



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

PHILOSOPHY FIELD OF STUDY

Klaipėda University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no sooner 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 for no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: **Prof. dr. Peter Jonkers**
2. Academic member: **Prof. dr. Michael Brady**
3. Academic member: **Prof. dr. Tomas Kačerauskas**
4. Social partner representative: **Rūta Elijošaitytė-Kaikarė**
5. Student representative: **Carlo Mazzini**

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 16th October, 2025 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 a need for translation during the meeting with the teaching staff, the alumni, employers, and social partners.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Klaipeda University (henceforth: KU) is a state university in Western Lithuania, founded in 1991. It is governed by a Rector, a Council of 9 members, and a Senate of 35 members which includes 7 students. KU has 3 faculties: the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Faculty of Marine Technologies and Natural Sciences, and the Faculty of Health Sciences, and 2 Institutes: the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology, and the Maritime Research Institute. The faculties comprise 17 Departments, 8 research and study centres, 2 museums, and over 60 laboratories. The Botanical Garden, the research vessel *Mintis*, and the sailboat *Brabander*, used for scientific research and training, form the basis for fundamental and applied research and experimental development in the areas of physical, biomedical, technological, social sciences, and humanities. KU implements the State Programme of an Integrated Research, Study, and Business Centre *Marine Valley* for the Development of the Lithuanian Maritime Sector. The University offers all cycles of studies: from Bachelor to Doctoral. It has about 2700 students from Lithuania and foreign countries studying in full-time and part-time studies. In the period of 2020-2024, a total of 108 three-cycle study programmes were taught at KU.

Overview of the study field

The activities of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (henceforth: SHMF) are organised by the Dean, two Vice-Deans, and the Council of the Faculty (17 members, including 2 students). SHMF has 7 departments, 5 centres, and 2 laboratories, and offers 18 BA programmes, 19 MA programmes, as well as a Professional Pedagogy programme (38 degree programmes in total). Postgraduate studies are carried out in Social Sciences and Humanities. Studies are conducted on a full-time basis (full-time, sessional, evening, and distance learning) and on a part-time basis. The SHMF has around 1100 students.

Previous external evaluations

The recommendations of the external evaluation in 2017, and the Programme's responses, were:

- Study aims, outcomes and content:
 - o Recommendation: Add an audit module to the content of the programme to ensure that the title of the programme matches the content.
 - o Response: The programme's subject content is revised. Since 2018, the content of the programme has been updated by 40%. In addition, subject modules focused on the development of practical ethical competences in ethical auditing in the public and private sectors have been added.
- Links between science (art) and study activities
 - o Recommendation: Strengthen interdisciplinary research in the field of *Spiritual Counselling*.
 - o Response: The scientific and academic performance of the university teachers working in the programme has improved. The articles published by the lecturers cover a wider range of topics. These include management, psychology, communication, and sociology.
- Study admission and support

- o Recommendation: The programme is popular among students, they are provided with all kinds of support, and there is informal communication between students and program lecturers.
- o Response: KU improved the conditions for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the study process (the Disability and Inclusion Policy of Klaipėda University was approved in 2024). The department's lecturers continue the tradition of individual collaboration with students.
- Studying, student performance and graduate employment
 - o Recommendation: Graduate employment is good, and the feedback provided to students, which encourages self-assessment of achieved results and further planning of study progress, is sufficient.
 - o Response: the programme's lecturers continued striving to maintain the current quality of the teaching and learning process, and to ensure the process of providing feedback to students.
- Teaching staff
 - o Recommendation: The continuity of the subjects taught in the programme should be ensured after the retirement of many lecturers.
 - o Response: After the retirement of the programme's lecturers who had reached retirement age, four young doctors of science began teaching in the programme. Also, lecturers whose average age is about 50 years have joined the programme.
- Learning facilities and resources
 - o Recommendation: Supplement the existing dominant traditional/classical theological sources with more recent publications.
 - o Response: Library funds with relevant professional ethics and auditing resources needed for PEAE have been updated. Better conditions have been created for students and teachers to use the Library's electronic access to international publications to deepen their study program subjects.
- Study quality management and publicity
 - o Recommendation: Study quality management is appropriate for ensuring study quality.

Response: The department aims to ensure that the quality management and publicity of the study program remain smooth.

Documents and information used in the review

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

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

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

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

- Summary of student evaluations
- SWOT analysis

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Professional Ethics and the Audit of Ethics
State code	6211NX056
Type of study (college/university)	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 1.5 years
Workload in ECTS	90
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	28-05-2015
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
Total:		23

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

Since 2015, the second cycle study programme Professional Ethics and the Audit of Ethics (henceforth: PEAE) has been operating at the Department of Philosophy, Arts and Communication of SHMF. Since the Department works on an interdisciplinary basis, the courses of the PEAE are not only taught by lecturers from the Department of Philosophy, but also from the Department of Psychology, the John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies, the Centre for the Study of Social Change, and the Department of Management.

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

According to SER, 8-13¹ and the SWOT-analysis (Additional Document 1), the need for the programme is based on expectations by public institutions and the programme's social partners as future employers, as well as on student surveys. An analysis of the quality of public services showed the urgent need for a Civil Service Training Strategy, focused on a competency-based human resources management model. One of the priority areas of this strategy is the introduction of a programme of professional ethics. PEAE focuses on training ethics professionals with a broad profile, in line with the civil service training strategy and the need for ethics professionals in Western Lithuania. Currently, no Lithuanian university offers such a study programme.

The main objective of the study programme is to prepare professional ethics experts and ethical auditors, who have a broad range of professional ethical skills and the ethical competence to organise and take part in ethical auditing procedures, and who can respond appropriately to the ethical challenges of contemporary society, identify ethical problems, carry out ethical prevention and decision-making under uncertain conditions, manage complex processes and situations involving knowledge and application of professional ethical standards in the public and private sectors, and formulate conclusions and recommendations. The PEAE aims to ensure that graduates are able to identify professional values in the public sector and to understand the importance of individual professional values and the communication of organisational and professional values, which are important components that need to be implemented in a systematic way, with a focus on the desired results.

According to the data of the High Official Ethics Commission, there are 400 permanent ethics commissions in Lithuania, so the need for professional ethics specialists is real and justified. Graduates of this programme can find employment in the public sector and business structures in the Klaipėda region as ethics committee members and experts, who can advise on ethical issues, organise ethics training, and provide sound advice on ethical audits of business enterprises.

¹ The numbers in the text refer to the numbers of the paragraphs in the SER.

