



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**THEATRE ART FIELD OF STUDY
AT LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND
THEATRE**

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 three 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 three 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 Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149. The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 14 October, 2024.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof Rosemary Napier Klich, Professor of Theatre and Director of Research at East 15 Acting School, University of Essex, United Kingdom;
2. Academic member: Prof Dr Anja Klöck, Professor of Acting and Theatre Studies at University of Music and Theatre “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” Leipzig, Germany;
3. Academic member: Dr Ali FitzGibbon, Senior Lecturer in Creative & Cultural Industries Management & Director of Internationalisation, School of Arts, English & Languages, Queen’s University Belfast, United Kingdom;
4. Social partner: n/a;
5. Student representative: Dominykas Šimonis, alumni of Master in Performing Arts (Piano solo), student of Master in Performing Arts (Accompaniment) at Vytautas Magnus University Music Academy.

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 14 October 2024 onsite.

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

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

There was need for translation during the meeting.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

The Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereafter LMTA, Academy) is an internationally recognised higher education institution that delivers studies in arts (Music, Theatre, Dance, Film and the History and Theory of Art) and trains artists for professional careers in the fields of music, theatre, dance, and film.

Founded in 1933, the Academy currently hosts about 1,000 students in three study cycles – Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral studies – in four faculties, three of which are based in Vilnius (Theatre and Dance Faculty, Music Faculty, National Film School), and one in Klaipėda.

Overview of the field of study

This evaluation covers the first cycle study programme of Theatre Art (specialisations in Acting, Directing, Theatre and Event Directing, Theatrical Production Management, Performing Arts Studies, and Puppet and Object Theatre. These specialisations are/will be taught across both the Vilnius and the Klaipėda Campuses. This programme aims to develop graduates that can work in Lithuanian theatres and theatre companies, and across the cultural, educational, and entertainment sectors. LMTA is well connected across the network of Lithuanian state and independent theatres and students benefit from LMTA’s portfolio of committed and varied industry partners and stakeholders.

Previous external evaluations

The programme was last evaluated in 2021 with the outcome requiring re-evaluation in three years. In response to the recommendations of the 2021 review, LMTA’s first cycle study programmes in Theatre have been reorganised and optimised. Since 2023, the programme in History and Criticism of Performing and Film Arts no longer accepts admissions, and it will be deregistered after the students who are currently enrolled finish the programme. It was decided to run and further develop only one first cycle study programme in Theatre, namely Theatre Art, in which students can choose one specialisation. Beside the specialisations offered since the 2023-2024 a.y. (Directing, Acting, Theatre and Event Directing, Theatrical Production Management) two further specialisations were approved in November 2023: Puppet and Object Theatre and Performing Arts Studies. They have been added to the list of specialisations and start admissions for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Documents and information used in the review

No.	Name of the document
1.	“Field of Study: THEATRE (P04) Study cycle: First, I, Bachelor studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (henceforth abbreviated as the SER)
2.	“Evaluation Report STUDY FIELD of THEATRE at Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre” of 2021
3.	Examples of theses and final projects (video and written material).
4.	“LIST OF FINAL THESES (PROJECTS) IN THE FIELD OF THEATRE BY BA GRADUATES IN 2024”
5.	visual materials (photos and videos) of the Klaipėda facilities
6.	“LMTA Facilities and Resources” (youtube.com)
7.	two examples of written assessment submissions for the final year project from the <i>Theatre Art</i> bachelor study programme (specialisation - <i>Theatre and Event Directing</i>): 1) Bachelor Final Project Evaluation Resolution; 2) Supervisor's feedback on the Final Project;
8.	Explanation of LMTA Study Regulations for the assessment of students' achievements at LMTA

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	Theatre Art
State code	6121PX004
Type of study (college/university)	University, First Cycle Studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Fulltime 4 years
Workload in ECTS	240
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Secondary Education
First registration date	19-05-1997
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	This programme has six specialisations and is taught across two campuses/Faculties.

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points ^{1*}
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
Total:		28/35

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

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

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

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

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

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

The field of Theatre Art as assessed by the review panel in October 2024 is a first cycle study programme with six specialisations taught at two campuses and across two faculties (Vilnius and Klaipėda). The specialisations of the study programme are: Directing; Acting; Theatre and Event Directing; Theatrical Production Management; Puppet and Object Theatre; Performing Arts Studies (the latter two to be introduced in 2024-2025 a. y.). Since LMTA is the only higher education institution in Lithuania providing university level programmes in the field of theatre, it holds a central position in the Lithuanian fields of culture and art. The SER reflects on the HEI's responsibility that comes with this position of not only sustaining but also developing the creative industries in Lithuania, Lithuanian society's cultural identity, and of inventing creatively artistic and cultural positions between national or regional traditions, "the world" and a future yet to come.

Teachers are aware of and connected to the current and future labour market, and the curriculum is tailored towards the employability of graduates. Revisions to the LMTA theatre training provision have been undertaken with input from and collaboration with representatives from the professional theatre industry; the new specialisation of Puppet and Object Theatre, for example, clearly responds to current regional industry needs. There is a focus within the curriculum on student developing 'soft skills' to aid employability, as well as artistic skills, with study outcomes around 'Social Abilities' and 'Personal Abilities' well defined and realised.

In the panel's site visit meetings, external stakeholders and employers spoke with the highest praise of LMTA graduates' skills and capabilities. LMTA graduates of the first cycle study programmes in Acting, Directing, and Theatre and Event Directing are working in national and international contexts.

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

LMTA have undertaken substantial revision of programmes and practices since the last SKVC evaluation report in 2021. There has been strategic reduction in the number of courses offered and the implementation of a single BA programme with six unique specialisations. This new framework provides an optimised training structure, covering the main specialisations within theatre practice and research.

There is evidence of a holistic and integrated strategy across the theatre study field including across the Vilnius-based and Klaipėda Faculties and across the different disciplines. The SER gives clear objectives of all specialisations within the larger objectives of the Theatre Art study programme. The study programme has clear objectives, and the different needs and parameters in each specialisation are both appropriately distinct whilst conforming to the HEI's overall mission statement.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The expert panel concludes that LMTA is meeting the needs of the country's theatre field in preparing future specialists and in generating a cultural and societal impact. LMTA has considerably revised

and restructured their theatre study field training provision on the first cycle level. The site visit meetings and the HEI's self-evaluation provide evidence of a carefully considered and robustly implemented HEI strategy, developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The panel commend LMTA's conviction in implementing changes that consolidate the theatre studies programme offer and create potential for more collaboration across specialisations, campuses, and cohorts.

It was evident to the panel that LMTA have undertaken consultation and thoroughly investigated the range and balance of the six specialisms that make up the Theatre Art course. As the LMTA identify in their Self Evaluation Report (SER), these are the areas of practice and knowledge that are most in demand, and by delivering these specialisms, the programme is designed to meet the needs of the theatre industry in Lithuania and more broadly, in Europe. While the specialism of Acting and Directing are very well established and recognised internationally, the other four specialisms are perhaps more nuanced, though no less important to the sector. Notes on each are offered below.

Theatre and Event Directing: While the stand alone Directing specialism appears to focus more on directing traditional, script-based, theatre productions, the Theatre and Event Directing specialism expands this focus to include events beyond staged theatre productions. Graduates will be equipped not only to directing innovative theatre but also to produce events, spectacles, and productions across the creative and entertainment industries.

