



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

POLITICAL SCIENCE FIELD OF STUDY

Kaunas University of Technology

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. Stefan Gänzle
2. Academic member: Prof. Anu Toots
3. Academic member: Prof. Simon Lightfoot
4. Social partner representative: Simonas Gaušas
5. Student representative: Karolina Markauskaitė

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 3rd of February 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

Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) is a public HEI established in 1922. It consists of nine faculties which offer “high-level interdisciplinary study programmes and develop scientific research on topical issues” according to the faculties’ website (<https://en.ktu.edu/faculties/>). Originally named the University of Lithuania, it evolved over time, being renamed Kaunas Polytechnic Institute in 1950 and finally Kaunas University of Technology in 1990. With over 153,000 graduates, KTU is recognized globally for its technological focus and commitment to education, research, and innovation. The Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities was established in 2014 through the merger of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Institute of Europe. At the faculty level, the Faculty Council and the Dean ensure implementation of the University’s research and study policy. Study Programme Committees and the heads of study programmes ensure the quality of studies, and the Fields.

Overview of the study field

KTU strives to foster knowledge transfer, societal impact, and sustainable development while promoting values like responsibility, academic integrity, and cooperation. KTU has cooperation agreements with more than 350 higher education institutions in 50 countries of the world allowing the University to develop strategic partnerships with foreign institutions in studies and research, and for our staff and students to go for academic exchange. At the moment, however, most of the partners are from European Union countries.

The study of Political Science at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) is offered through the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities. The second cycle study program in Political Science has been available since 2011. In addition to the Master’s program, the Faculty plans to launch a new Bachelor’s program titled “Politics, Philosophy, and Society,” aiming to strengthen Political Science studies. The Faculty is responsible for offering various programs in Political Science, Sociology, and other related fields at both undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as doctoral studies.

Previous external evaluations

The second cycle study program in Public Policy and Security was accredited in 2017. The evaluation period spans the academic years 2020–2023, with the 2023-2024 academic year still ongoing.

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*
- *Written responses provided in connection with the site visit*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

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

- *Site visit interviews*

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Public Policy and Security
State code	6211JX044
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full time, 1,5 years
Workload in ECTS	90
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	English
Admission requirements	Bachelor degree or its equivalent
First registration date	2011-12-21
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	N/A

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

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

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

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

KTU's second cycle study programme Public Policy and Security is designed to produce graduates who are able to assess the current political situation in light of risks and security problems. The combination of public policy and security are relatively unique in Lithuania and relevant to the current geopolitical situation. The programme is aligned with both the "Lithuania 2030" and the "Lithuania 2050" strategies. There is awareness of the skills required by the labour market and they are visible in programme LOs. There is a plan to develop a first cycle programme that will deepen political science at KTU. Graduates from the KTU programme go on to work in national and/or international political institutions, public administration or non-governmental organisations. The focus on consultancy and private sector employment aligns with the mission, goals and strategy of the KTU as a whole.

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

The Public Policy and Security programme aims overall to align with the mission, goals and strategy of Kaunas University of Technology. They also generally align with the vision and the mission of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The vision stresses sustainable development, interdisciplinarity and the advantages of being part of a technical university.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The programme's learning outcomes are relevant to the field of study. The programme is also relatively unique in Lithuania. The rationale for having a single programme is clear and well articulated. The department has plans for the development of a first cycle programme in the field of study which would strengthen the field. The technology angle and interdisciplinarity has been stressed across the site visit and through SER. This is clearly an area where being part of KTU adds value and the proposed focus on mega trends is a welcome one (both academically and in relation to the wider contribution to society). That said the trend of technological change and hyperconnectivity especially around governance systems is not explicitly addressed in the programme LOs and yet these wider notions of security and risk are clearly an increasing aspect of security studies. This aligns with the panel's view that the programme would benefit from having an increased focus on security and that the link between how public policy informs security could be made more explicit. Thought could also be given to the visibility of sociocultural transformation within the programme.

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

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The programme complies with the relevant legal requirements. It complies with the relevant field Descriptor (Political Science) and the relevant Cycle Descriptor. These include the structure of the programme, ECTS credits, total programme workload, credits for final thesis (project), contact hours and independent student work. It also aligns with the relevant Qualification framework.

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

There is alignment between the programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods. There is a clear process for review and quality assurance. There is also a process for the involvement of social partners. Importantly there is consideration given to increasing the number of assessment methods that allow students to evidence both the acquisition of skills as well as knowledge. The involvement and utilisation of the EDU-lab is crucial here. Given the delivery of the programme is online the programme team are encouraged to reflect that current delivery methods are aligned to best practice in online delivery. Again the expertise of the EDU-Lab is relevant here.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

Student competences are embedded in the programme and evidenced via the learning outcomes. There is an explicit recognition of student competences in many courses. The use of databases is a core mode to deliver skills and the programme team are encouraged to consider whether further modes could be utilised (see research integration section below). The research methods courses are a strength on paper but students did not always see the links between the methods courses and other aspects of their studies. The curriculum ensures development of student competences in a range of areas but the panel agree with SER reflection that the fact that competence development occurs over a number of modules makes it hard to assess the level of achievement of these skills. The key issue here is to map the development so the skills can be clearly surfaced to the students in order for them to articulate them. This is clearly something the Faculty is working on (SER, p. 26) and we encourage this work on surfacing skill development across the programme.

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

There are opportunities for students to personalise their learning goals ensuring core learning outcomes are met. The range of electives feels appropriate for the programme and staff base. The programme team is thinking carefully about internships and study abroad but the majority of students are working full time so student demand is low. The panel encourages the programme team to think creatively about the opportunities that might exist and how to integrate them into the curriculum. For example the ECIU opportunities seem exciting but they do not feel well utilised. The development of a challenge-based innovations module sounds very relevant in meeting the faculty goals and could be considered to be offered as an election or option.

