



LIETUVOS SPORTO UNIVERSITETAS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
LIETUVOS SPORTO UNIVERSITETAS

Grupės vadovas:

Dr. Oliver Vettori

Panel chairperson:

Vertinimo sekretorė:

Dr. Sonja Mikeska

Review secretary:

Grupės nariai (kategorija):

Panel members (category):

Dr. Daniel Almeida Marinho (academic)

Dr. Mark Sacco (academic)

Dr. Einius Petkus (social partner)

Beatričė Linkauskaitė (student)

SKVC vertinimo koordinatore

Review coordinator at SKVC:

Daiva Buivydienė

2023

Report language – English

CONTENT

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
II. INTRODUCTION	4
2.1. Background of the review process.....	4
2.2. Background information about the institution.....	6
III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS.....	7
3.1. Management	7
3.2. Quality Assurance	15
3.3. Studies and Research (Art).....	19
3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development	24
IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE.....	28
V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT	29

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Lithuanian Sports University


[signature]
Dr. Oliver Vettori

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.
2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.
3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#) and included the following members:

Panel chairperson:	Dr. Oliver Vettori
Review secretary:	Dr. Sonja Mikeska
Panel members (category):	Dr. Daniel Almeida Marinho (academic) Dr. Mark Sacco (academic) Dr. Einius Petkus (social partner) Beatričė Linkauskaitė (student)

4. As a result of external review **Lithuanian Sports University (*Lietuvos sporto universitetas*)** is given a **positive evaluation**.
5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	3
QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	3
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

*5 points - **excellent** – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **4** examples of good practices were found; **13** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of Lithuanian Sports University (Lietuvos sporto universitetas) (hereafter referred to as LSU or the University) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in Kaunas by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 [Order No. V-1529](#) and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 [Order No V-32](#) (hereinafter – the Methodology).
8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.
9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the University, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff, financial data, findings from the ex-post study field reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities as well as information on violations of academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information, such as a list of publications per staff member, information on which staff member teaches in what study programme and a survey questionnaire that is used for the evaluation of modules.
10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel *visited* the university from 3rd to 5th of May 2023 where it had 16 meetings with internal and external stakeholders. Subsequently, the Panel met in-person to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by email correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.
11. In line with the Procedure the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management, Quality Assurance, Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review.
12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the

minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

13. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

14. In line with the Methodology the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to submit comments on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.

15. The Panel received the comments from LSU and considered them. As a result 1 error was corrected and 1 precision was made in the report.

16. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (hereinafter – the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 of January, 2020 order [No. V-5](#), SKVC takes one of the decisions:

- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

The higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre.

The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

17. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;
- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;
- to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

18. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on its website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the review of the higher education institution together with the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

19. The history of Lithuanian Sports University (LSU) started with Higher Courses of Physical Education in 1934. In 1945, the Lithuanian State Institute of Physical Education was established, in 1999, the Institute was renamed as the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education and in 2012 it was renamed again as the Lithuanian Sports University. LSU is the only university in Lithuania that carries out research in all main fields of sports and health, delivers study programmes and trains high-level professionals in the fields of sports, physical education, physiotherapy and sports and leisure management.
20. LSU is a state higher education institution founded by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. The University has autonomy in academic, administrative, economic and financial management activities based on the principle of self-governance, academic freedom and respect for human rights, as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and LSU Statute.
21. The defined MISSION of the University, which sees itself as an important centre of sports science, physical education and the promoter of sports values and traditions, is to unlock and realise human potential in sports and health through education, research, innovation and leadership for the prosperity of society. LSU's VISION is to be an acknowledged leader in sports and health education, research and innovation in the Baltic Sea Region. LSU bases its profile on the following VALUES: curiosity, proactivity, integrity, and union. These definitions of mission, vision and values form the basis of the current LSU strategy 2023-2027.
22. The main organisational units of the University are the collegiate governing bodies, such as the Council and the Senate, and the sole governing body is the Rector and his senior management team. The University has four Departments, the Institute of Sports Science and Innovation, the Centre of Basketball Studies and Research, and the units coordinating education, research, and sports activities: Studies Division, Doctoral Studies and Research Division, Knowledge and Innovation Relay Division, Sports and Leisure Centre, Infrastructure and Service Centre, International Relations Office, Centre of Information technologies. The LSU Students' Council represents the LSU student community and actively participates in the activities of the LSU governing bodies.
23. LSU currently runs six undergraduate, nine graduate and two post-graduate study programmes. As of 1 October 2022, there were 1499 students enrolled in the University, including 1039 in the first cycle, 410 in the second cycle and 50 in the third cycle studies. In the same period, a total of 117 foreign students (47 undergraduate, 62 graduate, and 8 PhD) came to LSU for full-time studies. In 2022, 238 first cycle and 157 second cycle students entered LSU. During the period under review (2018-2022), a total of 1.814 graduates were awarded qualification degrees of respective levels, of these 1.360 graduates were awarded a bachelor's degree, 448 graduates were awarded a master's degree, and 60 graduates were awarded a doctoral degree. The majority of the University's employees are lecturers and researchers. In total, there were 119 lecturers occupying 91.04 posts at LSU (data of 1st October 2022).

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

The *Management* area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, which are set up in the Methodology:

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;

1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;

1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

24. As the only Sports University in the country, LSU has a fairly specific mission compared to other higher education institutions, which provides a good basis for its strategy. In the period under review, LSU's Strategy 2018-2022 was based on the following mission: to promote sustainable development of physical, mental, emotional and social well-being of people, help train athletes and provide prompt recommendations on the development of Lithuanian social and economic well-being by means of creative involvement of the world research, studies and modern technology in sport and exercise, physical activity and nutrition, recreation and rehabilitation and the development of research on the highest international level. The new Strategy 2023-2027 condenses the LSU mission on "unlocking and actuating human potential through sport and health studies, science, innovation and leadership for societal well-being," which is complemented by its vision to "become a recognised leader in sport and health studies, research and innovation in the Baltic Sea Region".
25. LSU's strategic plan is well aligned with the Lithuanian Health Strategy 2014-2025 (raise awareness and promote healthy lifestyle) and the National Public Health Development Program 2016-2023 (increase physical activity levels of the population and create conditions for active lifestyle). It is based on the provisions of the laws and strategic documents of the Republic of Lithuania and it also invokes European level policies, such as the provisions of the European Research Area (ERA) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
26. Following their vision, the current most prominent strategic goal of LSU is to become a Baltic leader and a recognized European player in sports science and LSU has therefore set its recent priorities to engage in international alliances and international networks. The Panel encourages LSU's endeavours to strategically strengthen its internationalization and sees it as an appropriate way using the potential of international networks in a globally connected environment.
27. The strategic definition of research areas in the strategic action plan matches the university's profile. There is an apparent focus on the role of Basketball and modern technology in Basketball training within a specific specialised department, while other research areas are given high priority

at the same time, such as Physical Education and Well-being, Athlete Training Technologies, Muscles, Motor Control, and Health Promotion as well as Leisure Management, Economics and Sociology.