Theatrical Production Management: This is an interesting and important area of training, with similar international courses delivered under banners of 'creative producing', 'theatre management', or 'cultural event management'. Graduates in this specialism are likely to go into management, producing, and events positions across the cultural and creative industries. The course includes modules in cultural policy, leadership, marketing and all areas of business, meaning that students will not only have the know-how to take on the business of managing theatres, but also possess a wealth of transferrable skills. The term 'production' may indicate to some, particularly internationally, a focus on the technical skills of lighting, sound, and stage management, but here 'production' is used in relation to the concept of 'producing'.

Puppet and Object Theatre: This is an innovative programme; while internationally there are programmes more generally in 'physical theatre', this specialism covers areas of movement and physical theatre but with a focus on training actors to work within object theatre and with puppets. With Lithuania home to 'Puppet Theatres' in Klaipėda and Klaunus, and hearing from the Director of the Klaipėda Puppet Theatre during the site visit that graduates with this speciality are needed in the industry, the programme specifically responds to the country's theatres' needs. With the success of international touring productions such as War Horse, the Lion King, and The Life of Pi, there is growing visibility of and interest in puppet-based theatre practices.

Performing Arts Studies: This specialism, similar to 'Theatre Studies' programmes internationally, introduces students to a wide variety of theatre and performing arts history, national and international practices, and general arts modules, equipping graduates to work across all areas of theatre practice, criticism, and production, as well as across the arts more broadly.

It is clear to the panel that the Academy's strategy places student success and experience at the heart of decision making, and that strategy is developed in conversation with social partners and future graduate employers. Through analysis of the provided documents and through discussions with industry representatives, alumni, and social partners, the panel conclude that graduates of the programme are/will be well-prepared for the labour market. Alongside their artistic development, students are offered support with topics such as resilience, resourcefulness, and responsibility. LMTA graduates play a crucial role in the ecology of the theatre industry in Lithuania and are spoken of with the highest regards by industry employers. In addition to preparing students for the Lithuanian labour market, due consideration has also been given towards preparing students for the international workplace and opportunities provided for students to work with international experts and to travel abroad.

The development of the new campus with state-of-the-art performance spaces provides new opportunities for the Academy's social and cultural impact and for the collaboration of students and staff from different theatre study areas. One area for continued monitoring and ongoing consideration is the integration of the two Campuses in Klaipėda and Vilnius and how these teams work under one umbrella, with students on both campuses provided equal opportunities. We commend the exchange of teachers across campuses, the consistent communication between teachers and managers, and shared methodological sessions. We also commend the Academy's move towards increasing inter-campus collaboration between students as well as staff. The panel members understand that students from both campuses predominantly meet during international projects abroad and that cross-campus collaboration in Lithuania is based on personal student initiative and/or extra curricular work. The monitoring of such initiatives is recommended in order to develop consistent collaboration opportunities and to possibly integrate them into the curriculum. With nascent cross-campus student interaction and given the esteemed status of the new campus in Vilnius, the symmetry between Klaipėda and Vilnius facilities, student experience, and professional opportunities should remain an ongoing consideration.

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

LMTA's Theatre Art BA corresponds to level six of the Lithuanian Qualifications framework and is compliant to the cycle descriptor approved by the Minister of Education, Sports, and Science. The panel were provided documents evidencing the legal frameworks within which the LMTA programmes operate, and the SER showed that the curriculum design, including aspects such as the structure of the programme, programme workload, credits, contact hours and final thesis/project, complies with all Lithuanian legal requirements. The Theatre Art programme currently offers four specialist pathways, and in November 2023, the LMTA Senate approved plans for another two specialisations in Puppet and Object Theatre and Performing Arts Studies (with preliminary intake in 2024 and thus not part of this review).

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

The study outcomes of the Theatre Art study programme are detailed in the SER in alignment to the HEI's Description of Study Cycles. Programme aims and learning outcomes are clearly identified and appropriately differentiated for each of the six Theatre Art discipline areas. Key outcomes of the study area not only include subject specific knowledge and research abilities, but also more holistic outcomes such as 'special abilities', which includes aspects such as career management and personal entrepreneurship, 'social abilities', which includes communication and interpersonal skills, and 'personal abilities', which includes adaptability, imagination, emotional intelligence, and teamwork, amongst other skills and qualities.

Assessment of learning objectives manifest in three key ways as articulated in the SER: through 'intermediate' or 'accumulative' assessment, through 'collegiate' assessment where assessment is undertaken by a commission, and 'diagnostic assessment' which takes place retrospectively to reflect on students' learning and achievement. All performance-based assessments are conducted 'collegiately' with at least three markers and that final theses are assessed by at least five specialists; this was indicated in the example of a feedback form shared with the panel that included the signatures of five markers. Assessment methods comply with the principles of validity, reliability, clarity, benefit and impartiality, yet they are flexible to match with the specific content, complexity and format of the respective assignment or learning outcome to be assessed. The methods used are both formative and summative, and marks across most modules are often based on a mid-term assessment and a final assessment.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The first cycle Theatre Art curriculum design at LMTA stipulates four years of study (8 semesters). All first cycle study programme specialisations offer a core curriculum dedicated to the field study (including internship and final thesis preparation). Depending on the specialisation and its specific practices of transmitting artistic, scholarly and organisational skills and competences, the number of credits provisioned for field study vary (from 213 in Acting to 129 in Theatrical Production Management), much as the number of contact hours differs depending on the student's field of specialisation. All students' specialisation modules balance experiential learning, contextual learning, independent learning and the learning of historical-theoretical knowledge and analytical skills in different proportions. Every pathway includes a range of discipline-specific training as well as some wider contextual and historical modules. All pathways include a large-scale semester-long 'final project', which gives the programme shape a sense of 'exit velocity' and culmination. During the site visit, an Admissions Specialist pointed out that students have a possibility of choosing English language classes at different levels, since this was not mentioned in the SER. International mobility and opportunities were widely reported particularly for Klaipėda students in terms of external projects, study trips and student exchanges. These opportunities appear to be extra to the curriculum or to be organised around summer schools.

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

Upon their entrance to the first cycle study field of Theatre Art at LMTA, students chose a specialisation. Following the SER, all study programmes aim at providing flexible curricula, trying to achieve a balance between prescribed competencies that are regarded as fundamental to the respective specialised professional activities on the one hand and individualisation on the other. All specialisations for example have 'elective' modules, with the number of elective credits varying significantly between specialisations (between 27-111 credits across the six specialisations). Electives across all six specialist pathways include modules exploring psychology, aesthetics, art history, and philosophy, as well as another 'optional subject'. During the site visit members of the faculties explained that they advise students in terms of giving them individual recommendations, since there seem to be many choices. LMTA students can choose subjects not just across LMTA but also at Vilnius University and Vilnius Academy of Arts; this gives students access to a much broader range of arts and humanities modules including foreign languages.

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

The final theses viewed by the panel represent an appropriately substantial portfolio of work in all specialisations and at the top end of the marks, student work is of the highest pre-professional standard. However, the assessment criteria are not clear to the panel, nor how these criteria are shared with students. It is also not clear if the assessment standards will be synchronised between Vilnius and Klaipėda Acting specialisations, where the acting portfolios of the final thesis projects seems to generally contain less performances than in the Vilnius programme; Vilnius-based Acting students generally have four-six performances in their portfolio, while Klaipėda students generally have only one-two. This seems to be a notable discrepancy given the assessment has the same weighting in both iterations of the course.

