CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of PHILOLOGY (LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE)

at Vytautas Magnus University

Expert panel:

1. **Prof. dr. Andra Kalnača,** *academic;*
2. **Prof. dr. Anastassia Zabrodskaja,** *academic;*
3. **Prof. dr. Hélène de Penanros,** *academic;*
4. **Prof. dr. Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė** , *representative of social partners;*
5. **Mr Osvaldas Bartaškevičius,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – Ms Miglė Palujanskaitė

Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	***Lithuanian Philology and Publishing***
State code	6121NX047
Type of studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (4 years)
Credit volume	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	22-01-2014

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149.

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by HEI; 2) site visit of the expert panel to the HEI; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149. The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 18 April 2023.

1. **Prof. dr. Andra Kalnača,** Expert panel's Chairperson; Professor at University of Latvia, Latvia
2. **Prof. dr. Anastassia Zabrodskaja**, academic member; Professor at Tallinn University, Estonia
3. **Prof. dr. Hélène de Penanros**, academic member; Professor at INALCO, France
4. **Prof. dr. Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė**, Representative of Social Partners; Director of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, Lithuania
5. **Mr. Osvaldas Bartaškevičius,** Student's Representative; Technical Language Translation and Localisation, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	*Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* Self Evaluation Report
2.	Annex 1, *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* Study Plan
3.	Annex 2, *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* List of Final Theses 2019–2021
4.	Annex 3, List of permanent teaching staff of the field courses

1.4. BACKGROUND OF PHILOLOGY (LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE) FIELD STUDIES AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Vytautas Magnus University was established in 1922 as a state university and re-established in 1989. It is a classical university based on the common beliefs and values of freedom, openness, and dialogue, and orientated towards humanistic culture. The University provides degree studies of all three cycles – first cycle, second cycle, and third cycle, which cover a broad spectrum of fields ranging from humanities, social sciences and arts to the fundamental sciences, environmental sciences, and biotechnologies.

Vytautas Magnus University works with many universities and scientists around the globe, implementing projects, enhancing student and staff exchanges, and improving the study and research system. The University continuously develops international networks and intercultural dialogues, participates in international scholarly, academic, and social projects, and encourages teacher and student mobility.

The University's Liberal Arts education profile, with core emphasis on studying broadly themed courses, ensures that the studies offered at Vytautas Magnus University are comprehensive; they are not restricted to specialised, pre-defined courses.

There are 14 academic units at Vytautas Magnus University: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Faculty of Economics and Management, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Informatics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Agriculture Academy, Education Academy, Music Academy, Institute of Foreign Languages, and Botanical Garden.

The study programmes in the field of Philology by Language are carried out by the Faculty of Humanities. The study programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* is carried out by the Department of Lithuanian Studies. In addition to this Programme, the Department offers three second cycle study programmes: *Modern Linguistics*, *Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism* in the study field of Linguistics, and *Literature Creation, Criticism and Communication* in the study field of Literary Studies.

Vytautas Magnus University has been preparing specialists in Lithuanian Philology since 1990. Until 2014, the programme *Lithuanian Philology* was carried out. The programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* was launched on 1 September 2014. This study programme has not yet undergone previous external evaluation procedures and therefore has no expert conclusions or recommendations to be discussed at the end of each area under evaluation.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Philology (Lithuanian language) study field and *first cycle* at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	**28**

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.
2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.
3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.
4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;
5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

(1) *Factual situation*

The Lithuanian Philology and Publishing Study Programmes offered by Vytautas Magnus University is special because it unites Philology with Publishing. The Study Programme is devoted to the studies of national philology and satisfies the needs of Lithuanian society for the preparation of specialists who have skills in text preparation, editing and publishing. The aim is to prepare specialists for today's society and the modern labour market who have knowledge of linguistics and literary studies and who have acquired practical publishing skills' (SER, p. 8). Thus, graduates of the Study Programme are given the opportunity to actively participate in the changing job market. The Study Programme is designed to meet the specific needs of Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030".

In general, the Study Programme is thoughtfully and carefully structured to achieve the intended profiles of successful alumni. Its content offers a good balance of theoretical and practical coursework and culminates with opportunities for students to test their skills in a real-world setting. The expert panel believes that the Study Programme is comparable to similar programs in philology and publishing at other European or North American institutions. The panel's conversations with employers and alumni confirm this. The panel noted no formal idiosyncrasies or calculation errors related to the Study Programme (i.e., contact hours, ECTS credits awarded, etc.).

As will be discussed later in this report, the faculty consists of highly qualified professionals who conduct relevant research and have repeatedly expressed their commitment to the field of their specialisation, their students, and their academic activity.