28. In LSU's educational offers, the main strategic focus lies on the scientific fields of sports. Thus, the management graduates can seek employment anywhere in the field, but they also have the sports competences in addition. In physiotherapy, LSU is more focused on sports than any other university and the field of public health is as well connected with physical activities. Thus, the graduate competence portfolio is visibly grounded in a strong competence in sports. This was also mirrored by how the university was/is perceived by the external stakeholders the Panel met during the interviews.
29. According to the interviews with the members of the University council, which also includes representatives from outside of the university, both the Health Sector and the Sports Sector have been involved in drafting the strategic action plan and their recommendations have been taken into consideration.
30. The strategy contains a SWOT like assessment of the relevant operational environment. Environmental factors (opportunities, risks) were not explored in detail, though. In addition, recent and future strategic topics, such as digitalization or sustainability, were hardly mentioned during the interviews, which signals that the university is still trying to find its angle towards those complex and dynamic issues. How external developments will affect the university and the university strategy, has not been analysed in detail by the University.
31. There are quantitative indicators for the implementation of the objectives defined for all strategic directions set out in the LSU Strategy, however in some cases the indicators appear to be driven by the fact that they would be easy to measure, rather than function as true measures of success. The targets/indicators on social impact, for example, remain largely stable from year to year, giving the impression the university is already at the beginning of the period where it wants to be at the end (the stakeholders also valued "stability of the status quo" much higher than "growth or further development" during the interviews with the Panel). The indicators in the area community culture will hardly be able to help monitor if the University's recruiting goals and diversity ambitions were successful, nor how the staff's wellbeing support the university goals. The indicators in the research area, though only few, seem to be the most effective ones in operationalising and monitoring LSU's aims at present. In summary, the Panel does not consider all indicators as appropriate and sees the necessity to strengthen the causal relationships between goals, actions and measurement of success.
32. The implementation of the objectives set out in the LSU Strategy 2018–2022 was measured by a total of 63 quantitative indicators covering all strategic directions. Based on the defined indicators (may they be less or more appropriate/effective, see comment above), there has been an assessment of how the strategic objectives of the previous period have been achieved (or not achieved), including a sound analysis, how this will drive the university development into the next period. The quantitative indicators and their achievement can be found in the LSU Annual Financial Statements and LSU Annual Performance Reports.
33. The Panel found that not all strategic areas are equally well developed/operationalized: the most prominent progress through strategic planning can be seen in the area of research. The area of education is more infused by an input-logic however. In the area of lifelong learning, the strategic

goals of the universities could have been further sharpened. In their current form, it is difficult to assess whether the university has achieved what it set out to. In the area of internationalisation, there are no clear references in the strategy documents on how the “international mindset” idea is put into practice.

34. During the interviews, many of the stakeholders referred to the Shanghai Ranking of the world's sports science schools as an important marker for external measuring the strategic process, as LSU has progressed from the 208th to the 103rd position. However, at the same time, some of the expected strategic indicators set up in the LSU strategy were also not achieved (e.g. foreign PhD students in full-time study).
35. The implementation of the strategy is evaluated annually and during the period under review, the LSU Strategy 2018-2022 was reviewed and revised by the LSU Council once to reflect changes in the external and internal environment. The Panel appreciates the regularity of the monitoring on a yearly basis and the scrutiny on the operational level involving LSU's relevant stakeholders.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:

1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;

1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;

1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.

36. LSU has institutional autonomy in academic, administrative, economic and financial management activities. The main structural units of the LSU governance are the collegiate governing bodies, such as the Council (9 members, elected by a public tender, term – 5 years) and the Senate (members *elected* for the term of 5 years) and the sole governing body is the Rector (responsible for the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Council and the Senate). The model of LSU management structure, as with other higher education institutions, is laid down in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania.
37. Whereas the Council is mostly responsible for financial affairs, the Senate is more responsible for academic affairs, such as students' tuition fees, approval of study programmes, research and experimental development, approval of internal quality assurance and monitoring its implementation, qualification requirement for lecturers, certification of lecturers and researchers and the academic community.
38. The members of the collegiate governing bodies are very content with their cooperative and collaborative approach, which includes regular meetings (e. g. the Senate has one meeting per month and also has four Senate commissions), so that issues can be solved in a timely manner and involve all stakeholders leading to a common decision. All in all, a spirit of collaboration and shared values was identifiable throughout the visit.
39. The core processes of the LSU are continuously improved in a systematic and consistent manner by process managers using the principles and methods of organizational redesign, creating a new process. In 2019, there was a reform for more effective management, where structures were newly defined, as well as partly abolished and merged. With the changes in the LSU structure, the management of human resources and processes was optimised, thus ensuring the quality and efficiency of LSU activities. The University's performance management and quality management

systems were also updated based on the principles of strategic management: administrative units were consolidated; their functions were clarified; and the number of managers was reduced for more efficient use of administrative human resources. At the time of the review, it was too early to assess the impact of the structural reform, however all stakeholders the Panel met in the interviews, seemed to be quite satisfied with their function within the current structures.

40. A risk analysis is apparently regularly carried out, however not on a very detailed level. According to the information given in the SER, the risk management is integrated into the LSU strategic planning and performance management scheme. At the strategic organisational level, the Rector has the overall accountability and responsibility for risk management. The Rector or the Vice-Rectors in the relevant areas are have the formal role of “Risk Owners”, whereas special “Risk Managers” are appointed according to the nature of the risk under consideration. The Rector reports on risk management to the Council. In the interviews with the Panel, LSU stakeholders perceived major risks in the political instability following the war in Ukraine and in current changes by government and salaries that might not be attractive for young people. Internal risks as well as the competitive situation or macro level risks for higher education globally (transformative power of artificial intelligence, cyber security...) have not been addressed at large. Seen against that background, the mode and frequency of the risk assessment would need to be further developed and linked to a more strategic and systematic environmental scanning in order to stay competitive for the future.
41. LSU academic self-governance follows democratic principles, which include direct participation of the LSU community in decision-making. LSU’s main stakeholders are students, LSU staff members, alumni, the sports community, strategic international partners as well as social partners. It is stated in the SER that input from the stakeholders like social partners and alumni is continuously being improved. During the interviews with the stakeholders, they reported on being included and on giving recommendations, however typically in a rather informal manner.
42. Special attention is given to representing the students’ voices in the management process of LSU. 1 of the 9 members of the Council is a representative of the Student’s Council (of the remaining 8 members, 4 are lecturers and researchers, the other 4 are independent of the academic community, one of whom is appointed by the students). In the Senate, the students’ Council’s representatives must make up 20% of its members and there shall also be one representative of the students’ council in the Rectorate. The Panel sees an adequate representation of students in LSU’s structures and processes.
43. The LSU management system does not foresee the explicit inclusion of international (European) stakeholders in the Council, which would guarantee that wider international/European perspectives are considered for strategic decision or relationships with the corporate sector beyond the region could be further deepened. Also, there are no special representatives of international students nominated, which might be due to the still relatively small number of international students enrolled at LSU.

1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;

1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.

44. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data and results of student success are in place. It was noted by the Panel members that very little attention was given to the topic of student dropouts in the SER and during the interviews, although the numbers are not that small (ranging from 16-21% in undergraduate studies and 13-17% in second cycle studies). In the SER, it was stated that the monitoring of graduate employability and the career tracking is one aspect, which the university plans to improve. The Panel sees a clear need for this, too. The interviews with the graduates confirmed that they periodically receive LSU surveys about their current career stages and are asked to provide data on their chosen career paths. LSU found out that 80-90% of their graduates work in the area of sports after graduating, but they are not well connected and know little about their fellow graduates.
45. In order to provide information to the academic community and the public, the Valorisation Plan and the Annual Performance Report are used as key instruments. The valorisation plan specifies the implementation and communication of LSU's strategy and the dissemination of information is being monitored by LSU, e. g. by tracking the number of views of the newsletter or the clicks in social media platforms. Social partners reported in the interview that they receive the newsletter including current information about LSU's offers and activities; however, it also seems sometimes difficult for them to receive the specific information, which is specifically relevant for them, e.g. information about athlete testing services. This shows that LSU's communication strategy could still be further target-oriented and also more prominent with regard to social media, international study portals, etc. Especially seen against the background of decreasing student numbers, the communication strategy could be checked for its effectiveness and further tailored to the needs of the individual target groups.
46. All key documents reflecting LSU activities and the Annual Performance Report are published on the University's website and are accessible to the LSU community and all stakeholders. All stakeholders are involved in discussing the reports on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and in making performance improvement recommendations. Parts of the website are also provided in English language, yet the English version of the university website provides less detailed information on programme descriptions for international students, with a focus on the most important information in the FAQ section. The currently enrolled international students confirmed that the information provided is satisfying for their study purposes, however it cannot be tracked, how many more potential (prospective) international students could be reached by enlarging the information provided in English language.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:

- 1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;*
- 1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*
- 1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*

1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;
1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.

47. Based on its Human Resources Development Strategy, LSU has set up a clear system for the employment of academic and non-academic staff. The recruitment to the positions of LSU lecturers and researchers is organized by means of a public competition for a term of 5 years according to the LSU Procedure for the Certification of Lecturers and Researchers and for Organizing Competitions for Academic Posts, drawn in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. A lecturer or researcher who wins the competition for the same post for the second time in succession receives an employment contract of indefinite duration and is certified every 5 years based on their compliance with the minimal qualification requirements for lecturers and researchers. LSU has also set up transparent procedures on the salaries as well as on the process of promotion or demotion. In the Panel's view, LSU's human resources (HR) system defines very clear and transparent standards and procedures. The interviews have shown that all staff members are highly satisfied by the system and support it. HR work of LSU was also externally evaluated and appreciated by a European level Excellence in HR award.
48. LSU appears to have both the academic and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives of teaching and research. All members of the academic staff have the necessary academic qualifications in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania. There is an above average number of professors and associate professors compared to lecturers and assistants within the staff complement. Most of the staff have been there for quite a long time, LSU experienced only minimal staff turnover at a rate not exceeding 7%. The Panel experienced a mix of younger and more experienced staff in the interviews and the SER highlights that young lecturers receive a training on the job and are integrated in project activities right from the beginning so that they can quickly familiarize with LSU structures and processes.
49. The number of international staff is quite low (in 2021/22 there were 4 foreign staff members, 5 international visiting researchers and 12 international visiting teachers). In the interviews with the Panel it was stated that it is LSU's goal to both attract new international researchers as well as to keep up the good conditions for the national LSU staff. The current strategy foresees to have 8 visiting researchers from European countries by 2027. As stated in the management section of this report, the Panel advises LSU to reconsider the indicators mentioned in the strategy and check their appropriateness for reaching LSU's vision to become a strong Baltic Leader operating internationally.
50. The University provides professional development offers, such as pedagogical training and language courses whereby staff are encouraged to improve their teaching and language skills. At the same time, they are given incentives to carry out research. Also the non-academic staff are given the opportunities to attend courses and seminars both in literacy skills as well as in the other competences to improve their work related skills. Over the last five years, LSU spent more than EUR 25,000 of own funds on staff development. Around 80% of the staff also regularly make use of the Erasmus mobility options that are offered every year to both academic and non-academic staff. In 2022, more than 50 LSU staff members were involved in more than 20 Erasmus project

activities. The Panel considers the provision of professional development offers adequate and acknowledges the high participation rate in Erasmus staff activities.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:

1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;

1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;

1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;

1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.

51. The University has a financial strategy and the University's Council is mostly responsible for the financial affairs. According to the various sources interviewed, the financial resources are well planned in advance (according to the regulations in the Budget Estimation Procedure) and allocated by fair means according to the needs of each department. The calculation of the required budget is forwarded by the Head of Department to the Rector, who passes it on to the Senate for approval of the respective budget. According to the interviews, LSU department members were highly satisfied with that process and confirmed that all activities in teaching and research could be carried out as planned. The Panel acknowledges a functioning system and sees the rationale behind the need-based distribution.
52. LSU's revenue consists of three components: government budget appropriations, own funds generated, and project and other funds received. In 2022, LSU had a budget of 10.607.400 €, of which around 60% are state-funded, around 20% earnings and 20% project funds.
53. LSU earnings are currently subsidizing because the number of education vouchers from the government has been increased and the numbers of Lithuanian fee-paying students is decreasing. Therefore, LSU aims to attract more international fee-paying students in the future.
54. There are a few funds generated through research projects. Although there are very good research results at different scientific levels, there are still few projects developed with external financial support, with the university relying mostly on the state budget and national funds.
55. Social partners and graduates do provide scholarships for LSU students and thus contribute to the growth of the student body. However, there is no direct sponsorship of Higher Education activities by LSU's social partners and the interviewed representatives of social partners mentioned that sponsoring was not common in the Lithuanian Higher Education sector. The Panel encourages LSU to consider sponsoring as one factor for raising more funds in the future.
56. The Financial Department is responsible for planning the financial costs to implement any further educational activities and the plans are approved by the Rector. A financial risk assessment is carried out in a way that expenses are planned in a very cautious manner. Salaries represent the major part (more than 50%) of LSU expenditure, while goods and services account for about 35% and scholarships about 15% of total expenditure.
57. The University has demonstrated that all the resources and basic infrastructure, which are necessary for the various teaching and research activities, are planned in advance and their use is justified. Students and staff with special needs are also able to use the full range of study, research and sports facilities.

