



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

LIETUVOS SPORTO UNIVERSITETO

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF LITHUANIAN SPORTS UNIVERSITY

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQAHE	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
GRL	Government of the Republic of Lithuania
HR	Human Resources
IP	Intensive Programmes
LSU	Lithuanian Sports University
MES	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania
MOSTA	Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre
RL	Republic of Lithuania
QAS	Quality Assurance System
QMS	Quality Management System
RCL	Research Council of Lithuania
SDIA	Strategy of the Development of Integrated Activities at LSU
SKVC	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SRL	Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UN	United Nations
VLS	Virtual Lecture System

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In October 2014, The Lithuanian Sports University, hereinafter referred to as ‘LSU’ or ‘the University’, underwent a second institutional review organised by The Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). This followed on the first review of the institution conducted in October 2011. In September 2014 the Team of national and international experts selected and appointed by SKVC, hereinafter ‘the Team’, were provided with the *Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education* and related documents alongside a copy of the LSU Self Evaluation Report (SER) and a large number of accompanying detailed appendices. The preparation of the SER had been prepared by a group that included several students as well as representatives of external academic and social partners. The SER covered the information required to prepare the team for its visit to the University and was presented in a clear format, particularly in mapping University goals and activities against external goals.
2. The Team was provided with other background documentation, including an evaluation of learning resources by MOSTA, in advance of the visit, and met at the SKVC Offices in Vilnius for a day’s training, including an overview of the education system and preparation of the agenda, immediately before the visit to the University. The Team undertook a site visit to LSU between 7th and 9th October 2014. During the site visit, the Team collected oral evidence to supplement the written evidence provided in the SER and its extensive appendices. Over the three-day visit, the Team held seventeen meetings in which it met with more than 125 internal and external stakeholders, including a wide range of staff, students, social partners and alumni, and was conducted on a tour of some of the major facilities of the University. The Team spent the day following the visit drawing together material for its report and conclusions, which were refined and finalized by email correspondence over the subsequent month.
3. The Team consisted of:

Leader: **Professor Geoffrey Robinson**, Education Consultant, lately Honorary Professor, School of Geography and Geosciences, University of St. Andrews, UK

Secretary: **Dr. Norma Ryan**, Education Consultant and Emeritus Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, University College Cork, Ireland

Members: **Prof. dr. Jostein Hallén**, Head of the Department of Physical Performance, Professor of Physiology, Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, Norway
Prof. dr. Paolo Parisi, Senior Professor of Biology and former Rector at the State University of Rome “Foro Italico”, Italy; President of the European Network of Sport Education

Dr. Linas Tubelis, Director of Lithuanian Olympic Sport Centre (representing employers)

Darius Varanius, doctoral student in biology, Vilnius University Faculty of Natural Sciences, Vilnius, Lithuania (representing students).

The team was supported by an SKVC evaluation coordinator.

4. The *Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education* defined the criteria to be followed in an external institutional review of higher education institutions organised by the SKVC and authorised by the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. The Methodology was produced in line with the Law on Research and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 54-2140) as part of the implementation process of Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September 2010 and other legal acts governing the activities and evaluation of higher education institutions and the provisions of the European guidelines for quality assurance in higher education.
5. The Team was directed to draw upon the SER, the learning resources evaluation initiated by the Ministry for Education and Science, data obtained during the on-site visit, the judgements and recommendations of the previous evaluation, the follow-up data and other information on the performance of the University. The Team was also asked to address the actions taken following the recommendations for improvement made in the review conducted in 2011. The report on this review was published in mid-2012 and thus the Team was conscious of the fact that it is only 2 years since the review and that not everything could be addressed in that short space of time.
6. The purpose of external review is to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of higher education institutions and the promotion of their culture of quality, and also to offer recommendations for the development of their activities.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

7. Located in Kaunas, LSU can trace its origins back to 1934 when the President of Lithuania, Mr. Antanas Smetona, established the Higher Courses of Physical Education (HCPE) offering a higher education degree. The HCPE were founded with the idea of combining the subjects of physical exercises and military training so that the graduates would be able to teach these subjects in gymnasiums. The Table below provides a brief history of the institution:

1934	Establishment of the HCPE.
1938	The HCPE were closed and their function was taken over by the Department of Physical Education established at Vytautas Magnus University.
1945	Lithuanian State Institute of Physical Education was founded as an independent institution. In the first year, 100 students were enrolled at the Institute.
1999	The Institute was renamed the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education by a resolution of the Parliament of Lithuania (Seimas).
2012	The Academy was renamed the Lithuanian Sports University.
2014	The University celebrates its 80 th Anniversary.

8. The University consists of:

2 faculties:

- Faculty of Sport Biomedicine
- Faculty of Sport Education

4 departments

- Department of Applied Biology and Rehabilitation
- Department of Coaching Science
- Department of Health, Physical and Social Education
- Department of Sport Management, Economics and Sociology

2 institutes

- Institute of Sport Science and Innovations
- National Wellness Institute

4 centres

- Career and Competence Development Centre
- Centre for Academic Quality Supervision
- Sports and Leisure Centre
- European Basketball Research Centre.

The University offers 20 study programmes: nine undergraduate programmes at Bachelor level (including one international undergraduate programme - European Bachelor in Physical Activity and Lifestyle), nine Master, and two Doctoral study programmes (one

international doctoral programme in Biomedical Sciences and one national programme in Social Sciences). Three of the study programmes (Bachelor's degree in Sports Coaching, Master's degree in Sports Coaching, and Masters degree in Physiotherapy) are delivered in English, but are not international programmes. In 2013/14 the University registered the following number of students:

Faculty	Undergraduate students	Master students	Doctoral students	Total:
Sports Biomedicine	956	177	24	1157
Sports Education (Social Sciences)	688	114	19	821
Total:				1978

9. **Mission and Vision of LSU:** the Mission of LSU is to promote coherent progress of society and be useful to it, providing exclusive international level research and studies in sports science. In terms of its vision, LSU aims to become one of the leading universities of sports, physical education, rehabilitation (physiotherapy) and health sciences in Europe, and the best in this area in the Baltic Sea Region by 2017.

10. LSU has expressed the following values on which all of its activities are based:
 - *Respect for knowledge:* “Respect for the exclusive knowledge, ensuring the unity of science and education, development of ongoing progress”.
 - *Fostering initiative:* “Thorough promotion of new ideas, initiatives, innovations, professionalism and leadership.”
 - *Openness of studies:* “Accessibility and quality assurance of academic services for Lithuanian and foreign schoolchildren and students, the community of employees and seniors as well as business and public sector institutions.”
 - *Cooperation:* “Promotion of active dialogue with national and foreign partners.”
 - *Sociality:* “Teamwork based on mutual respect, tolerance, competence and trust.”
 - *Exaltation of healthy lifestyle:* “Promotion, development and testimony of respect for healthy lifestyle and Olympic ideas.”
 - *Citizenship:* “Promotion of citizenship and patriotism.”

11. In order to realise the Mission and Vision of LSU, four themes have been identified in the Strategy of the University for Development of Integrated Activities (SDIA), corresponding to the main higher education policies and priorities of Lithuania and Europe.
 - a. **International Leader in Research**
Concentrate all available resources in the development of high quality research and innovations, which would serve Lithuanian and world public welfare, foster health promotion through sport and physical activity.
 - b. **High Quality and Attractive Studies**
Execute modern and relevant study programmes and recruit talented and motivated students.

c. **Development of LSU Identity**

Be leader in the areas of sport and physical education science, physiotherapy and health promoting physical activity, which would be recognized by the society and communities of other institutions of higher education.

d. **Effective management**

Ensure the organization's flexibility, ability to adapt the changes and to improve.

12. LSU, a public university, is the only specialized university in Lithuania that carries out sports and health promotion studies and research, and as such has a responsibility to lead and guide the nation in these areas.
13. At the time of submission of the SER the University had 92.19 full-time-equivalent (FTE) teaching staff, 17.60 FTE research staff and 133.25 FTE administrative and support staff. Over the past three years there has been some decrease in the number of FTEs together with a significant decrease in the ratio of full-time to part-time staff. More than 50% of the teachers hold positions at Associate Professor and Professor levels with more than 60% of all teachers holding a PhD degree.