Based on the structure of the Study Programme, the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge, the availability of actual internship, the required final theses (designed to demonstrate acquired research and composition skills), and the broad linguistic and publishing skills developed, the team believes that the Study Programme meets the needs of the current society and the modern-day labour market for Lithuanian philologists with diverse and broader knowledge in publishing domain.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It is noteworthy that this Study Programme is unique in its nature and provides so broad opportunities for employment to its alumni. The University adopted the strategy that clearly emphasises the value and need of this programme.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

(1) Factual situation

Vytautas Magnus University's mission is well followed by this Study Programme. Its outcomes, objectives and activities are all consistent with it. Philology, by its very nature, is an activity that requires strong linguistic skills, historical knowledge, and competence in intercultural communication. Thus, this Study Programme is well structured to produce graduates who will make significant contributions to the international profile of Lithuanian philology as well as the publishing field. The panel recognizes the variability of university strategic objectives which are clearly reflected in Study Programme aims and outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As noted above, the need for Lithuanian-speaking philologists is important for the linguistic, cultural and socio-economic development of Lithuania, as well as for the promotion of Lithuanian language, literature and culture abroad. Publishing should be available in the most accurate state language. The Study Programme addresses these needs directly, and such linguistic competencies in the official language align with Vytautas Magnus University's goals and mission. The panel assesses that the field and study programme as well as its outcomes are aligned with the mission, objectives of activities, and strategy of the HEI.

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements

(1) Factual situation

The structure and anticipated student progression, balance of theoretical and practical classes, and elements of student personalization in the Study Programmes meet and fulfil the national qualification levels, as the panel understands them.

As noted earlier, the panel believes that the Study Programme is consistent in structure, delivery, and outcomes with similar programs at external (non-Lithuanian) institutions of higher education. The panel noted no major methodological errors in the calculation of ECTS credits, allocation of home study requirements, etc. There is one minor concern about teachers' overloading because SER p. 10 states, "the regular practice is that teachers provide more consultation time depending on the students' needs."

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel finds the full compliance of the Study Programme with the necessary legal requirements, as we understand them. We advise to think about teachers' overloading and their balancing to provide consultation based on individual learner needs. This could be better calculated as the teaching staff is always overloaded with work per se.

Table No. 1 Study programmes *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	174 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	54 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	Yes; 15 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	Yes; 15 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	33%
Independent learning	No less than 30 % of learning	67%

* in case there is a national Descriptor of the Field Studies, please check if there are no stricter requirements

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes

(1) Factual situation

The teaching methods and learning opportunities within the Study Programme appear to be consistently well aligned. In general terms, there is a logical sequence between the theoretical and practical subjects studied and the teaching methods by which this material is presented as well as assessment methods with the help of which the acquired skills are controlled. This demonstrates collegial collaboration as students apply skills learned in one course to other courses in the same programme. Teaching appears to be delivered at a very high level. The objectives and means of the internship are met, meaning that students do learn through these

practices. Internship is not a formal exercise. The Study Programme is flexible and student-oriented and helps students suit their personal interests and needs. This was strongly emphasised during the meeting with students and alumni. The assessment system and methods chosen by teachers are in accordance with anticipated learning outcomes and are objective.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, there is a broad alignment between learning outcomes, teaching/learning methods, and the Study Programmes' aims. During the meeting with teaching staff the panel found that teachers have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses. The overall consistency of teaching, assessment, and learning outcomes seems robust. During the meetings none of the students could recall a case when he/she had been assessed subjectively. The panel assesses that the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes is adequate.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students

(1) Factual situation

The core courses of the Study Programme are rationally chosen based on *Artes Liberales* and, as noted earlier, are in line with comparable programmes abroad at the correspondent BA degree level. They are well in line to build both theoretical skills and practical knowledge, and especially to position the successful graduate as an employable philologist of Lithuanian with skills in the Publishing domain. The Study Programme is well thought through and is not narrowed down only to "philological" specialisation.

A small suggestion for developing student competencies is to bring in more foreign experts (Erasmus+ incoming teaching staff) who could give lectures that would allow students to position Lithuanian philology within the current framework of modern philology. A good strategy might be to form institutional or departmental agreements with specific institutions or individuals to guarantee continuity of interaction and foreign engagement. In this area of development, e-learning opportunities (ZOOM, Teams) can dramatically expand the teaching available to students at a relatively minimal cost to the institution.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the panel is satisfied that this is a strong Study Programme. The overall situation appears to be that a well-designed and outcome-oriented Study Programme is being implemented effectively. The panel assesses that the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures the consistent development of competences of students is adequate.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

Throughout the Study Programme, opportunities for course selection (elective courses) are repeatedly provided. Students can decide to study more language-related or literature-related courses. There is also a unique *Academia cum laude* option, which allows students to personalise their research topic under the supervision of the high-level specialist in the corresponding field.

However, SER (p. 18) notes "that some of those who have started minor studies do not complete them. The main reasons for this are excessive study load, difficulties in coordinating the timetables of the courses of the Programme and the courses of minor studies." This is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed.

The choice of the final topic/field of the thesis and place and nature for conducting internship also seems to meet the requirement of student personalization.