58. The University has shown that it has the resources for conducting appropriate teaching and research. The equipment in labs is modern, the technology is up to date and provides an ideal learning environment for conducting research-based education with applied teaching methods. The library is equipped with printers and 50 physical workstations have been installed in the library after the reconstruction, where students or university staff can use the library's access to electronic databases of scientific articles.
59. Besides the main reading room, the library also offers group-working rooms, which were praised by students for their functionality regarding studying and reading. At the moment, however, the group-working space in the library is the only place where students can meet. In line with that, the students have formulated the wish for some additional leisure or recreational rooms, in which also informal communication and networking could be fostered between the students.
60. Practical lectures are delivered in specially equipped classrooms. The University has upgraded three teaching and research laboratories, two computer classrooms (with 42 workstations), a well-developed sports infrastructure (swimming pool, athletics arena, sports halls, etc.), where students have practical training according to their field of study. The laboratories and equipment of the Institute of Sports Science and Innovation are also used for the learning process.
61. LSU also provides an e-learning platform (Moodle) as well as a hybrid set-up for classrooms in order to assist both online and hybrid learning scenarios.
62. **In summary**, the Panel found evidence that all standards in the Management Section of the Report are implemented by LSU. In particular, the structures, processes and resources are managed in a solid and transparent way that enables all LSU stakeholders to clearly identify and fulfil their role in the overarching system and to support the organisation culture. The management team is aware of current challenges and institutional areas of development and has the visible ambition to bring the university forward. An indicator-based monitoring of the strategic goals takes place every year and includes the participation of all relevant LSU stakeholders. However, the Panel sees the necessity to sharpen the Strategic Planning in terms of evaluating indicator effectiveness and in terms of a more detailed risk and environment analysis.

Based on the evidence provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

Firstly (1.1), LSU has a Strategic Action Plan, which is consistent with its mission and its implementation is assured.

Secondly (1.2), LSU has set up processes and manages them effectively.

Thirdly (1.3) LSU publicly provides information on its performance and management effectiveness, which is available to all stakeholders.

Fourthly (1.4) LSU has set up an effective human resource management system.

Fifthly (1.5) Financial and learning resources are planned, allocated and used rationally and are sufficient for fulfilling LSU's mission.

63. **Judgment:** The area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

64. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends LSU to sharpen its strategy in a way that strengthens the causal relationships between goals, actions and measurement of success. In addition to the annual monitoring of indicator achievement, there should also be an evaluation of indicator effectiveness in measuring the intended strategic outcomes.
- In terms of strategic risk and environmental analysis, the Panel recommends to monitor more systematically the external environment also on an international level, taking into consideration recent global developments and trends, such as AI, digitalization etc. and to critically reflect and assess their potential impact on LSU.
- Concerning LSU’s communication strategy, the Panel recommends a more targeted and client-oriented communication to enhance LSU’s visibility in the areas, which are relevant for the specific target groups (i.e. specific social partners). Especially in view of the demographic development and LSU’s expressed interest to attract new student groups (with a particular focus on international students), the current marketing measures should be checked for their effectiveness and strengthened in their impact.
- In terms of learning environment resources, the Panel would like to support the students’ expressed wish to have more room for interdisciplinary learning spaces where students can also integrate and network interactively in an informal way, as this is the basis for a lively student “co-curriculum”, in which important transversal skills can be acquired.

65. Good practice examples:

- A clear sense of collaboration and joint responsibility is pervading LSU organisation culture. There is a shared understanding of where the university wants and needs to go, which also indicates a particularly strong institutional identity felt among staff and stakeholders, which is not too common among higher education institutions.

3.2. Quality Assurance

The *Quality Assurance* area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, as set up in the Methodology:

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:

2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;

2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;

2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;

2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;

2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;

2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

66. LSU has adopted a Quality Assurance (QA) system based on a clear quality policy and developed a Quality Manual in 2014. The Manual describes all processes, procedures and

responsibilities for ensuring compliance with the ESG (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area). Compliance with the ESG can be seen in the fact that:

- LSU has defined a clear QA policy (QA Manual),
- LSU has implemented clear processes for the design and approval of study programmes,
- LSU's teaching and learning activities are based on the principle of student-centeredness,
- LSU has defined clear processes for all steps of the student life cycle (from admission to graduation and also including recognition),
- LSU has measures installed to guarantee an appropriate qualification of its lecturers for its study programmes,
- LSU provides adequate learning resources and student support,
- LSU ensures information and communication for LSU stakeholders,
- LSU publishes information about its Teaching and Learning activities,
- LSU periodically monitors and reviews its study programmes,
- LSU takes part in external QA procedures.

67. In 2021, when the new structure of LSU was adopted, the University reviewed its quality assurance procedures and developed a new Quality Manual, updating all processes, responsibilities and management structures. The principles and processes described in the LSU Quality Management System Manual are accessible to all stakeholders. They are based on the basic PDCA (*Plan – Do – Check – Act*) cycle concept and on the guiding principles of evidence-based management, leadership, striving for progress, universal participation and maximising social value. Under this common umbrella, LSU defined specific QA measures for its core areas (which were for the period under review based on the 2018-2022 strategy): QA for research & experimental development, QA for studies (first, second and third cycle studies), QA for internationalization development, QA for sports and third mission. Also for the supporting processes in the areas of human resources, financial resources, communication, infrastructure, specific QA schemes were drawn.

68. The quality processes themselves are regularly reviewed and revised. When the University strategy is changed, the quality processes are adapted accordingly. An example brought up in the interviews was the adaptation of quality processes when internationalisation had become a "horizontal direction" in the new LSU strategy 2023-2027 and therefore needed to be integrated in the different thematic areas. All changes in the quality manual are approved by the Senate.

69. LSU's Studies Division periodically monitors student achievements at the university level. It monitors whether student achievements are recorded in the information system and initiates the measures to improve the administration of studies. Feedback is gathered through the surveys of all participants in the study process (students, lecturers, graduates). The surveys are carried out at institutional, study programme and module level. Response rates vary. In 2020, 53% of all students took part in the module evaluation.

70. There is also an annual study programme monitoring scheme in place. In the Study Programme Committees, a continuous monitoring of the quality of the study programmes takes place and input of all stakeholders, also from students, alumni and social partners, is taken into consideration for making improvements. In the interviews it has been highlighted that alumni and social partners do

contribute their ideas and share their suggestions, however more in an informal oral way and not necessarily in a systematically documented manner.

71. The student feedback systems are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In the interview, the students reported about examples how they could bring in their views very easily during informal meetings with teaching staff and they also reported in which way aspects have been changed or modified based on their feedback. Besides these informal qualitative oral feedback options, all modules are also formally evaluated via an online questionnaire. However, only around 50% of students fill out the questionnaires. Based on this quota, the Panel would consider it important to provide incentives to the students to engage also in the formal channels for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching & learning processes, in order to ensure transparency as well as to safeguard the institution from eclectic ad hoc actions.
72. The relevant processes for Quality Assurance are specified in the Quality Manual, as well as in specific regulations for the specific activities (e.g. in the Procedure for Gathering Student Feedback for the Improvement of the Quality of Studies (approved by LSU Senate on 2022-09-17, Minutes No 6)). The roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders are clearly defined. In addition, the interviews with the different stakeholder groups have shown that the roles and functions are clear to them and seen as effective.
73. LSU has established a good regulatory framework and robust structures and processes for study programme development and study programme revisions, including criteria for closing a programme that is not performing up to expectations.
74. In addition to the external accreditation of study programmes, there is also a defined process for the certification of the study content of the individual modules in order to ensure the high quality of all modules. According to the Procedure for the Design and Certification of Study Modules, all modules shall be certified the next year after the introduction of the study module into the study programme plan. A study module may be certified for one, three or five years, or not certified at all. The certification of study modules takes place every year before 1 June of the current year, so that the information is updated on time for the coming study year.
75. Students as well as academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive encompassing academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. Notable support measures include a tutoring system, an introductory week, the possibility to negotiate an Individual Study Plan (for high-performance athletes), free psychological counselling, and a regular well-being survey. There are also various financial scholarships available, up to doctoral students. In the interviews with the Panel, all student representatives reported that they could address their questions or problems immediately and always received helpful answers that guided them securely through their studies and learning process.
76. The University also provides recreational offers. Thus, the Sport and Leisure Centre provides students with opportunities for sport and health promotion, healthy lifestyle development, volunteering and organising sports events. Students can use the gyms, the swimming pool and other facilities. LSU students can choose accommodation in the University's dormitory located on the campus. At the moment, one of the two dormitory places is being renovated for modernisation.
77. All stakeholders are very satisfied with the support services offered to them. Especially the tutoring system was praised as highly effective by the students, so that their needs are taken care of.

