



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

POLITICAL SCIENCE FIELD OF STUDY

**General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of
Lithuania**

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. Dr. Tomaž Deželan
2. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Žaneta Ozolina
3. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Stefano Braghioli
4. Social partner representative: Rimantas Dumčius
5. Student representative: Evelina Brazauskienė

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 10th of December 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

The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania (MAL) is a state-owned university and military training institution, established in 1992 as Lithuania's primary higher education institution for training officers. It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of National Defence (MoD) and functions as both an academic institution and a military unit. MAL offers academic programmes across three study fields: Social Sciences (Political Science), Business and Public Administration, and Public Security. Within Political Science, it provides a Bachelor's programme in International Relations (3.5 years, 210 ECTS) and a Master's programme in Military Diplomacy (2 years, 120 ECTS).

Overview of the study field

The assessed study field at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania is Political Science (J02), which supports the academy's mission of training officers and national security specialists. It includes a Bachelor's programme in International Relations (3.5 years, 210 ECTS) and a Master's programme in Military Diplomacy (2 years, 120 ECTS). The bachelor's programme integrates political science education with military training, preparing cadets for leadership roles in the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The master's programme, designed for military personnel and defence professionals, focuses on international security, diplomacy, and conflict analysis. Both programmes align with national defence priorities and NATO educational frameworks, combining academic study with practical military training and policy analysis.

Previous external evaluations

The past external evaluation conducted in 2023 recommended strengthening the integration of military diplomacy, improving the progression from general to specialized subjects, and refining programme sequencing to enhance logical continuity. It also suggested introducing new courses in NATO and EU security policy, arms control, and military diplomacy, alongside better coordination of thesis research. Additionally, the evaluation called for enhanced study management and communication to minimize scheduling and staffing issues, all of which have since been implemented

Documents and information used in the review

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

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

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

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

Courses syllabi

16156 Economic, Political, and Defensive Integration of Europe and Asia

16158 Russian and CIS Studies

16676 International Relations and Geopolitics

14450 Political System of the European Union

12353 European Studies

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	International relations
State code	6121JX001
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 3.5 years
Workload in ECTS	210
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Political Science
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	2001
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	N/A

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Military Diplomacy
State code	6211JX001
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Part-time, 2 years
Workload in ECTS	120
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master's degree in Political Science
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Completion of the bachelor's study programme
First registration date	2001
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 **first cycle** of the political science field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

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

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

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

1*

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.

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IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

The MAL's Political Science programs (International Relations BA, Military Diplomacy MA) are strategically aligned with critical societal and labour market needs, particularly within the Lithuanian National Defence System (NDS). The curriculum directly addresses the imperative of national security in the face of evolving threats, specifically focusing on developing officers capable of analysing international processes, understanding hybrid warfare, and contributing to a resilient defence posture. This targeted approach directly supports the core career pathway for graduates: leadership and analytical roles within the NDS.

Given Lithuania's long-term plans for significant expansion of its armed forces and a recognised shortage of well-rounded officers, the contribution of political science programmes is vital. These programs provide a foundational understanding of international relations and security studies, equipping officers with the critical thinking skills to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on collaboration with diverse NATO allies, from individual military units to state-level military diplomacy, underscores the importance of officers with a nuanced understanding of international partnerships and intercultural communication. For instance, the planned stationing of a German brigade in Lithuania highlights the need for officers skilled in military diplomacy and alliance management.

The guaranteed employment within the NDS post-graduation for the BA program cadets is a substantial strength, ensuring a consistent pipeline of qualified personnel. The Military Diplomacy MA program directly addresses the professional development needs of serving officers and civil servants within the NDS, enabling them to advance to higher ranks and leadership positions. In this context, the MAL's political science programs are critical to Lithuania's national security strategy, directly contributing to a well-trained and capable officer corps essential for defending the nation and fostering effective international partnerships.

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

The aims and learning outcomes of the MAL's Political Science programmes (International Relations BA and Military Diplomacy MA) demonstrate a clear alignment with the institution's overall mission, goals, and strategic objectives. The MAL's core mission centres on educating and training Lithuanian military leaders, and the political science programmes directly contribute by developing expertise in areas crucial for modern officers.

Specifically, the programmes foster competencies in national security, defence analysis, and understanding the political landscape. This aligns with the MAL's strategic goal of providing research-based higher education and advancing knowledge in military and national security fields. The curriculum's focus on analysing the international security environment and evaluating threats directly supports the MAL's mission of preparing leaders capable of operating in complex and evolving security contexts. The close collaboration with the Ministry of National Defence (MoD) and the Lithuanian Army (LA) ensures the curriculum's relevance to the needs of the NDS, reinforcing the MAL's commitment to high-quality, mission-oriented studies. The emphasis on international cooperation through initiatives like Erasmus+ and EMILYO is well aligned with the strategic objective

of maximising military personnel participation in international exchanges. Consequently, the programmes fulfil their role in contributing to a strategically capable and internationally engaged officer corps, thereby powerfully serving the MAL's overarching institutional objectives.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The MAL's Political Science programmes are demonstrably well-aligned with both the specific needs of the Lithuanian National Defence System (NDS) and the broader strategic mission of the Military Academy itself. The programmes equip graduates with the analytical skills and international understanding vital for modern officers, directly contributing to national security and Lithuania's engagement within NATO. The close collaboration with the MoD and LA ensures the curriculum remains relevant and effectively prepares graduates for leadership roles within the NDS, thereby fulfilling the MAL's objective of training competent and capable military leaders.