While the panel understands that – quite rightly – there is academic oversight over the selection of thesis topics, the panel was impressed with the variety and diversity of topics addressed, at least in the theses selected to be presented to the panel as supporting material.

The panel fully understands that the anticipated student enrollment is overwhelmingly Lithuanian; the panel only notes that this factor may stifle both inbound and outbound mobility opportunities.

 (2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As noted, there are various opportunities for personalization in the Study Programmes. Choosing a thesis topic and internship places are good elements of personalization.

The panel assesses that opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes is adequate.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements

(1) Factual situation

As noted earlier in this report, the preparation and evaluation of BA theses seems to be a strength of the Study Programmes. The topics under consideration cover broad areas of Lithuanian Philology and Publishing.

The process of thesis topic proposal, research and composition, and subsequent submission is regulated by the relevant VMU Study Regulations and General Order on the Final Theses Preparation and Defence. This centralised regulation does not seem to violate the examination autonomy of Study Programme professors, from whom thesis supervisors are formed. Not only university experts but also social partners with relevant experience can be part of the defence committee (SER, p.20). It helps create a direct link between the academic world and more practical fields. As noted in the SER on page 20, 'the quality of the final theses continued to improve during the evaluation period.'

Therefore, the thesis requirement seems to give students the opportunity to explore their chosen topic in depth and to demonstrate and improve their research abilities. In its rigour and scope, it corresponds to similar requirements for high-level BA theses in other European and North American universities.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The description of the thesis defence procedure is clear and understandable. The panel assesses that compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements is adequate.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Study programme design meets the legal requirements set out for higher education study programmes in Lithuania. The subjects are spread evenly. The modules are consistent with the level of studies.
2. The aims and learning outcomes of the Study Programmes correspond with the activities performed by Lithuanian Philologists and Publishing specialists.
3. The analysis of the subject-specific competence and learning outcomes indicates that the programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered, and that the name of the study programme as well as its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with one another.
4. The study programme is student-oriented and develops the competences necessary to meet the needs of societal and personal development, the modern labour market requirements, and to help the students to acquire competences compatible with their bachelor's degree. They also prepare the students for further studies (MA programme) or work in respective areas of study/research.
5. Clear evidence of strong research profile of staff feeding into teaching; students' involvement in research (*Academia cum laude*).

(2) Weaknesses:

1. In our discussions with teaching staff and current students, we picked up weaknesses concerning the participation of outgoing students and Erasmus+ incoming staff in mobility programmes. There appears to be poor dissemination of information within the university and a lack of wide consultations with staff and students on how to improve the situation. Increasing student exposure to foreign professors' lectures is desirable. If internationalisation is part of the university's mission and/or vision, the administration should enable, promote and encourage exchange of incoming faculty and outgoing students in order to allow them to acquire international exposure and experiences.
2. The panel feels that a careful consideration of practical elements might make the minor studies more attractive for students and help to reduce early dropout rates. Individual instructors should perhaps form mentorship partnerships with a smaller group of

students and 'follow' them throughout their minor studies career, and intervene when trouble is encountered.

3. Existing e-learning possibilities are not used to their full potential.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

(1) Factual situation

The teaching staff (18 persons, the majority of whom are full-time or more) of the Lithuanian Philology and Publishing study programme are active researchers. Annex 3 of the self-evaluation report shows 46 publications in the last 5 years, including 3 databases, i.e. a ratio of about 2.5 publications per head. Most of the publications are in Lithuanian, in national editions, but there are a few publications in international reference editions or referenced journals (John Benjamins; Scopus, Web of science). The dossier also mentions 8 projects: the majority are financed by the Lithuanian Research Council, but three projects are European. One third of the teachers act as experts in national and European organisations, and five of them are also on the editorial boards of journals, including international ones.

The predominant research areas are computational and corpus linguistics, language acquisition, foreign language teaching, multilingualism, and comparative literature and culture. Research is carried out in 7 research centres and 17 science and research clusters which articulate the various individual research themes around clearly defined research areas.

The University implements a comprehensive research management system:
- the institution's strategy is based on 5 objectives, one of which is to become an international research university;
- priority research areas are defined;
- specific credits are allocated to clusters and teachers for their top-level publications, and an internal procedure for invitations to the position of researcher for one or two years has been set up;
- numerous and varied partnerships at both national and international level are at the heart of the policy;
- Collective projects involving specialists from various disciplines but also from different levels of experience are encouraged;
- the institution carries out a constant self-evaluation of its strategy and its progress, which is proving to be rapid.

(2) Expert's analysis

The institution demonstrates a remarkable dynamism in the field of research. The steering of research is effective, and the emphasis placed on the establishment of structuring partnerships, both national and international, is very positive. The societal impact of this research activity is considerable. In addition to the results in the key areas mentioned (language acquisition and therapy, migration research, translation and intercultural communication, literature-media link) and the widespread open-source policy, the cutting-edge work in corpus and computational linguistics, and the resulting numerous open-access databases, are an invaluable contribution to research in Lithuanian Studies, not only for the students of the component as indicated in the report, but more broadly for all researchers in Lithuania and internationally.