In the examples of 2023 final theses provided to the panel alongside the SER, there are discrepancies with regards to the written element of the final projects the panel viewed; Klaipėda-based Acting students have included a written 'role analysis', whereas Vilnius-based Acting and Directing students have not. On page 17 of the SER it is explained that, "From 2024, the final thesis of the first-cycle studies in the field of Theatre consists of a creative project and a written piece of

work related to this project.” The panel have been provided 2024 final theses from the specialisms Acting (Vilnius) and Theatre and Event Directing (Klaipėda) and can confirm that these theses all include a written component alongside documentation of the practical work. The panel suggests that, with written components of final theses now being in place in all study programmes, further attention should be paid to developing coherent and compatible standards across campuses while also transparently differentiating requirements among the specific specialisations.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The study plans for the first cycle programme in Theatre Art and its specialisation programmes comply with legal requirements. First cycle study programmes in all specialisations are allocated 240 ECTS each. Based on the data provided in the SER and in the meeting with alumni and external partners during the site visit, study outcomes are relevant and meet the needs of society and professional theatres. HEI representatives emphasised during the site visit that increasing graduate competences are also reflected by an increase in numbers of students who continue in second cycle programmes in the field of theatre as well as other study fields.

The panel thoroughly commend the robust assessment of student final projects and the use of team-marking, with all final project marks agreed by a team of five markers. The panel also commend the quality of student work as evidence in the videos of the final projects/portfolios. While not a major concern, the panel would like to point out a potential imbalance within the grade descriptors used. The grade descriptors identify 7/10 as an ‘average’ mark, leaving only three grades to differentiate ‘above average’ work, and seven grades to differentiate ‘below average’ work. Although this grading system might have been in place in Lithuania for many years, the panel would like to point out that it may limit the capacity for teachers to nuance student grades and for students to see their grades develop over time.

Efforts are made by teachers, and it is LMTA policy, to provide students with a description of points of assessment and the criteria by which they’ll be graded at the outset of a teaching module. However, in the panel’s meeting with students during the site visit, they were not clearly able to speak to an awareness of assessment criteria – they insisted that they were ‘assessed on what they were taught’ but could not describe how criteria were used as part of the marking processes. It is evident to the panel that assessment criteria exist and assessment procedures are robust, however we recommend that further efforts are made to discuss marking criteria with students in the lead up to an assessment and not just at the start of term; to remind students of criteria, and to ensure that staff feedback clearly identifies student performance against the given criteria.

Panel members have some concerns about Klaipėda-based students’ access to a similar range of electives that Vilnius-based students have access to, and it was not clear within the SER how/if these differ. Also, the review panel recommends placing more emphasis within the curriculum on students developing ‘digital skills’ and working with digital tech as appropriate to their discipline to future-proof skills and to potentially increase employment possibilities to work in immersive and multimedia theatre, film, and the games industry. A final thesis was written on “*Applying Artificial Intelligence in Theatre. Examples on the Lithuanian Stage*” by a student in History and Criticism of Performing and Film Arts in 2023; digital technologies and AI have arrived on the Lithuanian stage and should be taken seriously because of the extremely fast technological development in this area.

The review panel praises the increase in international opportunities for staff and students, with substantial international engagement in European networks and exchanges. The panel also particularly commends the participation of LMTA Vice-Rector of Arts and Science, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ramunė Balevičiūtė, in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design Subject Area Group of the EU-

funded *Tuning* CALOHEX project, allowing the Academy to get acquainted with the tools designed to develop internationally competitive study programmes in the field of Theatre Art.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel highly commend the radical redesign of the Theatre Art study field curriculum with the help of a reduction in the number of separate first cycle study programmes and an increase in the number of specialisations offered under the roof of one first cycle study programme in Theatre Art. The new structure is perceived as having positive effects in that it integrates all specialisations, enables students to possibly change their specialisation during the early stage of their studies, synchronises different curricula and promises to enhance the collaboration of students and methodological co-operation of teachers across specialisation programmes.
2. The panel highly commend the involvement of stakeholders in the redesign of the programmes and introduction of new specialisations and their commendation of the high quality of the professional work of LMTA students and graduates.
3. The panel commend the introduction of a theoretical written component to the final thesis projects for the Acting and Directing specialisations in Vilnius, as recommended in the 2021 EER.
4. The panel commend 'collegiate' marking practices, especially for the final project.
5. The panel commend the introduction of *Tuning* CALOHEX tools to the Academy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings:

1. The panel recommends that further efforts should be made to discuss marking criteria with students across all specialisation programmes in the lead up to an assessment and not just at the start of term, to remind students of criteria, and to ensure that staff feedback clearly identifies student performance against the given criteria.
2. The panel recommends that measures are taken to identify and address gaps across programmes/campuses to ensure equal standards for final thesis projects and their respective written and practical components.

For further improvement:

The panel recommend:

1. To continue to integrate and align student experience across the Klaipėda and Vilnius-based Faculties.

2. To continue to reduce any sense of hierarchy between specialisation programmes and campuses, and create potential for more collaboration across specialisations, campuses, and cohorts.
3. To identify and address gaps across programmes and campuses in relation to the availability of elective subjects (such as languages). The panel recommends an audit of the range of elective subjects available to Klaipėda students and this is compared with the access of Vilnius students to electives at other institutions.
4. To look at increasing the emphasis on digital skills within the curriculum and potentially looking at training to work in now tech-heavy theatre, film, and gaming industries.

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
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The SER explains that the Lithuanian Research Council (LRC) conducts annual formal evaluations of art and scientific activities in HEIs. In these, the LMTA has been ranked first among Lithuanian universities for several years. An assessment of the quality of LMTA research was undertaken in 2023 by international experts who deemed it worthy of a score of 4.5 out of 5.

In terms of 'research' this expert panel would like to suggest a differentiation between academic research (which includes practice-as-research) and artistic practice. In terms of academic research, the SER presents a number of faculty members whose research is recognised nationally and internationally through presentations and publications. In terms of artistic practice, members of the Theatre Art faculty have won an impressive number of national awards and prizes for their professional work. How far this practice is critically reflected upon in order to make it transmissible in terms of 'artistic research', however, is not quite clear to the members of this panel. The SER well articulates that there is understandably an overlap between staff 'research' and staff 'professional practice'. Staff professional practice no doubt informs their scholarship and the scale and quality of LMTA staff practice suggests their teaching is informed by knowledge and experience of the latest developments in professional theatre practice. However, it might be helpful to actually openly address different theory-practice-constellations and to clarify to students that 'research' may mean different modalities of reflection, experimentation, knowledge production, searching, and re-searching in scholarly and artistic practices depending on the specifically given or chosen relationship between theory and practice. Significantly, the SER stresses that LMTA have eight Doctoral students in the theatre study field and six of them teach in first-cycle theatre programmes, so their research feeds directly into their teaching. By so doing, a direct transmission of latest research and new methodologies into the assessed programmes is to be expected.

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

In terms of the latest developments in the science, art and technology of contemporary theatre and performance practice, students at the first cycle level benefit from collaboration with social partners and the professional artistic work of members of the faculty. Most members of the faculty are heavily involved in professional practice in the performing arts industry. Alongside an impressive list of

national industry partners, they safeguard the continuous actualisation of the curriculum. When asked during the site visit, e.g. staff were acutely aware of the latest developments in industry around issues of consent and touch, and around intimacy practices. Given the substantial role of LMTA graduates within the Lithuanian Theatre industry, the curriculum at LMTA is not only shaped by, but shapes, the latest developments in theatre practice.

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

As well as working with internationally recognised theatre practitioners and pedagogues, LMTA Theatre Art students also can apply or audition to work with various industry and social partners on professional projects. These internships and professional placements are often facilitated or brokered by LMTA staff and give students opportunity to undertake professional-level work experience as part of their first cycle studies and on an extra-curricular basis.