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 programmes comply with legal requirements through adherence to national and international frameworks, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Military Officer Profession (SQF-MILOF). They align with Lithuanian laws such as the Law on Higher Education and Research and Ministry of Education and Defence orders. According to SER, regular programme reviews ensure compliance with updated descriptions of the political science field and other regulatory documents. Curriculum design and delivery meet requirements for ECTS credits, internships, and thesis preparation, while graduate qualifications align with national and EU frameworks for higher education and military leadership

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

Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning, and assessment methods are designed to be constructively aligned. While lecturers are the primary responsible for the alignment, the management is in charge of coordination and overview. Overall, the process is in force, however more attention should be paid to the full implementation of Bloom's taxonomy in the individual courses. The aims define the preparation of highly skilled specialists in international relations, security studies, and military diplomacy. Learning outcomes specify the competencies in knowledge application, research, and leadership required to meet these aims. Teaching methods include lectures, active learning techniques (discussions, debates), and research-based assignments to develop theoretical and practical skills. Assessment methods, such as presentations, written assignments, and cumulative evaluation, are designed to measure achievement of learning outcomes. Regular reviews by the Study Programmes Committee are organized in order to ensure alignment with programme objectives and stakeholder needs.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The curriculum ensures consistent development of student competencies through a structured progression of foundational, specialized, and practical courses tailored to programme outcomes. In the International Relations (BA) programme, the first year focuses on core political science subjects to build foundational knowledge. Subsequent years emphasize specialized topics in security studies, regional studies, and foreign policy. The inclusion of practical assignments, master's thesis preparation, and flexible schedules accommodates the professional needs of students, ensuring

competence development across academic and applied contexts. It is key to make sure that the curriculum (and individual courses) are regularly updated in the light of the most recent geo-political developments, especially given the focus of the programmes and of the academy.

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

Provided the specific type of education offered by the Academy and in spite of the constraints of military life, opportunities are offered to students to attend elective courses and join international exchange programmes like EMILYO and Erasmus+. Internships and thesis preparation in the final year integrate academic and practical skills. In the Military Diplomacy (MA) programme, foundational subjects are complemented by advanced modules in diplomacy, defence policy, and research methodology. In addition, during the 3rd semester - when the mobility window is in place - students who do not profit from mobility have the chance to attend English language courses, together with international visiting students.

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

Final theses comply with the requirements for the field and cycle by adhering to clearly defined methodological and procedural guidelines established by the Academy. These guidelines specify the scope, structure, and evaluation criteria for bachelor's and master's theses, aligned with national and international quality standards. In addition, ad hoc seminars are organized in order to prepare students for the development of their dissertation. Theses must demonstrate students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge and research skills to analyze relevant topics in political science, international relations, or security studies. The preparation process includes topic approval, supervisor consultation, and interim evaluations. Joint consultation seminars and the presence of both a civilian and a military supervisor are aimed to facilitate the process of thesis writing and the coherence of the final work. At the same time, a stronger emphasis - especially at the master's level - on research methods might help to improve students' empirical abilities, also with an eye on their final thesis.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The programmes comply with national and international legal standards, ensuring alignment with higher education and military frameworks. Regular reviews maintain compliance and relevance. Programme aims, learning outcomes, and teaching methods are well-structured, though stronger implementation of Bloom's taxonomy could enhance alignment. The curriculum balances theory and practice, with updates needed to reflect geopolitical shifts. Despite military constraints, students have access to electives, exchanges, and mobility options. Final theses meet required standards, but improving research methods, especially at the master's level, would strengthen empirical skills.

Overall, the programmes are well-structured, legally compliant, and offer a balance of theoretical knowledge and applied learning. Continuous curriculum updates and stronger methodological training will further enhance their effectiveness.

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
First cycle			X		
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. At both the MA and BA levels, significant emphasis is placed on the thesis writing process. Students are guided through a carefully structured path and benefit from dedicated, attentive supervision to support the successful completion of their work. This approach is particularly important as students balance the demands of academic studies with the responsibilities of military life.
2. Both the MA and BA programmes are designed to integrate academic studies with the realities of military life, reflecting a commitment to supporting students in balancing these dual responsibilities.
3. The programmes emphasize the inclusion of applied knowledge and leadership development, ensuring students acquire practical skills alongside theoretical insights. This approach enriches the learning experience and prepares students for challenges of military life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. To ensure the curricula remain relevant and address current geopolitical challenges, it is essential to **regularly review and update the academic literature** used in individual courses. This process is best carried out through peer review, though it may also require more proactive involvement and strategic guidance from the programmes' leadership to align course content with evolving global realities.
2. In light of recent geopolitical developments, particularly Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the **course "Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian Studies"** requires significant revisions to its content and academic references. The literature must be thoroughly updated to reflect the current context. It is strongly recommended to reframe the course to focus primarily on Russia while creating a dedicated, standalone course on Ukraine. This new course should center on Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration, offering students an in-depth understanding of the country's evolving geopolitical position and its aspirations within the European and transatlantic frameworks.
3. It is recommended to reschedule the **course "Quantitative Research Methods in Political Science"** from the 6th semester to an earlier semester. This adjustment would

make the course more actionable for students, allowing them to apply the acquired skills to the development of their theses more effectively and in a timely manner.