PREPARATION OF SELF-EVALUATION and CONTEXT

14. The University has produced a comprehensive SER, which appears to have widely involved the university community in its various components, including students and external stakeholders, who have jointly analysed and planned the development of the various areas. The issues raised in the previous Review have been addressed in detail and the resulting Action Plan and corrective actions are in general clearly expressed and complete. (These are detailed later in this report).
15. The later transformation of the institution into a full University is in line with what was done in other countries and responds to the priority increasingly underlined in modern society to promote the central value of sport and health-related physical activity. It is therefore a positive innovation, which also recognizes the relevance of LSU in supporting regional and national needs and development, and provides further impetus to its actions and activities.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

16. LSU, in the Report of the Review conducted in 2011, received a negative evaluation for the criteria of strategic management, and the Team conducting the current review focussed to a significant degree on this area and the specific criteria established by SKVC. From the outset, in reading the SER and its accompanying appendices, it was apparent to the Team that very significant efforts had been made to rectify the deficiencies identified in 2011. Staff, students, alumni and social partners were all involved in the planning process that was undertaken after the 2011 Review and very broad consultation took place before the new strategic plan was completed and published.
17. The picture gathered from the documentation submitted was reinforced during the numerous meetings the Team had with the various members of the University community, both internal and external. Although these may have sometimes been selected and not always really representative of the respective groups, the general impression is that the University has put the experience and recommendations of the previous review to very good use and is moving fast, with great determination and enthusiasm, toward the implementation of its stated goals, with a real potential to prove increasingly relevant for the social development and public health needs of its region and country.
18. The strategic action of the institution is based on a series of documents – consisting of a long-term plan (the SDIA for 2012-2017), a Three-Year Strategic Action Plan, adjusted yearly, and Annual Work Plans. These all appear to show a high degree of compliance with national and European policies and principles. The SER reports that these documents were developed aligned to the Lithuanian Government’s “Methods of Strategic Planning”. The LSU strategic planning process reflects the university mission, as defined in its Statute, and is extensively developed in the SDIA itself, which identifies four themes of development. Finally, the SDIA is fully in line with the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in particular the Bologna Process, and the actions specified or added in the various follow-up documents and Communiqués, as well as with those of the European Research Area (ERA), such as the emphasis on human resources policies and career prospects, on the adoption of open, transparent and merit recruitment systems, on the promotion of researchers’ mobility and open labour market, etc.
19. The University has adopted a strategy and themes largely based on its SWOT analysis of its environment and resources. The outlined possible Scenarios show relevant awareness of the institution’s limitations, possible prospects and potential risks. However, the decision to exclude Scenario A in favour of Scenario C is not entirely convincing, in that it does not seem to show a coherent consideration of LSU peculiarities, potentialities and limitations, and might involve unnecessary risks. The Team believes that a somewhat more flexible approach might prove beneficial.
20. The objective to develop (as in Scenario C) “unique international study programmes” attracting students “not only from Europe, but from the whole world” and of qualifying LSU as an “International Leader of Research by 2017”, may certainly prove highly instrumental in

stimulating internal motivation and commitment (and in fact remarkable achievements have been realised in the past few years or are being implemented), but is clearly likely to prove too ambitious in the short/medium-term perspective. On the other hand, the strong and persistent emphasis on this objective throughout all strategic documents and action plans poses a risk that less consideration will be given to the equally important and more realistic objective of further investment in the identity of LSU as *the Sports University of Lithuania* and a key institution for its region and the whole country (Scenario A).

21. In fact, the factors that have led the University to exclude the more congenial option outlined in Scenario A, such as competition from other local universities, identified as a threat in the Strategy, or the declining number of students, would seem to be less of a problem than anticipated and could potentially be overcome with some additional emphasis on the University's identity and promotion, as in fact seems to be partly happening already.
22. The various meetings, particularly with the external stakeholders, have clearly demonstrated to the Team that the University is very well rooted and strongly related to the region, with a unique potential for addressing the needs of the region as well as the whole country and as an important driver of development. Oral data provided during the site visit on the number of students registering in 2014/15 indicates that the threat of a decline is already being handled with some success.
23. It might therefore prove preferable to adopt Scenario A as the immediate perspective, and invest with great determination in developing the identity of LSU as the fundamental priority, rather than considering it a secondary objective as described in the SER.
24. The SDIA includes a very detailed plan involving specific measures for the implementation of the University's objectives, listing qualitative and quantitative indicators, as well as responsible persons and specific deadlines for the assigned tasks. Overall, the plan and the specific measures, objectives and indicators, appear to be reasonable, consistent and comprehensive.
25. The articulation of the SDIA into a three-year plan and an annual working plan and the definition of specific responsibilities allow a regular and effective process of reporting, monitoring and control activities. This is in line with best practice in international universities. All the indicators and the details of the plans appear to be reasonable and there should be no difficulty for LSU in continuing to implement and monitor them.
26. Comprehensive details of the SDIA and its implementation are made available to the university community, social partners and the general public, in a regular way and through various channels (relevant documents on the website, press releases, public lectures, and social networks). In its meetings with the various university groups, the Team noticed that some groups should have been more aware of details. Contradictions were noticed, for instance, with respect to the need for students to be involved in extra-curricular activities of benefit to society, and on the existence and functioning of some relevant bodies (Stakeholder Forum, Alumni Club). The students seemed to be ill informed about the Student Union and the procedures for the election of representatives to the Student Council. The Team noted that

the Stakeholders' Forum and the Alumni Club were formed only recently and that plans were in place but not yet implemented for meetings and activities of the two groups. Some members had joined but more are needed. The Head of the Centre for Career and Competence Development is responsible to the Rector for the further development of these activities, so that there are good prospects for further implementation.

27. The Quality Assurance System (hereinafter referred to as QAS) of Studies and Lifelong Learning complies with the provisions and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area and is presented in the SER section "Studies and Lifelong Learning".
28. The quality assurance policy was approved and the definition of the QAS was determined at the LSU Senate meeting (Protocol. 4) of December 19, 2013. They are detailed in the Manual of Quality Management System (QMS) and in the specifications of 19 procedures. Primary responsibility for the efficiency and effectiveness of QAS is at the level of the Senate and the Council. The Quality Council was established on October 1, 2013, with its chief responsibility being to advise the Rector on quality issues. The Council consists of 10 members – eight appointed members of the academic and non-academic staff, and two members appointed from student representatives.
29. In order to manage the University effectively, process management has been adopted. All of the University's activities have been divided into 19 processes – eight core processes, three management processes, six supportive and two improvement processes. Each process is regulated by the description of the procedure, which outlines the process activities, process manager and participants (employees/units). Participation of the University staff, students and other interested parties in the QAS is not limited to their representatives in the Senate, the Council and the Rector's Board activities.
30. Aiming to improve LSU activities, in January-April 2014 the Quality Council of the University carried out self-assessment of University activities according to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). In that self-assessment report, the Quality Council identified 54 strengths of the University activities and 53 areas for improvement. Out of these, 10 were selected as the key priority areas on the basis of which the Quality Council developed the University Improvement Action Plan. The LSU Improvement Action Plan was discussed in the Rector's Board (with the approval of the Heads) and on April 30, 2014, it was approved by Rector's Order (No. ISAK 99/B). The plan describes specific actions and their results, the persons responsible, the necessary resources and the dates of control. The plan is monitored and controlled by the newly established Quality Management and Accreditation Office.
31. The QAS is available to all staff, students and the general public on the University web site. Thus, all internal and external stakeholders, including the general public, can view the quality assurance policy, the results of self-assessment by the CAF model as well as the LSU Improvement Action Plan.
32. A revised organisational structure was put in place following the publication of the last review Report in 2012. From examining the structure and the reporting relationships defined in the SER and confirmed in oral interviews, the Team was satisfied that the organisational structure

is fit for purpose and in line with international norms. It will take a longer period before one can be more detailed on the effectiveness of the re-organisation. However, on the evidence provided to date and reviewing the very significant progress made over the past two years, the re-organisation would appear to be working very well.

33. Re-organisation of reporting lines for departments and the creation of new units have enabled transparency and accountability for specific University activities. New positions have been introduced to ensure the implementation of functions in line with the university strategic objectives and requirements.
34. The balance of centralization / decentralization in decision-making within LSU is ensured by the distribution of these functions to the management bodies: the Council and the Senate (both collegial bodies with representation from all stakeholders including students), and the Rector (with responsibility for ensuring implementation and accounting to the Council and Senate). The Rector may delegate responsibility for implementation of decisions to the Vice-Rectors for Studies, Research and/or Sports and Infrastructure, the Chancellor and the Rector's Board.
35. Decisions approved by the Council and the Senate are made public. Evidence was also provided to the Team of the implementation of actions arising from decisions made following the 2011 Review. In addition, evidence was provided of the alignment of the process management systems to the strategic aims and results of LSU.
36. Following the 2011 Review, LSU developed the *Strategy of the Development of Integrated Activities (SDIA)*, and the *Human Resources Development Strategy*. The Human Resources (HR) strategy is a well-thought-out and well-written document, with specific aims and action plans, responsibilities for implementation assigned to particular individuals and specific timelines identified. *Inter alia*, the need to create a work environment where employees feel appreciated was highlighted. The strategy includes planning, recruitment and selection, adaptation of new employees, training, motivation and evaluation of all LSU staff groups (the electronic version is available for University employees at www.lsu.lt/darbuotojams). The document was also provided to the Team in English during the site visit.
37. In January 2014 the University carried out an employee satisfaction survey. The results were made publicly available and posted on the University website (<http://www.lsu.lt/>). Teachers and researchers rated the highest satisfaction with their relationship with their immediate manager and feedback: incorporating job evaluation, compensation, in-service training and career opportunities. Maintenance and administrative staff evaluated the relationship with their immediate manager: incorporating feedback, relationships with colleagues, and teamwork. Taking into account the results obtained, the motivational system in LSU was adjusted focusing on the improvement of internal communication.
38. The University management expressed its awareness of the need to manage the change process and to provide encouragement and inducements in this process. There is a planned and systematic set of actions aiming at a smooth transition to the desired outcomes and the assurance of consolidation of those changes. The purpose of the LSU change management plan is to ensure the efficiency of the implementation of structural and systemic changes

through strategic management, the good experience of modern science and practice of quality and change management. LSU has a detailed plan, which is being operated, for the transparent and efficient implementation of the changes it deems necessary to deliver on the objectives and plans in the SDIA. The nature of reports and the procedures for their presentations are distributed according to the participants' competencies and functions assigned to them. Decisions made are based on the results of self-assessment, external evaluation and recommendations, and focused on LSU strategic goals. Decisions are made according to the need for change management in bodies from the top and from the bottom up, ensuring the balance between centralization and decentralization.