78. Regarding ethics and responsible behaviour, LSU has established a Code of Academic Ethics, which is in line with national regulations and guidelines (such as the Recommendations on the Development, Adoption and Implementation of the Codes of Academic Ethics for Lithuanian Research and Higher Education Institutions) and an Academic Ethics Committee supervises the compliance.
79. The Committee (with 3 students involved) investigates non-anonymous complaints about possible violations of academic ethics committed by LSU academic community members. The composition of the LSU Academic Ethics Committee, the complaints procedure, as well as the documents relevant to the handling of complaints, information on the procedure for filing complaints of harassment, sexual harassment, violence, persecution, discrimination, etc. are also available on the LSU website.
80. Complaints of harassment are handled confidentially, but are not completely anonymous. Anonymous complaints of breaches of academic ethics are not considered. However, students have the possibility to turn to the Students' Council and the official student representatives will bring forward their concerns without mentioning their names. The students that the Panel met during the interviews did not express any problems with this procedure.
81. Concerning plagiarism, there is an electronic system in place, which allows identifying plagiarism and the teachers have a duty to check on plagiarism. There are also information events organized, where the academic community is informed about the topic of plagiarism. The student association also actively spreads the information and there is a mandatory module for first year students called "critical thinking and academic communication", in which students are prepared for academic writing. Students can also check for potential plagiarism alerts in the Moodle system before handing in their theses. However, no data is available on the effectiveness of the measures; and the impact of artificial intelligence is yet to be assessed at the university. The Panel advises LSU to consider these aspects in future assessments.
82. The results of the external review were used to improve the performance of the higher education institution. LSU's Strategy 2018-2022, its measures and implementation actions and action plans were developed considering the experts' comments. The recommendations focused on the strengthening of the institutional identity, the promotion of strategic research areas (such as focussing more on the topic of improving children's health and physical activity), encouraging students to engage in extra curriculum activities, intensifying alumni activities, acquiring new research equipment, upgrading learning and IT tools, increasing the English proficiency of teachers and students, applying a more targeted recruitment strategy and linking the research activities of all academic staff members. Looking at LSU's activities in 2023, the recommendations of the previous external review seem all to have been followed up on. The most prominent progress can be seen in the research area based on the recommendation on strengthening strategic research areas. The engagement of alumni into LSU activities seems to be still a challenge (although measures for improvement have been taken), which LSU has also stated in its own self-assessment.
83. **In summary**, LSU implemented a solid Quality Assurance system, which is consistent with the European Standards Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and based on the PDCA cycle structure. The Panel met stakeholders, who were eager to take their share in bringing constant improvement into a system of regular monitoring and updating. The communication culture

provides many opportunities (formal and informal ones), for all stakeholders to bring in their feedbacks and their ideas for further development. Special focus is laid on student feedback, as set out in the student-centered approach according to the European Standards and Guidelines. The identified problems or challenges are dealt with immediately and with a clear focus on solution and optimisation.

Based on the evidence provided above the panel concludes the following:

Firstly (2.1.1), LSU has set up an internal QA document that is consistent with the ESG.

Secondly (2.1.2), LSU applies appropriate quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement that are applied periodically and ensure the involvement of all relevant LSU stakeholders.

Thirdly (2.1.3) LSU has defined specific processes based on the PDCA cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring and periodic evaluation as well as development of activities for optimisation).

Fourthly (2.1.4) LSU provides effective support offers for both its students and its staff.

Fifthly (2.1.5) LSU has set up specific standards and procedures on academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethic.

Sixthly (2.1.6) LSU has used the results of the last external review to improve its performance.

84. **Judgment:** The area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

85. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel advises LSU to strongly encourage the students and other stakeholders to bring in their feedback not only in informal, qualitative oral formats, but to also use the formal evaluation sheets and surveys in order to guarantee a transparent documentation of the quality cycle.
- Concerning the relationship with its alumni, the Panel advises to invest even more efforts in both tracking alumni career paths, but also integrating alumni (also international ones) into LSU activities in a systematic way and building up a lively alumni community.

86. **Good practice examples:**

- The support that LSU has set up for its students via the tutoring system is very encompassing and covers the needs of the students comprehensively.

3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

The *Studies and Research (Art)* area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, as set up in the Methodology:

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:

3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;

3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;

3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);

3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.

87. Currently LSU delivers 6 first cycle study programmes and 10 second cycle study programmes. The study programmes are delivered in the fields of Public Health, Rehabilitation, Management, Pedagogy, Performance Sport, Leisure Sport, Biology, and Education. LSU runs two PhD programmes in the field of Biology (jointly with the University of Tartu) and Education (jointly with Kaunas University of Technology and Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy).
88. The study and research activities are carried out and their results are consistent with the specific mission and strategic aims of LSU, which can be noticed in a number of attributes (number of scientific publications, commitment of staff members, quality of the laboratories and facilities). The various departments are responsible for the teaching and research activities.
89. The level of research activity is appropriate for the university studies and the outputs are improving. LSU researchers and lecturers publish their research results in relevant national and international scientific journals. The number of scientific publications in Q1 journals has been increasing in the last years. It has tripled in 2018-2022 compared to 2013-2017 (it has risen to 153 (33.5% of the total publications) from 50 (20.6% of the total publications) and the researchers that the Panel interviewed related this change to the current LSU strategy to have a clear focus on the quality of research publications and not only on the quantity of publications.
90. There are very good facilities to support research and learning opportunities. The laboratories are very well equipped with modern and up-to-date operators. Studies and research are closely related and research is effectively integrated in the study programmes. Relatedly, the content of the study programmes appears to be constantly updated, taking into account the latest developments in sports science and research conducted by LSU researchers. The students the Panel met in the interviews confirmed that their studies are strongly linked with research and that they are included in research projects. The relationship between the content of the module and the research work is also evaluated in the review for module certification.
91. There are good incentives for research: the researchers' workload must include at least 150 hours of teaching classes per academic year and lecturers with good scientific standards can have the lectures time reduced to a minimum. So the staff can decide for themselves, whether they would like to engage in more research or not and they were content with these regulations. Teaching provision and quality does not seem to suffer from this arrangement, either.
92. Teaching activities are carried out by all academic staff members (at least 35 % of the workload of each academic staff member has to be dedicated to teaching), however there are no explicit "quality criteria for good teaching" in order to incentivize more innovative teaching and learning scenarios. Thus, there are fewer opportunities to improve the career prospects related to teaching activities than to research activities. As some students reported that the didactic qualifications of researchers could be more advanced, the Panel would like to highlight the importance of the existing support offers for professional development, seen against the background of student-centred teaching and learning scenarios. At the same time, it must be stated that the quality of study programmes is closely monitored in the Study Programme Committees and any problems

brought up by the students are taken care of. As described in the Quality Assurance section of this report, there is an encompassing quality culture among all the stakeholders involved, so the Panel does not see the quality of studies endangered.