For further improvement

1. To disseminate best practices among lecturers and enhance both the relevance and consistency of the curriculum, it is recommended to promote peer-review sessions among lecturers. These sessions would allow lecturers to review each other's syllabi, exchange tips and ideas on applying Bloom's taxonomy, and ensure greater consistency in the course offerings in alignment with the overall curriculum. This collaborative approach would foster innovation, improve teaching strategies, and strengthen the coherence of the academic programme.
2. For foundational courses, it is recommended to identify one or two recent guiding textbooks that provide comprehensive and updated general knowledge. These should be complemented with recent academic articles or papers to ensure students are exposed to current research and emerging trends in the field. This approach balances core knowledge with contemporary insights, enhancing the academic depth and relevance of the courses.

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

Despite the exemption of the study programme from the annual evaluation of research and development, the MAL has demonstrated notable progress in its performance. This progress is evident in areas such as the production of scientific publications, active participation in conferences and international networks, and engagement in exchange programmes. To enhance its research environment, the MAL has introduced evaluation criteria for assessing performance, focusing on the dissemination of scientific works and the funds acquired from R&D projects.

The Academy's research priorities are aligned with the implementation of its study programme and are defined comprehensively, emphasizing their relevance to defence and national security. However, identifying more focused sub-themes within these priorities could improve the organization and management of the research domain at the MAL.

The MAL is an active participant in the International Society of Military Sciences (ISMS). However, expanding the involvement of its researchers in additional national and international networks relevant to the political science field could further enhance the scientific performance and visibility of its staff members (several researchers are very actively participating in many networks). Such engagement would foster collaborative opportunities, support the exchange of ideas, and strengthen the overall research output of the institution. Besides, it could contribute to one of the MAL priorities - the dissemination of scientific works.

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

The study courses at the MAL are closely aligned with its research agenda, reflecting the institution's unique profile and mission. This alignment ensures that academic content is directly informed by the latest advancements and priorities in defence and national security research. A notable strength of the MAL is the direct integration of findings from research projects into teaching courses.

In-house funding plays a pivotal role in supporting the development of research projects, which in turn contribute to the creation of new and innovative teaching materials. This funding model allows researchers and educators to collaborate effectively, translating complex research outputs into accessible and practical learning resources for cadets and students. By doing so, the MAL fosters a dynamic educational environment where theoretical insights are seamlessly connected to real-world applications.

Further efforts could be made to strengthen this synergy, such as systematically involving students in research activities related to their coursework and encouraging collaborative research that addresses pressing challenges in defence and security. These initiatives would enhance both the academic and practical dimensions of the study programme, equipping graduates with the knowledge and skills needed for their future roles in national and international security contexts.

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

According to the MAL Strategy, the involvement of cadets and students in research activities is a recognized priority. While efforts are being made to engage them, there remains significant room for improvement, particularly in light of the specific profile and mission of the University. Currently, the MAL involves cadets and students in various academic activities, including participation in conferences and attending lectures delivered by foreign educators and practitioners. These initiatives provide valuable exposure but do not fully leverage the potential of cadets and students or the institutional structure of the MAL.

Greater efforts should be directed toward engaging second-cycle (master's-level) students in research activities. Given their prior academic and professional experience, as well as their future career trajectories, this group is particularly well-suited to contribute meaningfully to research projects. Enhanced involvement of these students in structured research initiatives, such as collaborative projects with faculty, applied research for defence and security, and participation in scholarly publications, would not only benefit their academic and professional development but also strengthen the overall research output of the Academy.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The teaching staff in the assessed programmes have made substantial progress in research performance, largely due to a systemic and well-structured approach to fostering research activities. This approach effectively aligns research endeavors with both the curricula of the programmes and the overarching mission of the institution. Faculty members are actively engaged in a diverse range of research projects at both national and international levels, contributing to the advancement of their respective fields. A particularly positive trend is the increasing number of publications in peer-reviewed journals in recent years. The MAL provides a comprehensive range of opportunities for staff participation in research-related activities. However, it is essential to ensure that these opportunities are fully utilized to maximize their potential benefits.

Despite these advancements, further efforts are needed to strengthen the integration of researchers into international research networks. In particular, there is a need for increased participation in high-impact collaborative research initiatives such as Horizon Europe, COST, and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions. Stronger engagement in these networks would enhance visibility, funding opportunities, and international partnerships, further elevating the institution's research standing. Another area requiring attention is student involvement in research activities. Currently, engagement remains limited, partly due to the unique and idiosyncratic nature of the study programmes at the Academy, as well as competing student commitments. Nonetheless, this issue has been recognized as a strategic priority, particularly concerning second-cycle (Master's level) students.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Research excellence is recognised and research performance (i.e. the number of scientific publications, active participation in conferences and international networks, participation in exchange programmes) has increased significantly.
2. Introduction of evaluation criteria to assess the research performance of teaching staff, supported by an incentive system.
3. Introduction of funds available for research and its international communication.
4. Attention to the alignment of research priorities with the implementation of the study programme, the mission of the institution and the needs of stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Student involvement in research activities remains limited, which adversely affects the development of essential academic qualifications, including academic writing, research design, and other critical skills that are pivotal in later stages of their careers.
2. The current level of faculty engagement in international networks, research collaborations, and publications is inconsistent. Addressing this disparity is essential to foster the Academy's research output, and improve access to the latest advancements in political science.