39. The managers and participants of processes continuously perform process quality analysis – the efficiency of provided activities is revised, risk analysis is carried out (when planning new activities a SWOT analysis is carried out). After the assessment of all the circumstances and conditions, a decision is made by consensus, or a new process / activity is introduced and implemented.
40. Options of changes of fundamental processes are considered and approved by three main university management bodies that have the right to make decisions – the Council, the Senate, including the external stakeholders (the interested parties) and the Rector. Options for changes of supportive processes are considered and decisions are made by the Vice-Rectors, the Chancellor and/or heads of units according to their supervised areas. All employees and stakeholders can suggest possibilities for changes of processes. The Team heard that staff feel they are listened to and that their opinions are taken into account.
41. Management of LSU material resources (infrastructure) is carried out in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No. 54- 2140, No. 61, No. 101), Law on the State and Municipal Property Management, Use and Disposal (*Official Gazette*, 1998, No. 54-1492), University Statute (*Official Gazette*, 2012, No. 127-6399), resolutions of the University Council, Rector's orders, *LSU Strategy of the Development of Integrated Activities for 2012–2017*, and other documents.
42. The relevance and accessibility of material resources is ensured by permanent maintenance, repair and renovations, development and acquisition of the equipment required for research and studies at the University. The unit-trust State-owned real estate and the municipality-owned real estate during the period of reference (2011–2013) did not change. The infrastructure was updated using the University's general funds and funds from various projects, and adapted for the needs of modern studies and research. Hence the number of facilities for practical and laboratory work increased.
43. The Team saw evidence of the renovations during its tour of facilities. The Team also heard and saw evidence of funding that has been gained to deliver improved facilities in relation to sports fields, dormitories, the Library and more. It would appear that the University is very focussed on acquiring funds to continue this work on its facilities, some of which are in urgent need of updating, including provision of access for disabled students. The Team heard that the University is very open to suggestions for improvements in infrastructure from both staff and students as well as external stakeholders. In the LSU Strategy, the University

infrastructure development component is established and implemented by two measures – in order to become an international leader in research, the University has to achieve the European level of research infrastructure in the priority areas (1) and to ensure high-quality and attractive studies, to upgrade existing studies and to create the necessary infrastructure aiming at the internationality of studies and their availability for a wider range of people (2). For the development of infrastructure, active negotiations and consultations with the representatives of the Government and local governments that need the university services take place; contracts that provide for infrastructure development are signed.

44. The Team urges the University to continue this work and to seek all sources of funding including business partners and other social partners.
45. LSU activities and development are financed from the State Budget, the revenue generated for the offered studies, research and economic development services as well as project activities. Without reducing but aiming at increasing the income earned, through State allocation of study baskets and targeted funding, the University aims to increase the part received from the State budget funds, thus securing the stability of income. The preparation and implementation of the various projects financed from EU funds and other targeted funding sources take place to achieve strategic infrastructure and operational changes.
46. In implementing the SDIA, the University has allocated the obtained funds to ensure that not only are the institution's minimum needs met, but also that the development of strategic themes is supported.
47. On March 1, 2012, the Senate approved the Code of Academic and Professional Ethics and the Rules of Activities of Academic and Professional Ethics Commission. The Code of Academic and Professional Ethics applies to the most important avoidable (improper) academic behaviour and establishes the fundamental provisions of academic and professional ethical conduct, which are not directly defined by the State laws, employment contracts and internal documents. All staff seemed to be well aware of the existence of the Code.
48. **The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:**
 - a. LSU has a very detailed clear strategy with clear vision well disseminated throughout the University.
 - b. LSU has a mission articulated in a detailed action plan with specific responsibilities and a good monitoring system.
 - c. Excellent motivation and significant participation of staff at all levels.
 - d. The HR strategy document is very good, covers career and professional development, together with recruitment planning. Covers all aspects comprehensively, with an action plan and details of how to monitor developments, and lists responsible units and persons.
 - e. The Quality Assurance System and its oversight and monitoring procedures.

49. **The Team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:**

- a. Perhaps not all staff are as engaged as they might be in working towards achievement of the strategic objectives.
- b. The procedures for the participation of students in the Student Union and their appointment to the various bodies do not appear to be as widely known as they should be and would benefit from a more democratic approach.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given positive evaluation.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

50. In the 2011 Review, the area of academic studies and life-long learning was given a positive evaluation. The report did include, however, some recommendations and suggestions for improvement and it is clear that these have been acted upon.
51. LSU offers a total of 20 study programmes – nine Bachelor, nine Master and two PhD. Two of these are international programmes (one at Bachelor level and one at Doctoral level {paragraph 8}) that are delivered jointly with other institutions. These appear to be working well, with good mobility opportunities for the students – in all cases there is a compulsory period of study abroad. This broadens the student experience and increases the capacity of LSU to develop other areas due to the release of time spent in teaching and support of students. It also strengthens links with international institutions, which is a key strategic aim. Some amount of internationalisation applies also to the Master and PhD level.
52. The Team has some concerns over the number of study programmes offered. This applies particularly to the Bachelor level, where a high number of programmes, not always clearly distinct, may prove somewhat confusing and encourage a fragmentation of professional profiles that might be redundant for the immediate possibilities of the market and should preferably be reserved for the Master level. Moreover, LSU is a relatively small institution and has identified, *inter alia*, a need for improvement in the research profiles and research activities, with a particular focus on internationalisation of publications and mobility. Some efforts have been made, with a good deal of success, to reduce the teaching load of academic staff by the implementation of a comprehensive Workload Allocation System, which featured in the 2011 Review recommendations. This is very commendable and is aimed at maximising efficiencies, allowing more time for research and for other activities supporting the University's mission.
53. It is possible that a reduction in the number of study programmes could be considered along with a review of overlap between some modules. This would aim to identify possibilities for sharing modules between different programmes in order to reduce duplication of efforts. In fact, information gathered during the meetings indicates that this is already happening to some extent.
54. The University has implemented a virtual learning environment system - Moodle - and all teaching staff are required to put lectures and information about their courses and modules on the system. The University has rules as to what material can be uploaded and how it should be formatted etc. so there is an adequate control. This was an objective stated in the previous review and implemented over the reference period for this current review.
55. An important aspect for the implementation and further revision of the University's strategy is the need to acquire systematic and sound information on the relationships between the study programmes offered and the job market requirements and expectations. A systematic graduate tracking, differentiated by specific programme and market area, should definitely be undertaken in this direction.