Modules across the specialisations include Lithuanian and European theatre history and dramaturgy. This ensures all students engage in research beyond their own individual specialisation and have a holistic and comprehensive knowledge of theatre practice and its histories. The LMTA Performing Arts Research Center established in 2023 promises to provide further opportunities particularly on different concepts of ‘research’ in different practice-theory-constellations in the Performing Arts as indicated above.

Additionally, students may attend the Academy’s excellence courses who intermittently are also taught by international teachers much as various conferences and symposia – although not necessarily to be expected by a first cycle level student. The Academy’s running research project on “Identities and Democratic values on European digital screens: distribution, reception and representation” clearly negotiates latest developments in art and technology with a relevance to contemporary society. It may serve as an example of excellence in terms of opportunities for students to engage in cutting edge research beyond their busy curricular schedules.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The panel identify that LMTA staff are working at the highest level of professional industry practice in Lithuania and beyond. The strategic distinction between LMTA staff research and their professional practice, or alternatively, how their professional practice constitutes practice-as-research, is not entirely clear to the panel, though we recognise that these two areas are, from LMTA’s perspective, fundamentally linked. During the site visit, staff described opportunities to develop both their research and practice through engagement with international workshops and symposia, and the panel commend the Academy’s investment in and proactive involvement in European wide subject networks, which offers advantages to both staff and student development and ensures access to the latest international developments in science and art.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

The Review Panel commend:

1. The scale of engagement with industry and direct involvement on industry representatives and social partners in evaluation of student work and curriculum design.
2. Student opportunities for professional experience.
3. The Academy's partnerships and memberships in European-wide research and subject networks.
4. Doctoral students in Theatre Art are invited to teach on the first cycle level, thereby transmitting their latest research and new methodologies to the theatre students in the first cycle study programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement

1. The suggestions of the 2021 EER concerning the question of 'research' could be reconsidered, not in terms of coming up with a standardised definition of research for everyone but in terms of identifying different theory-practice-constellations and openly discussing with students how skills such as reflecting (verbally and in writing), describing precisely, critical thinking, researching topics and analysing can foster the development of artistic personalities also on the first cycle level of practical theatre training.
2. Given different kinds of research practices undertaken by staff, what might be common standards in terms of self-reflexivity, clarity, depth of analysis, relevance to task, level of critical engagement and enhancing one's own craft or competences? How then are these standards of research communicated to students and present within the curriculum? While expectations will be lower in first level cycles, the review panel suggests that the different meanings of 'research' in different contexts as well as possible gaps between them are more openly addressed and reflected among students and staff. The recent establishment of LMTA's Performing Arts Research Centre with undoubtedly provide a forum for these conversations.
3. Consider an integration of digital transformations into teaching: e.g. what do acting students need to know about the transformations happening in the field and their legal consequences (digital simulation of individual vocal and physical qualities, AI tool for dubbing and the impact of AI-tools in the filming and gaming industries)?

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

The student admission process at LMTA follows requirements of Ministry of Education and is managed through the central LAMA BPO. Applicants must undertake a centralised entrance exam and receive above the minimum threshold. The schedule and requirement for these entrance competitions are clearly published on the LMTA website.

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

The procedures for recognizing foreign qualifications and prior learning are in place and compliant with relevant standards. The process is clear and relies on applicants seeking recognition of a foreign qualification to request to do so via email, submit various documents, and provide information about their qualification. The evaluation of the foreign qualification in terms of its comparability with an equivalent Lithuanian qualification takes one month and is free of charge.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

Selection and admission processes demonstrate a structured approach, which is in line with the outcomes of programme. Centralised national admission system (LAMA BPO) regulates the admission system and responsible for school-leaving exams and their results, while the Academy is responsible for the performance of the entrance exam and its evaluation. This systematic approach effectively selects candidates with the skills necessary to succeed in the academic and artistic environment of the programme. The process for the recognition of foreign qualifications is clear and meets standards.

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

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

Academic mobility is supported through established Erasmus partnerships and Nordplus. The rates of student uptake of partial studies abroad or internships is low at just under 2% in 2023. This is somewhat mitigated by the uptake in short-term international mobility, which is just under 20% in 2022 and 2023. Two of the reasons provided in the SER for low percentage of student uptake of international mobility opportunities are that reintegration following a period of time away from the course and cohort is difficult for students; and that 'without foreign language proficiency at Level C, it is complicated to integrate successfully into acting students in another country'.

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

LMTA students benefit from substantial financial, psychological, and personal support. Student support mechanisms for theatre students are relevant, with provision of career support and specialist psychological help, and the in-house availability of professional psychologists ensure provision is adequate.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Study information and counselling are adequately provided, with a clear and accessible structure. Information about study modes, international mobility, optional subjects, and timetables are provided by means such as the LMTA website, through information days, via student representatives, via student email boxes, and once a year Open Doors Days where future students meet LMTA staff and receive information. The Academy also has a Career and Competence Centre that disseminates information about professional career opportunities.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The student uptake in international mobility, both for internships and partial study and short-term mobility, is indicated as low in the SER. However, this seemed somewhat at odds with the experience of staff and students, who spoke passionately about international opportunities and the benefit of these for cross-programme collaboration and personal development.

While the framework for international mobility is robust, further enhancements could be made to ensure that all students are aware of and encouraged to pursue these opportunities. The SER makes the case that one of the reasons for low uptake is that it is difficult for students to reintegrate into their cohort group from which they've been absent; this is understandable and the panel has no specific solution to this. However, as this will continue to be a barrier, the Academy should look to develop a strategy aimed at understanding student concerns around reintegration and developing mechanisms to overcome these concerns. For example, international mobility could be embedded within the curriculum and synchronised with local placements. The panel recognise that a solution may not be so clear cut, however an investigation is advised into the specific nature of the barriers to reintegration with the aim of developing possible solutions.

Another reason provided for the low uptake of international mobility is that without foreign language proficiency it is difficult to successfully undertake studies in another country. There could be a greater emphasis on ensuring students' English proficiency (C1) is well secured by the Curriculum. While foreign language studies are available to students in the form of electives provided by Vilnius University, there may be opportunity to improve uptake in international mobility, thereby enhancing student employability and international networks, by including a greater emphasis on language requirements in the first and second year curriculum. During the site visit, it was suggested to the panel by teaching staff that students do not need language training as they mostly all speak English well, however this was listed as a point of limitation by the SER evaluation team. We suggest auditing and evaluating student access to language training across Faculties and across the six discipline specialisations to ensure that first and second year students can access language electives should they choose to do so, and the Academy may want to consider whether the curriculum should include an element of compulsory language study. Also, targeted outreach initiatives could help to engage students who may feel less confident about studying abroad.

We highly commend the Academy's student support mechanisms. The support services are robust and well-rounded, effectively covering academic, financial, and personal aspects. The panel found the emphasis on financial support for students particularly commendable. The provision of two in-house specialist psychologists ensures student access to psychological and wellbeing support; the panel were impressed by this, as well as by the set-up of the Community Well-being Centre. Students seem well-supported in their academic journey, and the institution shows a commitment to continuous improvement in this area through feedback integration.