For further improvement

1. Despite the specific nature of the study process at the Academy, it is essential to adopt innovative approaches that promote and facilitate students' integration into research activities. For first-cycle students, these initiatives could focus on short-term, applied research opportunities, while for the second-cycle students more advanced involvement could be based on ongoing research projects within existing research groups.
2. Enhance participation in high-level international research projects driven by competitiveness, such as Horizon Europe, ERC grants, and similar programs, which serve as benchmarks for scientific excellence.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

The admission procedure for the Bachelor's degree programme is approved annually. Admission is done through the LAMA BPO and candidates are admitted based on their place in the selection queue. The selection procedure grade is calculated according to the approved procedure by adding the grades obtained in the A-level examinations and the annual grades in the subjects and multiplying them by the approved weighting factors. Applicants may be awarded additional marks up to a maximum of 2.5 points.

In the years assessed, the average score for undergraduate students has risen, while the maximum score has fallen. However, the number of first-year students also fell during the evaluated period. During this period, the number of first-year students for postgraduate programmes decreased, the minimum score for the selection procedure increased, while the maximum score for the selection procedure also decreased.

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

The recognition of qualifications acquired at universities abroad is based on valid documents at national level. The recognition of partial study results is based on the submission of the required documents by the student. Although the higher education institution has established its own procedures for the recognition of results obtained at higher education institutions, these are not published and are available on the higher education institution's intranet, so that those who are not yet studying at the higher education institution do not have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with this procedure in advance. During the assessment period, there were no applications for credit for non-formal and informal learning at the HEI, but this procedure is applied. For students who go abroad to study, the results will be recognised.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The selection and admission criteria and procedures are appropriate and meet the requirements. Undergraduate admission procedures are approved annually and requirements are publicly available. Admission is organised by LAMA BPO and is therefore impartial and in accordance with the admission requirements based on a competitive process. The information and requirements for admission to the Master's programme are published in advance. The recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study and previous education at universities is based on valid documents and is appropriate.

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

The university accepts students for study or an internship as part of exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ or bilateral exchange programmes and EMILYO. Information about exchange opportunities is published on the university's website and is accessible to all students. The number of students doing internships and studies has increased in recent years and the university is attractive to foreign military academies (foreign cadets and students seeking study and internship opportunities) to such an extent that it cannot fulfil all requests for incoming mobilities. There are more students who are mobile for study purposes and fewer who are doing an internship. The visit revealed that the mobility window for the first cycle students is in the third year of study. The low number of mobilities for internships is due to the fact that the internship coincides with the final thesis phase.

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

The academy provides a range of support services for its students, such as academic support, which includes access to information needed for study, access to the Information Centre's open collection, specialist workstations and consultation of resources in the library. Students receive financial support including full funding for study at both levels, accommodation, food and clothing, medical care and supervision, bursaries, named awards for relevant services, per diems for study abroad and reimbursement of travel expenses. Administrative and counselling support is provided, including advice on the study process and help with university orientation throughout the study period. Accommodation, meals, psychological support and free access to academic resources are also provided to students at the university. Psychological support is also offered to cadets and students. They are counselled in one-to-one sessions or remotely on stress management, mental health issues or personal challenges. Two full-time psychologists are employed at the MAL. Each student also has a mentor, who is already an officer, to strengthen the student's support and integration into the organisation's community.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

At the beginning of their studies, students are familiarised with the organisation of the study process: academic information, procedures and requirements, timetables, exchange programmes, recognition of credits, academic ethics, information systems, available services. The study programme is also presented, together with its objectives, outcomes, the organisational process and the requirements for the thesis defence. Meetings are organised at the end of the semester to discuss various topics related to the study programme. The visit has shown that students' opinions are taken into account and decisions are made on their basis when necessary. During the first lectures, the lecturers present the study subject. The SER indicates that the students' needs are addressed individually. The effectiveness of the information and counselling is determined by feedback surveys.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Opportunities for academic mobility are guaranteed. Academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support is adequate and effective. A variety of support is provided for students, including academic support, library resources and financial support. Students receive scholarships, per diems for study, reimbursement of travel expenses, free housing, meals, medical care and clothing. Sufficient information on higher education and study counselling is available. At the beginning of their studies, students are introduced to the study process, academic information, rules, study exchange programmes, recognition of academic achievements, academic ethics, information systems and services. Students' opinions are valued and feedback is collected through a survey. This ensures that the study process meets the needs of the students. The assessment also found that some communication with students takes place via the unofficial messaging platforms.

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. Students are supervised by mentors during their studies and have the opportunity to successfully integrate into the study process and gain professional experience.
2. Student feedback is taken into account and changes are implemented in response.
3. The study programme is designed to give students the opportunity to benefit from mobility and wider internationalisation.
4. Providing financial support for students who would otherwise find it difficult to concentrate on their studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Efforts to improve the attractiveness of study programmes for potential students and the resulting enrolment figures should be intensified. Ways should be sought to reverse the trend of declining academic performance of first-year students.
2. Despite the attractiveness of student-tailored modes of communications, interaction with students through unofficial and potentially unsafe platforms should be avoided.

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 the intended learning outcomes

The teaching and learning processes at MAL are strategically designed to meet the needs of students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes in a specific military context. The restructured undergraduate programmes use a modular format that combines military training and academic studies. This promotes focused learning and deeper engagement with the subject matter through concentrated periods of study followed by immediate assessment. While the modular system encourages concentrated learning, its intensity can present challenges for student wellbeing and work-life balance.