56. In meetings with staff and students it was confirmed that a variety of teaching and assessment methods are used. In particular the students were very positive about the teaching by staff who challenged them and who used a variety of teaching and learning methodologies.
57. LSU offers first, second and third cycle (doctoral) scientific degree programmes in two study fields: Biomedical Sciences (five Bachelor, six Master and one PhD study programmes) and Social Sciences (four Bachelor, three Master and one PhD study programmes) (SER, Appendix 11). The programmes lead to awarded qualifications in sport, adapted physical activity for the disabled, (this is a unique programme in Lithuania), sports physiology, physical education, health promoting physical activity, sports management, and physiotherapy (SER, Appendix 11). These study programmes comply with LSU's mission in providing international level studies in sports science (SER, Appendix 4). The programmes provide graduates with expertise in important areas of sport and physical activity. These graduates will have interests and competences on how different groupings within the country can use physical activity to their own, as well as Lithuania's, benefit by maintaining and improving their health as well as quality of life. This will have an impact on the nation's economy and social and cultural development and comply with strategic documents of both the State and the region (SER, Appendix 12).
58. In *Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"*¹ and the *National Sports Development Strategy*², Lithuania's principal strategic goals are associated with the development of the nation's welfare, fostering people's culture, creativity, tolerance and integration of people with disabilities and people of different age groups, wellness and sport. *The National Education Strategy 2013-2022*³ and the future vision for science and studies "Moksloji Lietuva" (Scientific Lithuania) aims for Lithuanian education to become a sustainable basis for dashing and independent persons, responsibly creating their own future and the future of the nation and of the world. Study programmes delivered at the University contribute to the implementation of these priorities of the national economic, social and cultural development.
59. Taking this into account, the University is focussing on the development of new degree programmes (e.g. Physical Activity and Lifestyle) and continuously updating the existing programmes. On the basis of the *Description of General Requirements for the Implementation of the Conception of LSU Basic University Education, Foreign Language Teaching, Reflection, Internship Practice and Final Thesis*⁴, all study programmes have been updated during the reference period. The University aims to ensure that the basic university education provided has developed the core competencies of globally valuable creativity, independence, critical thinking and citizenship; enabled students to develop their reflection, encouraged internal motivation for learning and to implement their practices in the preparation of their final thesis; created strong links between social partners and the University; and implemented the policies of foreign language acquisition.

¹ Resolution of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of May 15, 2012, No. XI-2015.

² Resolution of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of March 24, 2011, No. XI-1296.

³ Resolution of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of December 23, 2013, No. XII-745.

⁴ Resolution of LSU Senate of April 30, 2012, No. 7.

60. The Team commended the establishment of a Marketing and Communications Department with responsibility for targeting student recruitment from all Lithuania. Some evidence of the success of the initial activities of the Department was evident during the site visit.
61. LSU provided evidence of the different forms of life-long learning approaches adopted by the University. 44% of the full-time study programmes are also offered as part-time programmes and 21% of students avail themselves of this option (SER, Appendix 11). Part-time studies last for a longer period of time, more time is spent on independent work, and study timetables allow the students to combine employment work with studies.
62. Distance learning is under continuous development at LSU. All teachers are required to use the open-source virtual learning platform, Moodle. They are encouraged to prepare modules specifically for distance learning and make them available on Moodle, including video lectures. Additional hours and training are given to teachers for the preparation of such modules. In line with LSU's strategy, 30 modules will be taught in distance learning mode in 2014.
63. Catering to the broader needs of students and potential students, catch-up studies are organized. Individuals who have a professional bachelor's degree may enrol in bridging courses lasting for up to one year, and, following successful completion of modules, enter the second-cycle study programmes.
64. Advanced (good) students can request and be accepted for study according to an individual study plan. Individual study is developed on the basis of the university study programmes. Students can also request recognition of competences acquired in informal and non-formal education. Students who learn well and actively participate in sports activities receive nominal scholarships from patrons and sponsors. The University also facilitates studies for students with disabilities.
65. Part of the *University's* strategy is to provide relevant courses for social partners who would like to improve their qualifications; for example, employees in the fitness sector and teachers; and to qualify individuals for registration as European health and fitness professionals. In the autumn of 2013, LSU opened the Third Age University (in line with the 2nd strategic theme "High quality and attractive studies" identified in the SDIA), which carries out activities of public benefit in the areas of sport, health promotion, social, education, science and culture. Currently LSU's Third Age University has 144 students. They are offered 15 different modules taught by 21 LSU teachers, four visiting teachers, and nine students on a voluntary basis. LSU allocates a specific budget to the Third Age University's activities. This is a highly commendable contribution by the University to the promotion of life-long learning.
66. Monitoring the careers and employment opportunities of alumni is now the responsibility of the newly formed Career and Competence Development Centre. This monitoring is now happening on a periodic basis, with involvement of programme committees and study programme self-evaluation teams. In 2013 the Centre interviewed the graduates of 2012 and 2013. The study revealed that 67% of graduates commenced employment within three to four months after graduation.

67. The data generated by the monitoring of graduates' careers is discussed at the meetings of the Faculty Study Quality Supervision Committees and the Study Programme Committees. Taking into account the respondents' opinions, the plan for changes in the study programmes is revised, the study programme plans are improved, student competences (learning outcomes) are identified and new study modules are developed. Opinions of graduates about the practice placement, evaluation criteria and procedures, reporting forms and organization of studies are taken into account in the planning and revisions.
68. LSU is committed to continuing this monitoring activity with all new graduates and to extending the surveys to graduates of five years.
69. The University is a member of the Lithuanian consortium "Unicon" of the institutions of higher education. On December 20, 2013, an agreement with Vilnius University, Vilnius Academy of Arts and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre was signed. The University cooperates with academic partners not only in Lithuania but also abroad, with a particular focus on the Baltic area and Eastern Europe. Bilateral agreements with 63 universities and higher education institutions from 25 European countries have been signed. Partnerships are developed in international networks as well.
70. The University cooperates with the social and business partners and provided details of these in the SER. The Team also met with a large representative group that confirmed the level of activities and the expressed wish of LSU to further develop these links into more formal bodies, such as the Alumni Club and the Forum for Stakeholders, both recently established.
71. Communications networks with social and business partners have been well developed in study programme committees. The social partners are actively involved in study programme development processes: they are involved, together with academic colleagues, in the consideration of both the content of the programme and the competencies to be acquired by graduates, in addition to being directly involved in the organization and supervision of internship practice (approximately 290 students per year). What is unusual is the direct involvement of suitably qualified individuals in the review and assessment of the final thesis, and providing relevant feedback about the practical value of the theses. Additionally external social and business partners are engaged with teaching in modules, in workshops, professional innovation discussions and projects.
72. Internship practice is one of the most important forms of cooperation with partners: the University has tripartite internship practice agreements with schools, business enterprises, wellness centres, sports schools, health care facilities, public health offices, etc. Internship practice carried out in the partner institutions and under their supervision contributes significantly to the development of relevant competencies in the students. Over the past three years, the network of internship practice sites has rapidly expanded in foreign institutions.
73. As a consequence of participation in an international study project "European Bachelor in Physical Activity and Lifestyle Counselling" (No. 510029-LLP-1-2010-1NL-ERASMUS-ECDSP), an international study programme "Physical activity and Lifestyle" has been developed and accredited. The experience gained during the implementation of the project

was used to update all the study programmes in accordance with a student-oriented learning approach and to develop the governing documents of studies and quality assurance activities now formally adopted by the University.

74. LSU is actively engaged in developing and expanding its links with international institutions in areas relevant to both teaching and research. Some examples are provided here and more are discussed in the section on research^{5, 6, 7}.
75. The University has learned from its collaborations with foreign academic partners (both from those operating within the Baltic region and further afield) and as a consequence student support and counselling systems have been strengthened by establishing positions of programme directors and annual coordinators. Participation in international networks has strengthened and expanded cooperation with related universities, leading to teacher and student exchanges, to the improvement of study programmes, development of joint study programmes and improvement of teachers' language and professional skills.
76. It was evident to the Team that, in the development of the SDIA for 2013 – 2017 and the action plans associated with this core strategic document, LSU took into account the provisions of the EHEA and the EU higher education policies, including basing all studies on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), aligning the learning processes with assessment methodologies and the student workload. The University provided documentation demonstrating compliance with the provisions of the EHEA both in terms of strategic management and lifelong learning.
77. Internal quality assurance of studies is part of the overall quality management system in the University. Implementation of the provisions of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) is in place with respect to, *inter alia*, regulations of study programme quality assurance activities, provision of student-centred studies, on-going development of academic integrity, involvement of students in all aspects of the development and improvement of the quality of studies and the feedback

⁵ In cooperation with the University of Worcester (UK), a second-cycle study programme *European Basketball Coaching Science* is offered; a joint PhD programme in Education Science is offered in cooperation with the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Kaunas University of Technology and Šiauliai University; a joint international PhD programme in Biological Sciences is offered in cooperation with the University of Tartu (Estonia)

⁶ Participation in the international project funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission "E-Learning Fitness" (No. 511669-2010-LLP-IT-KA3- KA3MP) provided encouragement for the inclusion of innovative digital teaching methods into the learning process. During the project, non-formal education courses for persons wishing to become fitness instructors were developed and continue after the conclusion of the project

⁷ The University annually participates in about ten international study projects that assist with implementing new and updating existing study programmes. For example, participation in a joint Bachelor of Physiotherapy final thesis preparation and defence project under the NordPlus programme "Joint Physiotherapy Education in Bachelor Thesis Module (NorNePte)" led to improvements in the regulations for defence of theses; following participation in the ERASMUS study programme development project "European Bachelor in Physical Activity and Lifestyle" a new international study programme "Physical Activity and Lifestyle" was developed.

system to students. A culture of respect for the learners and teachers' didactical skills is in place, and the contribution of stakeholders to improvement of the quality of studies is valued in unity with scientific research.