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

The final theses comply with the requirement of field and cycle. There did seem to be some confusion around the process of supervisor/topic allocation so this could be clarified to students. Otherwise the principles of final thesis preparation, committee formation, and defense are consistent. The panel are supportive of the team's endeavours to work more closely with social partners in formulating topics for research and supporting students during the creation of the final thesis. There may be the opportunity to encourage slightly different forms of final thesis. Overall though the quality of the student work was high and the level of academic support was very good.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The major challenge for the programme is the fact that it is currently marketed as not being a remote course and yet the students experience the majority if not all their classes online. This is beneficial for the Lithuanian students given their work commitments but was clearly a source of frustration for the international students. The team needs to consider how to provide a fuller student experience for those students who have come to Lithuania and study online. It also needs to ensure more consistency of platform use (moodle or teams) by the teaching team to improve the online experience.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The focus on research methods provides excellent training for students.
2. The involvement of EDU_Lab in staff development is very positive.
3. Evidence of utilisation of technology within the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Ensure programme delivery mode is clear and transparent.
2. Consider how students (especially international students) physically in Kaunas can have an improved in person student experience.
3. Ensure Faculty/University strategic goals and vision firmly embedded in programme learning outcomes. The vision is an exciting one and one the programme should be able to align to in order to exploit its uniqueness.
4. Embed work by the Vice Dean for Education to ensure competences can be mapped over a number of different modules.

For further improvement

1. Reflect on the interaction between public policy and security across the programme.
2. Explore ways to encourage students to participate in ECIU and other relevant (GIFTed etc) activities.

3. Consider whether the Development of Challenge-based innovations could be integrated into the curriculum.
4. Explore opportunities to internationalise student opportunities beyond Erasmus and lengthy internships.

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

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

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

The program employs a total of 17 teachers, including two PhD students. In terms of full-time equivalents (FTE), staff without a doctoral degree slightly outnumber those with a PhD (6.66 FTE vs. 5.02 FTE, SER, p. 26). All teaching staff in the program are required to engage in research activities, with KTU regulations mandating that approximately one-third of working time be devoted to research. While this criterion is generally met, research time allocation has decreased by four percentage points over the past four years. The most significant decline has been among professors, whose research time dropped from 36% in 2020 to 28% in 2024, while their teaching workload increased from 52% to 57% (KTU responses to additional questions).

The research activities of the staff align with several interdisciplinary thematic areas, including civil society, social innovation and entrepreneurship, citizenship, democracy, political communication, environmental politics, risk and security studies, social welfare, equality, and inclusion. Several faculty members are also affiliated with the Research Group on Public Governance.

Between 2020 and 2024, the academic staff produced 45 scientific publications, including journal articles, monographs, and book chapters, averaging 2.65 publications per FTE per year. Publication output has remained stable over time (SER, p. 28), with contributions to high-impact, peer-reviewed journals such as *East European Politics*, *Memory Studies*, *Environmental Politics*, and *Global Policy*, as well as a monograph published by Taylor & Francis. Google Scholar citations for leading professors in the program range from h-index 15 to 30.

The program staff has been successful in securing external funding, with both domestic and international competitive grants. The total amount of external research funding has nearly doubled from 2020 to 2023, reaching almost €1 million in 2023 (SER, p. 31).

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

The integration of the latest scientific advancements into the curriculum is ensured through regular updates to course materials and reading lists.

Faculty members of the Public Policy and Security program are active participants in major European and international research associations and networks (ECPR, ISA, ESA, AAPOR). They are also involved in multiple Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 projects, which focus on higher education transformations, populism, social entrepreneurship, social citizenship, and social innovation (SER, p. 27). Their engagement in these projects ensures access to cutting-edge research developments.

In addition to academic association memberships, KTU's political science faculty maintains strong collaborations with several universities across Europe and the U.S. KTU is a member of the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU), which promotes the integration of the latest research on new teaching methods into program modules. One of KTU's flagship initiatives is its participation in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), where political science staff oversee fieldwork in Lithuania and contribute to ISSP's management structures. ISSP survey data are incorporated into research methods courses, other subject courses, and Master's theses. Beyond ISSP, 12 different research projects are used in four subject courses and two methods

courses (SER, p. 32). During the site visit, the panel observed that most faculty members emphasize data management and analysis, which is widely implemented in teaching. The online learning format is particularly well suited for hands-on training with open international databases.

Content-wise, faculty members primarily focus on two key megatrends outlined in KTU's research strategy: technological change and hyperconnectivity and intersectional crises and resilience. While the integration of these research areas into course modules is ongoing, it has yet to be fully realized. Similarly, the added value of the Public Governance Research Group, to which several faculty members belong, remains unclear, as no concrete evidence was provided regarding its integration into teaching.

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

Students primarily engage in research through the use of international survey databases (ISSP, ESS), where their instructors are actively involved (SER, p. 32). Master's students are invited to attend public presentations of research projects, while the Civil Society and Sustainability research group organizes book launches and academic discussions open to all students (SER, p. 32). Some students reported that faculty members occasionally reference their own research projects or recommend their publications as course readings; however, this appears to be an exception rather than a standard practice.

Students also have the opportunity to present their work at the annual SMILES: Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities in Contemporary Society conference, held on campus. However, for off-campus students, participation in this event remains challenging.

Graduates of the program can pursue a Ph.D. in Political Science, with two alumni having already defended their dissertations and one currently in their first year of doctoral studies. Many students cited encouragement from faculty - particularly their MA thesis supervisors - as a motivating factor for continuing to Phd.-level research.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

Overall, the discipline of political science at KTU is internationally competitive, as demonstrated by its strong research output and substantial volume of competitive grants. A key shortcoming identified in the previous external evaluation - the need for greater international research engagement - has been successfully addressed. The program actively integrates aspects of the faculty's research into MA-level teaching, with a stronger emphasis on enhancing students' quantitative methods and data analysis skills than on deepening their substantive knowledge of public policy and security, despite these being the program's central themes. The research profiles of the academic staff cover a broad spectrum of topics, with particular strengths in environmental issues, business and public management, public attitudes, and communication. However, public policy – in particular in connection with security – appears to be underrepresented in both research and teaching, raising concerns about whether the program can fully achieve its stated learning outcomes in public policy analysis.

Students generally have good opportunities to work with various databases and apply quantitative analysis skills in their coursework, theses, and research activities. Faculty members are highly committed to fostering these skills among students, yet student enthusiasm for quantitative methods appears to be limited. The Panel also noted during the site visit that some staff members, particularly in sociology, experience a "huge research load" due to their involvement in numerous projects, which has offset their declining teaching responsibilities. While this flexibility has a positive impact on staff well-being and research productivity, it may weaken the connection between research and teaching.

In response to the last external evaluation, which recommended strengthening the institutional structure of research, KTU has introduced thematic political science focuses within Research

Groups. However, the Panel did not find convincing evidence of how these Research Groups add value to the study program.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The program's strong emphasis on data management and analysis sets it apart from others in the field.
2. Technological components are integrated into all courses, supported by relevant in-house training for faculty.
3. The teaching staff demonstrates a high level of research engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The balance between teaching and research time requires careful attention. Maintaining the current high level of publishing and grant activities may not be sustainable if the research time continues to decrease.
2. Greater attention is needed to align the program's subject content with its title. If KTU prefers to maintain alignment with the staff's research profiles, reconsidering the program's title might be necessary.