The MAL utilises a range of active learning methods, including source analysis, exercises, seminars, projects, simulations and written assignments. These methods promote critical thinking, analytical skills and the practical application of knowledge that is essential for military leaders. The Master's programme has been specifically designed with a blended learning approach to accommodate working military professionals. The curriculum emphasises the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios through exercises, simulations and visits to relevant organisations. This approach enhances decision-making and problem-solving skills in contexts relevant to their future assignments. Research opportunities for cadets are limited due to the need to balance academic studies with military training, potentially impacting the development of advanced analytical and critical thinking skills. The smaller class sizes allow for a personal approach that enables individual consultations with faculty and programme leaders, fostering a supportive learning environment.

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

In view of its mission to train military officers, MAL is primarily concerned with access for specific student needs through individualised support. Admission to MAL is contingent upon meeting rigorous physical and mental health standards that reflect the demands of military service. MAL offers flexibility in study plans, assessment periods and personal counselling to support cadets with individual challenges and ensure that all admitted students can meet the rigorous academic and military requirements of the programme. An exception to the physical health requirements will only be made for military veterans who became disabled during their service and are willing and able to enter second cycle studies at MAL. This positive case also opens up the space for the discussion on the possibility of the admission of other students with special needs, particularly in 2nd cycle programmes. The infrastructure and ethos of MAL is equally conducive for the participation of male and female cadets.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

MAL students are effectively prepared for an independent professional career through a combination of intensive modular study, diverse active learning methods and opportunities for practical application. The emphasis on developing analytical, critical thinking and decision-making skills, coupled with personalised support and individual learning plans for veterans with disabilities, equips graduates with the tools necessary to excel in their military careers and contribute to Lithuanian national security. While opportunities for cadets to participate in research activities are somewhat limited, the integration of military training with academic study and leadership development provides a comprehensive foundation for independent professional success.

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

Monitoring the progress is performed on the basis of analysing accumulated data and regulated on the basis of university regulation. Progress monitoring and feedback are conducted at three levels: at the subject/module level, at the level of the study programme, by the Committee of Study Programmes in Political Science, and at the institutional level, by the *Study Department*. All (intermediate and final) achievement evaluation data are stored in the EDINA information study system and the processed results are presented to the CSPPS and the MAL Commandant during the extended Council meetings and further used for the improvement of the study programme and the organisation of the study process.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

The employment rate of MAL graduates is 100% as all graduates serve in the LA and students work in the national defence system. The higher education gained helps to advance careers in line with the 'Concept of Officer Careers'. With the acquisition of higher education, new career opportunities open up for MAL graduates: For cadets aspiring to a military career, acquiring higher education and completing the Course for Battalion Leaders provide the opportunity to reach first military rank; for retired officers, employment in the public or private sector where analytical and international process evaluation skills are in demand, or they can work as civilian employees and continue their career in the system.

The MAL also works with an alumni organisation. The alumni organisation organises regular meetings at which professional experiences are exchanged and advice is given on career development. Successful career examples and guest lectures are also organised. Data on MAL graduates who have completed their studies and obtained a qualification degree is collected and stored in the MAL archive and transmitted to the Education Management Information System. Information on the situation of graduates is obtained from the Ministry of Defence's Personnel Management Information System.

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

The principles of academic integrity at MAL are set out in the Statutes and the Code of Academic Ethics. The aim of the Code is to establish principles of academic ethics and to shape a unified approach to academic ethics, to promote ethical behaviour, to prevent breaches of academic ethics and to respond appropriately. The MAL Academic Ethics Committee deals with all matters of academic ethics, advises on matters of academic ethics and reports to the MAL Senate. Since 2023, the position of Academic Ethics Advisor has been established in the Department of Studies. During the period under review, no suspected cases of academic dishonesty among cadets and students in degree programmes were reported to the Academic Ethics Committee. Reports of suspected offences were made by Erasmus+ students.

MAL's rules of procedure set out the equal opportunities policy, its principles and the procedures for its implementation. It aims to create a favourable study and work environment for all students, employees and military personnel, to reduce attrition by attracting and retaining new talent and enhancing MAL's reputation as a university and attractive employer, and to create a healthy and safe study/work/service environment. The top management of MAL regularly analyses equal opportunities (diagnostics), on the basis of which it develops and approves an internal Equal Opportunities Strategy and Action Plan for its implementation. It sets specific annual targets and performance indicators, monitors and evaluates the impact of the actions (measures) and regularly reviews these documents. Various channels are available to all those studying, working or serving at the MAL to report breaches of equal opportunities.

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

MAL operates an appeals and review process organised in accordance with internal regulations. If a student is dissatisfied with the assessment or doubts its objectivity, he/she can discuss the validity of his/her academic performance assessment with the teaching staff and consequently also lodge an appeal. A student who is dissatisfied with the final assessment of a subject (module) may lodge an appeal with the MAL Commandant. Before submitting a complaint, the student must discuss the assessment with the faculty member for whom they wish to submit an appeal. The complaint must include: 1) an articulated explanation of why the appellant disagrees with the evaluation; 2) a detailed statement of the facts; 3) a precisely worded demand. The commission to investigate the appeal is formed by the Vice-Rector for Science and Studies on the instructions of the Commandant of the MAL. The commission examines the appeal and presents its decision in the minutes. Students may appeal against the defence of their dissertations, but not against the assessment of the dissertations. In the reporting period, there were no appeals due to irregularities in the assessment or defence of Bachelor's or Master's theses.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