However, the obvious progress of this component can only be slowed down by the division of working hours applied to teachers: with 600 contact hours on average (depending on the job category), the time devoted to research can only be insufficient to achieve the objective of a research university of international standing. This point should receive the full attention of the University in the years to come.

Apart from this major problem, one may wonder whether the organisation of research into numerous clusters superimposed on the various centres – if it has obviously been very useful and effective in reaching the current level – might not deserve to be reviewed today in order to simplify management.

Finally, the institution would benefit from strengthening its administrative support service for research, by setting up a monitoring service for European projects, and support for the constitution of these files, which would benefit from associating the three Lithuanian universities offering courses in Lithuanian philology in order to bring together the country's strengths in this field, which is by definition rare, on a European scale.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology

(1) Factual situation

The research carried out by the teachers of this faculty is clearly linked to the content of the curriculum. The presentation of the curriculum from the point of view of competences, and in particular those for research, shows a reflection on the articulation between the two fields. Most of the courses are taught by specialists in the issues studied who are conducting research in the fields concerned (see Annex 3), which ensures a link between teaching and research. In addition, the teachers on the study programme committee are responsible for monitoring the study programmes and ensuring that the latest research is incorporated. Each year the committee assesses the compatibility of the programme with the latest research trends and makes any necessary adjustments.

In addition, teachers who conduct research, especially in clusters, regularly organise conferences where the latest research results are presented. Students are invited to participate in or attend these events, which is a very good way for them to complement their training with

a direct link to the latest research developments and to get acquainted with the world of research and its associated activities.

Lastly, the list of subjects of dissertations in recent years shows a direct link with current research. Most of them are in the field of literature, especially in its most recent developments, with a strong link to current themes; theses in linguistics, although less numerous, also places Lithuanian firmly in the context of current issues in modern living languages.

(2) Expert's analysis
The link between research and the teaching programme is strong. An increase in the participation of foreign researchers (guest lectures, courses as part of incoming mobility, etc.) in the curriculum would strengthen the link with international research; given the University's resolutely open policy and the considerable number of partnerships established, this should be possible without much difficulty.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle

(1) Factual situation

The opportunities to participate in research in this programme are many and varied. The writing of a research paper in semester 6 is good training before the writing of the thesis, which is compulsory in S8. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate that research methodology has been acquired, which is a good preparation for the research that is expected at Master level. However, we wonder about the optional presence of the research supervisor on the defence jury – a provision common to the whole university: it is strange that the research supervisor, who has steered the work from the beginning, may not be present for the closing event of this long-term work, carried out in close collaboration and which, as is desirable, may lead to a continuation of the work at master's level. The defence jury should also include the compulsory presence of a member from outside the component – a teacher from another university, a researcher or a social partner – so that the student benefits from a certain openness and has to make the effort to present his or her work to an audience not necessarily familiar with the approach.

Training in scientific integrity is given during various courses, and a code of ethics as well as a text detailing all the provisions concerning plagiarism (definition of types of plagiarism, penalties, etc.) support this training. In addition, theses are systematically subjected to anti-plagiarism software. The self-assessment file also mentions training provided by librarians and their participation in certain courses dealing with the issue. Given the extent of the problem in this digital age, it would be advisable to present the issue systematically during the first week of the new academic year and, if necessary, to include modules presenting the various cases of plagiarism and citation standards, possibly online, as a compulsory part of the training in the first year.

Students benefit from the University's open-access policy and have access to databases, corpora, dictionaries, automatic analysis programs that are prepared in the research centres: this gives them direct access to the research of their teachers, shows them the possibilities of further study and research, which constitutes an important familiarisation with research, in its most concrete aspects

Numerous initiatives outside the university curriculum stricto sensu are also developed by the teachers: conferences, summer practice, summer camp, seminars in which students are invited to attend or participate. Some students are also invited to co-author papers with a professor or to publish reviews for online portals or cultural magazines. A small proportion may still be employed in projects run by their teachers, which gives them a first experience of actual research work. It is noted, however, that few students take part in these optional activities and perhaps stronger incentives than those currently offered would be useful to reinforce this participation, such as the allocation of specific ECTS credits.

Lastly, the many partnerships established with local socio-economic actors offer students the opportunity to put their learning into practice, including conducting field research in certain areas such as language development or multilingualism in partner kindergartens and schools.

(2) Expert's analysis

The opportunities for students to participate in research are many and varied, but certain measures could encourage more students to participate.