The panel note that an increase in state-funded study places would mean that more students face fewer financial barriers to study. LMTA is well-equipped to accommodate more state-funded places and an increase would be of benefit to the school, potential students, and the wider theatre industry context. The panel recognise that the allocation of state-funded places in Lithuania is regulated and administered by the state and that universities do not have agency over the number of state-funded places they are allocated. However, we mention this issue here in the hope of advocating to the state on behalf of LMTA with regards to their capacity to take on further state-funded places.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

The Review Panel commends:

1. The exceptional provision of psychological support for students.
2. Clear consideration given to the financial circumstances of students and support provided for student travel to events where possible.
3. Clear awareness of student needs and safety around consent and best practice in terms of intimacy and touch.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement:

1. The panel suggest auditing and evaluating student access to language training across Faculties to ensure that students have robust access to language electives across specialisations and campuses.
2. The Academy may consider creating targeted outreach initiatives to engage students who may feel less confident about studying abroad.
3. Consideration should be given to the reintegration of students returning from study abroad. As this is likely to remain an ongoing barrier to the uptake of international study, the panel suggests investigating student concerns and developing strategies towards successful reintegration.

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

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The information provided suggests there remains a consistent attention to students' development at a cohort and individual level. The SER (2024, p.39-40) details procedures for giving formative and summative feedback which cover possibilities for improvement. The SER details the nature of cumulative, collegiate and diagnostic assessment and provides details of how students are informed in advance about teaching, syllabus, criteria and formative/summative assessments (2024, p.16). The type of assessment is set by teachers based on the specific learning criteria and include practical, oral and visual methods. The panel have seen examples of assessment feedback and examples of Final Projects across various specialisations.

The meeting with students onsite confirmed the case made in the SER that students have ample and consistent opportunity to give feedback and to input into the shape and content of their studies. Students describe seeing immediate and positive responses from staff to student suggestions and describe open communication and confidence in the individualised support they receive. It remains less clear how students feel empowered to raise concerns anonymously or the degree to which they are protected in these processes.

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

The 2021 Review indicates that while teaching and learning processes take into account students' individual needs and *uniqueness* (2021, 3.4.1, p.22), more measures should be put in place to ensure students with special needs or disabilities (particularly invisible disabilities) were adequately supported within the pedagogy of all programmes (2021, 3.1.2, P.10, 3.4.6, p.24), building 'a culture of accessibility and inclusion'. Additionally, the LMTA campus at Vilnius was noted as being in poor condition and inaccessible for students with disabilities with relatively little concern expressed by teaching staff on this campus (the Klaipėda staff team expressing greater awareness, 2021, 3.6.1, p21-22). Since then, based on the 2024 SER and provided evidence, the panel can report the following:

- The new campus at Vilnius has opened in Autumn 2024 while the Klaipėda campus has been recently renovated. Further improvements are also underway.
- While the 2021 report indicates a degree of apathy towards students with disabilities, the 2024 SER (2024, p.33-34) details considerable improvement in student support services and efforts at inclusion. A Community Wellbeing Centre was established in 2022. Disabled students/students with special needs can complete a questionnaire to appraise what supports and accommodations will be needed during their studies.
- The SER (2024, p.35-36) also details students' access to social grants and targeted payments as well as discounts on dormitory accommodation for disabled students and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
- LMTA where possible covers expenses for students' attendance at and participation in festivals, concerts, etc.

- The SER details the LMTA policy on equality and inclusion and makes clear a principle of respect and inclusion. The site visit confirmed that staff have received training around aspects such as bias, equality, boundaries and consent.

Access to study includes admission processes. If a student who is socially vulnerable or has special needs cannot achieve admission, they can be deemed disadvantaged by processes. The above suggests significant efforts are made to ensure all students can access programmes of study. In addition, LMTA has procedures for admissions for foreign entrants consistent with regulations² that ensure there is competency for study but no disadvantage. LMTA (SER, 2024, p.30-31) has a formal process for recognition of self- learning which is clearly communicated to the applicant.

No information was provided in the SER on student population in terms of makeup (of gender, race, socioeconomic disadvantage and disability) or on the ratio of applications to admissions among these categories, only the reporting of overall application to admission numbers and grade averages. Considerations of these groups in managing the admissions process are detailed in the Equality Policy and this suggests a considerable effort is made to balance admissions. The panel also notes that the applications are handled external to the institution.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

LMTA has made considerable efforts to improve its culture of accessibility and inclusion. There are clear accounts in the 2024 SER about efforts to widen access through grants and targeted payments, to improve accessibility of buildings, and to support students through social and wellbeing supports and better inclusion processes.

There is an equality policy in place which details institutional policy on all aspects of respect, diversity, inclusion and protection from bullying and harassment. The SER makes clear this is a priority for the organisation and works to promote a community culture. A little more might be done to examine applicant and admissions data relative to grade outcomes for different demographic groups. However, as the applicant process is external to the programme there may be limited control of its processes; this suggestion might be passed on to the appropriate stakeholders.

Accessibility has clearly been a key consideration in the design and development of the new spaces, with allocated wheelchair space and elevators, for example. However, there are still improvements that could be made to make spaces 100% independently accessible. Such efforts might include reviewing all internal and external doors and ensuring self-opening/push button operated mechanisms exist so students in wheelchairs or with mobility aids can move around the building without assistance. More generally inclusive approaches in pedagogies and thinking were evident among staff teams during the visit that were less evident in the SER.

The increased and comprehensive attention to mental health and wellbeing and the provision of free counselling/psychological support across the institution is commendable. Post-COVID19, this is a welcome and necessary progression that will improve access to vulnerable groups and improve student experience and learning outcomes.

² As per SER 2024 (LMTA, 2024, p.31), <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ce47b860e1af11e39ea8c7e1dfdc4b5c/asr>

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

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

There is a formal process for giving feedback which is undertaken regularly in 1-to-1 sessions. Additionally, there is a panel moderation approach taken to practical and performance-based assessments, with at least three staff members collaborating on grading decisions. The process for and structure of assessment has been discussed earlier in this report, and the panel confirms that monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students is systematic.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

LMTA is the only HEI in Lithuania delivering studies in the fields of Film, Theatre and Dance. This makes the attention to industry trends and preparation of its graduates not only critical for graduate employment outcomes but for the field of theatre in Lithuania. The SER details theatre within the broader creative industries is a growth area in Lithuania (2024, p.6-7).

There is a strong attention given to professional sector engagement within the programme:

- LMTA works to maintain its study programmes and the new specialisations being introduced within the state Register of Studies. This applies an external standard to its programmes and thus its graduates.
- The programme combines theory and practice and there is evidence of regular updating and review of practice by staff (2-year cycle).
- Placements are provided within study programmes relevant to specialisation and the programmes outline a commitment to prepare them as 'professionals'. These are supported by both teachers and the Career & Competence Centre.
- Students are given instruction in self-management and preparation (preparation for professional work in the field, entrepreneurship, etc).
- It is suggested in the SER that many of those teaching are also engaged in professional practice and involve students in these projects, thus integrating student activity into the sector. In the 2021 report, this was highlighted as lacking a clear process for selection and this information is not provided in the SER 2024. During the site-visit, teachers and students articulated that it is not often the case that staff directly involve their own students in their external professional practice, rather, they are a conduit for information, facilitate networking, and broker introductions. For example, acting teachers cannot employ their acting students, merely recommend them to directors; directing staff cannot employ their directing students, but may invite acting students to audition. From staff meetings during the visit, the panel ascertained that there was an element of informal review to ensuring all students have equal access to such opportunities.
- Professional artists and social partners are thoroughly engaged in the programme in both campuses. A wide range of national partners are stakeholders in LMTA programmes and students complete many of their studies working with professional directors and theatres in both cities and elsewhere.
- Students are provided opportunity to undertake extra-curricular work on their own initiatives on campus in LMTA spaces; this capacity for students to pursue independent work further contributes to their professional development.