For further improvement

1. To enhance the program's appeal by emphasizing its strengths, such as the technological component and hands-on data analysis, making these features more visible and attractive to students.
2. To engage interested students more actively in academic staff research projects to cultivate research as a professional pathway.
3. To fully utilize interdisciplinary Research Groups to strengthen program development and improve teaching and learning practices.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

Admission to second-cycle study programs for Lithuanian citizens is conducted by submitting applications through the KTU information system, while admission for foreign citizens is carried out through the "Dream Apply" system. Graduates of the first cycle (bachelor's) and integrated studies who meet the requirements specified in the descriptions of study fields (groups of study fields) and second-cycle study programmes are admitted to second-cycle studies. The minimum admission requirements are: a Bachelor's or Master's qualification degree in any study field for university graduates; a professional Bachelor's qualification degree in social sciences, law, public management, or education (with 30 additional study credits) or a professional Bachelor's qualification degree in any other study field (with 60 additional study credits) for college graduates; and English language proficiency at least at level B2.

State-budget-funded study places are awarded through a competitive selection process, with funding granted to applicants who achieve the highest competition scores during admission. Applicants are admitted to study programmes based on the order of preference indicated in their application and their position in the competition ranking.

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the number of applicants and admitted students decreased compared to 2022/2023 and other years. In 2022/2023, there were 20 applicants, of whom 16 were admitted, whereas in 2023/2024, the number of applicants dropped to 14, with 11 students admitted. Therefore, it is worth considering ways to attract more students again. However, a positive aspect is that the number of applicants choosing the programme as their first priority has increased.

Overall, the admission process and its procedures are clear. The necessary information is available on the KTU website.

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

The evaluation and recognition of foreign qualifications for applicants to KTU are centralized and conducted by the International Relations Department. The process follows national regulations and ensures that foreign qualifications align with Lithuanian education standards. Applicants submit a single online application that includes both admission and qualification assessment. The evaluation considers the qualification's level, its equivalency to Lithuanian education, and any essential differences. If no substantial differences are found, the qualification is recognized as equivalent to a Lithuanian degree.

Recognition decisions can vary: full recognition, recognition with restrictions for specific fields, recognition with additional requirements (such as exams or extra courses), or non-recognition with partial credit for prior studies. Compliance with these requirements does not guarantee admission, which is subject to KTU's admission regulations. Additionally, learning outcomes from other Lithuanian or foreign institutions may be credited based on KTU's guidelines, with limits on how much can be transferred depending on the study cycle.

Before leaving for Erasmus+ exchange studies, students must coordinate their partial study plan and the recognition of learning outcomes in advance with the Vice-Dean for Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. This ensures that the credits earned abroad will be recognised upon their return.

Furthermore, KTU allows recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning, such as work experience, courses, or volunteer activities, awarding study credits if the learning outcomes align with the program. However, no more than 50% of a study program can be credited in this way, and the final project is not eligible for recognition. Between 2020 and 2024, KTU recognized 34 cases of competencies.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The admission process for second-cycle study programmes at KTU is clear and transparent, with Lithuanian citizens applying through the KTU system and foreign applicants using the "Dream Apply" platform. Entry requirements ensure that university graduates hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree, while college graduates may need additional study credits depending on their field. English language proficiency at a B2 level is mandatory. Admission to state-funded places is competitive, with funding granted to applicants with the highest competition scores. Although the number of applicants and admitted students decreased in the 2023/2024 academic year compared to the previous year, there was an encouraging increase in those selecting the programme as their first priority.

The evaluation of foreign qualifications is centralised, ensuring alignment with Lithuanian education standards, while KTU also recognises competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning, with certain limitations.

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

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

KTU promotes international mobility by offering students opportunities for partial studies and internships abroad. Academic mobility is categorized into physical (studying abroad), mixed (a combination of in-person and virtual learning), and virtual (online participation). The Erasmus+ program, which began in 2021, introduced new mobility options, such as short-term doctoral mobility and blended intensive programs.

Students can undertake partial studies through Erasmus+ in various partner countries, with tuition fees waived at partner institutions. Travel and accommodation expenses are covered by students, though KTU offers mobility scholarships. Other exchange programs, such as NORDTEK and State Scholarships, also provide opportunities. International students at KTU have lower participation in mobility programs, as they are already studying abroad.

KTU also facilitates international internships through Erasmus+, allowing students to gain experience in companies, research centers, and other organizations. Internships can last a minimum of two months, with special programs like "Vulcanus in Japan" offering additional opportunities. Students may take a year-long internship with approval from the Vice-Rector for Studies.

The university promotes mobility programs through its "KTU DISCOVERed International Student Exchange" brand, website, newsletters, and events.

Although opportunities to participate in exchange programmes are available and publicised, they have not attracted significant interest. According to the data provided in the SER (p. 39), during the 2022/2023 academic year, 3 students from the "Public Policy and Security" programme went abroad for partial studies or internships, while in the 2023/2024 academic year, only 2 students participated, one of whom took part in a BIP (Blended Intensive Programme).

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

KTU offers comprehensive academic support to students through various programmes, including the GUIDed mentoring programme and the KTU Talent Academy, which consists of GIFTed, GIFTed Masters, SKILLed FinTech, and SKILLed AI development programmes. However, some of these initiatives are designed specifically for first-year undergraduate students and are not suitable for second-cycle students. Students can also earn microcredentials through special modules.

Lecturers have allocated time for individual consultations, which is visible to students in the KTU information system and Moodle. Lecturers strive to maintain good relationships with students and provide the necessary support.

Financial support opportunities include a range of scholarships, such as talent scholarships for outstanding academic, research, and extracurricular achievements, sponsor-funded scholarships from businesses and patrons, and one-off incentive scholarships for students actively engaged in university life, volunteering, or student organizations. Social scholarships and state financial aid are available for students in difficult economic situations or those with disabilities. KTU also offers tuition fee reductions and financial assistance for international exchange programs, as well as funding through the Foundation of International Scientific Events, which supports student participation in conferences, seminars, and scientific competitions.

KTU promotes student engagement through career development, student organizations, arts, and sports programmes. Initiatives like WANTed, UNITed, INSPIRed, and ACTIVATed offer career support, extracurricular activities, artistic societies, and modern sports facilities.