- Strengthen group pedagogy for the preparation of the research paper and the dissertation (workshop on the same research area to discuss each other's topics and research strategies) in order to give students confidence in carrying out these tasks and opportunity to cross-check the different problems/issues that may arise in the course of the research;

- Support the development of annual student-only conferences organised by the students themselves so that they have regular opportunities to present their research to their peers. These conferences would benefit from being organised in cooperation with the other philology faculties in Lithuania, possibly on a rotating basis between the three universities concerned, so as to get students used to presenting their work externally; in this perspective, these conferences would benefit from being open to Baltic Masters students enrolled in the various European universities in order to aggregate the maximum research strength in this rare field on the European scale.

- Develop a system of internal scholarships within the institution to support research activity, including student fieldwork.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Comprehensive and effective research steering
2. Highly dynamic researchers with steadily improving results
3. Effective partnership policy, to be further strengthened in order to bring together all the forces available in this rare field of research on the European scene
4. Comprehensive training in a field that is rare by nature on a European scale and specialisation in publishing that is judicious and provides numerous job opportunities

(2) Weaknesses:
1. The number of teaching hours imposed on teachers is too high and obliterates the possibilities of the University to really raise itself to an international level of reference
2. Support for the submission of European projects and for high-level publications needs to be strengthened

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process

(1) Factual situation

Admission to the Studies is carried out by general admissions of the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Organizing Joint Admission (hereinafter referred to as "LAMA BPO") and through university admissions. General admissions consist of primary and additional admissions, and the latter is organised if there are still vacancies at the end of the main admission procedure.

Information about admission to studies is publicised at study fairs, during visits to schools, during events and projects organised by the University for high school students, in promotional videos, on the website of VMU Faculty of Humanities and on the social networking account of VMU Department of Lithuanian Studies, and VMU Students' Information Centre provides information to prospective and current students about study opportunities, academic and cultural life.

(2) Expert's analysis

The evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process is essential for ensuring transparency, fairness, and accessibility in the admission process.

General   Admissions   Procedure:
While the exact details of the admissions procedure at VMU are not provided, it is assumed that

the university follows a standard admissions procedure. A well-defined and systematic admissions process, encompassing primary and additional admissions if necessary, would ensure fairness and transparency in selecting students. The university is encouraged to provide more specific information on the admissions procedure to further assess its suitability.

Dissemination of Admission Information: The use of various channels, such as study fairs, school visits, university-organised events, promotional videos, the VMU Faculty of Humanities website, and social networking accounts, demonstrates an active approach to publicising admission information. These channels help raise awareness among prospective students about study opportunities at VMU. However, it would be beneficial for VMU to consider expanding its digital presence and optimising its online platforms to ensure easy accessibility and up-to-date information for prospective applicants.

Support for Prospective and Current Students: The presence of the VMU Students' Information Centre as a resource for prospective and current students is commendable. The provision of information about study opportunities, academic life, and cultural activities helps students make informed decisions. However, it would be advantageous for VMU to enhance its support system by offering personalised assistance and guidance through the Students' Information Centre. This could involve providing individualised counselling sessions, addressing specific inquiries, and offering guidance on application processes and requirements.

Recommendations for Improvement: Enhanced Digital Presence: VMU should prioritise strengthening its digital presence and ensuring that admission information is readily accessible online. This could involve optimising the university's website, utilising social media platforms effectively, and implementing digital marketing strategies to reach a broader audience. Additionally, providing an online application portal with clear instructions and support would streamline the application process.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application

(1) Factual situation

Recognition of foreign qualifications at VMU is done centrally in the International Cooperation Department in accordance with resolutions and regulations of LR, following information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, as well as general or individual (in the absence of general) recommendations and in consultation with the responsible staff from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

Recognition of partial learning outcomes is regulated by VMU Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Learning Outcomes. This procedure is performed in a decentralised way at the university, and it is organised by the faculty, or the initial assessment is done by the International Cooperation Department. The learning achievements of a person who has studied at another Lithuanian or foreign higher education institution are recognised by converting the acquired evaluation into ECTS according to pre-agreed equivalents if there is no violation of the

requirements of the contract or other document.

Recognition of partial studies can be carried out for current university students and newly enrolled. Current students participating in study exchange programmes agree on the study plan with VMU before leaving for a partner university. Learning outcomes acquired during part-time studies in accordance with the agreed study plan should be recognised upon an academic certificate from the higher education institution where the student has been studying. If the student has been for a visit for several semesters, certificates must be obtained and credited after each semester.

Individuals may apply for the assessment of competences acquired in work activities or voluntary work, internships, courses, seminars, projects, etc., while self-learning or at leisure time. Competences acquired by the candidate through non-formal and informal education can comply with the part of the appropriate study programme or separate courses.

There were no cases of recognition of learning achievements or competences during the analysis period of the Programme.

(2) *Expert's analysis*

Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: The fact that the recognition of foreign qualifications at VMU is conducted centrally in the International Cooperation Department in accordance with national resolutions and regulations demonstrates a structured approach to evaluating international credentials. The involvement of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and consultation with responsible staff ensures compliance with established guidelines. However, further details regarding the specific criteria and procedures for recognition would be helpful to assess the effectiveness and transparency of the process.