- LMTA engages in a range of international networks (both academic and professional), undertaking short-term joint student projects. This opens up opportunities for engagement in wider international professional practice and assists students in considering their graduate options in terms of international mobility.
- Students' final projects are promoted through a range of cooperations and festivals and are promoted to engage with young artists programmes in the professional scene.

Until 2023, a Career Management Information System (KVIS) was in place (SER, 2024, p.40). This is now replaced by SVIS, which draws data on graduate employment across a range of systems, including state services. The SER (2024, p.40) explains the overall graduate outcomes within the last three years, including employment, freelance work and further studies. How this is extracted by the institution from SVIS is not clear from the English language version of the site³. The SER (2024, p.43) details that the LMTA Career and Competence Centre has taken up additional monitoring in line with institutional strategy, Strategy 2030.

Graduate outcomes across the review period in terms of monthly earnings were affected by COVID19. Nevertheless, Annex 6 of the SER indicates the range of employments and experiences as well as the status of graduates. LMTA in the SER identifies it wishes to secure more graduates to move to further (second cycle) study. The presence of awards, consistent employment and mixed employment is broadly similar to graduate experiences in performing arts – a predominance of mixed employment with some notable successes.

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

LMTA staff and students are guided by the LMTA Code of Academic Ethics, which was made available to the panel in Lithuanian online and is published on the LMTA website. The Code of Academic Ethics requires staff to adhere to the principles of academic freedom, academic integrity, responsibility, collegiality and respect. The Code also takes a zero-tolerance approach to the witnessing of any breaches of these principles. Suspected violations of the Code are managed by the LMTA Ethics Committee as dictated by the LMTA Regulations on Activities of the Ethics Committee.

LMTA also have a Policy for Equal Opportunities, Inclusion, and Diversity, which is readily available on their website in both English and Lithuanian. It is a comprehensive policy defining the principles of equal opportunity and outlining measures to ensure that all staff and students are given equal opportunity to learn and perform well in a respectful environment without discrimination. The policy extends to areas such as staff recruitment, student admissions, training, staff remuneration, and complaints procedures.

It is clear to students how to access support if they feel in any way victimised, with instructions on the website directing them to the LMTA Rector or Academic Ethics Committee. If students have a complaint about their study process, they may lodge an appeal as guided by the LMTA Description of the Procedure for the Submission and Examining of Appeals Against Learning Outcomes. Appeals are considered by the Board of Appeals.

The two-year programme review cycle demonstrates that there is an institutional approach to academic integrity and review consistent with a rapidly changing field and environment for the students. Student feedback through the mutual feedback 1-to-1 process described above and student surveys, student representatives, feed in to review processes carried out 'at least every two years' of Study programmes (SER, 2024, p.14) through the Quality and Strategic Planning Division.

³ From SER (LMTA, 2024, p.40) <https://www.svis.smm.lt/en/>

This suggests the overall attention to changing contexts and thus student needs are reviewed institutionally with reasonable and appropriate regularity. The SER details an intention to involve social partners and graduates more in quality assurance (p.43) but no timeline is provided as to when this will be implemented.

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

The SER details that no cases of academic misconduct have taken place in the last three years and no students have lodged appeals or complaints in this time (2024, p.41-43). It also explains a detailed process of appeal/complaint for students to pursue should they be unhappy with the study process. There are reasonable restrictions on what types of appeal will be allowed consistent with other institutions. The Board of Appeals is convened in a timely manner.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

There are very clear formal processes to ensure academic integrity and commendable programme review at annual/biennial intervals, enabling the programmes to retain currency with contemporary practice. Clear processes are articulated for students to give feedback and students gave specific examples where their suggestions for programme development had been taken up. There are formal programmes for misconduct and appeals. The SER (2024, p.14) notes teachers are given freedom in developing assessments and content however also that study subjects are closely inter-related. While it is clear that there is formal internal planning and review and annual external evaluation, it is not entirely clear how peer review of teaching and assessment is completed between teaching staff (even though it seems to happen). Similarly, while there are clear avenues and positive routes for students to make suggestions about course development, it is less clear as yet how students' identities remain confidential where anonymous feedback routes are offered.

Across the programmes, students are actively engaged with the professional field directly in teaching and through opportunities, showcasing, etc. The final projects are an excellent springboard for emerging graduates and the staff work hard to promote and prepare their students. Students also have opportunities to perform to the general public throughout their studies at the LMTA Theatre and other professional spaces. International opportunities exist, most often through group short-term mobility and the absence of take-up for more extended semester/year abroad while understandable remains a challenge in terms of building independent and/or cohort mobility. Equally the exchange between campuses in terms of shared student projects or classes remains relatively limited and mostly extra-curricular. Particularly with the new programmes and new facilities, attention is needed to ensure students in both campuses have equal access to opportunities, facilities and skills.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

The panel commends:

1. Academic integrity and review to ensure the programmes remain contemporary is thorough and across all levels with opportunities for student input.
2. The improvements between the two review periods in terms of building both an inclusive culture and facilities are substantial, and this work should be recognised.
3. The professional input, showcasing and opportunities for students to engage with the professional field and social partners are impressive and thorough.
4. The range of international partners and projects the students engage with on an extra-curricular basis or as part of short-term collaborative projects is impressive and grounds them (and staff) in international practices and standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement

1. Specific to the campus visited in Vilnius, some review of the new facilities (and perhaps the older ones) could be undertaken to consider how disabled students can be supported to move independently through facilities, rather than requiring support from someone else.
2. Consideration should be given to ensuring a balance of experience and opportunity for students across the two campuses. Particularly given how the specialisations evolve, the availability of cross-institutional resources and electives for Vilnius based students, and with one much newer campus, there is a persistent risk that students are restricted depending on their location.
3. There remains an ongoing issue, which may be difficult to resolve, around the low take-up of formal international study abroad opportunities, whereby they earn study credits from an international university, which will have a knock-on effect on international employability. As per the panel's comments in Area 3 of this report, it is recommended that barriers to student international mobility are explored and addressed so that more students undertake international study and thereby increase their international employability.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

Staff have extensive professional experience at the highest levels. In the SER, in 2023, 206 established artists worked as teachers at the LMTA “including 34 laureates of national scientific and/or art awards (in 2022 – 158 and 29, in 2021 – 196 and 31, and in 2020 – 190 and 29, respectively)”. The panel were provided details of 79 staff members, with information about their most prominent work and professional practice, and the quality, prominence, and profile of the professional work undertaken by LMTA staff, as a body of work, is exceptional.

The ratio of teaching staff to students is currently 3.14, however it is recognised that due to the strategic overhaul of the study field curriculum, this ratio may be impacted as new specialisations are implemented and acting at Vilnius resumes intake.

The foreign language proficiency of the theatre study field teaching staff is strong, with the majority of teachers able to speak a foreign language at least at a B2 level.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

Teaching staff at LMTA are highly qualified, with a strong blend of academic and professional experience that aligns well with the program's learning outcomes. The presence of prominent national and international artists among the faculty enhances the quality of education, ensuring students receive relevant and up-to-date training.

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

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

The institution actively supports academic mobility, with established partnerships that allow faculty to participate in exchanges and international projects, and the SER statistics show a high take-up of these opportunities. The academy has substantially increased investment in Erasmus + teaching and learning in the last two years, up from 43,500 EUR in 2021 to 101,300 EUR in 2023. This commitment to mobility enriches the teaching environment by incorporating diverse perspectives, which benefits both staff and students. Teachers who engage in mobility through the Erasmus exchange program are well-positioned to promote these opportunities to students, potentially increasing the number of outgoing participants and fostering a more globally engaged student body. The list of locations and organisations to which LMTA staff have undertaken placements is very impressive and across many countries across Europe. Significantly, in addition to 35% of LMTA theatre studies staff undertaking an international mobility in 2022, the number of incoming international staff undertaking teaching mobility to LMTA has risen from 14% in 2021 to 34% in 2023.