93. There has been an increase in part-time students (e.g. in Sports Coaching, there has been an increase from 56 part-time students in 2017 to 143 part-time students in 2021, while there has been a decline in full-time students from 517 to 303 in the same field). Especially in part time studies, there is also an increased use of digital or blended learning formats to support the learning process. The organisation of part-time, distance studies is regulated by the LSU Study Regulation. LSU is currently in the process of expanding an online learning culture by promoting this aspect in their professional development offers. Seen against the background of declining student numbers and the need for a diversification of the student body in the future, the Panel acknowledges the actions already taken by LSU and also encourages LSU to further promote part-time studies and digital learning formats.
94. Internships are included in the study programmes and the tutors assist the students in finding the internship places for work-based learning, e.g. in the public health sector. LSU has set out a framework for the organisation (coordination, monitoring, control, evaluation and accounting) of internships, which is defined in the Procedure for Organising Internships at Lithuanian Sports University.
95. Only from 2022, LSU holds the right to carry out academic recognition of the higher education related education and qualifications acquired under the education programmes of foreign countries and international organisations for prospective students. Since that time, LSU recognizes foreign qualifications based on a regulated procedure; the university is involved in promoting part-time studies and the recognition of previous non-formal and informal learning is carried out. In any unclear cases of recognition, LSU seeks advice with SKVC for further guidance. As LSU only has experience in the field of recognition for half a year, the process for recognition of foreign qualifications and previous non-formal and informal learning will probably require a different approach in the future to deal with the more complex processes.
96. When it comes to recognition of informal learning, it should be highlighted that LSU has introduced a student portfolio at the end of the studies with evidence of all learning achievements including informal learning, as students have to describe and reflect on their whole learning process.
97. Students who studied abroad for a semester reported about transparent and easy recognition procedures for all their credits that they achieved abroad. However, some students who did not go abroad reported that they were anxious to go, as they feared that they would perhaps have problems in continuing their studies at LSU and perhaps miss out on credit points. So a proactive communication about the easy and transparent recognition processes could help encourage more students to go abroad.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):

3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);

3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

98. The development of internationalization is integrated in the new LSU Strategy 2023-2027 and is an integral part of the overall strategy, where internationalization priorities are identified as a horizontal topic in all four strategy areas (value creating higher education, research that creates relevant knowledge, community, and social impact).
99. The area of research is highly internationalized and the main foreign partners that LSU researchers collaborate with in joint research are the Norwegian University of Sports Science (Norway), Karolinska Institute and the University of Örebro (Sweden), the University of Mainz (Germany), the University of Leuven (Belgium), Manchester Metropolitan University (United Kingdom) and the University of Tartu (Estonia). The number of publications together with these foreign partners based on their joint research is increasing every year. It has risen from 34 in 2017 to 81 in 2021.
100. LSU has been engaged in 8 international research cooperation projects between 2017 and 2022 and now also plans to take a central role in establishing a European University Network in the area of sports education (with cooperation partners in Norway, Italy, Hungary and Albania).
101. The LSU Erasmus Policy Statement provides a clear basis for the internationalization of studies and offers more than 100 Erasmus partner universities to choose. In practice, however, the focus lies most on “internationalisation at home”. Although LSU staff members (researchers, teachers and even administrative staff) are very active in using Erasmus mobility offers every year, the number of outgoing student mobility is quite low (25 outgoing students in 2021/22 and around 40 outgoing students before the Covid pandemic). LSU undertakes a lot of measures to have an increase in outgoing student mobility, such as information seminars and individual counselling sessions, however most students do not wish to study abroad, as they would like to stay close to their families, their jobs and their athletic career obligations in Lithuania. Seen against that background of the very low number of interested students, the Panel doubts that the strategic mobility targets will be met easily. The goal that every LSU student will have at least one international experience will only be reached by offering short-term mobility (one week), which seem to be more popular amongst the students community, and by including the virtual mobility and internationalisation at home activities, in order to sensitize students for international endeavours. However, during the interviews with the Panel, there was no clear roadmap visible how to feasibly integrate these measures in the next few years, so that each LSU student will be reached.
102. At the same time, the number of international students is also relatively low (117 full-time students and before the Covid pandemic around 50 incoming mobile students per year). Asked for the reason about the low number of international students, various persons in the interviews referred to the political situation with the war in Ukraine nearby and they also mentioned difficulties for international students to receive visa for studying in Lithuania. The international students that the Panel met in the interviews also mentioned language barriers as a hindering reason for studying specific study programmes, as for internships in hospitals or other institutions in the public health sector, the Lithuanian language is a precondition for successfully working with patients. The Panel advises LSU to give special support to their international students and help them find suitable internship places or help them with visa issues and to communicate these

support measures transparently. Apart from that, the Panel sees the necessity to also enhance the international visibility of LSU's study offers.

103. The internationalisation of doctoral studies has been increasing lately. In the academic year 2021/2022, 16% of PhD students were foreign students and during the period under review, LSU lecturers supervised 12 PhD students at foreign universities.

104. As described in the aforementioned paragraphs, LSU integrates aspects of internationalization implicitly in so far as their research activities are carried out with international partners (see paragraphs 98 and 99) and the results also feed in their teaching activities in the study programmes (see paragraph 88). Seen from a structural perspective, LSU is engaged in specifically international research projects and also offers two specific joint study programmes in Sports Performance Analysis and Basketball Coaching and Management in cooperation with international partner universities. The number of international study programmes will be further extended with the planned European Alliance of Sports Universities.

105. **In summary**, the assessment has shown an impressive quality in the research area, especially in terms of research equipment as well as in a rising number of highly ranked scientific publications. Furthermore, LSU has set up a solid education system, in which study programmes are based on the latest scientific developments and curricula are constantly adapted and improved. Both students and staff are very satisfied with the research and learning environment at LSU. However, the area of internationalization still needs to be worked on, as the number of international students at LSU still need to be increased as well as further efforts have to be taken by LSU in order to mobilize their students to go abroad for mobility. Based on the current numbers, it is not clear whether LSU will reach its targeted goals of student mobility (that every student has at least one mobility experience during their studies) without applying additional measures.

Based on the evidence provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

Firstly (3.1.1), LSU's study and research activities are consistent with their mission and strategic aims defined in their strategy.

Secondly (3.1.2), LSU's research level is sufficient for the ongoing studies.

Thirdly (3.1.3) LSU's studies are closely based on research.

Fourthly (3.1.4) LSU performs a consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning.