78. After admission to LSU, students participate in a study module "Academic Communication and Career Planning", which introduces the studies, the support systems for students, the concept of academic integrity and the languages policy. Aimed at enhancing access to studies, depending on the needs of students, part of the tuition fee is reimbursed (for 300 students on average annually) and some students are provided with dormitories. Plans are in place for provision of additional spaces in the dormitories within the next couple of years. LSU rooms are adapted for students with mobility impairments, support is given to students with special needs (for example, single and social grants, targeted benefits, tax incentives in tuition and dormitory living services), a coordinator of persons with disabilities helps students to deal with the difficulties and if necessary, an individualized study schedule is provided.
79. Student dropout rates are constantly monitored and the reasons for leaving courses are analysed. During the reference period, students' dropout rates were in line with the minimal requirements of the conditions for studies and the quality of their organization provided by the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre. The improvement of students' progress receives continuous attention; the Faculty Study Quality Supervision Committees analyse and discuss the study results together with the students.
80. Teacher and student international mobility is valued in LSU and is one of the University's key strategic aims. Over the past four years, on average 52 students availed of the Erasmus programme and 18 students took opportunities for short-term mobility experiences under various intensive programs (IP), in total representing 3.5% of all students. The University is aiming to increase this to 5% over the period of the SDIA. The level of mobility of both students and teachers is determined by availability of funding, motivation and linguistic preparation. The target within the EU, however, is to have 20% student mobility and while the Team recognised the limitations of funding, in particular, it was not clear what actions the LSU plans to take to improve the level of mobility.
81. LSU provides publicity about opportunities, relevant information and preparation for students who plan to go abroad, including the improvement of language skills. The students who met with the Team expressed their appreciation of this and also their desire to increase the amount of time spent in study abroad. The Team was uncertain as to how indicative this view was of that of the entire student body.
82. LSU is actively developing modules and elements of programmes in languages other than Lithuanian (e.g. English, Russian) with the aim of encouraging inward mobility of non-Lithuanian students from international universities. Foreign students can also participate in internships.
83. International mobility of teachers during the period 2007-2013 under the ERASMUS programme has been recognized as the highest, *pro rata*, among all universities in Lithuania and received the Quality Award in 2013. There is a growing partnership with foreign

universities, recognition of teachers' excellence abroad and their professional development. Visiting teachers (each year about 20 ERASMUS teachers and 18 teachers – by various international projects and national programmes) are integrated into the study process. This concept of internationalization “at home” gives students the opportunity to gain international experience and understanding without having to leave the University.

84. LSU is a member of 12 international networks and boards. Participation in the activities of these networks has strengthened and expanded cooperation with universities similar to LSU, in teacher and student exchanges, in the improvement of study programmes, in development of joint study programmes, and improvement in teachers' professional and linguistic skills. Teachers are actively encouraged to engage in international mobility and in international study projects.
85. The steady increase in bilateral cooperation with European universities is linked to the strategic development of internationality within LSU. In the bilateral agreements with 63 universities and institutions of higher education from 25 European countries mentioned above (paragraph 69), the University is focussing on partnerships with similar institutions of higher education training specialists in the fields of sport, health and ensuring the offer of high-quality studies for incoming students.

86. **The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:**

- a. The focus on research-informed teaching.
- b. Quality assurance of study programme provision.
- c. The general strive towards continued development of international links, including mobility and development of international joint programmes, e.g., the Bachelor in PAL (Physical Activity and Lifestyle Degree).
- d. Development of study programmes in areas identified by social partners, including government.
- e. Levels of specialisation in study programmes at Masters level to facilitate specialised requirements.
- f. Continued development of E-learning modalities (video lectures available on line, presentations and modules available on the virtual learning environment platform, Moodle).
- g. The policy with regard to and development of diverse teaching and assessment methods.

87. **The Team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:**

- a. The low level of student mobility.
- b. Some duplication and fragmentation at Bachelor degree level in study programmes, which could be rationalised.
- c. The need for better coordination with stakeholders, graduate tracking and systematic analysis of market needs.

Judgement on the area: Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is given positive evaluation.

V. RESEARCH AND ART

88. In the 2011 Review, the area of research and art was given a positive evaluation. The Report did include, however, some recommendations and suggestions for improvement and it is clear that these have been acted upon.
89. The picture the Team has gathered from the various meetings would seem to show that some important limitations in the research potential of the institution are already being successfully addressed. Particular examples are the increased time for research allowed to the academic staff through the Workload Allocation System, the knowledge of English, apparently more widespread than anticipated, the increased interest in high-quality research and in mobility.
90. The Team was impressed at the high number of scientific publications produced, although it might prove useful to focus more on fewer publications on the determined themes, but of higher quality and impact. In this regard, the strategy of publishing four in-house journals might perhaps be usefully revised.
91. The objective of qualifying as an International Leader of Research, given the peculiarities and dimensions of LSU, would seem necessarily to imply an effort to develop strong institutional partnerships as much as possible beyond the Baltic region or other Eastern European nations where it seems to be focused at present.
92. It was evident from the discussions with staff and students, as well as external stakeholders and alumni, that all appear to be very well aware that LSU has a mission and that it plays an important role nationally in the field of sport and physical education. All levels at the University, from researchers and teachers to members of the administrative staff, as well as representatives of the social partners, are clear that LSU is very important for the nation to reach goals in the area of sport, physical activity, rehabilitation and to a lesser degree tourism. The mission is clear in the SDIA and other documents, as well as being very evident in the interviews conducted during the site visit, leaving no uncertainty that LSU strives to perform as well as possible in following this strategy to reach its goals.
93. In the Strategy there is a major focus on the internationalisation of all aspects of research and scientific studies. This is of course important, since research is international in its nature, especially in the natural sciences. A focus on achieving high international impact is important for all universities. That focus, however, should not be a hindrance to developing a more detailed strategy for each research area including specific foci and even hypotheses. Such strategies were not apparent to the Team.
94. LSU's identity is also very important and key to the University's future success and development. It is essential that staff, in pursuing the internationalisation of research activities, do not lose sight of the issue of enhancing LSU's identity.
95. LSU's mission includes the phrase "*providing exclusive international level research and studies in sports science*". In the SER this is further expanded on as a strategic aim of LSU to "*take a leadership position, and to improve the quality of research in order to produce the*

research output which would contribute to the Lithuanian and the world public welfare, foster health promotion through sport and physical activity”. The main strategic document, SDIA, is accompanied by several other plans to ensure that LSU achieves its goals. For instance, research in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities was identified as weak in the 2011 Review Report and a strategy to develop this field has now been developed, with some evidence of success in its implementation, even over this short period of time. A document has been prepared identifying the links between LSU’s study programmes and the research areas. Priority has been given to five research themes in the strategies.

96. During the meetings it became evident that not only the leadership, but all levels of the LSU community, including staff and students, understand the structure and strategy for development of the research areas/themes of the University and achievement of its goals.
97. Organization and administration of LSU’s research activities, research planning, execution and reporting take place in accordance with the Regulations of Lithuanian Sports University Research Activities. LSU’s fundamental and applied research is carried out in five strategic research areas approved by the Senate in 2012. They correspond to the themes of LSU studies and LSU mission, as defined in the University’s Statute. This creates pre-conditions for the unity of research and studies.
98. The SER did identify that a challenge exists in mobilizing resources to support changes in the scientific direction in which LSU intends to proceed. The number of successful research applications has increased and this will help with the implementation of the research strategy and development of new research areas.
99. Evidence was provided that researchers in LSU contribute with their research to the assessment of the effect of risk factors on health; the development of the system of early detection and control of non-communicable diseases and their risk; selection of gifted children and their proper preparation for elite sport; elite athletes’ training; children’s health strengthening and lifestyle monitoring; development of the prevention of cardiovascular diseases; development of mental health care; and co-operation and participation in the network of health promotion activities.
100. LSU’s five strategic broad research areas are as follows:
 - i. Coaching science, sport physiology and genetics
 - ii. Muscles, motor control and rehabilitation
 - iii. Physiological and social aspects of empowering persons with disabilities
 - iv. Health, physical and social education in the society experiencing changes
 - v. Leisure management, economics and sociology.
101. These five areas are central to and conformable with the priorities of the European Research Area with respect to sport and active lifestyle - they are of course also important for Lithuania. The SER provided evidence of the publications by staff in national and international journals in these strategic areas and of the links and contribution of the research to the national agendas.