Psychological and personal support at KTU is provided through a range of services aimed at ensuring students' well-being. Two psychologists, working a total of 1.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs), are available at the KTU Student Information and Service Centre, offering free individual and group consultations, stress management sessions, relaxation exercises, and canistherapy. Students can also seek support from a chaplain and a pastoral care group. Additionally, peer mentors help new students adapt to university life, while academic mentors assist with research activities, career mentors provide guidance on professional development, and tutors offer academic support in specific subjects.

However, it is stated in SER (p. 43) that during the analyzed period, students from the the Public Policy and Security programme did not participate in the WANTed, GIFTed, or GUIDed programmes, as they cited family and work commitments as limiting factors. Additionally, there was no recorded interest from Political Science students in using psychological or personal support services, indicating that they may prioritize other aspects of university life and external responsibilities over these available resources.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

At KTU, new students are introduced to the academic environment through various orientation programmes, including "Welcome Week," where they learn about study procedures, available resources, and meet faculty members. They also have access to videos, campus tours, and peer mentors to help them settle in. During the first class of each study module, lecturers outline the programme, objectives, and evaluation methods, which are also available on Moodle and the Academic Information System.

Students have continuous access to consultations and information via the KTU intranet, website, by email and weekly newsletters. The "one-stop-shop" in the Academic Information System centralises answers and issue reporting. Academic guidance is provided by the Study Centre and programme heads, while the "Study@KTU Ambassadors" programme promotes international exchange. The KTU Students' Association and faculty associations represent student interests, organise events, and conduct surveys.

However, the large number of communication channels often causes confusion among students. They are not always sure where to find the necessary information. There is a lack of a clear, unified communication and task submission platform. Lecturers choose their preferred method of communication, whether via email or Moodle, requiring students to adapt to each lecturer individually, which creates uncertainty. As a result, important study-related information, such as lecture rescheduling, sometimes fails to reach all students due to the fragmented and inconsistent use of these channels.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

KTU promotes international mobility through various exchange programmes, including Erasmus+ and other opportunities like NORDTEK and State Scholarships. However, student participation in these programmes remains low, with only a few students from the Public Policy and Security programme engaging in mobility activities in recent years. KTU provides extensive academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support, but some students, particularly from the Public Policy and Security programme, have not fully utilised these services, citing work and family commitments.

KTU offers comprehensive support through mentoring programmes, scholarships, career development initiatives, and access to sports and artistic activities. Psychological support is available through counselling services. While the university provides a range of orientation and guidance services to help students navigate their academic life, the large number of communication channels can cause confusion, leading to missed or unclear information for 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
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Many non-formal education programmes, leisure activities are available.
2. Comprehensive academic, financial, social, and psychological support is available for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. To encourage students to participate in at least short-term study exchanges, such as BIP.
2. To define and standardise the use of communication channels.

For further improvement

1. To encourage students to utilise academic, career, and psychological support services.

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

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

Study process is regulated by institutional (University's Statute, Provisional academic regulations, Code of Academic Ethics, Strategy of Studies 2021-2025), national and international documents. Learning outcomes are clearly listed within the internal Academic Information System (AIS) and were provided in SER (annexes 2 and 3). Both methods and learning outcomes are differentiated by each course. Students are informed about module structure in the first lectures and have this information available on Moodle.

Studies include more traditional teaching and learning methods (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops/ discussions, teamwork, case study analysis, individual project) and more innovative methods (e.g. project-, challenge-, inquiry- and problem-based learning, design thinking, reflective learning, US-based simulation of real situations). The classes are provided in the evening, on working days. Based on information provided by management and administration, there are plans to introduce an AI tool for facilitating course development for teachers. Use of innovative methods is part of teachers assessment. However, as indicated by SER representatives, it is still a challenge for teachers to avoid classical lectures.

Evaluation of achievements is both traditional (e.g. written exams, task solving, project reports) and innovative (e.g. portfolio of works or competencies, self-assessment).

Although SER states 'studies are provided on-campus, remotely or as blended learning' and programme website (<https://admissions.ktu.edu/programme/m-public-policy-and-security>) refers to blended learning, both management and administration representatives and students indicated that studies are carried out online except for examinations that are onsite provided students from abroad obtain a visa. This may lead (and have led at least in one case) to misunderstandings when students come to study in blended mode and instead end up learning fully online away from their home countries.

Graduates can pursue a PhD in Political sciences, although the action plan for 2023-2025 of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (appendix 7) does not foresee any increase in a number of third cycle students. Some of the interviewed alumni have pursued PhD.

Although most candidates are working, those who do not work sometimes have limited possibilities to find internship opportunities (e.g. AIS offers limited internship possibilities for students from abroad). In 2022-2023 year KTU had 9 Erasmus+ students coming from other countries and 3 out-bound mobility students visiting other countries.

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

Number of students from socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is low (one or none per year as indicated in the SER). However, KTU has a comprehensive policy for addressing their needs including the Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Violence Prevention Policy, KTU's emotional and social well-being policy and its implementation guidelines, the Religious Diversity Guidelines.

KTU provides financial (e.g., one-off social scholarships) and psychological (e.g. peer mentors, psychologists) to students with individual needs. As informed by senior management and administration staff, when digitalising study modules they took into consideration accessibility of students – adapted library (although the new library demonstrated was built for students of other programmes), trained the administration and teachers on the topics of learning about disabilities, ethics and adaptation of studies, universal design. However, the building in which the meeting took place was not fully adapted to students with special needs (e.g., lack of elevator is limiting access for students with physical needs).

At the University, it is possible to adapt studies for students with individual needs. For that students must fill out a survey form and make an appointment with the social welfare coordinator. There is a constantly active survey for the students with individual needs and all students who used the related services in 2023 were satisfied with the adaptation of studies. To add, the flexible forms of the achievement evaluation (e.g., longer time for exam) are applied while assessing the learning achievements of the candidates with special needs.

No complaints have been received during recent years regarding access to higher education.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

Teaching and learning addresses the needs of students and enables them to achieve intended learning outcomes. The format of the study should be better clarified as this confuses some students. Also, some students felt that course materials are too focused on the Lithuanian context – this needs to change considering the population of students from abroad increases. Since the programme is largely provided online, teachers should pay much more attention to how to engage students during their lectures. Finally, it seems that opportunities for internships abroad are insufficiently exploited.

