, the teaching staff is satisfied with the conditions provided by KU for professional development. They particularly appreciate the university's support for participation in international academic events, as well as the faculty's initiatives that contribute to enhancing teachers' competencies. However, inadequate salaries and a too high teaching load remain a significant problem, both in the present and when considering the preparation and motivation of future teachers. One of the consequences of these facts is that the number of international publications (in English) and the proficiency of the teaching staff to communicate in English (see the interview with the teaching staff) is low.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *Evaluated from scientific, didactic, and professional perspectives, the teaching staff of the Programme is well-composed.*
2. *Most teachers possess substantial experience not only in academic work, but also in pastoral service and psychological counselling.*
3. *The research areas of all teachers closely align with the course units they are responsible for teaching.*
4. *Teachers are satisfied with the conditions provided by the university to support their professional development.*
5. *An increased frequency of academic mobility.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. *The high teaching load has a detrimental effect on the research time of the teachers*
2. *The low proficiency in (written and oral) English affects the possibilities of the teaching staff to participate in the international academic debate.*

For further improvement

1. *It is essential to decrease the teaching load for the core teaching staff of the Programme.*
2. *Efforts should be made to seek and promote more opportunities for mobility exchanges.*
3. *It is necessary to explore options for increasing the salaries of the teaching staff.*

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Programme is primarily implemented at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, which offers 29 well-equipped classrooms and facilities suited for both theoretical and practical studies. Specialized premises, such as the Pope John Paul II classroom for theoretical lectures and the Laboratory for Psychological Counselling, provide dedicated spaces equipped with advanced tools like one-sided vision glasses and mobile filming systems for practical training sessions. The laboratory supports practical counselling by enabling real-time observation and audio-visual recordings for group and individual counselling (SER, p. 28).

Classrooms are equipped with stationary multimedia equipment, interactive boards, and have stable Internet connectivity, ensuring a modern learning environment. Additionally, the Faculty offers computer labs and Wi-Fi accessibility through the Eduroam service, enhancing digital learning opportunities (SER, p. 28).

Moreover, the library resources at KU are extensive and support the Programme with access to both traditional materials and a broad range of electronic resources. The KU Virtual Library and specialized databases provide access to scientific journals, e-books, and other educational materials. Resources relevant to the Programme, such as the Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling and other related publications, are available for students and faculty, offering both campus and remote access through EZproxy. The interlibrary loan service further expands access to national and international materials (SER, p. 29).

Adaptation measures for students with individual needs include specialized equipment and software, such as screen magnifiers, Braille printers, and voice synthesizers, to ensure inclusive learning. Facilities are adapted for students with mobility impairments, and KU offers psychological and spiritual support services. Financial resources for the Programme are used efficiently, with ongoing investments in facilities and infrastructure, as evidenced by recent renovations and upgrades supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport of Lithuania and EU Structural Funds (SER, p. 28).

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

KU demonstrates a proactive and strategic approach to planning and upgrading resources to support the Programme. Between 2021 and 2023, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities underwent extensive renovations, including modernizing classrooms, updating furniture, and acquiring new computer hardware. This significant enhancement of the learning environment was supported by a €1,000,000 investment from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, alongside EU Structural and Investment Funds, aimed at revitalizing the Faculty's overall infrastructure (SER, 30).

Furthermore, resource renewal at KU is a continuous and well-organized process. The Faculty allocates funds annually to enhance the study environment, ensuring that students and staff benefit from up-to-date facilities and materials. The KU Library plays a critical role in this process, working closely with faculty members to acquire newly published books, specialized literature, and digital resources that align with evolving academic and professional needs. This collaborative approach ensures that the resources remain relevant and reflect current developments in the field. The library's consistent updates to both traditional and electronic materials enable students to access a comprehensive range of learning tools and resources, including e-books, scientific journals, and online databases (SER, p. 29).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Overall, KU has invested substantially in creating a well-equipped and inclusive learning environment, with specialized spaces, modern technological resources, and comprehensive library access. These resources provide strong support for both the academic and practical training of students in the Programme, creating a well-rounded learning experience.

However, a notable area for improvement is the physical accessibility of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. While significant measures have been taken to support students with special needs, the lack of elevators and the presence of stairs without necessary accommodations present challenges for individuals with physical disabilities, limiting full accessibility to some facilities. Addressing this issue would enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of the Programme's physical infrastructure, aligning it with broader accessibility standards and further supporting KU's commitment to an equitable learning environment.