102. PhD programmes, as well as Bachelor and Masters, align with these research areas. Particularly impressive is the development of joint national and international PhD programmes including a joint doctoral programme in the field of Social Sciences Education (together with the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Kaunas University of Technology, and Šiauliai University) and a joint international doctoral programme in the field of Biomedical Sciences (together with the University of Tartu, Estonia).
103. Training students of all levels, as future professionals, is closely linked to the LSU strategic research themes. The best qualified scientists educated at LSU meet the requirements provided in the *Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania*.
104. LSU researchers collaborate with partners to develop and implement research projects. The funds received from partners have increased in the last three years. The funds remain low, however, especially from business partners. The Research Council of Lithuania remains a key academic partner in LSU research projects.
105. During the site visit, as well as documented in the SER in detail, the Team saw evidence of the wide range of activities involving collaborations and heard how helpful these collaborations are to the development of research and studies at LSU, as well as the knowledge and research provided to the collaborators as a consequence of work carried out at LSU. Some examples of this are given below:
- The University participates in the activities of clusters of iVITA and Advanced Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Measures. In order to more effectively carry out national and international research and publish scientific output, in 2012–2013, together with national and international partners, LSU established SMII (connecting 35 scientists and the European Centre of Research in Basketball, which cooperates with the University of Worcester (UK), the University of Leon (Spain) and the National Institute of Health (NIH), together with 16 associated social partners, connecting more than 70% of all health sector organizations in Lithuania).
 - LSU also collaborates with the Karolinska Institute (Sweden), University of Aberdeen (UK), University of Worcester (UK), University of Southern Denmark, and many others. According to the feedback received from teachers and researchers, these exchanges are useful and highly appreciated by LSU students, postgraduates and doctoral students who receive the new knowledge from visiting scholars and from LSU teachers after their internships in foreign universities.
 - LSU is a member of international organizations (currently 11). Signed contracts enable LSU researchers to cooperate with scientists representing these organizations and engage in international research networks.
 - Cooperation among sports science institutions of Lithuania and other Baltic countries was greatly enhanced by the Baltic Sport Science Association established in 2009.
 - LSU researchers cooperated with LNOC (Lithuanian National Olympic Committee) and assisted the Lithuanian national team in the preparation for the Olympic Games in

accordance with the programme “London 2012”; they are committed to helping in the preparation for the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

- LSU researchers actively cooperate with academic partners. This increases the relevance of the research activities, improves international visibility and enhances the quality of research. Cooperation includes joint research, joint publications, joint applications for projects (University of Tartu has become a partner in providing a project in accordance with the programme “Horizon 2020”), conferences, seminars and joint doctoral studies. New doctoral studies in the field of Education have been initiated.
106. The LSU Strategy highlights the principle of unity of studies and research. Through development of sports science, including fundamental and applied research in health-promoting physical activity and physical education as well as rehabilitation in different age and professional groups, LSU directly contributes to the initiatives of “Europe 2020 – A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth” solving problems of health and healthy aging, and the integration of persons with disabilities in Europe and Lithuania.
107. As discussed earlier in paragraph 105, the University identified a list of international collaborative researchers and lists publications with foreign authors in the SER. The Team deemed the volume of international collaborations to be very satisfactory in relation to the research activity at present. An example of a successful international project is given here: in the period of 2012.08.01–2014.08.01, LSU carried out one international scientific project “Citrate Synthase – A Target for Treatment of Obesity and Diabetes”, which received a 99,000 Euro (~340 000 LTL) grant from the European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes. The Project Coordinator is the LSU teacher and researcher Dr. T. Venckūnas. The project made a significant contribution to the rapid development of LSU’s strategic research agenda “Coaching Science, Sports Physiology and Genetics” (headed by Dr. A. Ratkevičius). Lithuanian and foreign researchers as well as doctoral students work on this project, investigating the genetic and molecular factors that determine health, physical capacity, muscle mass and functional changes.
108. The SDIA states that increasing the internationalization and international mobility at LSU is becoming more and more important. The numbers of both incoming and outgoing LSU staff under the ERASMUS programme in the period 2010–2013 were rather stable, indicating that support for the exchange of researchers under the ERASMUS programme in recent years has been optimized at LSU. Many LSU researchers receive support for scientific trips (internships and conferences) but it is not enough. LSU researchers should be encouraged to actively attract external funding for research activities.
109. According to the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL) Programme “Support for Researchers’ Visits”, in 2012–2013 LSU won 10 projects. This enabled researchers from a number of universities – world-class professionals – to visit LSU in 2013 to conduct research, helping researchers there to master the latest research techniques. The visitors also gave lectures, attended by both staff and students. Such cooperation is encouraged for the future. On the other hand, LSU researchers do not yet go to foreign universities for research. This has been planned for next year after establishing cooperation with the LSU visiting researchers. The

grant project for the period 2014–2015 provides funding for scientific trips to international conferences and several presentations of research results.

110. The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:

- a. Increased levels of activity in research and publications and an increased number of projects since 2011.
- b. The new strategy 2013 – 2017 on Social Sciences & Humanities.
- c. Collaboration with the University of Tartu established in 2011, leading to joint doctoral programmes.
- d. The well-established doctoral programmes in all areas.
- e. Increased mobility of researchers and students.
- f. Increased collaborative work and publishing with international researchers.
- g. Improved proficiency in the English language and the plan for continued improvement to ensure all staff are competent.
- h. The majority of teachers have, or are working to achieve, a PhD.

111. The team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

- a. No detailed strategy is defined for different research areas. Albeit there is a strong focus on internationalisation in the different research areas, publications are fragmented rather than forming coherent bodies of work in specific research clusters.
- b. Although the University has selected priority areas of research and prepared development plans for them, staff recruitment is not strategically targeted on those priority areas.
- c. LSU's Procedures of Teacher Workload Planning and Accounting require all teachers to carry out research and all researchers to teach, but there is no clear connection between the research by teachers and that by researchers, resulting in a lower quality of teachers' research than it might be.

Judgement on the area: Research and Art is given positive evaluation.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

112. In the 2011 Review, the area of impact on regional and national development was given a positive evaluation. The report did include, however, some recommendations and suggestions for improvement and it is clear that some of these have been acted upon and others are still in the process of implementation.
113. To have a major impact on national and regional development is defined in the mission statement of LSU, which is based on promotion of the harmonious progress of society, and development of sports research and studies conducted at international levels. The intended impact is featured in the main documents of institutional management and development: the SDIA and the Action Plans for one and three years. In achieving the aims and objectives written in these strategic documents, LSU carries out modern and relevant study programmes that attract talented and motivated students⁸.
114. LSU's impact on the region and nation is evident in major national strategic planning documents, the provisions of which are implemented in the University's activities. LSU recognizes the provisions of the Great University Charter, the European Higher Education Area and other advanced international scientific and academic communities.
115. The role of scientific, educational, artistic and other cultural activities in promoting regional and national development is performed by pursuing the objectives of LSU's SDIA – to expand the knowledge-based, high-quality range of services provided at LSU and engage in other economic activities beneficial to society. This effect is seen in annual reports to the Rector and the LSU community provided by holders of several administrative positions responsible for the implementation of the SDIA provisions and objectives. The summary of activities is presented to the LSU Council, responsible institutions, and the general public (the report is available on the LSU website).
116. The activities of specialists trained at LSU constitute one of the most important impact factors on the country. It is notable that the number of students attracted from outside the Kaunas region is increasing. Studies at LSU are chosen by school leavers from over 40 different Lithuanian cities and districts, and the University prepares specialists for all regions of the country. In addition to on-going study programmes in Kaunas, in 2013 LSU expanded studies in other Lithuanian regions, – opening the catch-up studies facilities in Druskininkai and Utena municipalities. As an example of the national impact of these LSU's study programmes, according to data of the Lithuanian Association of Basketball Coaches, approximately 80% of the Lithuanian basketball coaches training young and elite players are

⁸ (*LSU Statute*, SDIA 2nd strategic theme “High Quality and Attractive Studies? Creating scientific production and innovations (SDIA 1st strategic theme “International Leader in Research”) and distinguishing the University as a leader in the fields of sports science and physical education, physiotherapy and wellness through physical activity (SDIA 3rd strategic theme “Identity Development”).

graduates of LSU. Further examples of the University's effective regional and national impacts follow.