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

SER, 14 summarises the mission of KU as educating humans and intellectual society, fostering the development of educational, cultural, ethical, consultative, and experimental activities, and contributing to the development of humans and intellectual society. SER, 15-17 states that the connection between the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and KU's mission consists of developing, implementing, and monitoring ethical codes and regulations in a society in crisis in pursuit of holistic well-being. PEAE's learning outcomes enable graduates to carry out, individually or collectively, applied research, to research and analyse ethical guidelines, developments and trends in the public and private sectors, to develop and implement a code of professional ethics, to carry out an ethical audit, to use interactive tools, to develop and market service packages, to collaborate in a multicultural environment, and to communicate with different types of clients.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The Panel deems that the study programme, whose aims and learning outcomes are focused on professional or applied ethics, is unique, especially in this part of Lithuania. As the description of the learning outcomes and the intended competencies shows (SER, 13, Table 1), the focus of PEAE is on professional ethics and has an interdisciplinary character, which is realised through the participation of teachers with expertise outside the field of philosophy; finally, the programme succeeds in integrating theory and practice. This is because PEAE aims to be a direct response to the need for professional ethical expertise, expressed by social partners in the Klaipėda region, especially in the fields of economics and social work. The alumni, many of whom are already working in these fields, confirmed that this programme enables them to reflect on the ethical aspects of their professional activities and helps them in their personal development (evidenced by the interviews with the faculty management, the students, and the alumni, and the survey of student feedback, Table 5). Thanks to its close link with social partners and employers, the interdisciplinary character of the programme, and the successful integration of theory and practice (see the interviews with the students and the alumni), the Panel deems the programme to be aligned with the needs of society, especially in this part of Lithuania, and the labour market.

The Panel deems that the aims, learning outcomes, and intended competencies of the programme (see Table 1 and 2), which focus on developing, implementing, and monitoring ethical codes in public and non-public organisations and in society at large, thus fostering holistic well-being, align with the mission of KU, which consists of developing various educational, cultural, ethical, and consultative activities. Hence, the missions of KU and PEAE correspond with each other in providing graduates with the theoretical and professional competencies that are of direct use in a practical field of action, and in undertaking applied research in the graduate's specific field of expertise. However, PEAE's aim to provide students with a research qualification, preparing them for independent academic research (SER, 16f.), corresponds less with KU's focus on education and applied research, apart from the question of whether the programme is capable of realizing this aim (see below, Section 1.2).

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

SER, 8-13, and Tables 1 and 2 detail the aims, learning outcomes, and contents of the programme, and SER, 18-23 describe how they comply with the legal requirements; SER 24-26 give an overview of how the aims and learning outcomes are implemented in the individual modules and how they align with the teaching/learning and the assessment methods; SER, 27 summarises how the curriculum ensures the consistent development of student competencies; SER, 28 gives a succinct description of the opportunities for students to personalize their study programme; and SER, 29-31 give an overview of the rules and procedures in preparation of the MA-thesis.

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

According to SER 9, the main objective of the study programme is to train professional ethics experts and ethical auditors, providing them with a broad range of professional ethical skills and the ethical competence to organise and take part in ethical auditing procedures. The programme PEAE aims to ensure that graduates can identify professional values in the public sector and understand the importance of individual professional values, and are able to share them with professionals and society at large. From the first semester, MA students learn how to formulate scientific problems and select appropriate methods to solve them. The topics of the assignments are designed to enable students to analyse problems in the field of professional ethics and ethical auditing in greater depth and to present the results of their research in a practical way in the lectures. To realize these aims, the design of the study programme is interdisciplinary, comprising not only modules in philosophical ethics, but also in various other disciplines from the humanities, legal studies, and social sciences (Annex 1). Furthermore, the programme comprises two elective modules, to be selected from a total number of four modules. The general aims of the PEAE are specified in the expected learning outcomes and competencies (SER, 13, Table 1), which are claimed to align with the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy (SER, 20), although this claim is not substantiated in the SER. Table 5 (SER, 24) further details the learning outcomes at the level of the individual modules. Table 4 (SER, 23) and Annex 1 demonstrate that the total workload is 90 ECTS (equally divided into 30 ECTS per semester and 6 ECTS per module), including the MA thesis with a workload of 30 ECTS. The volume of contact hours is 18,75% of the student's total workload, while the rest (81,25%) is for individual work. All teachers in the programme PEAE have a PhD and are active researchers (see Annex 3).

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

SER, 24 and Table 5 explain how the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme comply with the academic and professional requirements of the MA type of studies. The main objective of the study programme PEAE is to educate professional ethics experts and auditors, who can manage complex processes and situations involving knowledge and application of professional ethical standards in the public and private sectors. Table 5 demonstrates how the expected outcomes and competencies (SER, 13, Table 1) align with the teaching/learning methods of the individual modules, and how these outcomes and competencies have been implemented in the modules. The guiding idea behind this alignment is that study and research methods lead to the assessment of study achievements, which consists of the completion of intermediate tasks using study and research methods and a final assessment in an examination. In KU's cumulative assessment system, the learning outcomes are assessed by means of mid-term assessments (test, individual work, individual

project, reflection, etc.), and the final grade is a summation of the grades obtained in the mid-term assessments and examinations.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

SER, 27 and Annex 1 detail the composition and coherence of the study programme. The main subjects in the first semester are: Classical Ethical Theories, Modern Christian Ethics, The Ombudsman: The Relationship Between Law and Ethics, Methods of Personal Psychological Cognition and a free elective subject (Business Ethics or Cultural Philosophy). In the second semester, the following subjects are included: Professional and Public Sector Ethics, Simulation Process and New Media Ethics, Ethical Auditing and Consultancy, Research paper (Project of Code of Ethics) and a free elective subject (Creating of an Organisational Culture or Consultation Process). In the third semester, 30 credits are allocated for the Final Master's Thesis. The consistent development of students' competences is ensured by the orderly arrangement of the subjects that are studied in the modules of the programme during all semesters: in the first semester, the subjects that consolidate theoretical foundations and contextual knowledge are studied, in the second semester, applied subjects are studied, and in the third semester, the acquired knowledge is consolidated by the Master's thesis.

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

As SER, 28 and Annex 1 demonstrate, the opportunities for the students to personalise their curriculum are limited to two elective modules in the first and second semester, an Erasmus exchange programme, and the topic of the MA-thesis and the specific research in preparation of the thesis.

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

SER, 29-30 describe the formal procedures and requirements regarding the MA-thesis in general. Criteria for the assessment of the theses, regardless their discipline, are: the relevance of the problems and individual issues examined, the degree of resolution of the aim, objectives and hypotheses (if any), the reliability of the research methods used and the results obtained on the basis of these methods, the validity and independence of the conclusions and recommendations, their theoretical and practical significance, the scientific level of the research carried out, of the results obtained and of the thesis prepared, presentation of the thesis, the reasonableness of the answers to the questions, the accuracy of the thesis, the ability to substantiate the claims theoretically and practically, the ability to debate, the language and style of the work, and the level of technical presentation of the text.