KU regularly updates and improves its facilities and resources to provide a high-quality educational experience for students. Upgrades to physical spaces, along with modern technology and learning tools, create a supportive environment that helps students succeed academically and prepare for their future professional paths.

The collaboration between faculty and library staff further strengthens the availability and relevance of study resources. However, it is important to continue updating scientific materials, particularly in religion and theology, to keep pace with current issues and developments. This approach helps maintain a modern, balanced perspective in the programme. Overall, KU's resource planning and upgrades successfully support student learning and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

- The Programme is supported by well-modernized facilities, featuring specialized spaces and advanced technological tools that enhance both theoretical and practical learning.*
- Regular updates to library resources, in collaboration with faculty, ensure that materials remain relevant and align with current academic and professional needs.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

- Limited accessibility for individuals with physical disabilities, as there are no elevators and the existing stairs lack necessary accessibility equipment.*

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system is outlined in SER, p. 31f., with key points noting that KU is certified under the ISO 9001 Quality Management System standard. The system of internal studies quality assurance at KU operates in accordance with the official descriptions of the Quality Management System, which provide all the information related to the stages of the process. The internal evaluation is conducted annually. The principles of assurance of the internal quality of studies comply with the European higher education quality assurance regulations and guidelines, as well as the main laws and legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania regulating higher education in Lithuania. The Centre is directly responsible for the realization of the Programme and the Programme quality assurance is guaranteed by the *Committee in the Field of Humanities*. All study programme management and quality assurance decisions are made collegially. Student representatives also participate in the activities of the committees. Student surveys are carried out, and their data are analysed at the Centre and the Faculty, the Programme is being improved, innovations are being implemented. Long-term monitoring as the basis for the study quality assurance is carried out at three levels (University, Faculty, Centre). After the international self-evaluation that took place in 2021, the Centre improved the Programme according to the experts' requirements, and developed improvement plans, which are approved by the Committee in the field of Humanities and the Faculty Council. Such an official evaluation has been carried out and improvement plans have been created.

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

SER, p. 32 claims that internal (administration, university teachers, students) and external (graduates, employers, representatives of student practice institutions) stakeholders participate in the processes of evaluation and improvement of the Programme. Cooperation with stakeholders takes place already during the study process, i.e., when organizing and assessing student practice. Cooperation also takes place at other levels: stakeholders facilitate scientific research, practical exercises, and study visits. Representatives of stakeholders are members of the self-evaluation group, participate in seminars, and discussions organized by the Centre as well as in the work of the Committee in the Field of Humanities, and other events.

A standardized assessment of the study process is carried out at the end of each semester, students are interviewed in accordance with the standardized questionnaire and are also questioned after each study practice and upon termination of the study agreement. At the end of each semester, meetings with representatives of the KU Student Union, who on their own initiative monitor the study process and assessments during session time, are organized. This is how problems encountered are expressed, discussed, and considered while improving the Programme (SER, p. 32f.).

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

Information about studies, their content, regulatory documents is provided in the KU information publications, on the KU website. Information about the Programme, qualification of higher education awarded, scientific and artistic activities, self-evaluation results, opinions of students, graduates and other parties involved on the quality of studies, as well as graduates' career indicators are publicly available. Information concerning the Programme is also disseminated on the Centre's Facebook page. Results of

feedback are taken into account during the meetings of the Centre, and the quality of studies is assessed and improved (SER, p. 33).

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

As stated in SER, p. 33, a detailed analysis of feedback data is conducted by the Committee in the field of Humanities. Based on these results, the Committee performs an annual review of the Programme and prepares a plan of measures to address identified areas for improvement. In order to optimize the implementation of the Programme, the Centre uses results of feedback gained through annual interviews with teaching staff of the Centre and the Department of Psychology. Based on the obtained data, plans to improve the quality of studies are prepared (improvement of Programme, introduction of new or improvement of course units), issues mentioned by students are analysed, and university teachers are consulted.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The structure of field management, decision-making, and periodicity of internal assessment are clearly described. The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system relies on enforcing applicable legislation related to the conduct and quality assurance of studies, as well as on maintaining effective relationships between the University, Faculty, and Centre levels for decision-making and implementation. The interviews with the University administration and teaching staff of the Programme have confirmed the effectiveness of these relationships. The Centre is well integrated into the Faculty, and the Faculty, for its part, views the Centre as an important unit, significantly contributing to the University's mission and strategy. Clear and collegial relationships ensure the quality of administration and the implementation of studies.