Monitoring of student academic progress is based on analysis of data collected and governed by University regulation. Progress monitoring and feedback is sufficient. MAL graduates demonstrate a high level of employability almost exclusively within the national defence system and the institution also works with an alumni organisation as well as information on the situation of graduates from the Ministry of Defence's personnel management information system. However, it is unclear whether this data informs the design of the curriculum. The rules for academic integrity are in place and functioning. Equal opportunity regulations are adequate and there are tools to report violations and raise awareness of the regulations. The complaints procedure is regulated, but the fact that no

complaints have been filed so far could indicate the high threshold and the bureaucratic nature of the procedure.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The teaching and other staff of the Academy show a willingness to develop professionally in teaching and learning as well as in research.
2. The Academy demonstrates a willingness to engage with the international academic community by offering mobility opportunities, integrating internationalisation components into the curriculum and strengthening international institutional links with similar institutions in Europe and around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The modular system of curriculum delivery, which promotes focused learning, shows a high intensity that could pose a challenge to students' wellbeing and work-life balance, which is also reflected in students' lack of motivation to engage further with research. Opportunities should be sought to enable additional curricular and co-curricular motivations.
2. Despite the good and solid track record of graduates in the national defence system, robust tracking of graduates' careers and use of this data to shape the curriculum is not evident. The link between career planning and curriculum design should be strengthened.

For further improvement

1. An exception to the physical health requirement is made for military veterans who became disabled while in the service and are willing and able to pursue second cycle studies at

- MAL. This positive case also opens up the possibility to explore opportunities for possible admission of other students with special needs, particularly in the 2nd cycle programmes.
2. The appeals procedure is regulated but not yet utilised. Opportunities should be sought to simplify the system for the appellant.

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

The composition of the teaching staff at the MAL aligns with the legislative acts of the Republic of Lithuania, ensuring compliance with national regulations. The majority of the teaching staff (81%) hold doctoral degrees. A noteworthy initiative at the academy involves monitoring gender balance among the teaching staff, yielding positive outcomes. Women constitute 39% of the total teaching staff, with representation varying across programmes—35% in the International Relations programme and an impressive 50% in the Military Diplomacy programme. These figures highlight a progressive approach to promoting gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Almost all teaching staff members are actively engaged in research activities, which contributes significantly to the academic and professional environment at MAL. However, the level of participation and achievement in research is uneven. While some faculty members demonstrate exceptional results, others show only modest engagement, indicating a need for more balanced support and encouragement for research endeavors across the staff.

Staff recruitment and management at the MAL adhere to clearly defined principles and internal regulatory mechanisms. These processes ensure transparency and alignment with the institution's strategic goals, fostering an environment conducive to professional growth and academic excellence.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

MAL maintains a well-qualified and strategically managed faculty, with commendable efforts in gender diversity and research involvement. The staff recruitment process follows clear principles and internal regulations, ensuring fairness and alignment with MAL's strategic objectives. Although MAL ensures compliance with national regulations, expanding partnerships with international institutions could further enrich academic and research opportunities. However, while some faculty members excel in research, others show limited engagement, highlighting the need for more balanced support and incentives to enhance research output across the board.

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

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

The mobility of both outgoing and incoming teaching staff at the MAL is robust and effective, demonstrating the institution's commitment to fostering international academic exchange. A particularly commendable decision by the MAL is its allocation of internal funding to support individual academic trips. These funds enable staff to participate in scientific conferences, engage in working groups, conduct data collection trips, and undertake other professional development

activities. This initiative not only enhances the international exposure of the teaching staff but also contributes to the broader internationalization of the academy as a whole.

By providing in-house funding, the MAL has successfully reduced its dependence solely on the ERASMUS+ programme, showcasing a proactive and diversified approach to facilitating academic mobility. This strategy allows for greater flexibility in participation and enables the academy to forge stronger ties with a wider range of international institutions and organizations. The dual focus on outgoing and incoming mobility enriches the teaching environment and strengthens the academy's reputation internationally.

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

The MAL demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting staff development on a systemic and continuous basis. To guide its efforts in this area, the academy has identified three key priorities, ensuring these priorities are closely monitored and effectively implemented. This structured approach proves the academy's dedication to fostering the professional growth of its teaching staff and maintaining high standards of academic performance.

On average, each teacher at MAL participates in two training sessions per year, reflecting the academy's proactive approach to improving professional competencies. These training opportunities encompass a wide range of areas, such as pedagogical skills, subject-specific expertise, research methodologies, and the integration of innovative technologies in teaching. By emphasizing targeted training aligned with its strategic priorities, the MAL ensures that its staff remains well-equipped to address the evolving demands of education and research.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The MAL effectively facilitates both outgoing and incoming staff mobility, demonstrating a commitment to international academic exchange. The allocation of internal funds for academic trips reduces reliance on ERASMUS+ and provides greater flexibility for participation in international research and professional development. The MAL maintains a structured and strategic approach to staff training, ensuring continuous professional growth and alignment with institutional priorities. While internal funding enhances mobility, further diversification of international collaborations could strengthen MAL's global presence and research impact. Despite regular training sessions, expanding offerings in interdisciplinary approaches and emerging international trends could better equip staff for future challenges.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

Second cycle			X		
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COMMENDATIONS

1. The academy's teacher-centered approach provides diverse opportunities to support teaching staff in advancing their professional qualifications and achieving their personal career aspirations. By fostering an environment of continuous learning and professional development, the academy equips teachers with the tools, resources, and guidance needed to excel in their roles.
2. The academy's commitment to the internationalization of its teaching staff ensures that the latest and most innovative advancements in political science are integrated into the teaching and learning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Ensure that all teachers actively participate in training sessions and professional development courses to maintain and enhance their qualifications. Encouraging consistent engagement in these activities will equip educators with the latest knowledge, skills, and methodologies needed to enhance their teaching practices and adapt to evolving educational standards.
2. To broaden collaboration with national, regional, and international institutions and universities in the field of political science. This enhanced cooperation will contribute significantly to advancing the scope and depth of security and defense studies, fostering a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to these critical areas.