SER, 24 (Table 5) and 31 explain the set-up, supervision, and the criteria for assessing the contents of the MA-thesis in the PEAE programme, in particular. The thesis is based on a framework of applied ethical requirements for ethics auditors in the civil service, the public sector, and business structures. This framework stipulates that the student is expected to analyse the chosen topic, drawing on scientific literature, discuss the framework of social norms and ethical codes, and present research carried out on the topic. The aim of the thesis is to reveal the student's ability to carry out independent research and to assess possible cases of ethical breaches or maladministration in various institutions, bodies, and business structures. The thesis defines the possibilities for improvement of normative ethical and legal acts, assessing the compatibility of ethical principles with the standards

of professional activity and formulates reasonable conclusions. Students are prepared for the writing of their thesis through a research paper in semester 2. The topic of the thesis needs to take into account the aims of the study programme, the proposals of the social partners, the list of recommended scientific research published annually by the Klaipėda City Municipality, and the Department's continuing research theme: applied ethics research. Students writing their final theses are advised not only by their supervisors, but also by lecturers from the Departments of Psychology, Management, the John Paul II Centre for Christian Studies, and the Centre for the Study of Social Change. Annex 2 – with the titles of the theses and the submitted copies of the full text – gives additional information about their compliance with the requirements for the study field.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The Panel checked whether the structure of the PEA study programme indeed complies with the qualitative and quantitative criteria of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy. Starting with the quantitative aspects of the programme, its total size (90 ECTS), division of the workload over three semesters (3 x 30 ECTS), workload of the MA-thesis (30 ECTS), and percentage of contact hours versus individual work (18.75% versus 81.25%) comply with the Descriptor's requirements. The number of elective modules is limited but acceptable given the programme's size and specific character. The programme comprises more than 60 ECTS in philosophy modules, as required by the Descriptor. The Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy stipulates that an MA programme in philosophy aims to train highly qualified philosophy specialists who are prepared to continue their studies at the doctoral level and to carry out research and analytical work in organisations that require a broad general education, deep theoretical training and analytical thinking skills, which enable them to independently formulate and creatively solve theoretical and practical problems in the fields of philosophy, culture, politics and society. The interdisciplinary character of the programme, whose modules are taught by specialists from various disciplines (see Annex 3), facilitates realizing one of the programme's aims, namely, applying ethical insights to various professional domains and issues. Therefore, the PEA programme complies with one of the overall aims and the learning outcomes of an MA programme in philosophy, required by the Descriptor. Yet, the Panel deems that the PEA programme does not comply with other requirements of the Descriptor for the study of philosophy, namely to train highly qualified specialists in philosophy, who are prepared to continue their studies at the doctoral level, even if one takes into account that the programme trains specialists in the field of professional ethics. This is evidenced by the very limited degree of (applied) philosophical knowledge of the MA theses (see below). In summary, to comply with the requirements of the Descriptor in the study field of philosophy, the programme needs a stronger philosophical framework in the field of professional ethics.

The Panel studied Table 5 and the student feedback (Additional Document 2 and the interviews) to check whether the correspondence between intended learning outcomes, teaching/learning methods, and assessment methods at the level of the individual modules is indeed realized. The main objectives of the programme, namely, its interdisciplinarity and the integration of theory and practice by discussing ethical questions in diverse professional contexts, are realized very well thanks to the different fields of academic expertise of the teachers and the interactive character of the classes, enabling students, who come from diverse professional backgrounds, to share their experiences and insights (interviews with the teaching staff and the alumni). The interview with the students and the teachers evidenced that all of them are very involved in the programme. Hence, the Panel deems that the intended learning outcomes align with the teaching/learning methods. In the interviews, the students and alumni indicated that the amount of ECTS of the modules corresponds with their actual workload. Unfortunately, the SER fails to give detailed information

about the methods for assessing the learning outcomes. These methods are included implicitly in the list of teaching/learning methods, but most modules only mention “individual project” and “exam” as assessment methods (Table 5). SER, 25 does not give any specific information about the employed assessment methods either. Moreover, the teaching/learning methods of 8 out of 13 modules consist of “Discussion, interactive lecture, literature analysis, and problem-based learning.” The Panel deems that the lack of diversity of the teaching/learning methods and the lack of detail (and diversity) of the assessment methods need to be addressed by the teaching staff and the programme management. In other words, the Panel does not completely agree with the study programme’s claim of the SWOT-analysis that one of its strengths consists of the coordination between learning objectives and outcomes, and teaching and assessment methods (see Additional Document 1).

The modules introduce a broad range of professional fields, in which questions about applied ethics are at stake, corresponding with the students’ professional backgrounds (SER, 27, Annex 1, interviews with students and alumni). Hence, the Panel deems that the composition and the set-up of the programme ensure the development of this aspect of the students’ competencies. The Panel suggests adding the module on business ethics to the compulsory modules, and including a new module on medical ethics to further enhance the programme’s focus on professional ethics. The teaching staff, students, and alumni also suggested that Programme Management could consider introducing a module on the ethical aspects of artificial intelligence. Yet, the Panel thinks that the philosophical level of the programme does not enough ensure the development of another competency, namely, to prepare students to continue their studies at a doctoral level.

The opportunities for the students to personalize their studies are limited. However, students and alumni did not complain about the small number of elective modules. They also indicated that participating in an Erasmus Exchange Programme at a foreign university is not a real option because of practical reasons (employment, family) that are beyond the study programme’s control (See Additional Document 2, section 2). The Panel welcomes KU’s initiative to prepare and organize blended intensive programmes together with foreign partners, and involve students in them, taking advantage of short-term mobility opportunities. During this programme, physical short-term mobility in a foreign country is combined with a virtual component (Additional Document 2, section 2). At this moment, the only real option for personalization is the topic of the MA thesis, and this is highly valued by the students and the alumni, as evidenced by the interviews.

The procedure for planning, contents, supervision, and assessment of the theses complies with the requirements for the study field. The students commended the teachers for the quality of their supervision work and their accessibility. The Panel studied (the English summaries of) the theses and concludes that their topics align with the interdisciplinary character of the programme and integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of the researched topic. Yet, the theses lack a philosophical framework in applied ethics or other fields of philosophy, which is essential to analyse questions in different professional fields from a philosophical perspective. The interviews with the students and alumni further confirmed the Panel’s impression about the lack of philosophical knowledge. Hence, although the programme PEAE manages to operate successfully in a niche that fulfills a genuine societal need, which is to be appreciated, the Panel deems that the Programme Management needs to address this shortcoming by paying more attention to enhancing the academic philosophical level of the programme, including the MA theses.

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 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Panel commends the programme for its interdisciplinary character and its successful integration of theory and practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Although the PEAE manages to operate successfully in a niche that fulfills a genuine societal need, which is to be appreciated, the Panel deems that the Programme Management needs to pay attention to enhancing the academic philosophical level of the programme, including its MA theses.
2. The Panel deems that the lack of diversity of the teaching/learning methods and the lack of detail (and diversity) of the assessment methods need to be addressed by the teaching staff and the programme management.

For further improvement

1. The Panel recommends restructuring the curriculum to add stronger philosophical framework.

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

SER, 32-44 describes the links between science (art) and study activities. These parts of the SER describe, in turn, evaluate the adequacy of the scientific activities for the philosophical field of research; the link between the content of studies and the latest scientific developments; and an assessment of the opportunities for students to be involved. The Panel will address these in turn below, in relation to the SER and to questions asked during the visit, and meetings with staff and students.