Access to higher education for socially vulnerable students and students with individual needs is well ensured. Not all buildings seem adapted to students with individual needs. Policies for ensuring access to higher education are merely reactive and rely on student initiative.

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

Learning progress is monitored using a number of systems including: a guide for evaluating students' achievements, procedure for students' attendance in classes, the Early Warning System enabling teachers to monitor student performance and attendance; the dedicated place within Moodle providing teachers with reflection on students work and/or evaluation.

The University applies the accumulative evaluation system where the final evaluation of the module consists of the marks of intermediate assessments and a final assessment, multiplied by the weighting coefficients and adding the multiplications. The number of the intermediate assessments for the study module and their percentage values is chosen by the coordinating teacher of the module. Besides the standard forms of evaluation, the additional evaluation of the student's activity level is applied (up to 10% of the final mark) by assessing student's preparation for case analysis, active discussion, participation in debates, case analysis, etc.

Teacher/supervisor assessments are reinforced by the Department of Academic Affairs which, once per year, prepares an annual report of the monitoring of the students' learning outcomes (according to the faculties and the study cycles). It is discussed at the Field Study Programme Committee.

Feedback to students is provided in a number of ways including academic mentors help students reach their learning outcomes; round table discussions at a programme level organised by the Faculty on possible improvements for the programme or a particular module; feedback survey to be filled by all relevant students for each module within the AIS; individual consultations by teachers coordinating the course during their available hours; email communication. Instead of passive requests to consult (e.g., students struggling academically are often passive) some KTU teachers also apply regular pre-scheduled consultations and/ or a proactive scenario consultation – they ask student what article she/ he has read and based on that asks more specific questions to check students' knowledge and identify its gaps.

However, when asked students indicated that communication with teachers is not standardised and methods depend on each teacher. For example, sometimes it is required that a student submits her/ his work via Moodle, then it is changed to submissions by email. Since channels are not standardised, students need to carefully check arrangements with each teacher, and this creates confusion and unnecessary complexity. Students also mentioned that KTU's communication became rather chaotic (e.g. Moodle platform is messy; readings change and they are not always notified about this; written communication is lacking).

Self-assessment and learning progress planning is not described in the SER and when asked students did not indicate specific tools (incl. those that are available in Moodle) for doing that.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

The University uses a number of tools in this area. Firstly, it carries out several surveys to monitor employability and career paths of students including annual graduate surveys, annual alumni surveys and biannual employer surveys. Survey response rate is not high. For example, a recent Alumni survey of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, conducted in June – July 2024, had a response rate of 7,4%. Secondly, KTU also monitors graduate employability according to the Education Management Information system. Programme's students are mostly working already while studying. The most recent data shows that 85% of the programme's students (2024-2025, 1st year) are employed. Students who graduated in January 2025 were 100% employed.

Since 2020, the University has had the alumni career mentorship supplementing KTU Mentorship Programme and assisting the University graduates in their career path after their graduation from the University. However, it seems that career mentorship is not widely used – in 2023, career mentors were assigned to 25 graduates of the University across all programmes, while none of the interviewed social partners and alumni did provide mentoring services for programme's students.

On the programme level, the KTU focuses on qualitative methods to collect the feedback from Alumni. This is mostly implemented as focus group discussions as the number of graduates of the programme is not big. For example, alumni feedback on their career paths is collected during the KTU WANTED Career Days which have been organised every autumn since 2004. The aim of this event is to provide assistance to the graduates in their successful integration into the labour market. Communication with graduates and employers takes many other forms including informal (telephone, Zoom, etc.) conversations, formal and informal meetings, formal and informal interviews with employers, joint publications based on research done during the studies, Alumni participation in project activities, meetings with stakeholders (that are also employers of the programme graduates). Overall, both interviewed alumni and social partner representatives' opinions regarding the programme delivery were positive.

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

KTU ensures compliance with its Statute and Academic Regulations, reinforcing academic integrity through various policies. The Board of Academic Ethics upholds the Code of Academic Ethics, allowing community members to report academic violations. KTU also enforces guidelines on the ethical use of generative AI, study module assessments, and written work requirements. To promote tolerance and non-discrimination, KTU implements the Equality and Diversity and Violence Prevention Policy. The Commission of Equal Rights investigates cases of discrimination, harassment, and equal opportunity violations, though no such cases were reported in the programme during the reviewed period.

The student-teacher relationship at KTU is shaped by the programme's interdisciplinary nature, technological emphasis, and hybrid learning approach. While teachers have flexibility in choosing modern teaching methods, the programme is primarily delivered online, making it harder to foster social interaction. Although students appreciated the digitalisation efforts, they also emphasized relatively low degree of social interaction via online or onsite means.

KTU applies specific plagiarism prevention guidelines for student-written works and enforces methodological requirements for academic writing. The Commission for Settlement of Academic Violations addresses breaches of academic integrity. Additionally, the university utilizes the similarity-checking system "Turnitin" to detect potential plagiarism in written work. Sanctions regarding plagiarism are strict – the student offender is expelled from the University for the second case of the violation. According to students, rules for plagiarism are well explained. KTU also provides guidelines and monitors usage of AI tools. However, AI detection software is not as precise as in case of plagiarism, so teachers try to mix written and oral assessments to properly assess student's knowledge and skills.

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

The University applies the Guidelines for the Submission and Processing of the Students' Appeals and Complaints. During the evaluation period there were no such cases in the political sciences programme. However, when asked if they know how to submit an appeal or complaint students were not fully aware how to do it.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is sufficiently systematic. However, communication channels between lecturers and students seem unstable and frustrating. Although some good examples of teacher feedback to students exist (e.g. pre-scheduled consultations), such proactive approaches could be better standardised for all students, esp. considering their low number. This may include promotion of self-assessment and learning progress planning tools.

Graduate employability and career are monitored well, alumni and social partner evaluations of the programme(s) are overall positive. However, the response rate of its surveys (e.g. alumni survey) is too low to obtain quality information. Career mentorship support to students is not considered as sufficient.

Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented well. The programme became more popular in 2022. However, challenges remain, including lack of sense of community among students, maintaining student motivation, and ensuring clear ethical guidelines for communication between students and lecturers from diverse backgrounds.

Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are prepared. However, not all students know how to submit an appeal or a complaint. The university lacks clearer guidance, such as mandatory workshops or an easily accessible online step-by-step guide, that is well advertised and provided to all students.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Active learning methods like project-based learning, design thinking, and real-life simulations are used. There are plans to integrate AI tools for course development. The use of innovative methods is part of teacher assessment.
2. Regular pre-scheduled consultations and proactive scenario-based consultations (e.g., questioning students on readings to assess knowledge gaps) are conducted.
3. Student activity is additionally evaluated (up to 10% of the final mark) based on preparation for case analysis, discussions, debates, and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic KTU aim to digitalise and internationalise the programme is commendable. However, it is not yet fully adapted to reach these aims.

Recommendations to address shortcomings:

1. To clearly indicate the online nature of the programme, integrate more global perspectives, provide further training for teachers on student engagement and better exploit Erasmus plus opportunities for students.
2. To ensure all buildings are adapted for students with individual needs and encourage a proactive role for teachers and administrative staff in identifying and assisting students who may not request support themselves.
3. To standardize communication channels between lecturers and students, enhance proactive and individualised feedback to students, and ensure all students, incl. international ones, have access to self-assessment/ learning progress planning tools. IUn addition, to improve guidelines for ethical communication between teachers and students to prevent misunderstandings, provide structured networking opportunities (virtual or onsite meetups) for student community-building, enhance cultural awareness training for teachers.
4. To reinforce structured career mentorship through career coaching, networking events, and faculty-led career planning sessions.
5. To implement clearer guidance to students on submitting appeals and complaints.

For further improvement:

1. To better utilise Erasmus+ opportunities for students.
2. To increase response rate of university surveys (e.g. alumni survey) or, instead, completely move towards qualitative data collection methods to obtain higher quality data from both alumni and social partners.
3. To establish guidelines for assessing AI use.
4. To increase EU institutional knowledge for international students

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

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

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

With a view to Lithuania's national regulations, the academic staff in political sciences at KTU is well-qualified, with 91% of second-cycle programme lecturers holding scientific degrees, and 23% holding professor positions. The recruitment procedure adheres to open and merit-based principles aligned with EURAXESS standards.

More than two thirds of staff have held at least 0.5 FTE positions at KTU for three years or more. Most staff members are in the age break of 40-48 years and maintain consistent turnover, supported by PhD students and new hires. In the Public Policy and Security programme, there currently are 11 teachers that coordinate modules in this study program and their FTE is 8,29 (KTU responses to additional questions). In this MA program, there is one non-Lithuanian national being employed. According to the SER, the average workload breakup for academic staff in the Public Policy and Security study programme is approximately one third of the workload and fully complies with the local regulations governing the workload of academic staff.

Language proficiency is emphasised, with over half of the lecturers achieving at least B2 in English, and C1 required for teaching in English. The programme Public Policy and Security maintains some participation of practitioners, in particular from the group of social partners.

Research competencies amongst the faculty teaching in the program are robust, with faculty actively and successfully participating in national and international projects (e.g., Interreg, Cost and Horizon), contributing to areas such as risk communication, political communication, governance, and public policy. Furthermore, KTU adheres to a policy of continuously emphasising the need for training amongst its staff members in terms of university pedagogy and methods.

The student-teacher ratio is favorable, with an estimated 9:1 for the faculty and 1:1 in the political sciences second-cycle programs, including Public Policy and Security, allowing for individualised attention and interactive teaching methods. In the Public Policy and Security programme, the teacher-student ratio has grown recently from 1,6 to 2,5 from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The second cycle programme in Public Policy and Security has a small number of academic teaching staff prompting an extremely favorable ratio between student and faculty. A significant part of the program is taught in a hybrid or online mode with only a few courses. In addition to the second-cycle program, it is currently planned to introduce an interdisciplinary BA programme focusing on Politics, Philosophy and Society. This would strengthen the overall base also in terms of future recruitment. Because of late marketing and limited traction amongst prospective students in Lithuania, the Faculty eventually decided to change the language of teaching from Lithuanian to English. By expanding the admission market, it is expected to increase the international appeal. To succeed with this approach, it is paramount not only to ensure an attractive study program and environment, but also a competitive research staff.

The teaching staff in Public Policy and Security fulfills the formal requirements (e.g., 80% of scientific degree, and 20% requirement of MA programs to be taught by professors) in terms of qualification. Research competencies are very good in light of the specific needs of the study program also allowing for quick adaptations, e.g. in terms of changing language requirements for programs. The teaching staff is able to cover a wide range of methods in the social sciences – both quantitative and qualitative. Overall, both, the number, qualification and competence of the teaching staff is very well aligned to meet the objectives of the study programme.

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

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

KTU actively promotes academic mobility through the Erasmus+ program, enabling teachers to engage in teaching and training exchanges with partner institutions globally. The program supports teaching visits lasting 2 days to 2 months, requiring at least 8 academic teaching hours, and funds staff training related to their roles. Selection aligns with university and departmental strategic goals. KTU has adopted mixed and virtual mobility formats due to COVID-19. Mobility is well-supported by the Faculty, with students valuing guest lectures. Between 2020 and 2024, 11 outbound internships and 5 inbound teaching visits occurred, despite pandemic-related limitations. Teaching staff of the Public Policy and Security programme actively take part in scientific conferences and dispose of the necessary funds.

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

The development of teaching staff competencies at KTU follows national guidelines encouraging enhancement in teaching, research, and general skills. KTU supports high-level research and professional development, with the EDU_Lab Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching playing a central role in training educators. Faculty receive training in innovative teaching methods and participate in follow-up programs to integrate these into their modules. Outstanding contributions to teaching innovation are recognised annually.

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching – EDU_Lab (<https://edulab-en.ktu.edu/>) assumes a central role as a university-wide competence center. The center collaborates with program committees and faculty to refine study programmes based on collected feedback. Faculty also enhance their research skills through participation in (international) conferences, projects, and training aligned with their expertise. Additional funding for research is available through various national and institutional channels.