Recognition of Partial Learning Outcomes: VMU's decentralised procedure for recognizing partial learning outcomes allows for flexibility and adaptability at the faculty level. The initial assessment by the International Cooperation Department and the subsequent recognition of learning achievements from other Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions based on pre-agreed equivalents reflect a systematic approach. However, it would be beneficial to provide more information on the criteria for determining equivalencies and the mechanism for resolving any potential violations of contractual requirements.

Assessment of Competences Acquired through Non-Formal and Informal Education: VMU's provision for individuals to apply for the assessment of competences acquired through non-formal and informal education acknowledges the value of learning outside of traditional academic settings. This recognition allows individuals to demonstrate their skills and knowledge that align with specific study programs or courses. However, the absence of specific cases of recognition during the analysis period raises questions regarding the accessibility and

utilisation of this recognition pathway. VMU should consider promoting and encouraging applicants to take advantage of this opportunity, as it can enhance the diversity and richness of the student body.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

All VMU students are provided with possibilities to use Erasmus+ opportunities: 1. To study for a semester or an academic year at one of 487 partner institutions in the EU or EEA /candidate countries as well as go outside the EU to one of 115 partner institutions. Under usual conditions (not during a pandemic period), about 200 VMU students take advantage of this opportunity per year. 2. To participate in Erasmus+ internship lasting from 2 to 12 months. Graduate students can also participate in this internship programme within 12 months after their graduation. Under usual conditions (not during a pandemic period), about 150 VMU students and graduates take the advantage of this opportunity per year.

Various channels announce information about student mobility possibilities: VMU International Cooperation Department and the Faculty international coordinator provide students with information about studies and placement abroad, VMU Erasmus days are organised, Erasmus+ competitions are posted on VMU website www.vdu.lt, intranet (Outlook), social media, etc.

In the last three years, a total of 2 students of the Programme have studied under the Erasmus+ programme.

It is mainly due to the pandemic that started in early 2020. It should also be acknowledged that the students of the Programme are not very active participants in exchange programmes, which is partly due to the specific nature of the Programme, i.e., the study of Lithuanian Philology.

(2) Expert's analysis

Opportunities for Student Mobility:
VMU offers students two main opportunities for academic mobility through the Erasmus+ program: studying at partner institutions abroad and participating in internships. The availability of a wide network of partner institutions within the EU, EEA/candidate countries, and outside the EU provides students with a diverse range of options. The inclusion of graduate students in the internship program also enhances post-graduation opportunities. The number of students taking advantage of these opportunities before the pandemic demonstrates the attractiveness and relevance of such mobility programs.

Dissemination of Information:
The use of various channels, such as the VMU International Cooperation Department, faculty

international coordinators, VMU Erasmus days, and online platforms like the VMU website, intranet, and social media, indicates an active approach to disseminating information about student mobility opportunities. These channels ensure that students receive up-to-date information about study and placement abroad and are aware of Erasmus+ competitions. The availability of multiple channels increases the accessibility of information and provides students with various avenues to stay informed.

Factors Impacting Student Participation:
The low number of students from the program participating in the Erasmus+ program over the last three years can be attributed primarily to the ongoing pandemic. The global health crisis has significantly impacted student mobility worldwide, leading to travel restrictions and disruptions to academic programs. Additionally, the specific nature of the program, focusing on Lithuanian Philology, may contribute to lower participation due to limited options for studying abroad in this field. It is essential to consider these factors while evaluating student participation rates.

Recommendations for Improvement:

Flexibility and Adaptability: VMU should continue to monitor and adapt its mobility programs in response to changing circumstances, such as the ongoing pandemic or any future crises. Flexible options, such as virtual exchanges or blended mobility programs, can be explored to provide students with opportunities for international experiences, even in challenging times.

Targeted Promotion and Guidance: VMU should consider providing targeted promotion and guidance specifically tailored to students in the Lithuanian Philology program. Emphasising the benefits and relevance of international experiences in their field of study can encourage more active participation. Personalised support, including information sessions and individual counselling, can help address any concerns or misconceptions students may have about studying abroad in this program.

Alumni Engagement: Leveraging the experiences and success stories of VMU alumni who have participated in mobility programs can inspire and motivate current students to take advantage of these opportunities. Establishing an alumni network or organising events where alumni share their experiences can create a sense of community and foster a culture of academic mobility.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

(1) Factual situation

Academic student support covers several aspects: 1) easily accessible and timely information on: a) the studies, including information which is useful to the students choosing their study courses according to their individual study needs and preferences; b) University's information (Rector's orders, rules, mobility opportunities, student support information, career possibilities, etc.) in order to keep in line with institutional issues and opportunities; c)

extracurricular University's activities (events, meetings, seminars, leisure and entertainment, etc.) in order to provide opportunities for students' personal development; 2) regular teachers' consultations to clarify topics of study courses or assignments, evaluate students' learning progress, provide and gather feedback both for students and teachers, etc.