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

The research of the Department of Philosophy, Art History and Communication focuses on topics that are in line with the strategic scientific directions of the University, including issues of welfare, digital literacy, and education; these topics are directly linked with the aims of the study programme. The research seems well supported by the Science and Study Promotion Fund. This has resulted in an increased number of international scientific publications in philosophy which are in English. As the SER notes, the average number of scientific articles that the staff are producing is over 10 per year, which is impressive, as is the student involvement in and publication of their own scientific research. This suggests that the research activities are on a good financial footing, and that the research activities – including participation in international conferences and seminars – is having a positive effect. Staff can also access European Alliance funding. It is difficult to determine at a precise level the quality of the research, since in the most recent MOSTA assessment, philosophy was grouped with theology. The rating of 2 out of 5 might be a concern; however, it is not possible to determine which part of this rating was due to the philosophical contributions. The discussions with senior management, administration, and staff suggested that the research is moving in a positive direction, with Open Access support, additional funding opportunities, increased research collaborations with other institutions in Lithuania, and financial incentives for publications. The staff also reported that their research is centrally integrated in their teaching, and that there are good formal and informal mechanisms to support research. External partners are involved in the alumni network. There is also involvement of external research groups in the country. Overall, the panel thought that the research was at a sufficient level and moving in the right direction.

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

There are good links between the research in the department and the latest developments in science, art, and technology. Staff are active in publishing, attend national and international conferences, and engage in science popularization activities. These elements of research are informed, as the SER notes, by the teaching that staff do, and so there is a two-way process whereby curriculum informs research, and research + feedback then informs teaching and the curriculum. There is a close link between the interests of students – notably in applied areas – and the teaching

specialisms of staff. Staff reported good feedback mechanisms with students, and that their interests also help to shape the curriculum.

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

There are significant opportunities for students to engage in research, both as described in the SER, 39-42, and in the Panel’s discussions with students and staff during the visit. The programme is the central place where students develop their scientific research, but they are also encouraged by the KU science fund to support research, to participate in conferences and annual competitions showcasing research, be involved in the ERASMUS programme. Especially noteworthy is the faculty organised annual student conference which supports presentations and publications. As Table 7 indicates, the numbers of students involved are low: 2 in 2023, 1 in 2024. Nevertheless, there is a lot of activity here and opportunities for student involvement.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The Panel discussed this area in great detail, and asked detailed questions of faculty administration, staff, and students. There is, as noted, an increased engagement with and support for research activities, and the research quality is, as a result, moving in the right direction. We thought that this trajectory of research outweighed, on the whole, the MOSTA assessment of 2, which would represent satisfactory rather than good. We could not judge, on this basis, that the philosophical research was rated as 2, given the presence of theology in the assessment. We did note that the increased numbers of international publications, attendance at conferences, and engagement in public activities were positive; and there is institutional and financial support for this activity. We would wish to see further improvements here, with a view to a higher MOSTA rating at the next round. But we were inclined, after much discussion, to give the department the benefit of the doubt in this area.

Student numbers engaging with research are relatively low. But there are good opportunities for involvement, as both staff and students report, and as the SER indicates. Feedback mechanisms and pathways between research and curriculum are also good. As a result, the Panel has some confidence that things are moving in the right direction. But the Panel would also strongly recommend that continued efforts at improving research quality among staff and students are made.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	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
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Staff are happy and feel supported in their research activities in a number of ways. There is an emphasis on improving research outputs through these pathways.
2. There are good opportunities for students to be involved in research through conferences, competitions, and the KU fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Research quality is a concern, given the MOSTA rating of 2, albeit for an assessment that involved theology. There needs to be a continuous focus on improving research quality, with a view to Philosophy being assessed by MOSTA at 3. This means that Philosophy needs to be a sufficient size for a separate assessment, and so not submitted together with Theology.

For further improvement

1. There are opportunities for work-in-progress sessions, research workshops with other Philosophy departments in Lithuania, that could strengthen research. The Society for Philosophers this year could be a model. These should be considered and an improved research culture in the unit put in place.
2. More students ought to be involved in scientific activities. Consider workshops and conferences that involve collaboration with other students at this level in the country.
3. Advertise research strengths more broadly and make more of what is distinctive about research in the department.

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

Admission to the PEAE MA is via Lithuania's LAMABPO system; eligibility requires a bachelor's (or professional bachelor's) plus 6 ECTS in philosophy/psychology, and selection uses a competitive score, with a minimum score of 6; 2022–2024 intakes filled limited state-funded places and admitted averages stayed over 8. Academic recognition is regulated and KU also recognises non-formal/informal learning through a two-commission process. Financial/social support includes Senate/Faculty/incentives, social and one-off scholarships; targeted payments and individualised arrangements are in place for students with disabilities under the University's Disability and Inclusion Policy.

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

Admission is run via the national LAMABPO system with clearly published rules and a fixed, public competitive-score formula (GPA 60% + thesis/exam 40% + bonus for peer-reviewed publications), and a minimum eligibility threshold of 6 points, ensuring transparent and rule-bound selection.

Admission scores indicate consistently strong cohorts: in 2022–2024, admitted averages were 9.12, 8.79, and 8.75 (highest 9.77/9.07/9.46; lowest 7.97/8.36/7.47), reflecting selectivity above the minimum. State-funded places (4 in 2022; 7 in 2023; 6 in 2024) were filled each year; class sizes have been relatively small but consistent (6–8 students per year), which aligns with the programme's seminar-based pedagogical model and allows for close supervision and interaction between students and teachers.

Dropout rates are low. When withdrawals occur, they are mainly linked to individual circumstances rather than programme-related causes, as confirmed during the site visit discussions with staff and students.

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

KU has formal, published procedures for crediting study results gained at other HEIs, approved by the Senate and described in the Study Regulations and a dedicated Senate resolution on partial-study crediting.

Credits from foreign HEIs are recognised if the institution is legally recognised in its home country; decisions are taken by the Head of Department, coordinated with the Vice-Dean for Studies, and approved by the Dean. KU applies ECTS to ensure transparent comparison and recognition of studies completed abroad.

For Erasmus+ periods, a Learning Agreement is signed before departure confirming that successfully achieved credits will be recognised; after mobility, recognised subjects are entered in the KU Academic Information System and listed (in LT/EN, with host-institution indicated) in the Diploma Supplement.

KU also operates a structured recognition of a prior learning route for non-formal/informal learning. Evidence is assessed by two commissions which may use interview, portfolio analysis, and real/simulated task evaluation to reach a decision.

In practice, the programme reported no recent cases of foreign students needing credit transfer (2022–2024).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

Admission is transparent and consistently applied via the national LAMABPO system and a public scoring formula, with admitted averages remaining high; cohorts are small and state-funded places are filled. Dropout is low and monitored with exit-interview follow-up. Academic and information support (Moodle, AIS) and library access (incl. remote databases) are adequate; financial, social, and wellbeing supports are in place.