For further improvement

1. Continue internationalization of the study programmes by inviting visiting professors ensuring that students benefit from a truly international learning experience, as well as providing opportunities for teaching staff to teach in foreign universities.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

The HEI's material base is focused on the implementation of studies and military training. The HEI is equipped with classrooms of different sizes, which can accommodate from 12 to 150 students depending on the classroom; all classrooms are equipped with wireless internet, video and audio equipment. There are specialised computer classes where students can use a variety of software such as MC Office, SPSS, MAXQDA, and there is one classroom dedicated to design-based studies. Practical training is carried out in Lithuanian Armed Forces units and military institutions. An intranet is used to provide information relevant to studies.

The information available to students and the sources needed during their studies are available in the library and a collection of information resources in Lithuanian military sciences is being formed during the evaluation period. Library resource collection contains more than 25,000 titles and 120,000 copies of documents in Lithuanian and foreign languages in a variety of media for teaching, learning and research needs. It provides access to full-text journal databases such as Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), EBSCO eBook Academic Collection and others. Ebooks purchased from Lightning Press are available on the Military Reading Room computers. The EzProxy tool is available remotely in the library's reading rooms, computer labs, dormitories and offices.

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

As a general policy, HEI is upgrading its entire infrastructure, and the physical base developers are taking into account the specific resource needs required, and HEI is planning to build another classroom for design-based learning. Both lecturers, cadets and students can make requests for the acquisition of study and academic literature. Plans for the renewal of material resources are made for three years.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The HEI is committed to providing adequate facilities, information, and finance to ensure an effective learning environment. The institution provides spacious well-furnished classrooms, computer laboratory facilities dedicated for students, and military training facilities, clearly demonstrating focus on theory as well as practice. Well-equipped library facilities with digital tools and remote access enhance study and research capability. Long-term planning and development of infrastructure ensure provision of resources. The three-year planning cycle and responsiveness to the requirement for academics improve the drive for improvement by the institution, resulting in an entirely supported learning environment for teachers and students.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The material resources required for the study process are adequate and sufficient to meet the needs of students and teachers.
2. Both academic staff and students have the opportunity to make suggestions for the acquisition of resources.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The internal quality assurance system for the programmes is secured through a structured and multi-tiered approach. The Study Programmes Committee (CSPPS) oversees compliance with quality standards, regularly reviews curricula, and incorporates feedback from students, teaching staff, and external stakeholders. This should also relate to the assessment of the necessity for curriculum and courses' updates.

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

The involvement of stakeholders, including students, in internal quality assurance is facilitated through structured feedback mechanisms and active participation in decision-making processes. Students provide input via regular surveys, meetings with the Head of Study Programmes, and discussions with the Study Programmes Committee (CSPPS). Stakeholders such as alumni, employers, and military representatives contribute through consultations, feedback on thesis topics, and programme evaluations. The CSPPS analyzes this input to propose improvements to study content, methods, and infrastructure. This collaborative approach ensures that feedback is incorporated into the decision-making process, fostering continuous improvement and aligning programmes with stakeholder needs

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

Information on programmes, external evaluations, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected through regular internal and external quality assurance reviews, feedback from student and graduate surveys, and evaluations by the Study Programmes Committee (CSPPS). This data is used to assess programme performance, inform curriculum adjustments, and address identified gaps. Improvements and outcomes are implemented by the CSPPS and Study Department and reported to the Council and Board of Science and Studies. Information is made publicly available via the MAL website, annual reports, and internal and external communication channels, ensuring transparency and alignment with national and European quality standards.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Student feedback at the MAL is collected every semester through student surveys, post-session meetings with the Head of the Study Programmes of Political Science (HSPPS), and periodic teaching staff meetings. Feedback is also gathered qualitatively during student-teaching staff consultations and through graduate surveys conducted one, two, and three years post-graduation. The collected feedback is analyzed by the teaching staff, the Study Programmes Committee (CSPPS), and the Study Department. Summarized feedback is then presented to decision-making bodies like the Council and the Board of Science and Studies for improvements to course content, study programmes, and learning environments. This is the basis for the HSPPS to take actions should critical issues arise.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The internal quality assurance system ensures high academic standards through regular curriculum reviews by the Study Programmes Committee (CSPPS), incorporating feedback from students,

faculty, and external stakeholders. Stakeholders, including alumni and employers, actively contribute to programme development, enhancing study content and infrastructure.

Transparency is maintained by collecting and publishing information on programme evaluations and improvements via the MAL website and reports. Student feedback is systematically gathered through surveys and meetings, analyzed by CSPPS and the Study Department, and used to implement continuous improvements in courses and learning environments.

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. Strong emphasis is placed on gathering student feedback, which is facilitated by a remarkably high response rate. This feedback is systematically integrated to refine teaching approaches and inform the periodic review of educational processes, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with students' needs and expectations.
2. The appointment of a cadets' representative for each cohort and the assignment of a tutor to every student help ensure that students feel comfortable and unencumbered by hierarchical structures. This fosters an environment where they can express themselves freely, significantly enhancing the learning process and promoting openness within the academic setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. While the link with alumni is quite strong and consolidated, the organization of a regular alumni survey might prove key both to strengthening the connection with the external stakeholders and to trigger a positive process of trickling down when it comes to the curriculum development.