It is also noted that staff participate in a wide range of international networks and associations including the European Theatre Schools Association *EdE*⁷⁵; Europe: Union of Theatre Schools and Academies *E:UTSA*⁷⁶, European League of Institutes of the Art *ELIA*⁷⁷, Network of theatre institutions in higher education *Nortees*⁸⁵.

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

There has been substantial investment in teachers' professional development over the last two years, with the funding spent on professional development of staff totalling 4,100 EUR in 2021 and increasing to 40,600 EUR in 2023. LMTA provides many opportunities for professional development, with a structured approach to enhance teaching and artistic skills. Workshops, training, and ongoing development initiatives are readily available, with examples provided to the panel in the SER. LMTA is embedded in numerous professional associations and networks. They also have many partnerships with other conservatoires and academies across Europe; in 2023, the LMTA's partner network included 173 agreements with other HEIs in 40 countries.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

Opportunities for academic mobility and professional development are available and accessible for staff, and the Academy has made substantial investment in these fields. This investment in staff development and international networking, the high number of staff taking up the opportunity for international mobility, and the scale and profile of the organisations that staff locate to are exceptional in terms of international comparison. A variety of courses and workshops are offered to staff members for the development of both pedagogical and artistic skills and competencies, and as indicated in the SER provides, there has been significant uptake from staff in engaging with these opportunities.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Teaching staff are well-qualified and actively engaged in professional development, both in terms of their pedagogical development and their own professional artistic practices.
2. The profile of staff in terms of their professional standing as theatre practitioners is outstanding; it is exceptional to have teaching staff who are internationally recognised actors and directors still working professionally at such a high level in the industry.
3. There has been notable increase in staff academic mobility and the substantial uptake of mobility and developmental opportunities will no doubt contribute to the high quality of education provided.
4. In addition to LMTA staff undertaking placements at organisations across Europe, LMTA staff and students benefit from a high number of international staff travelling to undertake placements at LMTA, some with very impressive international profiles.
5. Staff engage with international networks and associations.
6. The panel commend LMTA's investment in staff development and training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement

1. The panel recommends the further development of training for teaching staff around emerging technologies, especially AI, and innovative teaching methods.
2. The panel commends the organisation of cross-campus training, collaboration, and exchanges for staff and recommend that such initiatives continue, with ongoing training on pedagogy, methodology, and the aesthetic aspects of theatre training.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

The new LMTA campus in Vilnius will, when completed, consist of eight purpose-built buildings including two blocks of halls (studio spaces, specialised teaching facilities), the Faculty of Theatre and Dance, the National Film School, the Faculty of Music, the library and student residence, a block of buildings for theoretical studies and administration, and the Chamber Hall. Phase 1 of construction has been completed and the panel were able to tour the large new building in which the Theatre and Dance Faculty is housed and the small block of halls. The building for the Theatre and Dance Faculty is a large three-story building that includes, on the first floor, a state-of-the-art black box theatre, to be equipped with new technologies, lighting, and sound equipment, and that provides extensive adaptability to allow for exploration of varied forms of theatre practice. The second floor of the building houses specialised dance studios, each with its own dressing room, that can also be used for acting training and/or rehearsals. The building's third floor is dedicated to seven specialised actor-training studios of the highest standard and a 'transformative space', a large studio with production facilities that can accommodate small-scale performances with flexible audience arrangements. The building also includes the Grand Dance Hall and a Cinema Hall, impressive facilities of a professional standard that will house dance rehearsals and productions and film screenings.

LMTA has invested substantially in teaching facilities since last evaluation (there was a recommendation to make facilities accessible for students with special needs), ensuring that teaching spaces, rehearsal rooms, studios, and performance spaces that are well-equipped to meet the needs of theatre students. Additionally, the academy provides access to essential informational resources, such as specialised libraries and digital tools to support the learning environment. Financial resources are appropriately allocated, ensuring that students have the necessary support for their studies. The new facilities emphasise sustainability and the academy is developing a sustainability action plan.

The panel also undertook a tour of the Main Building (Building 1) including the Balcony Theatre, music facilities, and innovative audio technology studios. The Main Building also houses the library, of the library, which is well equipped and provides student access to international digital databases of theatre productions and resources. While the panel were impressed by the exceptional facilities in Vilnius for Theatre Art students, the panel did not visit the Klaipėda campus. They were provided photos and video links showing some of the eleven classroom spaces, including flexible black-box studio spaces with lighting and sound, traditional classroom spaces with tables and chairs, a meeting room with a large central table, and the 'Training Theatre', which has been recently renovated and has raked seating for an audience of 150.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources

Resource planning and upgrades are conducted regularly to align with academic and industry standards. The need for learning facilities and resources is considered twice a year and fulfilled in accordance with the priorities set and financial capacities" (SER). The library is well supported, IT is sufficient and appropriate, and students have access to spaces after hours for rehearsals.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The panel's site-visit revealed the extent of the investment and vision around the new Vilnius campus, which is of the highest standard and provides an excellent and exciting learning environment for students. One of the students we spoke to described the new building as creating a feeling of "being united". The new campus and its further development has the potential to not only provide students with excellent learning spaces, but to be an open space for the broader public community, social partners.

The panel did not have physical access to the Klaipėda campus though were provided visual documentation of facilities; teaching facilities presented seem appropriate, though it is difficult for the panel to discern the accessibility of the Klaipėda spaces and whether the spaces overall are sufficient.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

The panel commend:

1. The learning facilities in Vilnius, with the completion of the new campus, are of the highest international standard. As well as offering exceptional teaching, rehearsal, performance spaces, the new campus will bring benefits in uniting students and staff across specialisations and providing an interface between the Academy and the public in Vilnius.
2. Facilities and resources are regularly audited and updated.
3. The Academy's emphasis on developing environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement

1. The panel rate the Vilnius campus facilities and resources as "exceptional (5)" however access to the Klaipėda campus has been limited. The panel thank the SER team for providing video and photographic documentation of the Klaipėda teaching spaces, however, the panel's capacity to evaluate the quality, scale, and accessibility of the facilities has been restricted (so cannot score Area 6 'exceptional' as a whole). Additionally, the planned Vilnius campus is not yet finished, with remaining buildings to be built to house seminar-room teaching and research. As such, the panel's recommendation is that, having established state-of-the-art facilities for theatre training and performance at Vilnius, focus needs to be

- placed on finishing the other buildings on the Vilnius campus and the comparative quality of the Klaipėda facilities.
2. The panel encourage continued consideration of accessibility across both campuses, for example, with automatically opening doors that can be operated from a wheelchair.

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
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FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The SER details a range of checks and measures in place to ensure that students are given clear information about the expectations of their study programmes, assessments, learning outcomes. The LMTA also details annual and two-year cycles of evaluation and review that make clear a healthy and robust system for updating course content in line with institutional standards and the state Register of Studies compliances.

Course leaders have processes in place to monitor progress of individual students. This enables course leaders to have an overview of how a cohort is working and progressing. In the SER, it is less clear how this translates into cross-disciplinary review between staff within the Faculty or across the two campuses, however the site visit meeting with senior management outlined a comprehensive and systematic process for review across the study-field that includes staff at both campuses.