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

KU ensures structured Erasmus+ mobility for PEAE students via the “Mobility Online” system and selection by an Erasmus+ Committee using transparent criteria (academic average, B2 language proficiency, motivation, host-fit, recommendation, and previous mobility with priority to first-time/full-time students). Credit recognition after mobility is secured through pre-agreed Learning Agreements and formal transcription into AIS and the Diploma Supplement. Actual mobility uptake has recently been low (e.g., one outgoing in 2022; no incomings), with language confidence (preference for Lithuanian despite a B2 English requirement) noted as a factor; since 2024, the programme has introduced Blended Intensive Programmes to offer shorter, more flexible options, and two current students intend to participate. Student support is broad: merit-based and one-off scholarships (Senate/Faculty/incentive), social scholarships under national rules, State Study Fund loans (tuition/living/partial studies), tuition-fee reductions and dormitory discounts; psychological counselling (named psychologist), spiritual care (academic pastoral) and career services (CV/cover letter, interview preparation) are available. Inclusion is formalised through KU’s Disability and Inclusion Policy (29 Nov 2024), enabling individualised arrangements (e.g., ground-floor timetabling, adapted tasks and deadlines). Information and counselling are systematic: university/faculty welcome events and introductory lectures identify key contacts; at the first class, each course provides its subject programme (topics, independent tasks, literature, assessment, and deadlines). Continuous counselling is provided through weekly consultation hours and email; learning information and materials are accessible on Moodle/VMA and AIS. Students praised clear communication, timely feedback, and easy access to lecturers during the site visit.

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

KU provides structured Erasmus+ mobility for PEAE students: applications are submitted via the “Mobility Online” system to the International Relations Office; selection is carried out by an Erasmus+ Committee using transparent criteria (academic average, foreign-language proficiency at B2, motivation, suitability of the host institution, recommendation, and previous mobility, with priority to first-time and full-time students).

Recognition of credits after mobility is guaranteed through pre-agreed Learning Agreements and formalised transcription into KU's AIS and the Diploma Supplement.

Actual uptake has been low in recent years (one outgoing in 2022; no incomings). During the site visit, it was noticeable that language factors also play a role: while B2 English is required for mobility, some students feel more confident studying in Lithuanian.

Since 2024, the programme has begun to use Blended Intensive Programmes (BIP) to enable shorter, more flexible mobility formats (virtual component plus a short physical stay), and two students from the current cohort indicated intention to participate.

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

Financial support comprises merit-based (Senate/Faculty/incentive) and one-off scholarships, social scholarships under national criteria, plus State Study Fund loans (tuition/living/partial studies). Tuition-fee reductions and dormitory discounts are also available. Psychological and personal support is provided through individual counselling (named psychologist) and spiritual care (academic pastoral), while career services offer CV/cover-letter guidance and interview preparation. Inclusion measures are formalised: KU's Disability and Inclusion Policy (29 Nov 2024) enables individualised study arrangements; when needed, classes can be timetabled on ground floors and tasks/timings adapted.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

At the start of studies, students attend university-wide welcome events and faculty introductory lectures where they meet key staff (dean's team, study specialists, programme head) and are told who to contact for what; in the first lecture of each course, lecturers present the subject programme (topics, independent tasks, literature, assessment methods and deadlines). Continuous counselling is available throughout the programme: lecturers offer weekly consultation hours and email support, refer students to the appropriate services when needed, and all study information and materials are accessible via the KU virtual platform (Moodle/VMA) and AIS. During the site visit students praised the clear communication, timely feedback, and ease of contacting lecturers.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Erasmus+ mobility is procedurally strong (transparent selection, Learning Agreements, reliable credit recognition), yet participation remains very low. The profile of many students (mid-career, employed, family commitments) and language confidence issues reduce feasibility of semester-long stays. The introduction of Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) directly targets these constraints and is already generating interest. To convert this into sustained uptake, the programme would benefit from: (i) embedding short "mobility windows" into the curriculum calendar; (ii) expanding short-term formats (BIPs, staff-led study visits, micro-mobility) aligned with course assessments; (iii) offering targeted language scaffolding (pre-departure English refreshers and host-language basics); and (iv) tailored outreach that frames mobility as career-relevant for working students. Beyond mobility, academic and personal support is coherent and responsive. Students report timely feedback and easy lecturer access; services for psychological, spiritual, and career guidance are visible and usable; and funding instruments (merit/social scholarships, loans, fee/dormitory reductions) help mitigate financial barriers. Inclusion arrangements under the 29 Nov 2024 policy are in place and used pragmatically (e.g., timetable/location adaptations).

Conclusion

The evaluation point is met. KU offers relevant, adequately resourced, and well-signposted support that students perceive as accessible and effective, enabling steady learning progress. The principal enhancement need is mobilising participation in international experiences: build on BIPs and introduce structured mobility windows, micro-mobility, and targeted language support, while monitoring outcomes.

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
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Panel commends the programme for the high level of lecturer availability and responsiveness. Students consistently reported that academic staff are approachable, provide timely feedback, and offer individual support when needed, which contributes strongly to a positive learning environment and a sense of being well guided throughout the studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcoming

None

For further improvement

1. Try to further encourage mobility participation by expanding short-term and blended options (such as BIPs and COIL) and offering light language support before departure.
2. The Panel recommends the Programme Management does not for the time being implement its idea of introducing courses in English to attract foreign (Erasmus+) students, since the proficiency in English of most students does not reach the minimum B2-requirement, and that of the teachers does not reach the minimum C1-requirement.

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

SER, 27 explains the form of study (full-time, a sessional study schedule), teaching model (hybrid) and tools (Moodle platform, Academic Information System). In addition, various methods of study are listed. SER, 28 shows the approach to the students with special needs.

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

As explained in SER, 27, the study programme is carried out in a full-time form of study, and a sessional study schedule is applied. A hybrid model of teaching is used when a part of the theoretical hours of contact work is carried out remotely. The academic classes are held in periodic sessions, 4 times a year, at the time specified in the study calendar. The duration of the session depends on the number of subjects studied but is not longer than 2 weeks. According to SER, 27, studies are carried out using various methods, including lectures, discussions, reflections, individual and group work, consultations, practical observation and interview tasks, analyses of scientific sources and data, modelling, independent work, viewing and analysis of video material, etc. The Moodle platform is used in the study process. SER, 27 states that the University also uses the Academic Information System, which provides and makes available to each student information about study programmes and individual subjects.

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

According to SER, 28, students may obtain permission from the dean of the faculty to attend classes freely. Students who are unable to continue their studies due to illness, pregnancy, or childcare leave may temporarily discontinue their studies (academic leave may be granted) for up to one year or a longer period provided for in the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. Furthermore, students are provided with the opportunity to take exams individually. SER, 28 makes the case that low-income students can reduce their tuition fees, social scholarships are awarded, and discounts are applied in the dormitory. If there are disabled people in the group, lectures are organized on the first floors of buildings.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

In general, the Panel appreciates the flexible organization of the study process. Online and hybrid teaching is available. Moreover, small student groups enable the successful implementation of an individualized study model. However, the description of teaching and learning is very laconic in SER. For example, there is no information about developed research skills, thus confirming the Panel's impressions from Area 1. On the other hand, there are repetitions, e.g. about distance learning. The Panel confirms that the study form in periodic sessions and a hybrid form of teaching is student-centred and satisfy the needs of students. During the meeting, students and graduates confirmed that the Moodle platform is used and various teaching methods are applied.