KTU emphasises didactic competences as well as language proficiency, requiring English skills at B2 or C1 levels, depending on teaching responsibilities, and offers employer-funded language courses. The university also enables staff to undertake additional study modules, fostering ongoing skill development and quality assurance. Professional courses to develop research competences which were attended by faculty in the past included Quantitative Text Analysis, Machine Learning and R etc. Per academic year there have recently been 12 and 13 enrollments (with a staff number of 22-24). Enrollment in didactic courses for university pedagogy were smaller: e.g., 4 in the academic year 2022/23 according to the SER.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

There are various opportunities for both academic mobility and professional development available for the staff at KTU. Teaching staff have seized opportunities in both realms. Both mobility and outbound internships by staff are being utilised on a regular basis; guest visitors are highly welcome and have, in the case of the Public Policy and Security programme from the University of Madeira, become a regular feature over the recent years. The EDU_Lab assumes a particularly important role and its courses have also been selected by teachers from the program under evaluation. Practitioner experts, often from the group of alumni and social partners, are engaged in guest lectures. The next step could entail encouraging them as mentors and sparring partners in some of the research conducted by the faculty active in the program. Yet, on the whole, opportunities for academic mobility and professional development of the staff are ensured and actively utilised.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching – EDU_Lab assumes an important role in offering university pedagogical classes to staff.
2. Focus on advanced methodological training is an asset both in the study field in general, and in the Public Policies and Security study programme in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Consider the organisation of a research group underpinning the core theme of Public Policies and Security to strengthen collaboration at the department.
2. Consider closer cooperation with practitioners also in terms of research (e.g., via student mentorships) in line with the study program.
3. Ensure sufficient inclusion of international students on campus in a more comprehensive way.
4. Teaching staff draw on a rich reservoir of databases available at KTU. Increase student participation in data-driven research even more.

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

For the purposes of the study programme, the premises of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities are used, there are 14 classrooms with capacity of 13-60 seats and four computer classrooms for 81 students, two of them are equipped with the software for qualitative and quantitative data analyses. One classroom has the equipment for delivering virtual lectures (SER, 59). Remote classes that are the major mode of teaching at the programme, are organised using Zoom and MS Teams virtual environments.

KTU Library resources are allocated in different disciplinary branches and locations. The most modern University Campus Library complex provides multifunctional space for both staff and students to be engaged in different forms of work and social activities. The Campus Library complex is situated in the KTU main campus, distant from the Faculty building. The Library of Social Sciences and Humanities is located in the city centre, in close distance to the Faculty building. It has various rooms for group and individual work, on-site collections and digital databases. For the programme digital databases are especially important, since the programme is taught mostly online. The KTU Virtual Library reveals public/open access to 87 journals in International Relations and 287 journals in Political Science (all subtopics) (website vb.ktu.edu) and more than 50 licences databases. In total, the Library has more than 2800 books and 650 journals in the field of political science (SER, 60). Virtual Library resources are accessible from every location with secure KTU logins. For methods' courses and MA theses, statistical software packages SPSS, and MAXQDA are available not only in the computer classes, but also in personal computers as a network license, using Virtual Private Network (VPN). Most of the course materials are provided online in the Moodle environment that is obligatory for every lecture course.

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

The infrastructure plan is renewed annually in close cooperation between the administration and members of the Faculty. Currently, one classroom is equipped with modern technology for virtual teaching, but similar equipment is being considered to be installed in other classrooms (SER, 59). The Panel welcomes this development.

For updating literature resources and licenses for software and databases the Head of the programme and teaching staff communicate with designated personnel of the Library. Members of the academic staff participating in the interviews were satisfied with the existing level of IT equipment (both hard-and software), neither did they feel they were limited in purchasing new literature resources. Overall approach to acquiring resources seems to be regulated in basic aspects entailing flexibility in personal needs and work habits (i.e. not every staff member is using KTU's provided laptop; working from home is allowed but not regulated).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Overall, there is no shortage of resources in terms of space, library or software resources needed for studying and research. Development of infrastructure and study resources is continuously planned and updated. The programme is taught online and to students that reside abroad. This

requires constant development of the educational technology that is applied in the Programme. Provided materials and the site visit revealed that equipment of virtual teaching and learning is at basic level, which satisfies current needs, but may not allow for advancement. The number of students in the programme has increased sharply in recent years and KTU needs to make sure that teaching resources and methods are aligned with this (for example, considering different time zones of remote students). During the site visit, there were technical problems with online communication; some students missed feeling of belonging to the KTU community because of remoteness.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Virtual Library and international statistical/ survey databases accessible for staff and students both on- and off-campus provide solid resources for online teaching.
2. Staff and students can make use of statistical software packages, the licences are regularly renewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. IT equipment must be regularly updated to ensure off-campus students have a complete and enjoyable learning experience, including tools for co-learning outside the classroom, participation in student conferences, and social activities. (A similar shortcoming was indicated in the previous evaluation report.).

For further improvement

1. Expansion of the student body in numbers and geographically should be paid due attention while developing the IT infrastructure (i.e. by considering different time zones of remote students, delivering hybrid lectures or seminars).

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) ensures the quality of its Political Science study field through a comprehensive internal quality assurance system. This system aligns with EU policies and Lithuanian regulations, focusing on continuous improvement and active stakeholder involvement. The internal quality assurance consists of a variety of tools and is primarily entrusted to the University's Study Programme. The main functions of internal study quality monitoring and evaluation are performed by the University Senate, the University Study Quality Committee, the Faculty Study Committee, and the Field Study Programme Committees. The management of study fields and programmes is based on the KTU statutes and regulations as well as national law, and other legal acts related to the regulation of higher education.

The Political Science study programmes are managed by the Political Science, Sociology, and Public Administration Study Programme Committee (FSPC), which coordinates the development, implementation, and quality assurance of the programmes. The Head of the FSPC works closely with the Faculty administration and ensures communication with students, teachers, and social partners. Regular reviews and updates of the study programmes and modules are conducted annually, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and experts.

The quality assurance process includes ongoing surveys and assessments, such as student and employer feedback. The FSPC is responsible for making necessary changes and ensuring that the Political Science study programmes meet both academic and professional standards.

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

The involvement of social stakeholders, including students, alumni, and employers, plays a crucial role in KTU's internal quality assurance. The KTU Students' Association actively engages students in University governance, decision-making, and academic processes, ensuring their perspectives are considered in the development of study programs.

Alumni contribute by sharing their expertise through career mentorship and guest lectures. Employers and social partners, particularly in Political Science, offer practical insights by suggesting thesis topics, participating in teaching, and aiding in the development of relevant skills. Feedback from stakeholders, including surveys and roundtable discussions, guides the continuous improvement of study programs. These evaluations help identify areas for improvement, such as expanding internship opportunities and clarifying study goals.

Stakeholder opinions influence the content of modules and learning outcomes, ensuring the programs remain aligned with societal needs. The University's commitment to transparency, efficiency, and continuous development fosters ongoing enhancement of educational quality.

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

The University ensures transparent communication among students, teachers, and staff, reflecting its commitment to public service and democratic accountability. It utilizes various channels for both internal and external communication.