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

Processes are in place to gain input from students throughout their studies such as student representatives, student surveys, and 1-to-1 feedback. There are also processes for anonymous feedback and reporting.

The SER indicates that as part of Strategy 2030 there will be more input from social partners and students in contributing to quality assurance. Local theatres, social partners and external teaching artists are involved in different parts of assessment processes and programme delivery. While the panel did not have access to documents such as LMTA Committee Statutes or Faculty Statutes, LMTA have assured the panel that the systematic involvement of teachers, students, alumni and social partners in quality assurance processes is formalised in the LMTA study programmes regulations, LMTA and Faculty statutes, and other documents of LMTA governance bodies.

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

From application process through to graduation, the SER details processes for publishing information on processes, study programmes, supports available. The website details a range of exciting changes, opportunities, and student news, however, various points suggest online information platforms can and should be better used; the SER details a desire to use online platforms better for the promotion of its students, their projects and graduate outcomes. Data on graduate

career outcomes has changed systems for recording and monitoring and it is not clear how information is published by way of national statistics and rankings.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

The SER details a range of systems for gathering student feedback and surveys of their views. Student representation is considered and included in programme reviews. Students reported “feeling heard” and were clearly familiar with how they can feedback to staff, receive support, and express their views. They explained they can speak to their student representative, that they can easily speak to their ‘course-lead’, and that they could also speak to the Dean. Students reported giving feedback to help improve the course “regularly” and provided examples of where they’d offered suggestions and these suggestions had been immediately acted upon by staff. (e.g. the desire for particular workshops on clowning and Suzuki Method).

Processes for incorporating anonymous feedback were provided and the anonymity of feedback provided by students via surveys is ensured by the LMTA’s *Procedure for Organising Surveys at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre*; the description of these procedures was approved by the Rector in March 2024.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Quality assurance processes operate in line with institutional standards and the state Register of Studies compliances. Between the SER and the site visit, the panel understood clear connections between high level overview assessment of programmes, the programme level mechanisms for quality assurance and the regular student-facing underpinning quality principles for teaching, assessment and feedback. While a point was raised earlier in this report about the grading scale, nevertheless, there is a clear systematic approach with high responsiveness to student input.

It was clear through the panel’s meetings that stakeholders feel consulted and able to feed into course development and design. It is the panel’s impression that this is due to the close relationships and strength of community that exists within and around the LMTA.

The SER, some review of the LMTA website and the site visit highlighted that more might be done to share information and use the online information platforms more effectively to promote both student and alumni work as well as making the programme’s overall performance and systems more externally transparent to the public and also to students.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Quality assurances appear to have a clear ‘through-line’ from high level institutional and governmental standards to course delivery and review and student input.

2. Students and social partners feel engaged in helping to further improve the curriculum, its delivery, and the student experience; the students both formally and informally, the latter informally through close working relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

N/A

For further improvement

1. Given the substantial input of social partners in terms of planning the new specialisms and through informal feedback, the robust review processes and the efforts to prepare students for the professional field, it would be recommended that a timeline is put into action for social partners to formally feed into quality assurance, programme review and development.
2. Improvements to the online platform should be undertaken to make processes more explicit and transparent to students and public and to more effectively promote student and graduate achievements.

V. SUMMARY

As evidenced in the Self-Evaluation Report, LMTA staff and management have demonstrated a considerable effort to address any shortcomings or recommendations from the previous review; to act with innovation and willingness to change; and to realise a strong vision for the benefit of students and the professional field. The panel were impressed with the facilities in Vilnius and also the passion and commitment of the staff from both campuses. Students and social partners demonstrated a feeling of involvement and ownership in LMTA and its activities, a real strength for the institution.

Through analysis of the provided documents and through discussions with industry representatives, alumni, and social partners, the panel conclude that graduates of the programme are/will be well-prepared for the labour market. Alongside their artistic development, students are offered support with topics such as resilience, resourcefulness, and responsibility. Additionally, students have substantial opportunity to develop their employability across the course through industry placements, self-initiated projects, professional opportunities, and public performances. LMTA graduates play a crucial role in the ecology of the theatre industry in Lithuania and are spoken of with the highest regards by industry employers. In addition to preparing students for the Lithuanian labour market, due consideration has also been given towards preparing students for the international workplace and opportunities provided for students to work with international experts and to travel abroad. The excellent relationship of the Academy to the wider theatre industry in Lithuania is again demonstrated by the input of social partners and graduate employers into the recent redesign of the Theatre Art programme and introduction of new specialisations.

The panel have identified a number of areas where the good work might be improved or where anomalies were encountered, either inconsistencies with the reporting or with what the panel understand as international norms of practice. Some, such as the encouragement to improve the online platform or address the independent accessibility for students should be seen as encouragement to keep building on the good work already done. Some may highlight aspects that may be outside the institution's control (e.g. monitoring demographics in applications or capturing graduate outcomes in a more meaningful way). However, these are offered to ensure the potential for these to be prioritised in future planning.

The Review Panel have not identified any substantial shortcomings; practices within LMTA's Theatre Subject Area are mostly meeting the evaluation criteria to a 'very high' standard. One key area for continued improvement relates to ensuring parity for Klaipėda and Vilnius based students with regards to their experience, access to electives, facilities, and employability (for example, as evidenced in the Acting specialisation final theses). The panel recognise that this has been an area of consideration for LMTA; plans are in place to mitigate some of these issues, including the introduction of Klaipėda-only specialisations such as 'Puppet and Object Theatre', which has been informed by and will work in collaboration with the Klaipėda Puppet Theatre.

The panel notes a number of minor aspects for the review which might be considered in the future to ensure it is done with the due diligence and care required. There were, the panel understands exceptional circumstances that interrupted the smooth planning of the review and led to the late appointment of the panel. Ideally, the panel would have a longer lead-in and preparation for the site visit. Equally, while the information in the review was extensive, intensely reflective and detailed, the panel found itself chasing some basic information about the structure of the programmes. As these review processes vary between countries, it would be advisable to ensure the SER team are given instructions to include a simple, layman's explanation of the structure and modules of the

programmes in addition to a complex Excel sheet, and samples of feedback and marking. Lastly, the panel notes they were unable to visit Klaipėda campus in this trip and the full visit was conducted in just one day; this was intense and limited what the panel could say about Klaipėda campus.

The panel would like to thank SER team for the significant work in producing a thorough and detailed report. Compliments are given to LMTA theatre staff for making themselves available for and working on the coordination of an intense but very useful site visit. Staff are also commended for their openness in engaging with questions and discussing their practice. The participation of students and social partners in the site visit and their willingness to answer the panel's questions was valuable and appreciated.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

Areas of excellence noted by the Review Panel include:

- The role of LMTA as thoroughly embedded within the theatre sector in Lithuania, with a network of committed professional and social stakeholders who value and employ their theatre graduates.
- The vision and quality of the new campus in Vilnius; this is an excellent facility that will inspire and benefit students. With the professional theatre on the ground floor and the intention for this floor to be a semi-public and professional space, the campus has the potential to become an exciting interface between the Academy and its students, professional companies, and the public.
- The investment in and uptake of staff international mobility opportunities.
- The ethos engendered by LMTA staff and students, acknowledged by industry stakeholders, alumni, and social partners, prioritising the professional advancement, personal development, and wellbeing of students.
- Support for students' mental health with an in-house psychologist at each campus available to all students.
- The profile of the teaching faculty; LMTA's teachers have extensive professional experience across the theatre industry in Lithuania and connect students to professional opportunities and projects.