The administration welcomes feedback from students. The research results are published, and reports are posted on the faculty's website.

After meeting with students and graduates, the Panel confirms an individual and flexible approach to the students with special needs. The system of students' financial support works well. However, the Panel noted that the building is not suitable for disabled people.

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

SER, 28 maintains that the monitoring of the learning process and feedback is well organized and systematic. According to SER, 29, the employment of graduates is very good. It is noted that graduates are working in their field. SER, 29 maintains that both legal acts and practical measures at the KU ensure academic honesty. SER (ibid) states that there have been no cases of intolerance and discrimination during the last 3 years. Finally, SER, 29 maintains that the KU has good procedures for submitting and processing appeals.

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

According to SER, 28, the procedure for the quality, organization, data analysis, availability, use and publication of KU student feedback surveys on study programmes, teaching of study subjects, organization of the study process, and assessment of student competencies is established by the Description of the Procedure for Organizing Study Feedback at the KU. The feedback is anonymous, ensured electronically or by submitting a written questionnaire. Student surveys are organized by the faculty and carried out by employees authorized by the dean of the faculty to ensure an effective study progress monitoring system. The analysis of the feedback results is carried out after each semester in the Department implementing the study programme (SER, 28).

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

According to SER, 29, the career monitoring of graduates has been organized and carried out by the Study Office since 2024. It is stated (ibid) that 21 graduates (2022 – 6; 2023 – 9; 2024 – 6) are successfully working in their professional fields in the analysed period of 2022–2024. 10 graduates work in budgetary institutions of various social and health services. 7 graduates work in the public sector of educational institutions. 3 graduates work in private capital institutions, and 1 graduate is a freelancer. Most graduates work in the Klaipėda region, whilst a smaller part work in other regions of Lithuania (SER, 29).

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

SER, 29 maintains that the assessment of a student's knowledge, abilities and skills is fair, honest, impartial, and aligned with the objectives of the course being taught. Students are guided by the principle of academic honesty in the study process. SER, 29 mentions also the threats to academic honesty: copying, plagiarism, and violation of the guidelines for the use of AI. The principles and measures for ensuring academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination are defined in the Study

Regulations (2024 version, Chapter V, paragraph 51), and other documents. SER, 29 states that the students do not complain about a lack of integrity, tolerance or non-discrimination. According to SER, 29, the General Requirements for Independent Written Works of Klaipėda University Students (2020) stipulates the principle of academic honesty. In this document, the students are encouraged to formulate their scientific ideas independently, to gain knowledge not only theories that support their idea but also opposing theories, to make references, to comply with citation requirements, and not to falsify data. Finally, the authenticity of written works is checked in the information system of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library Oxsico and the Turnitin tool integrated into the KU VMA for checking the correspondence of written works (SER, 29). SER, 29 states that there have been no cases of violation of the principles of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination in the PEAE study programme over the past 3 years of study.

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

According to SER, 29, the KU Study Regulations provide an appeal procedure when students disagree with the assessment of an exam or thesis project, or when a student believes that he or she has been unlawfully denied the opportunity to defend his or her thesis. In such cases, the student may apply to the Head of the Department (SER, 29). Those who disagree with the exam assessment have the right to appeal within two days. The Head of the Department notifies the student of the answer within three working days from the date of receipt of the appeal. SER, 29 states that there have been no appeals in the PEAE study programme over the past 3 years of study.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

After meeting with different groups of the KU, the Panel confirms that the learning process is being monitored in different levels. However, SER does not explain some aspects of monitoring, e.g. students' drop-out. The Panel deems that a systematic monitoring of the study process should include also an action plan for drop-out prevention.

The Panel appreciates very good employment of graduates in the field of applied ethics. The fact that most graduates are working in both the public and private sectors, shows that the programme meets the needs of the regional labour market. It is laudable that the university operates on a regional basis since students come from the region and most often stay there with the knowledge they have acquired. Students work in a wide variety of places – in schools, healthcare institutions, and managerial positions. The studies allow them to apply the acquired knowledge in practice. It is noteworthy that students come from very different backgrounds. However, the focus is only on the practical application of studies, so there is little philosophical expertise among the students and graduates.

The Panel appreciates that SER discusses the principles of honesty, including in cases of AI. Indeed, the legal documents at the KU encourage honest studies. However, the aspects of academic integrity are not enough discussed in SER. The Panel did not face any cases of intolerance or discrimination during the meeting with various groups of the KU.

The Panel confirms that the KU has transparent procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints. However, the fact that there was no case of appeals during the last period can indicate that the students only use this procedure as a final resort.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 4	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
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Flexible organization of the study process and small student groups enable the successful implementation of an individualized study model.
2. The employment of graduates is very good; it shows that the programme meets the needs of the regional labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The Programme Management is recommended to consider more systematic monitoring of the study process and include an action plan for dropout prevention.
2. The Programme Management is recommended to consider measures for better accessibility for disabled people.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

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

SER, 80-88 describes the teaching staff in the field study programme. There is a focus on three elements of assessment – as detailed below – and one table, concerning mobility of staff. During the meeting with the staff, the Panel asked a range of questions; the Panel also got feedback about teaching staff from students and external partners.

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

There are 11 lecturers on the programme, with four professors, and all have the relevant qualifications. This balance of seniority seems about right, and is consistent with similarly-sized institutions internationally. Additionally, there are eight lecturers working on the programme: two from John Paul II Christian Studies Centre, five from the Department of Management, and one from the Department of Psychology. This is a good mix of disciplinary expertise, and one that seems well fitted to the range of courses taught and the interests of students taking the programme. Interdisciplinarity is a valuable thing in a programme such as this. Most staff have very significant teaching experience. Student-staff ratio is very good: 11 lecturers (who are core on the programme) for student cohorts ranging from 6 to 9 in the last few years. So this is better than one-to-one in terms of a ratio. As far as the Panel can tell, staff turnover is not a problem.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The study programme is very good in terms of the numbers, experience, range of interests, and balance of staff. Student-staff ratio is very good indeed – in fact, far better than nearly all other departments internationally, although this is in part a function of relatively low student numbers. The staff is sufficient, therefore, to achieve learning outcomes.

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

SER, 85 and Table 12 address staff mobility, while SER 86-88 describes staff development. These items were also discussed in the session with staff.

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

As the SER notes, staff have two opportunities per year to apply for training and mobility on the Erasmus+ programme. It is encouraging to see that the vast majority of those who apply receive support for mobility, and there is a good range of participating countries and departments that staff at KU can visit. Six members of staff were successful in their application to the programme in 2024,

which is an increase on previous years, and suggests a positive upward trajectory. One possible downside is that there were no visiting lecturers during this time, which is something that the administration and staff might want to discuss, and think about how to improve this in the coming years.