117. LSU participates in the activities of two Research & Development clusters⁹. Over the past four years research clients have included: European Diabetes Research Foundation; Research Council of Lithuania; Lithuanian Business Support Agency Programmes "INOKLASTER LT+" and "INTELEKTAS LT"; JSC "Baltec CNC Technologies"; JSC "Ortopagalba"; PI "Žalgiris Basketball Centre"; the Lithuanian Basketball, Football and Athletics Federations; the Lithuanian Association of Basketball Coaches; Kaunas Swimming School; Kaunas Centre Sports School; JSC "Kauno stiklas"; JSC "Vildoma"; Kaunas Municipality Sports School "Viltis (Hope)". The services of the University researchers are used by the Lithuanian Olympic team (preparation for the London 2012 Olympic Games involved 13 LSU scientists). These were the most successful Games in the history of sport in Lithuania (five medals won). In the Preparation Plan for the Rio Summer Olympics a team of 13 LSU scientists has also been approved.
118. LSU has signed cooperation agreements with Lithuanian business companies, health promotion organizations, various sports federations, associations, municipalities, sports centres, hospitals, educational institutions, social non-profit organizations, the numbers of which grow every year (in 2014 there were a total of 89 cooperation agreements). During the reference period (2011–2013), 26 contracts of national impact and 26 contracts of regional impact were newly launched.
119. LSU's Career and Competence Development Centre is important for the in-service education of national and regional sports professionals. In the period of 2011-2013, 73 in-service courses were organized (24 in 2011, 18 in 2012, and 31 in 2013). These courses qualified 3150 specialists in the Kaunas region and in Lithuania in the fields of physiotherapy, physical education, rehabilitation, sports and other areas, i.e. the participants gained or extended permits of sports activity (809 in 2011, 743 in 2012, and 1598 in 2013). In the autumn of 2013, LSU opened the Third Age University (SDIA 2nd strategic theme "High quality and attractive studies"), which carries out activities of public benefit in the areas of sport, health promotion, social, education, science and culture. LSU continuously organizes various events for sports, health promotion and rehabilitation organizations, and individual sports – in 2011–2013 there were 35 national and international seminars organised for Lithuanian and foreign professionals. They attracted more than 2,200 participants. The University has a weekend Basketball Academy, Swimming, Running, Nordic Walking, Football, Pilates, Fitness and other sports and wellness classes. The Career and Competence Development Centre helps

⁹ In 2012, a cluster "Advanced Orthopaedic And Rehabilitation Devices" was established "Development of Open Access to R & D Infrastructure of a Cluster of Advanced Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Devices" and "Development of Orthopaedic Knee Brace Prototype with Innovative Means of Effect] In 2011, a wellness cluster "iVITA" was established (uniting 10 business and one educational institutions, and implementing two EU-funded projects, the value of which is 1,351,377.00 LTL to increase and develop the competitiveness of this cluster–integral enterprise "De Futuro"). In 2013, JSC "De Futuro" was awarded the "Innovation Prize 2013" in the innovative product category. Also, in 2013, UAB "Baltec CNC Technologies" along with LSU and "Audimas" implemented another EU-funded project with the value of 549,915 LTL, "The Development of a Qualitatively New System of Monitoring Human Physiological Parameters and Testing Physical Fitness" (S.M.A.R.T.).

organize project activities undertaken by other University departments (e.g. “Keep Moving Along with LSU”, “Studies Without Barriers: The Integration of Students with Special Needs into the University Community”, “Retraining and Professional Development of Persons Employed in the Field of Physical Activity”). The latter project re-trained more than 100 people.

120. Aiming at dealing more effectively with the national public priorities in the fields of sport and health care, in 2013–2014 LSU, along with national partners, founded the National Institute of Wellness (together with 16 associate social partners, connecting more than 70% of all wellness sector organizations in Lithuania). The University actively cooperates with the Kaunas region gymnasiums (13 events in 2011, 19 events in 2012, 16 events in 2013, and 13 events in 2014), Kaunas city and district municipalities and other social partners.
121. LSU Sports and Leisure Centre provides continuous physical activity services for the inhabitants of Kaunas and its region. It is commendable that the University is very open to engagement with the public and allowing access by the public to the facilities available, many instances of which the Team witnessed during the site visit.
122. In 2011-2013, LSU academic and administrative staff actively disseminated and popularized ideas of science, sports, health in various events, seminars, public lectures; the implementation of projects and activities was widely featured in the national media. For example, in 2012-2013, LSU teachers prepared and uploaded 38 video lectures on different topics to the video lecture system (hereinafter - VLS), which is publicly available on the Internet to all, and they have been viewed more than 100,000 times¹⁰. This is the largest number of video lectures in this system compared to other universities.
123. The University has very good relations with the main sports organizations: the Lithuanian National Olympic committee and Sports Department, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Interior.
124. LSU focuses primarily on the strategic priority goals and implementation measures of the social development of the State, particularly in education, as set out in the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, the Provisions of the National Education Strategy for 2003–2013. Aimed at ensuring international level research output in the social sciences and the humanities, the Development Strategy of Social Sciences and Humanities for 2013–2017 has been approved by the University.
125. The goals of the National Progress Programme for the Period 2014–2020 (create and develop the infrastructure of movement, health, sports and games, develop non-formal education and lifelong learning) are implemented in the research activities and study programmes of LSU (Physical Activity and Public Health, Physical Activity and Lifestyle, Sports Coaching, etc.) and practical projects (LSU infrastructure and project development).

¹⁰ 29-04-2014 VLS system data – <https://vips.liedm.lt/institucija/lietuvos-sporto-universitetas>

126. Provisions of the Lithuanian Innovation Development Programme for 2014–2020, aiming to move Lithuanian education onto a sustainable basis so as to increase the welfare of the nation, to develop an agile, independent, responsible and viable person capable of managing his/her future, Lithuania and the world, are echoed by the activities of LSU’s Institute of Sports Science and Innovations, the European Basketball Research Centre, all study areas, as well as the practical projects undertaken.
127. The topics of final theses are closely related to LSU’s strategic research themes and the programmes of studies executed in the Faculties of Sports Education and Sports Biomedicine. The thesis topics are actively shaped and offered by LSU social partners, institutions and companies of business, science, health, sports and other areas, the representatives of which are involved in the activities of LSU study programme committees. The summarized themes of the topics of student theses in the first cycle and the second cycle of studies and their percentage representation are: Empowerment and integration of people with disabilities (5%); Public health, obesity and disease prevention (12%); Tourism, sports management and sports recreation themes (24%); Rehabilitation and muscle research (20%); High-performance athlete training (9%); Development of a healthy, sustainable and balanced personality through sport (13%).
128. As a specific example, the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee, as a social partner, provides topics related to the Olympic movement for LSU students’ final thesis.
129. Student internship practice is carried out in business companies, sports clubs, Lithuanian State institutions, social assistance offices, hospitals, secondary schools, sports schools, sports federations, children’s leisure centres, and preschools. Every year in their placements, more than 1,200 University II-IV year students learn about the current problems, prepare SWOT analyses of companies and provide suggestions for their solution.
130. LSU staff and PhD students are actively involved in volunteering activities in national and international sports, cultural and social events (European and world adults and youth championships in different sports, national sports championships, etc.). They also manage and develop Sports Volunteer Union activities.
131. For example, the activities of the 2011 European Basketball Championship involved over 100 LSU staff and students. Although LSU students who met with the Team could not confirm that they are all actively involved as volunteers, permanent voluntary activities do engage more than 30 LSU students.
132. Staff of the University are very involved in national discussions in parliament and with government on the value of sport and physical education, serving as expert members of a number of boards and working groups.
133. **The team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:**
- a. The University’s impact on regional and national development has increased during the last three years and its vision and strategic planning provide every prospect of future increase.

- b. To have a major impact on national and regional development is established in the LSU mission, which is based on promotion of the harmonious progress of society, and development of sports research and studies conducted at an international level, with evidence that the number of students from other Lithuanian regions is increasing.
- c. The University has a wide range of social partners, numbering about 130, with which it actively engages.
- d. LSU has very good relations with the main sports organizations and legislatures: the National Olympic Committee of Lithuania, the Department of Physical Education and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The University assists with the Lithuanian Olympic team preparations as research provider and performs high-level research for other Region and State bodies.
- e. The University has very good relations with other Lithuanian universities, including involvement in two national consortia.
- f. LSU staff are very involved in national discussions in parliament and with government on the value of sport and physical education, serving as expert members of a number of boards and working groups.
- g. The University has very good relations with local, regional and national businesses (it is involved in two Research & Development clusters with business companies), and provides various education projects to Kaunas and Lithuanian society and its sports facilities are open to and much used by the local community.

134. The team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

- a. The Stakeholders Forum and the Alumni Club have been recently formed, but nothing has yet been implemented in terms of meetings and activities.

Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given positive evaluation.

VII. FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW REPORT 2011.

135. The Team considered all the recommendations made to LSU (formerly LAPE) in the Review Report 2011 and how effectively they were implemented. The Table below summarises the findings of the Team based on the written documents submitted (in particular Appendix 2 of the SER) and the interviews conducted during the site visit. Clearly more work needs to be done in some areas to ensure the continuous improvement of on-going activities but in all instances excellent progress has been made and the Team was assured that it is the intention of all in the University that this work will continue. The Team was very impressed with the commitment of the management and staff of LSU and with the amount of implementation achieved in the past two years.