Fifthly (3.2.1) LSU has defined a strategy for internationalization of research and studies, including indicators (which need to be further sharpened in the view of the Panel, see section 1), means for its implementation and to some extent, a measurement of the effectiveness of measures is performed.

Sixthly (3.2.2) LSU structurally integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of its studies and research activities.

106. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

107. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends to improve the internationalisation strategy including measures to enhance LSU’s international visibility in order to attract more international staff and international students. The enhancement measures should be in line with the recommended widened scope of the communication and marketing activities (see management section) and should also more actively integrate the role of internationally based LSU alumni, which could serve as further LSU ambassadors.
- In view of the low numbers of outgoing student mobility and the students’ general hesitancy towards studying abroad, new innovative approaches in fostering mobility (such as for example “tandem mobility”, short term mobility options, incentives for mobility) should be further explored and marketed. The good experiences from students and alumni who have been abroad, should be used to strategically portray the advantages of gaining international experiences and intercultural competences.
- The Panel encourages LSU to further extend and use its already high-level research cooperation to apply for even more research project funding in cooperation with other universities and other stakeholders.

108. **Good practice examples:**

- LSU foresees a specific Dual Career support system for athletes with individual study plans to enable athlete training and studying at the same time.
- The learning portfolio for students, which was recently introduced, is an innovative approach that mirrors the competence-orientation of LSU studies and also integrates the aspects of informal learning. It also highlights the students’ responsibility for reflecting their learning pathways and achievements.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

The *Impact on Regional and National Development* area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, as set up in the Methodology:

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:

4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;

4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.

109. LSU is active in the promotion of health amongst sports oriented populations in the region of Kaunas and nationally, which is in line with its mission. LSU also considers specific national and regional demands by including an encompassing net of social stakeholders and takes into consideration their articulated needs and demands. More than 30 collaboration agreements are signed each year with different organisations. A total of 1022 collaboration agreements were signed over the period 2018-2022. The stakeholders reported that they were contacted individually by phone or by personal mail and could always address their needs while being in contact with

- LSU, however they did not mention any systematic needs gathering. The Panel sees the need for a more systematic analysis of regional and national needs and demands.
110. The impact on national development becomes evident and visible, as LSU organizes conferences and seminars for the Lithuanian sports community. LSU uses their mobile laboratory to promote sports science and LSU in the regions of Lithuania to the public, but also to schools. LSU's third mission activities also clearly highlight the benefits of sport to the youth sector.
 111. LSU has contracts with 6 federations for athlete testing and LSU creates individual study programmes for high performance athletes. Although LSU has excellent laboratories and researchers, only a few sports federations profit from it in managing the preparation programme for the Olympic Games. There could still be more engagement in high performance athletes' preparation management and sports management. Thus, the research market could be exploited even further to create additional budget income.
 112. LSU cooperates with its social partners also in the form that they receive LSU students as interns for practical phases in their studies. The coordination, monitoring, control, evaluation and accounting of internships is defined in the Procedure for Organising Internships at Lithuanian Sports University. Through the internships, LSU students contribute to solving specific challenges on the stakeholder site, while also benefitting in acquiring professional practice and sharpening their analytical and problem solving skills.
 113. LSU provides a multitude of educational offers for the general public (an average of 76 events per year during the last 3 years) and opens up courses for free listeners in the field of Third Age University. LSU also provides its library services, offers mass sport activities and opens its swimming pool to the general public.
 114. The latest research results are also used to produce policy recommendations (white papers etc.) that are presented to politicians and LSU representatives are also asked for advice by politics. During the Covid-19 pandemic situation, recommendations were developed on how to be physically active and protect one's health and the information was spread nationwide. In this context, the LSU Communication and Marketing Department launched a public communication project "LSU Experts Advise", in which LSU lecturers, researchers, students and alumni shared video exercises and advice. Also in non-pandemic times, LSU engages in producing recommendations and guidelines for society, e.g. guidelines for physical education teachers working with children of all ages or good governance recommendations for sports organisations.
 115. Despite the broad networking activities in the Kaunas region, LSU currently collaborates only to a limited extent with the other Kaunas universities, e.g. in the form of a planned joint study module to address the challenges of the city and the region. More cooperation initiatives like this could strengthen the impact on the regional and national community.
 116. The University's students also take part in LSU Third Mission Activities. They have the opportunities to get engaged in volunteering activities and take part in LSU's social events, such as for example in the event "Because it's good to communicate", in which more than 120 children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds take part. Around 100 students volunteer at LSU events each year.
 117. LSU monitors, analyses and evaluates the above-mentioned activities in the area of regional and national impact (third mission), yet the evidence presented was more in a case-based anecdotal

manner than in a consistently structured, systematic manner. Mostly, the endeavours that LSU tracks, are traditional dissemination-type activities, with outputs measured (e.g. number of events, number of participants in an event). There are good connections with the main sports, health and education field institutions, yet no precise strategy on further developing these relationships or on evaluating measuring the impact at regional, national or even international level. Therefore, the Panel recommends to conduct a more systematic impact monitoring and evaluating the current indicators in their effectiveness of really measuring the impact.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

- 4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;*
- 4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;*
- 4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

118. LSU organises innovative lifelong learning activities (lectures, seminars, courses and training) for the public, private and community sectors, with an emphasis on vocational training and adult continuing education in the fields of performance sport, physical activity and public health, physiotherapy, applied physical activity, sport and tourism management, physical education and others. The activities are planned and coordinated by the University's Knowledge and Innovation Relay Division. The activities in the lifelong learning sector have been developed in line with national development strategies (such as the Sports Development Strategy 2021-2030, the Law on Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and the programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania 2021-2027), and in the context of targeted needs surveys in 2019.
119. LSU currently offers lifelong learning activities to more than 2000 persons per year and the demand is growing. Especially seen in the light of decreasing fee-paying student numbers, the importance of addressing new "student" groups in the area of lifelong learning is increasing. The lifelong learning area is one of the strategic areas that is currently under development according to the interviews. New lifelong learning programmes are currently planned together with the Sports Federations. A micro-credential approach is planned in cooperation with the private sector, but is still under discussion. As the participants of the LLL programmes have to combine their participation with their work, there will also be an increase in online and blended learning formats for LLL, for which LSU is preparing at the moment. The Panel encourages LSU to systematically further develop the LLL area and introduce new offers in line with the stakeholders needs to meet the growing demand while also taking into consideration the current international developments in Life Long Learning, such as the microcredential approach.
120. The monitoring and needs analysis is mostly done by screening the environment for political changes that require new qualifications. After the new sports law in 2019, there was a national need to retrain the coaches, as an academic degree is now the prerequisite for working as a coach in the public area. Similarly in the field of physiotherapy, LSU provides the opportunity for qualification studies, as the physiotherapists have to renew their license every 5 years.
121. Besides the sports coaches and physiotherapists, one of the central target groups of LSU's lifelong learning activities are school teachers employed in physical education. Here the topic of

inclusive education was added to physical education plans at schools, so LSU provided a training programme on that topic for the specific target group.

122. Social partners and graduates have the chance to actively address their needs for further qualification to LSU. A prominent example that was mentioned during the interviews, was the sports federations' wish for qualification of coaches in sign learning in order to be able to work with deaf athletes.
123. LSU also engages in regular communication activities with its graduates and tries to help graduates by providing additional knowledge. However, they seem to be included more on a case-by-case manner and not in the form of a cohesive alumni group (see also the analysis in area 2).
124. The LLL offers are not only open to external stakeholders, they are also open for regular students at LSU, who are interested to take courses. The competences acquired in LLL courses are also part of their student portfolio of competence development.
125. LSU organizes each year an International Science Conference for the Lithuanian sports community, so that they are informed about the latest research trends and results and can thus update their knowledge.
126. Lifelong learning activities are accompanied by the same quality assurance surveys as they are used for student feedback after classes. Evaluation forms are used in lifelong learning seminars to collect participants' feedback, asking, for instance, whether they have benefited from the workshops and what topics they would like to see covered in the future.
127. The university is also very open for any kind of informal feedback from the participants and social stakeholders involved in the LLL activities, but the stakeholders are not systematically involved in the quality cycle.
128. The Quality Assurance instruments seem to be applied only for the persons who took part in the LLL activities, but an important factor of Quality Assurance would also be the evaluation whether the appropriate target groups were attracted. The Panel recommends extending the QA activities beyond pure feedback collection.
129. **In summary**, the assessment has shown that LSU holds tight connections with a large network of social partners and dedicates efforts into a high number of Third Mission activities, both for Lithuanian society at large and for specific target groups, such as physical educators or coaches. It can be observed that the area of Life Long Learning has gained growing importance for LSU and that currently first steps are taken in order to develop this area further to meet the growing demand. In the Panel's view, further efforts should be invested in a more systematic needs analysis and a more systematic impact monitoring.

Based on the evidence provided above, the panel concludes the following:

Firstly (4.1.1), LSU analyses national and regional demands, identifies specific needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and regional development.

Secondly (4.1.2), LSU monitors, analyses and evaluates the effectiveness of the measures taken.

Thirdly (4.2.1) LSU monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning.

Fourthly (4.2.2) LSU anticipates diverse forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation.

Fifthly (4.2.3) LSU evaluates and assures the conditions for lifelong learning.

All the standards are fulfilled by LSU. However, the Panel advises LSU to use a more systematic approach.

130. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

131. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Many of LSU's partnerships have a long history and seem to have more naturally grown than systematically planned. As LSU stated that this area is currently being further developed, the Panel recommends taking a clear strategic approach for the further development, which includes a more systematic stakeholder management and a more systematic needs analysis with regard to a diversified stakeholder group.
- The Panel recommends to conduct a more systematic impact monitoring and evaluating the current indicators in their effectiveness of really measuring the impact at national level.
- The Panel recommends using LSU's potential to enhance its engagement in high performance athletes' preparation management and sports management.
- The Panel advises to extend the QA instruments activities beyond the aspect of evaluation of existing LLL offers and the pure collection of participants' feedback. The Panel encourages LSU to take into consideration European developments in the area of LLL, in particular the current approach in setting up micro-credentials and providing respectively adapted QA measures.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in

Management:

- A clear sense of collaboration and joint responsibility is pervading LSU organisation culture. There is a shared understanding of where the university wants and needs to go, which also indicates a particularly strong institutional identity felt among staff and stakeholders, which is not too common among higher education institutions.

Quality Assurance:

- The support that LSU has set up for its students via the tutoring system is very encompassing and covers the needs of the students comprehensively.

Studies and Research (art):

- LSU foresees a specific Dual Career support system for athletes with individual study plans to enable athlete training and studying at the same time.
- The learning portfolio for students, which was recently introduced, is an innovative approach that mirrors the competence-orientation of LSU studies and also integrates the aspects of informal learning. It also highlights the students' responsibility for reflecting their learning pathways and achievements.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are as follows:

Management:

- The Panel recommends LSU to sharpen its strategy in a way that strengthens the causal relationships between goals, actions and measurement of success. In addition to the annual monitoring of indicator achievement, there should also be an evaluation of indicator effectiveness in measuring the intended strategic outcomes.
- In terms of strategic risk and environmental analysis, the Panel recommends to monitor more systematically the external environment also on an international level, taking into consideration recent global developments and trends, such as KI, digitalization etc. and to critically reflect and assess their potential impact on LSU.
- Concerning LSU's communication strategy, the Panel recommends a more targeted and client-oriented communication to enhance LSU's visibility in the areas, which are relevant for the specific target groups (i.e. specific social partners). Especially in view of the demographic development and LSU's expressed interest to attract new student groups (with a particular focus on international students), the current marketing measures should be checked for their effectiveness and strengthened in their impact.
- In terms of learning environment resources, the Panel would like to support the students' expressed wish to have more room for interdisciplinary learning spaces where students can also integrate and network interactively in an informal way, as this is the basis for a lively student "co-curriculum", in which important transversal skills can be acquired.

Quality Assurance:

- The Panel advises LSU to strongly encourage the students and other stakeholders to bring in their feedback not only in informal, qualitative oral formats, but to also use the formal evaluation sheets and surveys in order to guarantee a transparent documentation of the quality cycle.
- Concerning the relationship with its alumni, the Panel advises to invest even more efforts in both tracking alumni career paths, but also integrating alumni (also international ones) into LSU activities in a systematic way and building up a lively alumni community.

Studies and Research (art):

- The Panel recommends to improve the internationalisation strategy including measures to enhance LSU's international visibility in order to attract more international staff and international students. The enhancement measures should be in line with the recommended widened scope of the communication and marketing activities (see management section) and should also more actively integrate the role of internationally based LSU alumni, which could serve as further LSU ambassadors.
- In view of the low numbers of outgoing student mobility and the students' general hesitancy towards studying abroad, new innovative approaches in fostering mobility (such as for example "tandem mobility", short term mobility options, incentives for mobility) should be further explored and marketed. The good experiences from students and alumni

who have been abroad, should be used to strategically portray the advantages of gaining international experiences and intercultural competences.

- The Panel encourages LSU to further extend and use its already high-level research cooperation to apply for even more research project funding in cooperation with other universities and other stakeholders.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- Many of LSU's partnerships have a long history and seem to have more naturally grown than systematically planned. As LSU stated that this area is currently being further developed, the Panel recommends taking a clear strategic approach for the further development, which includes a more systematic stakeholder management and a more systematic needs analysis with regard to a diversified stakeholder group.
- The Panel recommends to conduct a more systematic impact monitoring and evaluating the current indicators in their effectiveness of really measuring the impact at national level.
- The Panel recommends using LSU's potential to enhance its engagement in high performance athletes' preparation management and sports management.
- The Panel advises to extend the QA instruments activities beyond the aspect of evaluation of existing LLL offers and the pure collection of participants' feedback. The Panel encourages LSU to take into consideration European developments in the area of LLL, in particular the current approach in setting up micro-credentials and providing respectively adapted QA measures.

© *Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), 2023.*
A. Goštauto g. 12, 01108 Vilnius, Lithuania
tel.: +370 5 205 3323
skvc@skvc.lt
<http://www.skvc.lt>