5.2.2 Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

There are a number of opportunities for staff development, including the provision of five days annually for staff to improve qualifications, a sabbatical leave scheme every five years, support for participation in international scientific events and conferences, and the Science and Studies Promotion Fund. Staff reported many opportunities for upskilling, including courses in AI Ethics and other fields where applied ethics is relevant. It is impressive that the institution also has annual qualification improvement plans for staff to prepare and discuss. As the SER notes, all staff have improved their qualifications in the two years leading up to the assessment, so this activity is having a very positive impact.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

Staff are well-qualified, well-supported, and are improving their qualifications year-on-year in a range of areas. Staff commented in their meeting with the Panel that there is an ‘open-questions culture’ in staff, and that this is valuable with students as well. There are good contacts with what is happening elsewhere in Lithuania when it comes to staff qualifications, good disciplinary connections, and – in part because of the relatively small size of the department – communications with administration are also good. Quality management and communication seem very good, and staff see the value of what they are teaching, and speak positively about the levels of institutional support. In total, then – from the standpoints of staff numbers, qualifications, support, mobility, and skills development – this represents a very positive picture of the programme.

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
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Student-staff ratio is very good.
2. Support for staff mobility and career development is very good. Both are examples of good practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. Try to think of how to make KU more attractive to visiting lecturers.
2. Try to think of increasing student numbers, perhaps by working with alumni and social partners to engage with potential students more widely.

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

The PEAE MA is delivered at KU's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, which has 29 equipped auditoria (incl. two large rooms set up for online teaching) and access to the Aula Magna complex with two 250-seat halls and a 100-seat teleconference room; since 2024, the campus also includes an EU-CONEXUS co-working space with individual and group areas and video-conferencing equipment. The main MA classes run in renovated rooms 204/201/106. All teaching spaces have internet and fixed multimedia; four rooms have interactive boards; there are computer labs (14 and 8 workstations), campus Wi-Fi/Eduroam. Library provision combines physical and e-resources.

The SHMF library (353 m²) offers a reading room (33 seats, 10 PC-equipped), a group room, self-service loans/returns, printing, and extended hours in exam periods; across KU library units, there are 79 reading places (18 computerised). In 2022–2024, the programme collection added 47 titles (80 copies). KU subscribes to 29 licensed databases (e-journals, e-books, etc.), accessible on-site and remotely via EZproxy; major resources include Web of Science/Clarivate, Scopus (incl. Scopus AI), EBSCO, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, and plagiarism-checking systems Turnitin/Oxsico; interlibrary loan is available. Subscriptions are supported through national consortia and research-council funding.

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

Physical facilities. The programme is delivered in SHMF premises with 29 equipped auditoria, fixed multimedia in all rooms, several interactive-board classrooms, computer labs (14- and 8-seat), campus Wi-Fi/Eduroam, plus access to Aula Magna (two 250-seat halls and a 100-seat teleconference room). Core MA rooms (204/201/106) were recently renovated and re-equipped; since 2024, students also use the EU-CONEXUS co-working space with video-conferencing and group/individual areas. Students have the SHMF library (353 m²; 33-seat reading room with 10 PCs; group room; self-service loans; extended exam-period hours) and 79 reading places across KU libraries; 29 licensed databases (e-journals, e-books) are available on-site and remotely via EZproxy, with interlibrary loan. In 2022–2024, the programme collection added 47 titles / 80 copies; VLE Moodle and AIS support continuous access to materials, schedules, and assessment information. Facilities were upgraded in 2021–2023 with a €1,000,000 investment (classrooms, furniture, IT); databases are financed through national consortia and Research Council/Ministry support, and the library maintains annual acquisition budgets. The review team notes limited physical accessibility in parts of the building, as several classrooms can only be reached by stairs; this may hinder full inclusion for students with mobility impairments.

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

Renovation and upgrading are planned and implemented on a rolling basis. In 2021–2023 the Faculty underwent a major refurbishment (classrooms, furniture, IT) funded with €1,000,000; the

SER states that material resources are renewed periodically with annual faculty funds, and that departments are continuously informed about new publications and catalogues to guide acquisitions.

The library follows an annual, demand-led acquisition process (department heads collect needs from lecturers; orders placed each year) and sustained database subscriptions (most via the national consortium; RCL/Ministry support), including remote EZproxy access.

Overall, the SER evidences systematic, year-on-year planning and upgrades across facilities, digital platforms, and information resources.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Facilities and information resources adequately support the programme’s learning outcomes. Teaching rooms are equipped with fixed multimedia, Wi-Fi/Eduroam, some interactive boards, and computer labs; students also access the Aula Magna complex and the new EU-CONEXUS co-working space (2024). Ongoing investment is evidenced by the 2021–2023 refurbishment (€1,000,000) and a stated policy of annual renewal of material resources. Library provision is solid: SHMF library with study places/PCs, interlibrary loan, and 29 licensed databases (remote access via EZproxy), alongside Moodle (VLE) and AIS for continuous study information and assessment. However, the review notes a shortcoming in physical accessibility: some teaching spaces are on upper floors reachable only by stairs, which may hinder full access for students with reduced mobility. All in all, the programme meets the requirements, although some improvements in the material infrastructure are recommended. KU provides adequate and sufficient facilities, informational and financial resources, and there is evidence of continuous planning and upgrading. The main improvement needed is to address stair-only access to certain teaching spaces to ensure consistent physical accessibility across the learning environment.

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
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

None

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Some improvements in the material infrastructure are needed, especially regarding the physical accessibility of teaching spaces, ensuring that all core learning environments can be used by students with reduced mobility.

For further improvement

None

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

As described in the SER, the Department of Philosophy, Art Studies, and Communication at Klaipėda University has a Committee on the Study Areas of the Humanities which evaluates the study process of the programme, makes proposals not only to the Faculty Council, but also to the Department regarding the quality assurance of the programme implementation, reviews the study outcomes, programme content, sequence of subject teaching, requirements for students' independent work, etc. The Department receives, collects, and analyses information on the quality of studies, and makes proposals regarding the quality assurance of the programme's implementation. The need for the second cycle study programme Professional Ethics and the Audit of Ethics is based on expectations by public institutions and the programme's social partners as future employers, as well as student surveys.

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The SER 111 states that the Department, after the international self-evaluations that took place in 2017, improved the programme according to the recommendations of experts. The Department developed and implemented improvement plans, which are approved by the Committee on Humanities Study Fields and the Faculty Council.

However, from its meetings, the Panel concludes that the programme indeed meets practical expectations by employers and alumni and students, but does not fully meet the requirements of the Philosophy programme (see also Area 1). During the panel meetings, the Panel heard that this programme is very specialized. It includes only a few philosophy courses, most of the content consists of various interdisciplinary subjects that are useful in the workplace, such as law, economics, and management. The administration states that the program offers a broad and diverse perspective, but they also acknowledge that this is both a strength and a weakness of the programme.