During the visit, the panel noted the very active involvement of social partners in the Programme's internal quality assurance. Administration, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers, and representatives of student practice institutions are all committed to ensuring that spiritual counsellors are prepared as well as possible. Everyone recognizes the relevance of this profession and the growing demand for it, as well as the fact that the contexts in which spiritual counsellors operate are changing and expanding. These contexts are best experienced by graduates, employers, and representatives of student practice institutions. They are eager to share their knowledge with the Programme implementers and students, providing feedback and highlighting emerging needs that the Programme implementers aim to address. Cooperation between internal and external stakeholders is particularly vibrant and effective. It is noteworthy that some of today's employers or representatives of student practice institutions are also graduates of the Programme. Therefore, they have insights into the study situation and the work of spiritual consultants. All those who participated in the meeting during the site visit confirmed their close involvement in ensuring study quality and their interest in further collaboration.

Extensive information about the programme and its implementation is available on the University website, and events and activities at the Centre are actively shared on its Facebook page. However, more publicly accessible information on the Programme's execution, feedback at various levels, and the changes being implemented could benefit students, employers, and other stakeholders. Additionally, it would be valuable to have a centralized source for information on job opportunities for spiritual counsellors. Alternatively, the Centre could regularly share this information on its Facebook page.

During the site visit, interviews with students, graduates, teaching staff, and stakeholders highlighted that the exchange of views on Programme implementation and improvement is an active and ongoing process. Students and graduates reported that their feedback is responded to effectively, with their comments and needs taken into consideration.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. *The Programme has an effective internal quality management.*
2. *The internal quality assurance system of the studies is ensured by the collegial and coordinated activities of the various KU administrative units, and by as systematic collaboration with social partners.*
3. *The involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance is especially effective.*
4. *The quality of the Programme is repeatedly monitored.*
5. *Information about the Programme is clear and accessible.*
6. *All stakeholders can provide feedback on the Programme quality, which is **answered** effectively by the Programme implementers.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. *Increase the accessibility of information about Programme implementation by providing public updates on feedback received and any changes applied as a result.*
2. *Establish a centralized source for job opportunities in spiritual counselling to assist graduates in career planning.*

V. SUMMARY

The Programme is unique because it succeeds in integrating spiritual counselling and psychology. Moreover, the Programme is also highly relevant to Lithuanian society: its graduates work in hospitals and health care institutions, nursing homes for elderly, psychological support centres, etc. The leadership of KU recognizes these assets of the Programme and supports it actively.

The course units are in accordance with the Programme's aims and outcomes, and are well arranged. The set-up of the Programme ensures the gradual acquisition of skills essential for spiritual counselling and the fulfilment of the Programme's aims and outcomes. The learning outcomes of individual course descriptions align well with the Programme aims and outcomes. The Programme succeeds in integrating religious studies and psychology, keeping the balance between theological and psychological knowledge, and respecting individuals, regardless of their religion.

The course descriptions reflect the variety of methods used in the study process. These study methods are suitable for both knowledge transmission and the development of practical skills needed by spiritual counsellors. As far as the content of the Programme is concerned, the course units are in accordance with the Programme's aims and outcomes. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Programme may neglect or leave underdeveloped some relevant topics, such as issues related to migrants, and spiritual counselling for prisoners.

Students have sufficient opportunities to personalize the structure of their studies, particularly by choosing their professional practice location and selecting optional subjects. The needs of students, especially regarding the balance between studies and work, are taken into consideration. The principles of preparing and defending the final thesis are clear and serve to strengthen students' research abilities.

The Programme has a rather small teaching staff in theology, but the integration of applied research in psychology is highly effective. The Programme involves both teaching staff and students in meaningful research projects. Research in psychology is well-developed in the Programme, whereas the theological research component could benefit from further expansion and increased output in high-impact international journals.

The teaching staff are active in research, regularly publishing work that informs the academic content, ensuring that students are exposed to contemporary issues and research. Through participation in international conferences and research projects, the Programme effectively integrates modern advancements into its curriculum. Moreover, the Programme provides ample opportunities for master's students to engage in scientific research. Encouraging students to enter doctoral studies is essential to providing for the future teaching staff in this Programme.

The selection and admission process is structured to be both accessible and transparent. By intentionally welcoming students from a variety of academic backgrounds, the Programme strengthens its interdisciplinary framework. However, while the optional preparatory courses in psychology and theology offer valuable support for students who may lack prior experience in these areas, they are currently fee-based and optional. To promote consistent academic readiness, it may, therefore, be beneficial to formalize these courses as recommended preparation.

KU's recognition procedures are well-implemented, fully aligning with European standards and supporting both international mobility and inclusivity. The approach to recognizing non-formal and informal learning is thorough, ensuring that students with diverse experiences can integrate smoothly into the Programme.

KU provides a solid framework for student mobility, aligning with international standards and facilitating credit transfer through Erasmus+ agreements. While academic mobility is encouraged, the Programme could benefit from promoting shorter, flexible mobility options to accommodate students with commitments that limit extended study abroad. KU provides well-rounded support services that effectively address students' varied needs. Access to academic resources and personalized consultation opportunities fosters a strong academic foundation. Financial assistance options, along with social and psychological support, enhance students' well-being and ability to focus on their studies. KU's approach to providing study information and student counselling is thorough and well-structured, giving students clarity and support at each stage of their studies.

The Programme's teaching methods allow for active student engagement, supporting students in achieving the intended learning outcomes. The cumulative assessment approach provides students with consistent feedback, reinforcing their learning outcomes and helping them identify areas for improvement. For socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs, the Programme incorporates specific measures to ensure equitable access.

The Programme largely meets the criteria for effective student assessment, progress monitoring, and support for academic integrity. Although feedback mechanisms are functional, there is room for improvement through a more structured system of personalized feedback sessions. Regarding employability and career tracking, the Programme collects some information from graduate feedback and national employment data but not in a systematic way. This limits the Programme's ability to integrate the graduates' feedback into curriculum development. In terms of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, the Programme has defined policies and drafted reports, which demonstrate that there have not been any cases of academic misconduct or appeals over the past three years.

The teaching staff composition is strong from scientific, didactic, and professional perspectives. Many teachers bring valuable pastoral and psychological counselling experience to their courses, which enhances the quality of their teaching. The research field of all teachers relates closely to the course units they teach. The teaching load of the staff raises some concerns about whether they are able to meet both teaching and research requirements. The ratio of qualified university teachers to students is adequate to achieve the expected learning outcomes and allows for teaching that is tailored to the student's needs.

In the period from 2020 to 2024, academic mobility has been enhanced by several teacher mobility events. Discussions with the teaching staff revealed that they are open to mobility exchanges. The teaching staff appreciate the university's support for participation in international academic events, as well as the faculty's initiatives that contribute to enhancing teachers' competences. However, inadequate salaries and a too high teaching load remain a problem, which (partly) explains why the number of international publications (in English) and the proficiency of the teaching staff to communicate in English is low.

Overall, KU has invested substantially in creating a well-equipped and inclusive learning environment, with specialized spaces, modern technological resources, and comprehensive library access. However, a notable area for improvement is the physical accessibility of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. While significant measures have been taken to support students with special needs, the lack of elevators and the presence of stairs without necessary accommodations present challenges for individuals with physical disabilities, limiting full accessibility to some facilities.

The collaboration between faculty and library staff strengthens the availability and relevance of study resources. Overall, KU's resource planning and upgrades successfully support student learning and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

The structure of field management, decision-making, and periodicity of internal assessment are clearly described. The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system relies on enforcing applicable legislation related to the conduct and quality assurance of studies, as well as on maintaining effective relationships between the internal stakeholders. The interviews with the University administration and teaching staff of the Programme have confirmed the effectiveness of these relationships. During the visit, the panel noted the very active involvement of social partners in the Programme's internal quality assurance.

Extensive information about the Programme and its implementation is available on the University website, and events and activities at the Centre are actively shared on its Facebook page. However, more publicly accessible information on the Programme's execution, feedback at various levels, and the changes being implemented could benefit students, employers, and other stakeholders.

During the site visit, interviews with students, graduates, teaching staff, and stakeholders highlighted that the exchange of views on Programme implementation and improvement is an active and ongoing process. Students and graduates reported that their feedback is responded to effectively, with their comments and needs taken into consideration.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Examples of excellence should include examples exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

1. *The well-defined interdisciplinary character of the Programme.*
2. *The Programme successfully integrates research into the curriculum, providing students with exposure to cutting-edge developments in theology and psychology.*
3. *Most teachers possess substantial experience not only in academic work, but also in pastoral service and psychological counselling.*
4. *The Programme has an effective internal quality management.*