V. SUMMARY

The external evaluation of the Political Science study field at General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania has identified significant strengths across multiple evaluation areas while also highlighting areas that require further improvement.

The study programmes at MAL are well-aligned with the strategic needs of the Lithuanian National Defence System, ensuring that graduates acquire relevant skills in international relations and security studies. A strong collaboration with the Ministry of National Defence and the Lithuanian Army guarantees that the curriculum remains up to date and aligned with national security objectives. The curriculum structure balances theoretical knowledge with practical application, supporting both academic development and military training. At both the MA and BA levels, significant emphasis is placed on the thesis writing process. Students are guided through a carefully structured path and benefit from dedicated, attentive supervision to support the successful completion of their work. This approach is particularly important as students balance the demands of academic studies with the responsibilities of military life.

The research environment at MAL has improved significantly, as evidenced by an increasing number of publications and active participation in international research networks. Research priorities are closely linked to national security needs, and findings from ongoing projects are actively integrated into teaching. Internal funding mechanisms for research and academic mobility have been successfully implemented, enhancing the institution's research output.

The admission process is transparent and adheres to national regulations, ensuring fair and merit-based selection. The institution provides comprehensive financial and academic support, including scholarships, accommodation, meals, and psychological assistance. A well-structured mentoring system enables students to integrate into both military and academic life effectively. Both the MA and BA programmes are designed to integrate academic studies with the realities of military life, reflecting a commitment to supporting students in balancing these dual responsibilities.

Teaching methods emphasize active learning, fostering critical thinking and practical application. The modular format ensures structured learning, with strong links between military training and academic studies. Graduates have an excellent employability rate within the national defence system, demonstrating the effectiveness and relevance of the programmes. The faculty is highly qualified, with a significant proportion holding doctoral degrees and actively contributing to research. The institution provides ample opportunities for professional development and international mobility, further enhancing academic qualifications. Gender diversity among faculty members is commendable, with balanced representation across different programmes.

A particularly notable aspect of MAL is the commitment to student support. The academy provides a structured and effective mentoring system that allows students to develop both academically and professionally. The presence of mentors fosters a strong sense of guidance, ensuring that students are supported throughout their studies. Furthermore, student feedback is actively collected and integrated into decision-making processes, allowing for a responsive and adaptable educational environment. The commitment to fostering an open and engaging academic culture is evident in the academy's proactive efforts to ensure that students feel heard and valued.

The investment in modern infrastructure is another commendable aspect of MAL. The academy offers well-equipped classrooms, computer labs, and access to essential software for research and learning. The library is stocked with relevant academic resources, including access to international databases. Continuous infrastructure upgrades ensure that students and faculty benefit from modern learning facilities. The ability of both academic staff and students to suggest resource acquisitions reflects the institution's responsiveness to the needs of its learning community. The quality assurance system is well-structured, engaging students, alumni, and external stakeholders in a meaningful way. Feedback mechanisms ensure that student input is considered in curriculum development, while transparency in programme evaluation and public information dissemination is maintained through structured internal and external reviews.

Despite these strengths, certain areas require further improvement. The curriculum should be regularly updated to reflect evolving geopolitical challenges, with particular attention to recent developments in Eastern Europe. Greater efforts should be made to engage students, particularly at the master's level, in research activities to enhance their academic and analytical skills. The modular system, while effective in ensuring focused learning, could be adjusted to improve student well-being and engagement in research. The recognition of foreign qualifications and prior learning should be made more transparent and publicly accessible to prospective students. Although the appeals process is well-regulated, it appears bureaucratic, and efforts should be made to simplify it for students. Further diversification of international collaborations could enhance research opportunities and academic mobility.

The review panel expresses its gratitude to MAL for its commitment to quality education and institutional development. The academy demonstrated a strong willingness to engage in open and transparent discussions throughout the evaluation process. The high-quality self-evaluation report provided a solid foundation for assessment, and the well-organized site visit allowed for meaningful interactions with faculty, students, and administrative staff. The diverse team of students involved in discussions, the extensive tour of facilities, and the overall hospitality extended to the panel are sincerely appreciated. MAL's dedication to continuous improvement and excellence in military education is commendable, and the panel encourages the institution to build on its existing strengths while addressing areas identified for enhancement.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The evaluation of the Political Science field at Military Academy of Lithuania highlights several outstanding achievements that exemplify excellence in higher education. A key strength is the structured thesis-writing process at both bachelor's and master's levels, ensuring dedicated supervision and high research standards despite the demands of military life (Area 1). This integration of academic rigor with military training is a benchmark for comparable institutions.

MAL's student-centered approach is another example of excellence. The mentoring system, alongside structured feedback mechanisms, provides personalized academic and professional guidance (Area 3). Additionally, cadet representatives ensure transparent communication between students and administration, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement.

The academy's commitment to internationalization is demonstrated by faculty participation in international research networks and publications (Area 2). MAL successfully aligns its research priorities with national security needs while maintaining strong global engagement.

Infrastructure development and resource accessibility further showcase MAL's excellence. The institution continuously upgrades facilities and includes both staff and students in resource acquisition decisions (Area 6), ensuring a state-of-the-art learning environment.

Lastly, MAL excels in quality assurance, actively integrating stakeholder feedback into program development (Area 7). This commitment to transparency and adaptability strengthens its reputation as a leader in political science and security studies within military education.