	Recommendation	Follow-up Report
1.	That LAPE recognise the organisational benefits of widening its consultation process when preparing future self-evaluation reports.	Implemented. Evidence was provided in the SER and in interviews with internal and external stakeholders that there was very wide consultation in the preparation of the SER for 2014.
2.	To establish more comprehensive structures and documented procedures for conducting the strategic planning processes; these should include a clear reporting structure for monitoring the implementation and impact of the strategic plans and the systematic tracking and monitoring of associated change-management activities; the general aim should be to communicate with and elicit contributions from all internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis, and to promote a culture of inclusiveness in planning and enabling LAPE's progress.	Implemented. Evidence provided both in SER and accompanying appendices. Documents published on University web site and available both to staff and the general public.
3.	Revise student questionnaires in line with Students' Union comments and extend them beyond programme level to cover the range of student support services and other learning resources available within the Academy.	Implemented. Evidence was provided that questionnaires were amended and broadened in scope. Students have full access to the results and feedback is provided on actions taken by LSU.

	Recommendation	Follow-up Report
4.	Pay special attention to engaging formally with and utilising the skills and experience of administrative support staff to better effect; in-service training and a mobility plan for the development of professionalised and specialised staff within core central units would improve the effectiveness of teaching, research and administration across the entire university.	Implemented. Much progress has been made in all the activities referred to here, including mobility plans for both academic and administrative staff. Evidence was provided of individual annual review meetings held with all staff to discuss and consider career and professional development opportunities and needs.
5.	Develop strategies to boost competence and national and international publications in social science/humanities research.	Implemented. LSU have strategies in place and evidence was provided of the increase in the number of publications in social sciences/humanities over the past two years. Staff are supported in a number of ways detailed in the SER.
6.	Communicate and promote better the services of the Language Unit to staff and students who publish internationally.	Implemented. LSU has also set targets for the improvement of English language skills for all staff and is offering courses to facilitate this.
7.	Establish centrally managed procedures to monitor the recruitment of students and promote their retention.	Implemented. This is now in place and is monitored and reported on to Senate and Council.
8.	Establish mechanisms to promote and monitor LAPE's impact on the local community; a Social Partners' Forum, recommended to be in place by 2012, and an Alumni Association could help.	Implemented. Evidence of significant enhancement of the level of promotion was provided. A Forum for Stakeholders has been established together with the Alumni Club. Responsibility for the support of and expansion of these entities rests with the Centre for Career and Competence Development and has the full support of the Rector and the senior team.
9.	Three broad recommendations combine to address the two principle areas of weakness that the Team found in the evaluation. 1. to implement , in several cases as a	Implemented.

	Recommendation	Follow-up Report
	<p>matter of urgency, developments that are reportedly ‘<i>in progress</i>’, and for some of which scheduled target dates have already been missed. Many are covered by expressions of ‘<i>should do</i>’ in the self-evaluation report.</p> <p>2. to develop robust mechanisms and procedures to track the progress of the implementation and monitor the fitness for purpose and effects of the implementations, a need that LAPE also acknowledges in its self-evaluation report.</p> <p>3. to document comprehensively the implementation and monitoring procedures, including clear reporting channels. The text of the evaluation report directs attention to the following proposed or much-needed developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a Centre and comprehensive system for quality monitoring – QMS – designed to conform with the Part 1 ESG requirements; ii. the human resources strategy and implementation plan, to afford appropriate flexibility to align staff recruitment, selection and the recognition and reward of excellence with the priorities of LAPE’s Strategic Plan; and the constituent Workload Allocation Model, to provide for the strategic allocation of human resources between teaching, research, support (technical, library) and administrative staff; iii. making distance-learning modules available from 2012 onwards; iv. a central Careers Service; v. investment in developing the 	<p>The SER documented the significant progress that has been made in changing from <i>in progress</i> to <i>implemented</i>.</p> <p>These are now in place and regular reports to Senate and Council are made with details.</p> <p>This is now in place.</p> <p>Established</p> <p>Implemented.</p> <p>Published on the University web site and available to all staff.</p> <p>Workload Allocation Model is implemented and evidence was provided in the SER and orally of its effectiveness. Evidence was also provided of the strategic allocation of resources between different activities as a consequence.</p> <p>Distance-learning modules are now available.</p>

	Recommendation	Follow-up Report
	<p>expertise of staff in the International Relations Office to enhance LAPE's success rates in securing national, European and International funding.</p>	<p>Established Implemented.</p> <p>Additional staff have been appointed and are working with other units to maximise benefits.</p>

VIII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The team commends the following as examples of good practice within the University:

- i. A regular and effective process of reporting, monitoring and control activities allowed by articulation of the SDIA into three-year and annual plans,
- ii. The successful implementation of the Workload Allocation Model, aiming to achieve staff workloads balanced between research, study, administration, professional enhancement and voluntary activities.
- iii. The implementation of the virtual learning environment, Moodle and its uptake by all teaching staff.
- iv. The use of modern technologies, including the internet, to make activities publicly available, such as lectures captured on video, training lessons such as Tai-Chi and Pilates streamed live.
- v. Development of social areas for use by students.
- vi. The development of Joint PhD programmes, not only within Lithuania but also with internationally-based universities.
- vii. The employability focus of LSU's curricula, especially the inclusion of internships within the majority of its programmes.
- viii. The broad inclusive range of membership of Council, in particular with representation of an international institution.
- ix. The number and variety of links with external stakeholders.
- x. Openness of LSU to the use of its facilities by the wider, general community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That LSU should, as a priority, place the enhancement of its university identity as a central focus of their strategic activities.
2. That LSU should prepare strategies for promotion and enhancement of each of the five strategic research and studies areas.
3. That there should be an increased focus on research into development of children's health and level of physical activity.
4. That students should be more actively encouraged to engage in extracurricular activities such as volunteering.
5. That the Alumni Club and the Forum for Stakeholders be promoted more widely and strongly and their activity levels increased.
6. That a review of modules and programmes should be carried out so as to reduce any duplication/overlap and maximise the efficiency of teaching.

7. Deliver additional equipment and related resources.
8. Continue the planned expansion of student practice, as a key aspect of study learning and competence development.
9. Maintain the provision of support for the improvement of English language skills for students and staff.
10. As a development of the excellent HR strategy, and to enhance further the rising quality of research, prioritise the research strategies to support by targeted staff recruitment.
11. Encourage clear connections between research by researchers and research by teachers, with the aim especially of raising the quality of the latter.

IX. JUDGEMENT

Lithuanian Sports University is given positive evaluation.

Grupės vadovas:
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ANNEX.

LITHUANIAN SPORTS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

Lithuanian Sports University (LSU) community is very grateful to the Team of Experts for the comprehensive and objective analysis of LSU activities, indicated strengths and weaknesses and provided recommendations on how to more effectively implement the University mission, vision and strategy. We also want to thank very much the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for continued assistance in improving the mechanisms that allow more efficient and better quality implementation of LSU mission. We have no doubt that the recommendations of the Team of Experts will inspire us to new endeavours and encourage immediate improvement of activities which obviously need to be accomplished right now.

Having carefully read the conclusions of the Team of Experts, we found some factual discrepancies, so we want to draw your attention to them:

1. Paragraph 8. The University offers 20 study programmes: nine undergraduate programmes at Bachelor level (including two international programmes delivered in English), nine Master and two Doctoral study programmes (in Biomedical Sciences and Social Sciences).

Specification. LSU offers one international undergraduate degree programme and one international Doctoral programme.

2. Paragraph 51. LSU offers a total of 20 study programmes – nine Bachelor, nine Master and two PhD. Two of these are international Bachelor Degree programmes that are delivered jointly with other institutions.

Specification: LSU offers one international undergraduate degree programme and one international Doctoral programme.

3. Paragraph 111. The team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

- a. No detailed strategy is defined for different research areas. There is a strong focus on internationalisation but publications are fragmented – there is no plan to focus on specific areas/clusters.
- b. Priority areas in which to recruit staff to support research strategies are not identified.

- c. There is no clear connection between the research by teachers and that by researchers, resulting in a lower quality of teachers' research than it might be.

Specification:

- a. Each strategic trend has developed a Three-Year Work Programme which provides the Action Plan (Appendix 1), which was approved on June 26, 2012 at the LAPE Senate Meeting, Protocol No.10.

- b. On October 1, 2012, Rector's Order No. 261 / P, a synergetic team for the development of the priority areas of research and the preparation of their development plan was set up, and the team selected LSU priority areas of research and prepared a plan for the development of the priority research areas, which was approved on May 6, 2013, Rector's Order No. 18 / M (Appendix 2).

- c. All teachers are required to carry out research, and all researchers have to teach. This requirement is indicated in the Procedures of Teacher Workload Planning and Accounting at Lithuanian Sports University, approved on December 21, 2012, at the LSU Senate Meeting, Protocol No. 6.

4. Paragraph 133. LSU has very good relations with the main sports organizations and legislatures: the Lithuanian National Olympic committee and Sports department, and the Ministries of Education and of the Interior. The University assists with the Lithuanian Olympic team preparations as research provider and performs high-level research for other Region and State bodies.

Specification: LSU has very good relations with the main sports organizations and legislatures: the National Olympic Committee of Lithuania, the Department of Physical Education and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.