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

From the panel meetings, the Panel concludes that the employers are keenly aware of the need of such a programme: one of the motivations for establishing these studies is that organizations and institutions have recently been looking for ethics specialists, as there is a national-level requirement to have such a specialist. Cultural, societally-oriented, and NGO institutions need these specialists. The programme's content is developed with the contribution of both students and social partners. From the meetings with administration, teachers, and students, the Panel concludes that the relationship between the administration, students, and alumni is strong and mutual.

As stated in SER no 10, the curriculum in PEAE is designed to provide future professionals with the necessary knowledge and practical and professional skills. From the very first semester, MA students learn how to formulate scientific problems and select appropriate methods to solve them.

However, in the discussions, it appeared that the knowledge gained is more practical than theoretical, and stakeholders value the practical level of studies.

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

As stated in SER, 31, the programme's subject content has been revised, thereby following one of the recommendations of the previous external evaluation. Since 2018, the content of the programme has been updated by 40%. This was reported and confirmed in meetings with teachers and administration. Students, alumni, and employers also agree on changes to the programme which have occurred mostly as a result of their feedback. This shows that students are well informed about changes in the programme.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

As SER, 107f. shows, KU systematically collects information about the programme's quality, thereby following the Quality Management System. The quality assurance of the programme under review is collected by the Committee of Humanities Study Fields, in which students are represented. Student surveys are conducted by this Committee, and their results are analysed and made public to all stakeholders on the KU intranet and the website (SER, 108). Besides collecting the formal feedback from the students, the students told the Panel that informal mentorship is also important to them, including shared trips and celebrations. They state that they receive this from the University.

During the meeting with students, they also mentioned that the University regularly asks how the programme can be improved, and what additional elements are needed. Students feel that they are heard if they want to say something.

For lecturers, insights from the students are both necessary and welcome. There are feedback meetings after each course, and students feel that the advice provided is acknowledged and that they are listened to.

Hence, it is no surprise that student feedback on this programme is highly positive. Students highlight the program's practicality and applicability in the workplace. Although there is no continuity into a doctoral programme, students felt that they gain as much content as they need. They also emphasize the close relationships with both the lecturers and their fellow students.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The administration, teachers, students, and alumni claim that the programme has been created together, and feedback is heard, and the Panel can confirm that this aim is fully met after reading the SER and having spoken with the students. Students affirm that the programme offered by Klaipėda University is truly distinctive due to its practical nature. During the meetings with students and alumni, the Panel received strong support for this programme. Students work in a wide range of fields, including schools, healthcare institutions, and managerial positions. The knowledge they acquire allows them to apply it in practice. They regard the programme as important, and their opinion is that the administration listens to their proposals for improving the programme. Students are evaluated, and their feedback is encouraged.

Students and alumni believe that the study load is sufficient and that there is enough information. However, they also agree that this programme is more focused on psychology than philosophy, at the same time, the interviews did not suggest that there is a real need, from the student perspective, to give the programme a stronger philosophical focus. Some students have the impression that the programme lacks responsiveness to contemporary problems and challenges; for example, courses could include not only medical or educational topics, but also AI ethics. The Panel was unable to find out whether this impression was shared by the majority of the 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
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The PEAE programme is being developed vertically and taking into account the opinions of different stakeholders.
2. The improvement of the programme is greatly influenced by organizations and institutions, which are looking for ethics specialists, as there is a national-level requirement to have such specialists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The programme management is recommended to examine whether the programme's responsiveness to contemporary problems and challenges could be improved, e.g. in the field of AI ethics.
2. KU could think about how to promote their programme more than regionally, to invite students not only from the Klaipėda region but also from more distant cities.

V. SUMMARY

The Panel wishes to thank KU for organising the site visit and for the engagement of all stakeholders during the meetings. This summary addresses the individual areas, first highlighting the positive aspects of the programme under review, followed by identifying areas where there is room for improvement.

- Area 1

Thanks to its close link with social partners and employers, its interdisciplinary character, and the integration of theory and practice, the programme is unique and aligns with the needs of society and the labour market, especially in this part of Lithuania. The aims of the programme also align with the mission of KU, namely to provide graduates with the theoretical and professional competencies that are of direct use in a practical field of action. The interdisciplinary character of the programme, whose modules are taught by specialists from various disciplines, facilitates applying ethical insights to various professional domains and issues. The students and teachers are very involved in the programme. To facilitate the students' opportunities to personalise their studies, the Panel welcomes KU's initiative to prepare and organize blended intensive programmes together with foreign partners. The procedure for planning, contents, supervision, and assessment of the MA theses complies with the requirements for the study field. The students commended the teachers for the quality of their supervision work and their accessibility.

The most important area for improvement, which occurs as a shortcoming in various sections of this report, is that the programme urgently needs a stronger academic philosophical framework in professional ethics to comply with the requirements of an MA programme in philosophy. Furthermore, the Panel deems that the lack of diversity of the teaching/learning methods and the lack of diversity of the assessment methods need to be addressed.

- Area 2

The programme offers good opportunities for students' involvement in research. Feedback mechanisms and pathways between research and curriculum are also good. The Panel notes that the increased numbers of international publications, attendance at conferences, and engagement in public activities are positive, and that there is institutional and financial support for this activity.

There needs to be a continuous focus on improving research quality. There are opportunities for work-in-progress sessions, research workshops with other Philosophy departments in Lithuania. More students ought to be involved in scientific activities.

- Area 3

Admission is transparent and consistently applied via national systems. Dropout is low and monitored with exit-interview follow-up. Academic and information support and library access are adequate; financial, social, and wellbeing supports are in place. Opportunities for Erasmus+ mobility are in place and recognition is ensured through Learning Agreements. Students are introduced to programme requirements at the start of the year. Teachers are highly accessible and responsive.

The Panel recommends that the programme explore ways to enhance student participation in Erasmus exchange programmes. It also recommends improving the students' and teachers' proficiency in English to a B2 level (for students) and a C1 level (for teachers).

- Area 4

The programme has a flexible organization of the study process. The study form in periodic sessions and a hybrid form of teaching is student-centred and satisfy the needs of students. The programme offers an individual approach to the students with special needs. The system of students' financial support works well. The KU has transparent procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints.

The Programme Management is recommended to consider more systematic monitoring of the study process and include an action plan for dropout prevention.

- Area 5

The student-staff ratio of the programme is very good. Staff are well-qualified, well-supported, and are improving their qualifications year-on-year in a range of areas. The programme benefits from an 'open-questions culture' in staff, and communications with administration are also good.

- Area 6

Facilities and information resources meet the requirements. KU provides sufficient facilities, informational and financial resources, and there is evidence of continuous planning and upgrading.

The main improvement needed is to address stair-only access to certain teaching spaces to ensure consistent physical accessibility across the learning environment.

- Area 7

Students and alumni strongly support this programme, and the administration listens to their proposals for improving the programme. Moreover, they confirmed that they receive enough information from the programme management.

Students have the impression that the university lacks responsiveness to contemporary problems and challenges; for example, courses could include not only medical or educational topics, but also AI ethics. The Panel recommends that the programme pay attention to this concern.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE