



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

PHILOSOPHY FIELD OF STUDY

Vilnius University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Peter Jonkers (signature)
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

SKVC coordinator: Radvilė Blažaitytė

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: **Prof. 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 15th of 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 no need for translation, and the meetings were conducted in English.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Vilnius University (henceforth: VU) was founded in 1579 and functions as a public institution. Its governing bodies comprise *the Senate, the Council, and the Rector*. VU has 15 core academic units (henceforth: CAU) (11 faculties, 1 institute, 1 centre, 1 academy and 1 business school) and 12 core non-academic units. The CAUs communicate and cooperate to conduct research and teaching in the framework of implementing the University's Strategic Plan. According to the data of October 1, 2023, there were 5466 employees at the University (of which 2602 were teaching staff, 805 were research staff, and 2059 were non-academic staff); the University had 24134 students (of which 2083 were foreign nationals who studied in full-time study programmes).

The University offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies in the fields of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medical and healthcare sciences, and technological sciences. It offers more than 90 bachelor's and integrated study programmes as well as 110 master's and professional studies (pedagogical) programmes. Doctoral students can choose among nearly 30 research fields, while resident students can choose from more than 60 residency study programmes. The university offers studies in 12 study field groups and 60 study fields (SER, 7f.).

Overview of the study field

The Faculty of Philosophy, which is the CAU that operate studies in the field, comprises 5 institutes: Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies, Institute of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Institute of Education Sciences, and Institute of Sociology and Social Work; 10 departments: Department of History of Philosophy and Analytic Philosophy, Department for Continental Philosophy and Religious Studies, Department of Social and Political Philosophy, Department of Health Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, Department of Sociology, Department of Criminology, Department of Social Work and Social Welfare, Department of Social Policy, Department of Theory and Culture of Education; 11 centres: Centre for Indian Studies, Levin Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, Centre for Research in Organisational Psychology, Centre for Psychotraumatology, Centre for Research in Developmental Psychopathology, Centre for Research in Suicidology, Centre for Research in Child Development and Psychoeducation, Centre for Research in the Psychology of Law, Centre for Disability Studies, Teaching Competence and Professional Development Centre, Education Policy Centre; and 2 laboratories: Laboratory of Psychophysiology and Cognitive Psychology, Laboratory of Applied Psychology, that conduct research and offer studies in their respective areas (SER, 8).

The main research fields in the field of philosophy include: The history and present of philosophy: fundamental methodological controversies; Contemporary studies of the continental philosophical tradition and religion; Philosophical foundations of the natural and social sciences: analysis of contradictions in natural and social studies; and Society, community, and the individual: changes in quality of life and values.

Currently, the CAU delivering studies in the field has 417 teaching, research, and administrative staff, (85 professors and chief research staff, 107 associate professors and senior research staff, 83 assistants and research staff, 53 junior assistant and junior research staff, 37 lecturers, 52 administrative staff); at present there are 2308 students. In the evaluated study field of philosophy, bachelor and master study programmes are operated (SER, 9).

Doctoral studies of philosophy are also operated. In general, these studies are not joint with other institutions, but in some cases the PhD in Philosophy is jointly conducted with another higher education institutions, e.g. the University of Turin (Italy), by means of an agreement.

In 2023, 35 state-funded and 10 non-state-funded students were enrolled in the BA study programme of philosophy, and 8 state-funded and 2 non-state-funded students in the MA programme (SER, 33). During the interview, management informed the Panel that student intake had increased considerably in 2024 and 2025.

Previous external evaluations

The last external evaluation of the programmes of the study field was conducted in 2017. The recommendations of this external evaluation, and the Programme's responses are (SER, 22f.):

- Study aims, outcomes and content:
 - o Recommendation 1: The establishment of a department or body at VU, which would collect funds from foreign countries, primarily from the European Commission, would be beneficial and favourable for the development of internationalisation in studies and the VU staff. At the same time, it is recommended that the staff and administration take decisive action to encourage student participation in international programmes, particularly the ERASMUS programme. The establishment of a department or body, with a dedicated budget and tasked with collecting funds from foreign countries, primarily from the European Commission, preferably at the central level, would be beneficial for promoting the internationalisation of the programme.
 - o Response 1: During the reporting period, opportunities for student mobility were expanded – both for partial studies and internships:
 - The number of agreements with foreign universities, where students can go for partial studies, increased;
 - The selection of courses in the Philosophy study programme taught in English grew;
 - By utilising the Erasmus programme and other opportunities, there was an increase in the number of foreign lecturers invited for both long-term and short-term visits;
 - Master's students were involved in research projects as researchers;
 - Students were engaged in the organisation of international academic events;
 - The Faculty of Philosophy's website in English was improved, providing more comprehensive information on student mobility opportunities.
 - o Recommendation 2: Develop public relations, particularly with social partners and alumni, by creating a "centre" for informing, workplace training, and employment opportunities. It is desirable that more strategic actions be taken regarding public relations to raise the profile of the master's programme in society. Social partners and alumni should be more actively and systematically involved in the programme's coordination and adjustment activities to introduce students to the professional world.
 - o Response 2: During the analysed period:
 - The number of social partners increased
 - The Faculty of Philosophy's website was continually improved;
 - Members of the Philosophy Institute community were more actively involved than in previous years in promoting information and creating an appealing image of study opportunities on social media and in the media, particularly

- during the preparation period for student admissions to first and second cycle study programmes;
- The Communication Department will help ensure proper communication with prospective students, attract new social partners, and so on;
- Formal and informal student surveys are regularly conducted, and students are invited to participate in various meetings with representatives from the professional world.
- o Recommendation 3: It is recommended to supplement the programme with a more structured opportunity to study skills-development courses.
- o Response 3:
 - The bachelor's programme has been supplemented with an elective course "Argumentation Theory and Practice", aimed at developing academic skills.
 - The opportunity for specialisation in the bachelor's programme provides structured competencies and skills development.
 - Individual studies for bachelor's students, based on their needs, allow them to choose courses that develop practical skills.

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*

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	Philosophy
State code	6121NX033
Type of study (college/university)	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part-time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 4 years
Workload in ECTS	240
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor in Humanities
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)	

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Philosophy
State code	6211NX029
Type of study (college/university)	University Studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 2 years
Workload in ECTS	120
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master in Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	19-05-1997
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	4
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	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Quality assurance and public information	5
Total:		30

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	4
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Quality assurance and public information	5
Total:		29

*

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

The Faculty of Philosophy offers BA and MA programmes in philosophy, consisting of a combination of historical and systematic approaches to philosophical questions. Both programmes provide students with the option to specialize in contemporary continental philosophy (philosophy of culture) and in analytic philosophy, thus ensuring a variety of study outcomes within a single program. The MA programme offers only one optional specialization, viz. "Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences". Besides compulsory modules and specialisations, both programmes include a great variety of optional and individualized modules (App. 2) that are interdisciplinary and combine academic and applied modules (SER, 13 and App. 1). The fact that the BA and the MA programmes are called philosophy reflects their content, not their level. The academic staff of the programmes consists of active researchers in various fields of philosophy and participates actively in social life (SER 9f.).

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

App. 1 gives a complete and specified overview of the aims and learning outcomes of both programmes, while App. 2 shows how the individual modules realize these outcomes. The selection of these aims and learning outcomes of both programmes is determined by three criteria: (1) the qualification levels, specified by the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework; (2) the Descriptor of Study Cycles; (3) the Descriptor of the Philosophy Study Field (SER, 10). Furthermore, the aims and learning outcomes of the programmes are updated in relation with the development of philosophy in Lithuania and abroad, and the labour market. To realize these updates, cooperation is sought with various social partners and visiting lecturers from foreign universities.

The overall aim of the BA programme is to train philosophical specialists with a broad humanistic profile, who are well-versed in historical and cultural contexts, and who can use their philosophical skills to independently and proficiently deal with the challenges of their intellectual and practical fields of study. The general competencies of the programme comprise the development of analytical and critical thinking, interpretation, and communication skills. The subject competencies include knowledge of the fundamental problems of philosophy, the application of philosophical paradigms to general problems of the relationship between the human and the world, the production of a philosophical text, and the application of a multidisciplinary approach (SER, 11).

The MA programme focuses on the study of contemporary philosophy, and orients students in their research work by providing methodological, theoretical, and specific competencies in philosophical scholarship, developing research skills, and applying an interdisciplinary approach. The

multidisciplinary approach of the programme is a response to contemporary challenges, including the rise of artificial intelligence as reflected in the opportunity to specialise in the philosophy of cognitive science (SER, 11f.).

Graduates of the BA programme can work in the education system, the civil service, government and public administration, private companies, strategic bodies, NGOs, management consultancy, sales and advertising, publishing, journalism and media, public relations and other areas. Graduates of the MA programme can work as researchers, lecturers, journalists, translators, civil servants, business development consultants, policy makers, and interdisciplinary liaison officers, dealing with both theoretical and practical issues (SER, 12).

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

The aims and expected learning outcomes of the two Programmes are designed to implement the mission of VU, namely, to strengthen the cognitive and creative potential of Lithuania and the world, foster academic and other spiritual and social values, and educate active and responsible citizens of Lithuania and social leaders. Furthermore, these aims and learning outcomes are in line with the strategic priorities of VU (2021-2025), namely, to contribute to society and the Lithuanian state, as well as to create a collaborative and sustainable university. In particular, the link of the two programmes with the strategic priorities of VU consists of – at the BA level – demonstrating awareness of moral responsibility for the impact of one's activities and outcomes, the ability to participate competently and professionally in discussions concerning worldview and value issues relevant to society and the state, identifying and critically evaluating ideological perspectives, understanding and analysing the relationship and interaction between philosophy and other disciplines, recognizing the role of philosophy as a foundational mode of thought in the development of science, culture, and social life, and analysing and evaluating scientific, cultural, and social phenomena from a philosophical perspective. At the MA level, this link consists of demonstrating the ability to create spoken and written texts for public communication grounded in philosophical competence, adapting these texts to specific audiences, conducting complex analyses of ethical issues in contemporary society, and synthesizing and interpreting phenomena of contemporary culture (SER, 12f.).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

As stated in SER, 10, the two philosophy programmes of VU substantially differ from those taught at other Lithuanian universities. The latter comprises courses in certain branches of philosophy, in particular practical philosophy and professional ethics, but cannot be considered full-fledged philosophy programmes. Hence, the philosophy programmes that VU offers are unique in the Lithuanian academic landscape, offering modules in all important fields of philosophical enquiry. Moreover, to train future academic philosophy teachers and researchers in a relatively small country like Lithuania, there should be one HEI that offers classic BA and MA programmes in philosophy. Apps. 1, 2, and 3 substantiate the claims of SER, 11f. about the main aims of the BA programme, namely, to train theoretically and methodologically well-prepared philosophical specialists with a broad humanities education, as well as the main aims of the MA programme, namely, to equip students with the research skills that enable them to get a comprehensive grasp of contemporary philosophical issues. The Panel's interviews with the students and the alumni confirmed that both programmes indeed realized these aims.

In summary, the two VU programmes under review meet the national and international standards of a classic philosophy programme in terms of learning outcomes, compliance with the needs of society and the labour market, and professional training very well and without shortcomings. The Panel recommends that the Programme Management consider the possibility of introducing a specialisation in contemporary continental philosophy in the MA programme, besides the existing specialisation “Philosophy and Cognitive Science”, because this would add balance to the study programme and align with a similar specialisation in the BA programme.

As the official data, provided in Tables 19 and 20 (SER, 55f.) show, the majority of the graduates from the BA and MA programmes are employed on a contractual basis or are self-employed. Moreover, the graduates are employed in highly skilled roles, like management and organisational analysis, human resources and career guidance, advertising and marketing, teaching, journalism, etc. In the interviews, the alumni confirmed that employers appreciate the practical, communicative, and argumentative skills of the graduates, their intellectual flexibility, and their broad worldview. These data about the employment of graduates correspond with what can be expected from a programme that does not prepare students for a specific profession, and are in line with the surveys of graduate employment in other European countries.

As noted in SER, 77f., the Study Programme Committees of the BA and MA programmes in philosophy meet at least two times a year to discuss how the quality of the programmes can be improved. Furthermore, the Faculty management is keen to improve the research activities of the teaching staff through an effective hiring strategy, facilitating publications in leading philosophical journals, and fostering the internationalisation of research. The result of these initiatives was that the Philosophy Institute was graded with app. 4,2 on a five-point scale for scientific research, its economic and social impact, and its prospects (SER, 23). Finally, the interview with the teaching staff made clear that there has been an important improvement in the way the teaching load is allocated, the offer of targeted training, including AI and online teaching, and the communication with the faculty management. There is also a mentoring system in place for starting teachers. This shows that the Faculty of Philosophy invests actively in its employees. These four elements (improvement of the quality of studies, strengthening research activities, investment in employees, and impact on society) are important strategic objectives of VU (SER, 12f.). Another important element where the two programmes contribute to realizing one of the objectives of VU is the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge through a host of modules from different fields of knowledge (SER, 13, App. 2). Hence, the Panel deems that the two study programmes under review align with and strengthen thoughtfully and effectively the mission, objectives, and strategy of the university.

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, 13f. and Table 1 state that the BA and MA study programmes comply with the formal requirements for respectively first- and second-cycle studies. Apps. 1 and 2 aim to substantiate these claims on the level of the programme as a whole; App. 3 does so on the level of the individual modules by listing the learning outcomes, the teaching/learning methods, and the assessment methods of every module, and linking them to the general study outcomes of the BA and the MA programmes. SER, 15f. substantiates how the aims, learning outcomes, curriculum design, and

modules of the two study programmes comply with the academic and professional requirements of the BA and MA types of studies by focusing on the systematic knowledge skills provided by the two programmes, based on theoretical training and research. SER, 16f. and especially Apps. 2 and 3 detail the coherence of the two study programmes by demonstrating how the general and subject-specific competencies and their corresponding learning outcomes are addressed in the individual modules of both programmes. SER, 18-20 offers an overview of the opportunities for students to personalize their studies in the BA and MA programmes, respectively. Generally speaking, this is realized through optional modules, individualised studies (60 ECTS), and academic exchange programmes. Finally, SER, 20f. details the principles and procedures of the BA and MA theses, based on various regulations established by VU and the Faculty of Philosophy. The aim of both theses is to prepare for and execute scientific work. To realize this goal, students are supervised by faculty members of the Department of Philosophy and the Department of the History of Philosophy and Logic, thus ensuring the academic level of both types of theses.

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The BA programme aims to prepare philosophy specialists with a broad humanistic profile who have a good understanding of historical and cultural contexts and are capable of applying philosophical skills of analysis, interpretation, reflection, and critical evaluation to independently and competently solve problems in intellectual and practical areas. This aim is specified in the general and subject-specific learning outcomes of the programme (App. 1) and is implemented throughout the structure and content of the programme and the learning outcomes of every module (App. 2 and 3). As Table 2 (SER, 16) shows, the student's workload per year is 60 ECTS (30 ECTS per semester), with a total of 240 ECTS for the whole programme, including 15 ECTS for the BA thesis. The programme comprises 155 ECTS devoted to modules in philosophy, and 15 ECTS to a non-formal internship. To achieve the 180 ECTS in philosophy, required by the Descriptor of the Philosophy Field, students need to choose 25 ECTS modules in philosophy from the optional courses and/or individual studies, although they are free to choose other modules, outside the field of philosophy (SER, 16, 19). All modules are in multiples of 5 ECTS, and the volume of contact hours is 36% of the student's total workload, while the rest (64%) is for individual work (SER, 15 and App. 2). Although the BA programme has practical activities in seminars, it includes no internship.

The MA programme aims to train specialists with a broad theoretical profile in multidisciplinary fields of the humanities and social sciences, who are capable of using historical and contemporary insights to engage in discussions on various philosophical disciplines, independently and critically interpret philosophical texts, form and defend a clear position on philosophical topics, and independently conduct scholarly research on philosophical issues. This general aim is specified in the general and subject-specific learning outcomes of the programme (App. 1) and is implemented throughout the structure and content of the programme and the learning outcomes of every module (App. 2 and 3). As Table 2 (SER, 16) shows, the student's workload per year is 60 ECTS (30 ECTS per semester), with a total of 120 ECTS for the whole programme, including 30 ECTS for the MA thesis and its preparation. The overall majority of the modules (more than 60 ECTS) is devoted to philosophy. 27 modules (including optional modules) are in multiples of 5 ECTS, 16 modules (including optional modules) are in multiples of 3 ECTS. The volume of contact hours is 22% of the student's total workload, while the rest (78%) is for individual work, thus giving students more time for independent work and the freedom to apply their knowledge and skills in the context of their MA thesis. (SER, 15 and App. 2).

Ch. IV, Par. 29 of the Descriptor of the Study Field in Philosophy also defines the criteria that will be used to assess the learning outcomes of the modules: integrity, critical and creative thinking, individual and independent thinking, and meaningfulness. The SER does not specify explicitly if and how the assessment criteria of the modules correspond with the requirements defined in the mentioned Descriptor.

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

SER 15f. explains how the aims and learning outcomes of the two study programmes comply with the academic and professional requirements of the BA and MA types of studies. The main characteristics of both programmes are that they provide systematic knowledge and skills based on theoretical training and research, and are grounded in the research of the teachers. This can be realized because most BA and MA modules are taught by active researchers. Furthermore, the quality of the study programmes is ensured through annual external evaluations.

SER, 17f. and App. 3 give an overview of how the intended learning outcomes correspond with the teaching/learning and assessment methods. The descriptions of every module (App. 3) include a detailed overview of the intended learning outcomes, the teaching/learning methods, and the assessment methods, thus facilitating an insight into their correspondence. Once a year, the Study Programme Committee reviews the correspondence between these three elements for every module, taking into account the students' evaluations of the modules, and consults with teachers on how to improve this correspondence as needed. VU organises training courses for the teachers regularly to train them in new teaching and assessment methods, and the students are encouraged in various ways to participate actively in the courses.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competencies

SER, 16f. and Apps. 1 and 2 substantiate the coherence of the content of both study programmes and explain how the general and subject-specific competencies and their corresponding learning outcomes are addressed in the individual modules. In the early years of the BA programme, preparatory tools for further work are introduced; studies in the history of philosophy are conducted sequentially according to epochs, parallel with courses in systematic philosophy. In the first semester, an introduction to philosophy is provided through the course "Introduction to Philosophy." This also includes the start of integrated philosophy practice, focused on text analysis in a seminar format. Thinking skills and academic work skills are developed through the Logic course. In the fourth semester, the Academic Writing course involves research paper preparation practice. This is the first full academic standard research project, which is continued in the sixth semester as a term paper and culminates in the final BA thesis. The BA programme includes two optional specialisations, one in "Philosophy and Visual Culture" and another in "Philosophy of Science and Logic" (6 modules of 5 ECTS plus the BA thesis of 15 ECTS) (SER, 19).

Unfortunately, the SER does not include a similar detailed overview of the set-up and coherence of the MA programme. From App. 2, it can be concluded that the MA programme builds upon the BA programme by focusing on contemporary philosophy, and offers a large number of optional modules, which enable students to specialize and prepare them to write the MA thesis. The MA programme includes an optional specialization in "Philosophy and Cognitive Science" (6 modules of 5 ECTS) (SER, 20).

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

SER, 18-20 and App. 2 present an overview of the opportunities for students to personalise their curriculum. In the BA programme, personalisation opportunities already start in the first semester of the first year, comprising 10 ECTS optional modules out of a total offer of 15 ECTS. Semesters 2-7 comprise each 10 ECTS individualised studies out of a total offer of 25 ECTS, and in semester 8, students need to choose 15 ECTS optional modules out of a total offer of 40 ECTS. Some of these optional/individualised modules are in philosophy (to meet the requirement of 180 ECTS philosophy modules, stipulated by the Descriptor of the Philosophy Study Field), but students can also choose modules from other disciplines, mainly from the language department and social sciences. Another way to personalise the students' curriculum are the two specialisations (Philosophy and Visual Culture, and Philosophy of Science and Logic), consisting of 6 modules of 5 ECTS. The opportunities for MA students to personalise their curriculum are even larger since it comprises a total of 60 ECTS elective modules, thus enabling students to align their curriculum with the topic of their MA thesis or their professional interest. A more structured offer for personalisation is the specialisation "Philosophy and Cognitive Science," consisting of 30 ECTS. Finally, students can personalise their curriculum through Erasmus stays and non-formal education or self-education that helps to meet the individual learning needs of students (approval by VU is required).

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

SER, 20f. and App. 3, 18 and 44 detail the formal procedures and requirements as regards the substance of the BA and the MA theses. App. 3 shows in detail how the learning outcomes correspond with the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy, Ch. III, par. 19 and 20. SER, 20f describes in detail the preparation of both types of thesis, thereby referring to several official regulations and procedures of VU regarding the preparation, defence, and storage of theses. This information is published on the website of VU.

The BA thesis aims to develop the following competencies: the ability to initiate research; plan the course of the research work; select relevant literature sources; read scientific literature (in both Lithuanian and foreign languages); use philosophical terminology; independently analyse and interpret philosophical texts; understand the discourse and horizon of contemporary philosophy in the selected areas; pose questions, formulate a thesis, argue one's position, and seek appropriate solutions when analysing complex problems; understand and apply an interdisciplinary approach, express thoughts clearly, and argue and justify the statements defended in the Bachelor's thesis; relate the research problem to a broader context.

The MA thesis in Philosophy is presented in the form of a completed scientific work. The aim is to develop the ability to formulate and analyse complex philosophical problems based on scientific literature and meta-analysis, and to present them in the form of a scientific presentation; use traditional (written) and IT sources to conduct research, properly present the bibliography and references; participate in the discourse of philosophical science, appropriately use scientific vocabulary, challenge discussion participants, and verbally present arguments to support one's statements.

In preparation for their BA- and MA-thesis, students attend research seminars, during which they are introduced to the principles and requirements for writing a research paper. Throughout the thesis preparation process, students are advised by designated supervisors who are researchers in the field under evaluation. The final decision whether to allow the student to defend their final thesis is taken by the Study Programme Committee. The compliance of the content of the final thesis to the

study field is assessed by the final thesis defence committee. The theses are uploaded into the University information system (VUSIS), which has an Electronic Plagiarism Detection System (EPDS).

The SER and App. 4 do not give any evidence about the involvement of social partners in the preparation of MA-theses. During the meeting with the social partners, they confirmed that they are not involved in the composition of the programme.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The Panel checked whether the structure of the BA and MA study programmes, as presented in Table 1 (SER, 13), indeed complies with the qualitative and quantitative criteria of the Descriptors of First and Second Study Cycles and with the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy.

As demonstrated above (Section 1.2.1), and the Tables 1 (SER, 14), and 2 (SER, 16), as well as Apps. 1, 2, and 3, the learning outcomes of the BA and the MA programmes fully comply with, respectively, the sixth and seventh level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework as defined in the General Descriptor of Study Fields and with the specific learning outcomes of the Descriptor of the Philosophy Field (Chapter III, par. 19 and 20). App. 1 demonstrates very clearly how the learning outcomes of the Descriptor of the Philosophy Field have been implemented in both study programmes, and Apps. 2 and 3 specify how these outcomes are aimed to be realized by the individual modules. The Panel deems the set-up of the BA programme, namely to comprise 155 ECTS of philosophy modules, combined with 25 ECTS of philosophy modules to meet a Requirement of the Descriptor of the Philosophy Field, a fair compromise between the regulations of VU and the mentioned requirements of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy. In this context, it is relevant to mention that the interviewed students confirmed that the actual workload per course did not exceed 25-30 of the student's working hours. Although the SER and App. 3 do not substantiate if and how the assessment criteria of the modules correspond with the requirements defined in the Descriptor of the Philosophy Study Field, the Panel checked the learning outcomes and assessment methods of the modules and is convinced that the criteria used meet these requirements. This is also confirmed by the students and the alumni. In summary, the panel thinks that the implementation and the aimed realization of the learning outcomes, as stipulated in the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy, in the BA and the MA programmes have been very successful, and therefore deems both study programmes to comply with the legal requirements.

The Panel studied App. 3 and the student feedback of both programmes (App. 6 and 7) 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 Panel commends the teachers of both study programmes for their accurate, detailed, and transparent information about this correspondence. It demonstrates that this criterion is indeed met, and the survey reports, comprising feedback from the students of the two programmes, confirm this positive impression (Apps. 6 and 7). The MA students even gave the programme a rating of 4.1 on a five-point scale (App. 7). A point of attention for the Programme Management is the comments from BA students that the balance between the study load and assessment may need to be reconsidered (App. 6), but during the interview the students said that there are no structural problems as to the balance between the amount of ECTS per course and the actual workload.

The BA and the MA programmes are coherent and ensure a consistent development of the student's competencies very well. SER, 16f. offers an excellent underpinning of these two factors in the BA

programme. The idea to offer two optional specialisations, one in continental and one in analytic philosophy, adds to the coherence of the programme. To avoid overspecialization, the programme also requires students to choose 60 ECTS in “individual studies” from a wide range of (inter)disciplinary modules offered by VU, but they can also opt for additional modules in philosophy (25 ECTS). The MA programme has a different structure as it prepares students mainly for academic research in a specialized field. This is realized by reducing the number of compulsory modules (30 ECTS per year), thus leaving ample space for optional specialised modules in philosophy. This structure convincingly ensures the coherence of the MA programme and the consistent development of the competencies of the students. An additional element to enhance the coherence of the programme is the specialization “Philosophy and Cognitive Science” (30 ECTS). The Panel deems this a sensible decision, but recommends the Study Programme Committee consider the possibility of adding a second specialization to the MA programme, oriented to continental philosophy. Such a second specialization enables students to continue their specialization in continental philosophy of the BA programme (Philosophy and Visual Culture) in the MA programme, thus enhancing the coherence between the BA and the MA programme (SER, 19). Besides, the Panel deems that the internship in the BA programme could develop the students’ practical skills. At the same time, it could be helpful for the faculty’s staff in editing philosophical journals, organizing philosophical conferences, or translating philosophical books. Finally, it would contribute to a closer relationship with social partners.

The structure of both programmes offers students ample opportunities to personalize their studies without compromising the coherence of these programmes. The Panel deems that the Programme Management has succeeded in finding a very good balance between the extremes of a too rigid and a too individualized programme. This also applies to the decision that the BA consists of 155 ECTS devoted to compulsory modules in philosophy and 25 ECTS devoted to optional modules in philosophy, which are included in the list of optional modules and/or individual studies, while at the same time giving students the freedom to choose modules outside the field of philosophy. The decision to introduce specialisations (2 in the BA programme, and 1 in the MA programme) allows for a structured personalization of the curriculum.

SER, 20f. convincingly shows that the procedure for planning, contents, supervision, and assessment of the theses of the BA and MA programmes complies with the requirements for both cycles and the study field. All theses of both programmes are supervised by members of the Department of Philosophy and the Department of the History of Philosophy and Logic, thus ensuring the academic quality of the theses. Alumni and students commended the teachers for the quality of their supervision work and their accessibility. The Panel studied (the English summaries of) the BA and MA theses and concludes that they comply very well with the Study Field Descriptor.

In summary, the Panel deems that the BA and MA study programmes meet the requirements of the Descriptors of the Study field of Philosophy very well, from a national as well as from an international perspective.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial	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
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		shortcomings to be eliminated			without any shortcomings
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Both study programmes meet the national and international standards of a classic philosophy programme in terms of learning outcomes, compliance with the needs of society and the labour market, and professional training very well.
2. The large number of optional courses, individual studies, and the two specialisations in the BA programme and one in the MA programme enable students to personalise their studies in well-structured ways.
3. Excellent supervision of the BA- and MA-theses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The Programme Management is recommended to consider the possibility of introducing a specialisation in contemporary continental philosophy in the MA programme, besides the existing specialisation "Philosophy and Cognitive Science", because this would add balance to the study programme and align with a similar specialisation in the BA programme.
2. The Programme Management is recommended to consider the possibility of introducing a kind of philosophical internship in the BA programme. The areas of the practice could include the philosophical journal "Problemos" published by VU, organization of scientific conferences hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy, publishing houses of philosophical books, and so on.

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, 23-30 describes the links between science (art) and study activities, including Tables 3-6. 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 conducted in the department is very good, as evidenced by the recent improvement in assessments from the Research Council of Lithuania in 2022 and the 2023 international evaluation, with the department scoring very highly in each of the elements. The improvement was due, in part, to the increase in the number of publications with prestigious international journals and monograph publishers. There is a good level of participation in international conferences, and marked also by a number of awards; the science award in 2022 for one of the professors is particularly noteworthy. National conferences, funded by RCL, are also a feature. There is also a good level of public engagement and knowledge exchange beyond the department, and engagement with the research council. The plans for future research directions are sensible and financially viable, and there is good engagement with external partners internationally. There is good support too from senior management and administration, with staff being encouraged to put on international conferences, and very good office support for grant applications. There is an impressive number of research projects listed in the tables that have taken place in the last few years. The increase in early career researchers has had a positive effect on research culture. In light of this, the Panel was confident that the upward trajectory in research quality will continue.

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

There is good integration between research and curriculum, as courses are taught by those with the relevant research specialisms, and there are close links between the relevant research and the topics that students pick for their dissertations. Courses are regularly updated to reflect latest developments, with the most recent research being a particular focus of the MA.

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

The panel thought that this was the weakest element in this area, with the SER reporting difficulties in getting students involved and engaged in research apart from under the direct supervision of a member of staff. This is especially true at BA levels. But there is more involvement at the MA level, resulting in published articles at the national level, and national awards. The panel was encouraged by the re-establishment of the scientific society of students in 2024, which might act as a springboard

for more student scientific activity. Indeed, the students had a very positive view of this society and its sense of community. The Panel encourages the department to further support actions to gain RCL funding for summer student engagement with research, as this is an area where it is acknowledged more work can be done.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The Panel was very impressed with the range and quality of research and research activities, both as described in the SER, and in meetings with senior management, staff, and students. There is a good support structure for research, especially from the research office and with respect to grant applications. Research quality continues to improve, as does engagement with international conferences and workshops, and public engagement and scientific activities. The department has a good range of research specialisms, and a good sense of what the next steps should be to continue to improve its research profile. There is good integration of the latest research into teaching, and staff clearly think carefully about this element of the provision. There could be more in the way of student engagement in research, especially given the re-establishment of the student scientific society, and the high levels of engagement with this reported by the students. But this is a minor point. In all, there is a very good research culture which is resulting in outputs in prestigious journals, and which is informing the teaching and curricula in the department at both BA and MA levels.

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
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Very high-quality research, which continues its upward trajectory. It is encouraging to see publications in prestigious international journals and with prestigious presses.
2. Very good support from senior management and the research office for research activities and grant applications.
3. Good levels of integration of the latest research into teaching, especially at MA level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. As noted, it would be good if there could be more thought as to how to engage students at both BA and MA levels in scientific research activities. Joint staff-student conferences, works-in-progress seminars, and similar might be welcome.
2. It would be good for the student scientific society to be involved with other such societies in Lithuania, and student research culture and community enhanced in this way.

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

The panel met with admissions stakeholders and students. BA selection is via the national LAMA BPO competition (matura-based ranking with defined bonus points), with information published centrally and at faculty level; intakes have been steady and both SF/NSF places filled, with entry scores trending up. MA admission requires a BA in Philosophy or another BA plus SPC-agreed bridging; a weighted score (thesis/final grade, GPA, and philosophy background) is applied, and bridging is set in a learner agreement when fundamentals are missing. VU recognises foreign qualifications under Lisbon procedures and has established RPL/credit-transfer rules (up to 75% transfer; up to 50% RPL); uptake has been minimal in the period reviewed.

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

BA (first cycle). Admission is through the national LAMA BPO competition. Candidates are ranked by a competitive score based on state matura examinations; additional points are awarded for defined achievements (e.g., voluntary service; military service). The maximum score is 10 and the minimum threshold to participate in the competition is 5.4 (before additional points). Information on requirements is published centrally (VU and LAMA BPO sites) and by the Faculty.

MA (second cycle). Applicants must hold either a BA in Philosophy or another BA plus supplementary/bridging studies decided case-by-case by the Study Programme Committee (SPC). The competitive score formula during 2021–2024 was $0.5 D + 0.5 VS + P$ (final thesis/exam grade; weighted average of other grades; plus points for prior Philosophy studies/minor). Bridging options are available under a learner agreement where fundamental Philosophy competencies are missing.

Across 2021–2023, BA intakes remained steady, with both state-funded (SF) and non-state-funded (NSF) places filled (e.g., 2023: BA 35 SF / 10 NSF; MA 8 SF / 2 NSF). Admissions tables also show more entrants arriving with higher competitive scores, indicating improving academic preparedness.

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

VU is authorised to recognise foreign qualifications and applies the Lisbon Recognition framework and related national procedures. In the analysed period, one request for recognition of foreign qualifications was submitted and granted. Procedures for recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning are established; up to 75% of a programme may be recognised for transfer (first/second cycle), and up to 50% for RPL based on competencies (final theses/exams are excluded). During 2021–2024, no BA/MA students in this field applied for RPL. Information and forms are available on VU websites; SPCs take the decisions.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

Admissions to the BA are rules-based, centrally managed via LAMA BPO, and clearly aligned with the programme's aims through published coefficients (History, a second/third subject, Lithuanian language & literature) and a minimum threshold that preserves standards and transparency;

admissions data show stable demand and preparedness. For the MA, the competitive-score formula (0.5 D + 0.5 VS + P) and case-by-case bridging decided by the SPC create a fair balance between maintaining academic level and opening access to strong candidates from adjacent disciplines; heterogeneity at entry is explicitly managed early on with staff guidance and additional literature, which students report as workable in practice. Recognition processes are robust and Lisbon-aligned, with clear ceilings for credit transfer ($\leq 75\%$) and RPL for non-formal/informal learning ($\leq 50\%$), though actual use in this field has been negligible, suggesting a need to signpost RPL/bridging options more visibly to prospective applicants.

Students confirmed heterogeneous prior knowledge at MA entry; this is openly addressed at the start of MA, and students reported they can catch up with initiative and guidance from staff (additional literature, supervision). Many BA students plan to continue into MA. The Panel recommends addressing this heterogeneity, especially because it is at odds with one of the recommendations of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy, which recommends 60 ECTS in philosophy for students who do not have a BA in philosophy.

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

The panel reviewed the SER and programme documentation and, during the site visit, met with BA and MA students, teaching staff, management of the University. Academic advising is provided centrally through SACO, and both staff mentoring and the peer “creative programme” support student integration, which students reported as helpful, particularly during MA transition. Information on study requirements and support is accessible via VUSIS, faculty websites, and the Student Life Guide. Mobility opportunities are available through Erasmus and bilateral agreements, as well as ARQUS and COIMBRA networks; participation is higher among BA students, while MA students often balance studies with employment and have fewer practical mobility windows due to onboarding and thesis timing. Students described staff as approachable and highlighted active student societies and wellbeing services, while also noting that grants may not fully cover living costs and that “you-said/we-did” feedback follow-up could be more visible.

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

Mobility is administered by the International Relations Office and CAU staff, with Erasmus/bilateral agreements, and additional opportunities via ARQUS and COIMBRA; students can spend up to half of their total study time in mobility. Partner lists and recent agreements are publicly documented; outgoing student numbers are tracked annually.

BA students use exchanges more frequently; some during site visits cite grants as insufficient without family support.

MA mobility is structurally constrained (onboarding in the first semester; thesis in the last), with practical windows mainly mid-programme. Many MA students work and/or have family commitments, limiting availability. Students also reported language-of-instruction mismatches at some hosts and dissatisfaction with the “no final-semester mobility” rule. These observations align with SER trends.

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

Central SACO provides large-scale consultations; the university-wide mentoring programme operates across all CAUs. Students highlighted newly introduced staff mentors and a peer-mentoring “creative programme” as particularly helpful (e.g., MA transition).

ESN supports incoming/outgoing students. Site-visit notes emphasised an active student scientific society (≈10 events) that strengthens community and early research/social engagement.

Psychological counselling (including crisis sessions), equal-opportunities/disability coordination, chaplaincy, sports and cultural activities are available and regularly publicised.

Multiple scholarship types, fee reductions, and disability-related support are offered; distribution is monitored annually.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Students access calendars, registration, grades, and survey tools via VUSIS; faculty websites and the Student Life Guide complement central channels. Surveys show the VU website is a primary.

Students reported approachable staff and effective informal channels; formal end-of-course feedback exists, but they asked for greater transparency on how feedback leads to changes (e.g., publishing responses more consistently). Library services received positive comments.

Additionally, perceptions of workload variability across modules and end-of-semester intensity were noted. Students/alumni also mentioned a relatively high drop-out (approx. 50%) linked to employment, programme expectations, and a small group staying abroad after Erasmus; lack of philosophy at school level and surprise at Latin/logic requirements were cited as factors shaping expectations.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The support ecosystem is comprehensive and effective: large-scale SACO advising and a mature mentoring programme (now including staff mentors and a peer “creative programme”) sit alongside solid integration activities (e.g., student-led curatorships) and well-publicised wellbeing, inclusion, and financial-aid services; students consistently describe staff as approachable and the library as positive. Notably, staff mentors and the peer “creative programme” were introduced recently and are viewed by students as working well for academic and social integration. Mobility frameworks (Erasmus/bilateral, ARQUS/COIMBRA) are ample and clearly administered, yet uptake patterns diverge by cycle: BA students participate more, while MA students face structural timing limits (first-semester onboarding and a blocked final semester for thesis work), employment/family constraints, and in some cases host-language mismatches; several students also observe that the grants available may not fully cover living costs. Feedback channels combine informal approachability with formal surveys, but students report that minimum response-rate thresholds can limit actionability and that published “you-said/we-did” follow-ups could be more visible.

Against this generally positive backdrop, there is a cycle-specific difference that justifies a lower appraisal for the MA than for the BA. On admissions, the MA deliberately keeps entry routes open to applicants without a prior degree in philosophy in order to sustain viable cohort sizes; while pedagogically defensible and institutionally understandable, this policy increases heterogeneity of

prior knowledge and can lead to perceptions of repetition in some courses and to added supervisory load to help less-prepared entrants “catch up.” The unit addresses this mainly through individual work and supervision rather than through structured, synchronous bridging components, which keeps the programme inclusive but places ongoing pressure on teaching and academic support. Teaching staff are aware of the challenge and describe a range of responses; they also note that some non-philosophy backgrounds can enrich MA-level learning, yet acknowledge the extra effort required to level students. MA cohort size has also been somewhat variable (the noted 2023 dip was described as a one-year “blip,” with 16–17 students in surrounding years), which can amplify these support demands year-to-year.

Conclusion.

Admission and support arrangements meet requirements for both cycles, with strong, student-valued services; however, for the MA there are persistent, structural tensions between an inclusive admissions model and the resources needed to smooth heterogeneous entry profiles, compounded by mobility timing rules and the large share of working students.

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	
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel commends the programme for its transparent and rules-based BA admissions process, which ensures fair access and alignment with programme aims through clearly published criteria and steady demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The MA’s open admissions lead to heterogeneous prior knowledge without a structured bridging mechanism, placing extra support demands on staff and influencing the learning experience. Therefore, the Panel recommends addressing this heterogeneity, especially because it is at odds with one of the recommendations of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy, which recommends 60 ECTS in philosophy for students who do not have a BA in philosophy.

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

The competencies to be developed and the intended learning outcomes are focused on the development of general competencies required for further studies, independent learning, and the modern-day labour market (SER, 46). The lectures combine traditional teaching and interactive-learning methods (SER, 47). The Faculty of Philosophy offers individual studies for students with special needs. Socially vulnerable groups are also provided with appropriate financial support and services (SER, 52).

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

As noted in SER, 46, the competencies to be developed and the intended learning outcomes are focused not only on the provision of certain subject-specific knowledge and skills, but also on the development of general competencies required for further studies, independent learning, and the modern-day labour market.

Both the BA and the MA are open for students from other fields. The BA programme offers the possibility to choose philosophy as a minor. The MA programme accepts graduates from other fields.

The main forms of studying are contact classes in auditoriums (lectures, seminars, practical sessions, consultations) and non-contact, including independent work by students (self-study of literature, work on written papers, and specific tasks given by lecturers) (SER, 47).

According to SER, 47, the lectures combine traditional teaching and interactive-learning methods. SER, 48 and the final theses show that the competence of a researcher in philosophy is developed during the preparation of the final thesis. Additionally, the development of research skills is also horizontally integrated in many course units, and scientific research work is often part of the cumulative assessment.

According to SER, 48, the BA programme includes 5 subjects that are directly aimed at developing students' abilities to plan research, collect, systematize, analyse and evaluate information, use information technologies and databases, and apply formal requirements for the form and content of research presentation. The MA programme includes 4 such subjects.

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

In 2020, VU approved a five-year Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy. The Strategy foresees the study process to socially vulnerable groups by investing in the adaptation of the University environment, providing access to compensatory equipment, consulting students and teaching staff on issues of the accessibility of studies, and allowing students to study according to

individual study plans. The Strategy provides for the objectives related to disability, gender equality, cultural diversity, social exclusion, balancing of study and/or work commitments with personal commitments, and anti-discrimination (SER, 50).

Additionally, the VU Community Development Department has a Disability Affairs Coordinator who is responsible for analysing and monitoring the needs of members of the University community, including the Faculty of Philosophy, with disabilities (SER, 50).

The Faculty of Philosophy offers individual studies for students with special needs. As argued in SER, 50, the accessibility of the VU physical environment and the availability of a wide range of compensatory equipment have been increasing for students with mobility, visual or hearing impairments every year. Moreover, students with disability are informed on the VU website (SER, 50). Additionally, socially vulnerable groups are provided with appropriate financial support and the services (SER, 52).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The Panel sees the advantage in the fact that the BA study programme provides a broad education in humanities. It is very laudable that students of other fields of study at Vilnius University have the possibility to choose philosophy as an additional field of study. Indeed, students use this opportunity (5 in the 2021-2022, 3 in the 2022-2023 and 5 in the 2023-2024 academic year).

It is laudable that contact classes are also conducted online in individual cases. However, some MA students wish the lecture were in the evening to balance work and study time. Some students (especially those who are not working) were satisfied with the lecture time.

Although many new methods are mentioned in SER, 47, the traditional lectures, as well as the method of reading and discussing, prevails. Sometimes, it works very well, especially in the case of charismatic professors, of whom there is no shortage in the faculty. The Programme Management demonstrates very good knowledge of contemporary teaching methods. The Panel would be willing to apply new methods on a wider scale in the teaching process.

The Panel confirms that the development of research skills is horizontally well integrated in many course units, and scientific research work is often part of the cumulative assessment. The Scientific Research module is aimed at developing students' abilities to plan research, collect, systematise, analyse and assess information, use information technologies and databases, and apply formal requirements to the form and content of research presentation, as declared in SER, 48. The Panel found at least 4 such studies in each study programme (Academic Literacy, Coursework, Bachelor's Theses Project, and Bachelor's Thesis in the BA and Research Project, Master's Thesis, Scientific Research Thesis, and Master's Final Thesis).

After meeting the students, the Panel confirms that through their studies, students develop academic and analytical thinking. The amount of information is quite large, which allows them to think critically and formulate questions. One of the most important values mentioned by the students today is the ability to formulate questions correctly for AI. Students have their own voice and the opportunity to express what they feel is lacking – which subjects, in their opinion, are needed more. Students state that philosophy studies prepare them for a changing world. From the meeting with the students the Panel concludes that bachelor's studies seem to bring students more satisfaction. At the same time, MA students work more independently.

The VU has all the necessary legal acts (Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy, Description of Procedure for Individualisation of Studies at Vilnius University according to

Individual Needs arising from Disability) to protect students with disability. The Panel confirms that the teaching rooms of the Faculty of Philosophy are adapted for the disabled students and equipped with lifts. Furthermore, such students are supervised by a coordinator and are supported financially. Finally, they have all the necessary services, including psychological counselling and spiritual support.

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

According to SER, 49, the assessment of achieved learning outcomes is planned and organised by the lecturer coordinating a particular course unit (module) within the limits of the course unit (module) description approved by SPC. Students are familiarised with the assessment methods, their application and time limits for interim and final assessment during the first lecture, all of which are detailed in the descriptions of course units.

As argued in SER, 49, the BA programme includes the following methods of performing assessment: tests, written answers to open questions, completion of specific tasks during the exam, assessment of written essays and individual work / projects. The MA programme focuses more on inclusive, problem-based teaching and independent research.

The Programme Management states that the assessment of students' achievements is professional, transparent, fair, objective, reliable, and based on the principles of respect and goodwill. The student-centred study model requires a cumulative assessment system that combines continuous, interim and final assessment of students' achievements (SER, 49).

According to SER, 52, within the university environment, the progression of philosophy students is monitored at the following levels: (1) course unit (module), (2) course of study, and (3) study programme.

At the level of the course unit (module), students' progress is assessed by the lecturer(s) of the subject/module. Furthermore, the Study Administration Unit assesses the students' progress at the course level. The Student Services and Careers Unit is monitoring student attrition and implementing an action plan to prevent it. At the level of philosophy degree programmes, the degree programme committees are monitoring the content of studies. At the level of final theses, the SPCs are evaluating the outcomes of the defence of final theses, as well as the proportion of students who have successfully defended their final theses within the stipulated timeframe. The Administration of the Study Department is monitoring the level of all students of a specific year. The SACO monitors student drop-out levels and implements an action plan for drop-out prevention (SER, 52–53).

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

According to the SER, 49, the BA graduates can continue with the second cycle of university studies in different study fields at both Lithuanian and foreign universities or obtain a teacher's qualification, while the MA programme prepares students for further doctoral studies. The graduates of philosophy can also pursue non-degree VU pedagogical studies in "School Pedagogy" (SER, 49).

The graduates are surveyed one year, three years, and five years after graduation to evaluate their employability, the ability of graduates to successfully establish themselves in professional activity and to determine graduate career and work satisfaction. According to the data in the Education Management Information System (SVIS), one year after graduation, more than 36 % of the BA graduates are studying and more than 60 % of the MA graduates are employed on a contractual basis (SER, 55, Tables No 19, 20).

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

According to SER, 57, the diversity of opinions within the academic community, the openness for ideas, mutual respect, trust, tolerance, and balancing autonomy with accountability to the state and society are ensured. The relationships between the members of the VU community is outlined in the Statute of Vilnius University, Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University, Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025, and other documents (ibid).

The teaching staff and students of VU adhere to the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University that defines general norms of academic, teaching, learning and scientific research ethics. The Code defines cases of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, bribery, and assisting another in dishonest academic activity. The Study Regulations of Vilnius University stipulate that those students who have violated academic ethics may receive a reprimand or be expelled from the University. During the analysed period, no students were expelled from VU for dishonesty during the assessment of students' achievements or for plagiarism in the preparation of written papers, and no students were reprimanded (SER, 57-58).

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

According to the SER, 58, the Faculty of Philosophy has a transparent procedure for submitting and processing appeals. A student who disagrees with the final assessment (grade) for a course unit may submit a reasoned written appeal to the Dispute Resolution Commission of the faculty no later than seven calendar days from the date of publication of the final grade. Appeals against the final assessment of final thesis are not allowed. Appeals regarding violations of the interim assessment, final assessment of students' achievements, final examination or the final thesis defence procedure may be lodged by students no later than within three working days after the date of the interim assessment, final assessment of students' achievements, final examination or the defence of the final master's thesis (ibid).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

After the interview with students, the Panel was convinced that students are familiar with the assessment methods, their application, and time limits for interim and final assessment during the first lecture. The meeting with students confirmed that the assessment of students' achievements is professional, transparent, fair, objective, reliable, and based on the principles of respect and goodwill in most cases.

In the study process, the Panel faced a student-centred study model with a well-realized cumulative assessment system that combines continuous, interim, and final assessment of students' achievements.

It is clear to the Panel that the monitoring system of both the BA and MA study programmes takes place at various levels. The Panel recommends that the different bodies (lecturers, Study

Administration Unit, the Student Services and Careers Unit, the degree programme committees, the Administration of Study Department, etc.) responsible for the various levels of studies' quality cooperate better.

It is laudable that the Faculty of Philosophy is monitoring the graduates in a systematic way. The students have an additional opportunity to pursue non-degree VU pedagogical studies in "School Pedagogy" (SER, 49). One of the most important points to mention is that the acquired knowledge helps graduates find employment in a wide variety of positions. Philosophy graduates are found among journalists, advisers, and managers. However, the analysis of the graduates' statistics provided in the SER, 56 shows that most graduates are employed in other fields than philosophy. This can be explained by the abstract content of classical philosophical studies. However, the Panel deems that the internship in the philosophical field can improve the BA programme.

The Panel confirms that the policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are ensured both by legal acts and practical activity within the Faculty of Philosophy. However, the fact that no students were expelled from VU for dishonesty during the analysed period may not only show the fairness of the students, but also insufficient control by the teachers. Moreover, the AI challenges are not discussed in this regard.

After the discussions with students, the Panel confirms that there is a transparent procedure for submitting and processing appeals. However, the fact that the cases of appeals are extremely rare can indicate that the students only make use of this procedure of appeal 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
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The academic programme and its supporting infrastructure have been adapted to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of students with individual needs.
2. Students of other fields of study at Vilnius University have the possibility to choose philosophy as an additional field of study. The students have an additional opportunity to pursue non-degree VU pedagogical studies.
3. In both BA and MA study programmes, the study model is student-centred with a well-realized cumulative assessment system that combines continuous, interim, and final assessment of students' achievements. The monitoring system of both the BA and MA study programmes takes place at various levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The Panel recommends that the different bodies (lecturers, Study Administration Unit, the Student Services and Careers Unit, the degree programme committees, the Administration of Study Department, etc.) responsible for the various levels of studies' quality cooperate better.
2. The Programme Management is recommended to consider measures to increase graduates employed in the philosophical field (e.g. an internship in the BA programme).
3. The Programme Management is recommended to consider measures to meet the wishes of the MA students to balance work and study time.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

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

SER, 59-65 describes the teaching staff in the field study programme. There is a focus on three elements of assessment – as detailed below – and seven tables. The Panel met with staff during the visit and asked a range of questions; it 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 31 members of the teaching staff, with a 2:1 balance of men to women. This is in line with the make-up of very many philosophy departments. All but two of the teaching staff are permanent members of staff. All teaching staff are appropriately qualified, and the number of staff has remained roughly the same in the review period. This is a welcome level of stability. There are a number of welcome elements in this area. New PhDs are given the opportunity to teach both seminar and courses; there is a detailed annual review process to discuss performance and goals; and student feedback is built into the certification programme. It is good to see the student voice in this area. The student-staff ratio is about 4:1 at the BA level, and 1:1 at the MA. Both of these are very good.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

Staffing levels, competencies, evaluation, and student-staff ratios are all very good and so the aim is fully met. This is a large, stable, and experienced department, and one which has good mechanisms in place to support for certification and evaluation.

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

SER, 62-63, and tables 26 and 27, address staff mobility. Pages 63-65 address staff development. These items were also discussed in the session with staff.

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

There are significant opportunities for staff mobility through a variety of schemes described in the SER, including Erasmus+. There are good levels of communication and support for staff mobility, and liaison with the international coordinators ensures that staff are fully informed of their options and levels of support available. There are also impressive university-level funds to support a range of internationalisation activities. The practice of sharing feedback from these visits is a very good idea and to be commended. The levels of communication and support are reflected in the good numbers of staff taking visits abroad for teaching and research, at an impressive range of international institutions. There is also an impressive number of visiting lecturers at VU, with four

each in 2022-23, and 2023-24. This sense of an international community, and groundwork for international teaching and research networks, is a good indicator of a healthy internationalisation culture, and one that ought to be further encouraged and supported. It is also very good to see the levels of support from senior management and administration for internationalisation, staff and student mobility, and collaborations with Latvia and Estonia to further support mobility. The high levels of activity in the department thus reflect a main aim of the senior management.

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

There are significant, institutional level programmes to improve pedagogical competencies and develop teaching staff in place in VU since 2018. These include three programmes, focused on basic competencies, development of competencies, and a programme focused on new staff. The Centre for Educational Competence puts on a large range of in-person and online seminars and workshops for staff development, which are paid for by VU, and which staff report are very beneficial. Staff noted positively the range of courses and opportunities, especially around digital tools to deal with AI. Staff also reported a significant range of informal mentoring that goes on in the department, which new staff find particularly valuable. In all, this is an impressive range of staff development opportunities, and something which is noted by and appreciated by the staff the Panel spoke to.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

There is an impressive range of opportunities for both staff mobility, and staff development. It is good to see the levels of institutional structures and support for both; as a result of this, staff mobility is very good, and VU is attracting teachers from international institutions to visit here. Senior management support and focus on this element is good to see. Central provision of career development training is very good as well. Clearly, VU has thought about this in depth and detail, and the institutional structures are in place to ensure that staff have both opportunities to develop their pedagogical and research competencies, and expand their interests to take account of the latest developments, for instance in AI.

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	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Very good institutional focus on and support for internationalisation opportunities.
2. Very good provision of staff development opportunities, and communication of these to staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

None

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

Teaching takes place mainly at Universiteto St. 9 and the Central University Buildings at Šv. Jono St. 4, with ~2,112 m² of classrooms and 41 rooms equipped for hybrid/remote delivery (Wi-Fi, fixed multimedia, cameras; some rooms with Smart Boards, visual displays, and Optivote response systems). When needed, additional rooms at the VU Business School (Saulėtekio Av. 22) are timetabled to avoid excessive moves between buildings; after the full return to in-person teaching in 2022–23, weekday classroom occupancy reached 80–90% at peaks. Computer rooms host 23–26 workstations; specialised software is available (e.g., MAXQDA, SPSS Modeler/Statistics, ESRI ArcGIS), alongside general IT services (VUSIS, VPN, Eduroam, Office 365/Teams, Moodle-based VLE) and central e-exam rooms (capacity 118 seats).

Library provision is extensive. Students use the Central Library (CL) at Universiteto g. and the Scholarly Communication and Information Centre (SCIC) at Saulėtekis; the SCIC is open 24/7 and provides automated lending/returns, individual/group rooms, scanning/printing and specialist software. Within the CL there is a dedicated Philosophy Reading Room (37 workspaces; 12 PCs; two height-adjustable desks; ergonomic seating; lounge areas), holding 17,250 titles (31,654 copies) in adjacent fields and 2,942 philosophy titles (5,786 copies); the reading room is open 09:00–21:00 (weekdays). The VU Virtual Library gives VPN access to 94 subscribed databases (e.g., JSTOR, Oxford, Cambridge, Wiley, T&F, ScienceDirect) and ~260k e-books; acquisitions are teacher-driven and budgets are tracked (e.g., €9,685 for books/periodicals in 2022/23; VU-level database spend €1.14m in 2022/23). The library runs information-literacy training (e.g., 248 academic hours in 2022; ~2,000 students). Students reported positive satisfaction with library services to the Panel during the interviews.

Accessibility and inclusion measures are embedded. The CL and SCIC provide Braille Room, height-adjustable terminals/desks, lifts and threshold-free access; OCR-ready PDFs can be supplied and materials delivered to convenient locations for users with reduced mobility. The Philosophy Reading Room includes adapted furniture and software for visually impaired users; the Faculty also holds compensatory technologies (e.g., JAWS, SuperNova, high-contrast keyboards, specialised desks).

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

Continuous planning and upgrades are systematic. Annual CAU budgeting (approved by the CAU Council) covers renovations, IT refresh, licenses, and collections; recent works included multiple room refurbishments at Saulėtekio Av. 22 (new flooring, seating, AV), and the Institute participates in bottom-up space-improvement initiatives (e.g., 2023 “Lively Space Club” survey leading to accessibility proposals).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Facilities are ample, modern, and well-equipped for Philosophy at both cycles. Library resources and services are a major strength: deep print holdings plus very broad e-resource coverage (94 databases), long opening hours (including 24/7 SCIC), and structured information-literacy support that is demonstrably used. Accessibility arrangements are comprehensive, combining adapted spaces, assistive technologies and institutional procedures for individualisation. Planning/renewal is continuous and data-driven, evidenced by recent refurbishments and regular collection investments. The only watchpoints are peak-time room pressure (80–90% occupancy on busy days) and the gradual replacement of legacy software/OS on some library machines, both already manageable within current planning cycles.

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
Second cycle					X

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Panel commends the University for its excellent library and ICT facilities, which offer extensive print and digital resources, and modern learning environments. These facilities are well maintained, accessible, and continuously updated, providing strong support for students' learning and academic progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

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

Teachers and students can give input to the Philosophy programme. The programme operates by seeking consensus from all sides on what works and what does not. Attention is paid to the expectations of the community and the capacities of the administration. People are open to changes and speak about them openly.

The university also has programmes to work with alumni and employers, meetings with whom help the teachers to understand what practically works or could be changed in the program.

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

As noted in the SER, VU strives to ensure that the quality of studies meets the highest international standards and satisfies the needs of all stakeholders. It is important to note that in 2024 the Senate of VU formally endorsed the institution's revised Study Quality Assurance Manual. In this document, the Panel found the main requirements of the University for programmes: A student-centered approach, internationalization, interdisciplinarity, social impact and responsibility, transparency and openness of activities, continuous improvement.

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

The faculty is undergoing a generational transition. Younger people are joining, and the faculty is becoming more open and self-critical regarding itself and its programmes. New specializations are being introduced, and courses are becoming more individualized.

The administration claims that it is important to gather feedback from students, alumni, and employers. The faculty maintains regular contact with alumni and potential employers. Alumni meet with current students to share their experiences, and the university organizes alumni days aimed not only at maintaining connections with former students but also at understanding how the University's programmes could evolve.

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

Vilnius University seeks to ensure that the quality of studies meets the highest international standards and satisfies the needs of all stakeholders. For this task, according to the SER, the programme "Development and Implementation of the Internal Study Quality Management System of Vilnius University" was developed. Both BA and MA studies have committees to work on the improvement of study programmes. To improve the programme, information is collected from various stakeholders and evaluated by Faculty administration.

After the last external evaluation, there were improvements in the programme, even when there were no recommendations. The majority of teaching staff are active researchers who teach subjects corresponding to their areas of expertise, and the assessment of student progress is clearly regulated.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Students have a voice and opportunities to express what they feel is lacking, such as what courses or content they believe should be emphasized more. MA students have more independent work. Students state that studying philosophy prepares them for a changing world. The university conducts surveys after one, three, and five years for each faculty, which helps to understand what knowledge and skills each faculty provides. From the discussions with the Panel, it appears that BA studies provide greater satisfaction to students than MA studies; students in the former programme also feel more heard and listened to by the administration.

Students make extensive use of the library, and there is easy access to online materials. If there are any comments or suggestions about missing resources, they are addressed promptly.

Most students plan to continue with an MA after completing their BA; however, a significant number drop out in the first year - mostly for practical reasons, due to the difficulty of balancing studies and work. The MA programme is more oriented toward advanced philosophy studies, so students whose goal is not philosophical research face more challenges in continuing their studies because of their job.

The Faculty understands this problem, so a mentorship programme was launched last year, in which lecturers help students understand whether the chosen studies are suitable for them and whether this is what they truly want.

MA students have expressed a need for evening or online lectures. Although such options are not available at the university, the programme can be extended up to four years part-time studies. Additionally, MA students, at their own request, have more independent work, and they are not penalized for missing lectures. Another request is to have more lecturers from abroad; since last years the administration heard their voice, and there are more lectures from other universities.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

From meetings with administration, teachers, and students, the Panel concludes that the Philosophy programme meets the requirements for internal quality assurance in an excellent way – successful efforts are made to include more international elements, maintain constant communication with lecturers, students, and alumni, and keep everyone informed about changes.

In the Panel's meetings with alumni, the latter expressed the wish to be more involved in the development of philosophy programmes, especially since they already have work experience or were actively seeking for employment. At the same time, social partners say that it is important to understand that students in this programme are primarily prepared for further studies rather than for immediate entry into the labour market.

As noted in the SER, VU applies various processes and procedures for internal quality assurance of studies very successfully: engages in approval, monitoring, and evaluation of study programmes; monitors and analyses the study process; implements and improves systems of assessment of student achievement. This can be concluded from the Panel's meetings with administration, teachers, and students. The administration is open and transparent in creating the programme.

The Faculty also emphasized that when considering the quality of the study programme, they take into account the global situation; in recent years, there has been no shortage of challenges, such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. According to the administration, these factors are also considered when designing study programmes, as students themselves follow the changing

situation, and their study needs depend on the circumstances. The Panel concludes that the SPC has been very successful in integrating the global situation in the programme.

From the meetings, it is clear that the university values stakeholders' opinions about the current study programme. Lecturers bring various suggestions and proposed changes to the programme - recently, more practical subjects have been included. This demonstrates the excellent cooperation between the lecturers and the SPC. For example, students attend exhibitions together, which helps them learn not only to reflect but also to develop certain aspects of cultural management - not just to think critically, but also to organize. This way, they become more engaged. They can read about things, but they can also gain a practical perspective on what is happening. The faculty administration itself also encourages incorporating practice and experimentation when working with 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
Second cycle					X

COMMENDATIONS

1. The university's evaluation system is functioning; all relevant parties are informed and have the opportunity to provide their recommendations for the programme. Information about the programmes and their evaluation is publicly available. Students are very satisfied with the programme and their input. In summary, the Panel deems that the Philosophy programme meets the requirements for internal quality assurance in an excellent way;
2. The programme is open for changes and input from stakeholders (students, alumni, social partners).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. It would be worthwhile for VU's philosophy programme to consider offering more diverse courses for MA students. Thirty percent of MA students state that the opportunity to engage in practical work could help them determine whether these studies are suitable for them.

V. SUMMARY

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

- Area 1

The BA and MA philosophy programmes meet the national and international standards for a classic philosophy programme in terms of learning outcomes, compliance with the needs of society and the labour market, and professional training very well and without shortcomings. The graduates are employed in highly skilled roles. There has been an important improvement in the way the teaching load is allocated, the offer of targeted training, and the communication with the faculty management. The Panel deems that the programmes align with and strengthen thoughtfully and effectively the mission, objectives, and strategy of VU. Their learning outcomes and implementation in the individual modules fully comply with the requirements of the study field of philosophy. Both programmes are coherent and ensure a consistent development of the student's competencies very well. The structure of both programmes offers students ample opportunities to personalize their studies without compromising the coherence of these programmes. Alumni and students commended the teachers for the quality of their supervision work, thus ensuring the high quality of the theses.

The Panel recommends that the Programme Management consider the possibility of introducing a specialisation in contemporary continental philosophy in the MA programme, because this would add balance to the study programme and align with a similar specialisation in the BA programme.

- Area 2

The Panel was very impressed with the range and quality of research. There is a good support structure for research, especially with respect to grant applications. The department has a good range of research specialisms, and a good sense of how to further improve its research profile. There is good integration of the latest research into teaching. In all, there is a very good research culture which is resulting in outputs in prestigious journals, and which is informing the teaching and curricula in the department at both BA and MA levels.

The Panel recommends to spend more attention as to how engage students at both levels in scientific research activities. Joint staff-student conferences, works-in-progress seminars, and similar might be welcome.

- Area 3

Admissions to the BA are clearly aligned with the programme's aims. Recognition processes are robust and Lisbon-aligned.

Students confirmed heterogeneous prior knowledge at MA entry. The Panel recommends addressing this heterogeneity, especially because it is at odds with the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy.

- Area 4

The Programme Management demonstrates very good knowledge of contemporary teaching methods. The Panel confirms that the development of research skills is horizontally well integrated in many course units, and scientific research work is often part of the cumulative assessment. Students can express what they feel is lacking in the programmes. The teaching rooms of the Faculty of Philosophy are adapted for disabled students and equipped with lifts. These students are also supervised by a coordinator and are supported financially. The assessment of students' achievements is professional, transparent, fair, objective, reliable, and based on the principles of respect and goodwill. Both programmes have a student-centred study model with a well-realized cumulative assessment system. The policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are ensured both by legal acts and in practice within the Faculty.

The Panel recommends that the programme apply new teaching methods on a wider scale. It also recommends that the different bodies responsible for the various levels of studies' quality cooperate better.

- Area 5

Staffing levels, competencies, evaluation, and student-staff ratios are all very good. There is an impressive range of opportunities for both staff mobility and staff development. VU is attracting teachers from international institutions to visit here.

- Area 6

Facilities are ample, modern, and well-equipped for Philosophy. Library resources and services are a major strength. Planning/renewal is continuous and data-driven.

The only watchpoints are peak-time room pressure and the gradual replacement of legacy software/OS on some library machines.

- Area 7

The programmes meet the requirements for internal quality assurance in an excellent way, maintain constant communication with lecturers, students, and alumni, and keep everyone informed about changes. The administration is open and transparent in creating the programme. The university values stakeholders' opinions about the current study programme. Lecturers bring various suggestions and proposed changes to the programme. This demonstrates the excellent cooperation between the lecturers and the SPC.

The Panel recommends that the programme management consider offering more diverse courses for MA students. Thirty percent of MA students state that the opportunity to engage in practical work could help them determine whether these studies are suitable for them. Another recommendation is to engage more closely with alumni and social partners, because their experience could help align the programme with the challenges of today's world.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

- Both study programmes meet the national and international standards of a classic philosophy programme in terms of learning outcomes, compliance with the needs of society and the labour market, and professional training very well.
- Very good support from senior management and the research office for research activities and grant applications.
- Very good institutional focus on and support for internationalisation opportunities
- Excellent library and ict facilities