Upon the need, students can receive free-of-charge counselling of a psychologist at VMU Psychology Clinics in individual meetings or online. Students with disabilities are consulted and assisted by a disability coordinator in dealing with various issues related to their studies and environment. Upon the need, a disability coordinator also advises students on disability etiquette, conducts other educational activities.

Student social support is coordinated by VMU Student Affairs Department, which manages students' accommodation at the University dormitories, administrates student social and motivational scholarships, accommodation fees and release from tuition in specific cases. Accommodation service is provided for VMU students, and they have opportunities to settle in the University dormitories. For some students, based on their social status, the cost of accommodation is reduced.

Students are supported in modelling their career plans. VMU Career Centre of Student Affairs Department regularly organises seminars and provides consultations on career planning issues. Regularly, at least once a year, face-to-face meetings with the Faculty Alumni members are organised, where graduates introduce their work experience, the relevance of acquired knowledge and skills.

Students can choose a minor study programme offered by VMU Entrepreneurship Academy to develop entrepreneurial skills and abilities as well as to join *Academia cum laude* individual study system that allows for motivated undergraduate students to expand the scope of their undergraduate studies, to go deeper into the chosen study topic, to work with world-wide known professors from other universities.

(2) Expert's analysis

Academic Support: The provision of easily accessible and timely information regarding studies, university information, and extracurricular activities is commendable. The availability of such information helps students make informed decisions about their study courses, stay updated on institutional matters, and engage in personal development activities. The regular teacher consultations further enhance academic support by allowing students to seek clarification, evaluate their learning progress, and provide and receive feedback. This holistic approach to academic support contributes to students' overall learning experience.

Psychological and Personal Support: The availability of free-of-charge counselling services provided by psychologists at VMU Psychology Clinics demonstrates a commitment to students' psychological well-being. Individual meetings and online counselling options ensure that students can seek help when needed. Additionally, the presence of a disability coordinator who

offers support and guidance to students with disabilities highlights the commitment to inclusivity and creating an enabling environment for all students. The provision of disability etiquette education and other related activities is commendable in promoting understanding and inclusiveness.

Financial Support: The coordination of student social support by VMU Student Affairs Department, including managing student accommodation, administering social and motivational scholarships, and providing fee exemptions in specific cases, demonstrates a commitment to addressing financial concerns. The reduced cost of accommodation for students based on their social status indicates an effort to ensure affordability and equal opportunities for all students.

Career Planning Support: The organisation of seminars and consultations on career planning issues by VMU Career Centre is a valuable resource for students. These initiatives provide guidance and support in shaping students' career plans and help them explore their professional options. The organisation of face-to-face meetings with faculty alumni members further strengthens the connection between students and professionals in the field, allowing graduates to share their experiences and insights.

Additional Educational Opportunities: The availability of a minor study program offered by VMU Entrepreneurship Academy and the Academia cum laude individual study system highlights the commitment to offering additional educational opportunities. These initiatives allow students to develop entrepreneurial skills, expand the scope of their studies, and work with renowned professors from other universities. Such opportunities contribute to students' intellectual growth and provide a platform for further academic exploration.

Conclusion:
Based on the provided factual information (SER) and visitation, it is evident that the academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students in the given field at VMU is comprehensive and demonstrates a commitment to student well-being and success. The university's efforts to provide easily accessible academic information, regular teacher consultations, psychological counselling services, disability support, social support, career planning assistance, and additional educational opportunities contribute to a supportive and enriching learning environment. However, continuous evaluation and improvement of these support services based on student feedback and evolving needs are recommended to ensure their ongoing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

First-year students of the first study cycle receive the most important information in the special annual event "Introduction to Studies". It is organised according to topics relevant to students to acquaint them with the University, its services, and opportunities. The introductory week includes faculty and staff presentations, foreign language options, opportunities to study

abroad, Student Council and academic clubs' presentations, information about the use of library resources, campus facilities, etc. During the event, students get to know the campus environment, faculty and senior students, and the chosen study programme. On the Faculty Day, first-year students are introduced to the chosen study program in more detail. These measures enhance the motivation of new students and encourage them to reach high learning achievements.

Students can receive more information about the study programme at VMU website https://www.vdu.lt/lt/study/program/show/242/. To provide students with timely information about studies, they receive personalised emails. Students use a specially designed portal https://studentas.vdu.lt/login.php?lang=EN where they can receive informational messages.

Heads of Faculty and Department and members of the SPC meet periodically with students to discuss relevant issues and career opportunities. The Faculty's administrative staff advises students on a wide range of academic and study organisation issues.

According to VMU Study Regulations, each teacher spends an allotted number of hours per semester advising students on homework, individual or group assignments and/or other study-related issues. Consulting is performed face-to-face during officially announced hours, as well as using different online means, such as *Skype*, *MS Teams*, email, discussion forums, other communication environments and tools that are convenient for teachers and students.