For internal communication, the University keeps stakeholders informed about study programmes. Externally, the University employs diverse methods to reach a broad audience, including students, the public, and alumni. This includes hosting events, using Google Ads and digital campaigns on Facebook, maintaining a website, and engaging on social media platforms. During admission periods, banner ads on Lithuanian internet portals boost visibility. Alumni receive an annual newsletter to stay informed about programme developments. Additionally, the University maintains a dedicated website for the study programme in both Lithuanian and English, utilizes AIKOS for vocational guidance, and provides printed materials to enhance programme visibility. Active use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube further strengthens engagement with the public.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

The responsibility for ensuring the quality of the Political Science study programme lies with the Study Field Programme Committee and the Head of the Study Programme Committee.

Feedback from students is gathered through semester-end surveys, where they evaluate individual modules, teaching quality, and the overall programme. This helps to continuously improve the programme. Between 2020 and 2023, students rated the “Public Policy and Security” programme rather positively, in particular for the 2022-23 study year, praising, amongst other things, the supportive communication, well-structured modules, and professional teachers. However, students suggested improvements, including revisiting the consistency of module assignments and the structure of materials on Moodle. The “Student Voice” survey also highlighted satisfaction with supervisors and the clarity of requirements, as well as the innovative study format and guest lecturers. The feedback collected guides the development of annual programme improvement plans and resource allocation, ensuring the programme’s continuous enhancement.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The development of the field of study draws from an internal quality assurance system that involves several stakeholder groups and that is guided by continuous monitoring and dissemination of the results. Overall, the study program “Public Policy and Security” has received positive evaluations demonstrating that students and social partners alike appreciate the program. Yet, during the site visit several panel interviewees expressed dissatisfaction about a) inconsistencies in using Moodle or alternative online platforms for the courses, b) communication with students and availability of academic staff. It is difficult to assess to what extent these concerns are representative, but it seems worthwhile for KUT to have an eye on these issues.

Thus, feedback from students and other stakeholders seems to be one of the key elements of the University's efforts to improve the study quality and one of the foundations for ensuring and implementing changes that are relevant to the University and its community. A graduate career pathway survey is conducted every year on the University level. The most recent iteration of the Alumni Survey, which, according to information provided by KTU, aimed to find out about the integration of alumni into the labour market, their career and achievements, the competences they have acquired and the need to improve their study programmes, was conducted in 2024 yielding only response rate of 13,6%. The numbers for the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities was even lower (7,4%). Finally, on the programme level, focus group discussions are being conducted with students and graduates as the student numbers are low. As the organization of the surveys is based on the principles of voluntary participation and anonymity of the respondents, there are limits to raising responsiveness and thereby reliability of the survey outcomes.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The quality assurance system is responsive to needs by students and social partners.
2. Decisions are made public and communicated via different channels ensuring that there is a sense of community.
3. The student satisfaction with the study program Public Policy and Security has grown over the past few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Response rates in surveys are low and information therefore insignificant. Ensure systematic use of alternative formats for the provision of feedback, e.g., by way of developing Study Barometers in close cooperation with MA-level students and social partners.
2. It should be aimed at making participation in surveys a routine exercise and incentivize participation by rolling them out at strategic moments of the course.

For further improvement

1. To consider introducing informal (oral, in-class) mid-term evaluations to provide improvements "on-the-go,, that is for the remaining part of course.
2. To develop systematic Study Barometers to collect data over time.

V. SUMMARY

Public Policy and Security is one of eight second-cycle study programmes in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU). The programme aligns with the study descriptors for Political Science. In the 2022/23 academic year, it enrolled 35 students, an increase of 20 compared to the previous two admission cycles. There are plans to introduce a new Bachelor's programme - Politics, Philosophy, and Society -, aimed at strengthening Political Science studies.

The main challenge for the programme is that it is marketed as a hybrid model, yet students experience most, if not all, of their classes online. While this arrangement benefits Lithuanian students with work commitments, it has been a source of frustration for some international students. The programme team should consider how to enhance the student experience for those who have relocated to Lithuania, but are still studying online.

The Public Policy and Security programme is relatively unique in Lithuania in terms of its content. Training graduates to understand "security" in the current geopolitical climate is crucial for Lithuanian society, and graduates of the programme go onto work in relevant public and private sector organisations. There is a strong emphasis on enhancing students' quantitative methods and data analysis skills, which are valuable for employability. Graduate employability and career outcomes are well monitored, and evaluations of the programme from alumni and social partners are generally positive.

The panel recommends that the programme team review the balance and connection between the two elements of the programme. Public policy appears to be underrepresented in both research and teaching, as does the explicit link between policy and security. Some students felt that course materials are too focused on the Lithuanian context, which, given the geopolitical challenges, should be addressed to provide a broader perspective. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme, combined with the focus on technology, is a key strength. However, it could be developed to align more closely with the institution's strategic vision, emphasizing mega trends, technological change, and hyperconnectivity.

The curriculum is informed by internationally competitive research undertaken by academic staff with the relevant qualifications and experience. However, there are some concerns that the faculty's success in securing research grants has diverted staff from teaching, potentially weakening the connection between research and teaching. Additionally, the panel found no clear link between the new research groups and the programme. This issue is further compounded by the relatively small number of academic teaching staff, which, while contributing to a favourable student-to-staff ratio, also puts pressure on the programme.

Staff have opportunities to develop their teaching skills through EDU_Lab, which has led to notable innovations across the programme. However, further efforts are needed to enhance student engagement in the online learning experience. The significant increase in student enrolment in 2022/23 has also changed the nature of programme delivery, an issue that needs urgent attention. Students benefit from the involvement of practitioner experts and social partners in teaching. However, more could be done to engage these groups in mentoring students, particularly in relation to employability and skills development.

The admission process for second-cycle study programmes at KTU is clear and transparent, with Lithuanian citizens applying through the KTU system and non-Lithuanian applicants using the "Dream Apply" platform. The entry requirements for academic qualifications and English proficiency are appropriate for the programme.

While opportunities for international mobility and academic support exist, student participation remains low due to work and family commitments. Students are generally well-aware of their learning progress, and feedback to students is provided systematically. However, a broader concern

is the standardisation of technological platforms for teaching and communication, particularly given that most of the programme is delivered online.

Overall, the programme offers socially relevant content and produces well-trained graduates. It fosters a strong research culture that informs teaching, and staff are engaged and motivated. Moving forward, the programme must ensure that its two key elements (Public Policy and Security) complement each other more, clarify its modes of delivery, and make a concerted effort to build a sense of community – particularly for international students who have relocated to Kaunas but continue to study remotely.