(2) Expert's analysis

Introduction to Studies: The organisation of the annual event "Introduction to Studies" is commendable as it provides first-year students with important information about the university, its services, and opportunities. The event covers various topics relevant to students, including faculty and staff presentations, foreign language options, study abroad opportunities, Student Council and academic clubs' presentations, and information about library resources and campus facilities. This comprehensive introduction helps students become familiar with the university environment, their chosen study program, and motivates them to achieve high learning outcomes.

Study Information Channels: The provision of personalised emails and a specially designed portal for students to receive timely study information is an effective approach. Personalised communication ensures that students receive relevant and targeted information about their studies. The portal acts as a centralised platform where students can access important messages and updates, enhancing their access to study-related information.

Faculty and Department Support: The periodic meetings between heads of faculty and department, members of the Student Program Committee (SPC), and students are beneficial for addressing relevant issues and discussing career opportunities. These interactions provide a platform for students to voice their concerns, receive guidance, and explore future prospects.

The administrative staff's role in advising students on academic and study organisation issues further supports students' academic journey.

Teacher Consultations: The allocation of specific hours for teachers to advise students on homework, individual or group assignments, and other study-related issues is praiseworthy. The availability of face-to-face consultations during officially announced hours and the use of online communication tools, such as Skype, MS Teams, email, and discussion forums, cater to the diverse needs of students and facilitate effective communication between teachers and students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Developed support measures
2. Special attention to students with disabilities

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Low mobility

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER, the study process at VMU is regulated in accordance with the Study Regulations. The University provides good opportunities for distance studies. All information about changes in the study process are communicated via email, Moodle platform and the University's website. Students can access study materials remotely, communicate and collaborate with peers, complete assignments, and, with the permission of the study units, report learning outcomes, provide feedback and questions, and receive support from the teacher remotely.

Innovative study methods are applied with a particular focus on the active participation of students, strengthening the interaction between the student and the teacher, developing cooperation between students, and solving real-life issues.

A detailed description of the teaching/learning methods used is provided in the Moodle study course description for each study course at the beginning of each semester.

The cumulative assessment system is applied to assess students' knowledge. Methods of assessing student achievement are consistent with the study methods and include assessment

of the student's written work and presentations; assessment of participation in discussions; observation and evaluation of project presentations; assessment of practical individual and group assignments; testing and written questionnaires.

Students write term papers independently, in consultation with a supervisor. The topics of term papers reflect the content of the courses studied. Students have the opportunity to choose the topic of their term papers according to their field of interest. Term papers are publicly defended.

Students in semester III and semester V of the Programme carry out the professional practice, during which they independently apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills to specific activities, become familiar with their future professional activities, and, by independently carrying out the tasks assigned to them, acquire new skills needed for their professional career.

The Programme provides students with comprehensive information about the content of study courses and reporting requirements, both in contact lectures and in online meetings. Students have the possibility to continue their studies at the second cycle: in linguistics studies (Modern Linguistics, Applied English Linguistics, Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism, which is an international joint degree programme between VMU, Johannes Gutenberg University (Mainz, Germany), Stockholm University (Sweden) and Tartu University (Estonia); or literary studies (Literary Creation, Criticism and Communication), or students can study in other fields.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The learning process is clearly regulated, and students are provided with information on the study timetable, programme content and assessment requirements. Cumulative assessment encourages students to learn in a coherent manner. The balance between theory and practice is positive. On the one hand students learn how to write a scientific text in coursework and on the other hand they do two internships during which they become acquainted with the nature of the work and the expectations of employers. The teaching and learning process enables us to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

(1) Factual situation

The University has a document of disability policy – University of Inclusive Opportunities. The aim is to improve the opportunities for persons with disabilities to acquire higher education, to find employment in higher education institutions and to ensure accessible study or working conditions for them. Students with disabilities are advised on a variety of issues by a disability coordinator.

According to the VMU Description of the Procedure for Providing the Individual Study Schedule, socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are given the opportunity to study according to an individual study schedule.

Socially vulnerable groups (orphans, people with disabilities, students from large families, families receiving social benefits and low-income families) receive different discounts for tuition or dormitory fees and scholarships are provided for these students.

There were no students with special needs enrolled in the Programme during the evaluation period.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups, students with special needs in VMU are adequate.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

(1) Factual situation

The monitoring of student learning progress is regulated by VMU Study Regulations and the Description of the Procedure of Monitoring of Student Learning Achievements and Providing Assistance to Students at VMU. In the Programme, the monitoring of student study progress is a continuous process ensured at different levels.

Teachers provide feedback to students in a systematic way: after mid-term examinations and the exams, students are acquainted with the assessment results and comments on how well they have performed the tasks.

Students' academic achievement and assessment are discussed during SPC meetings at the end of each semester. During every semester, administrative staff and SPC members discuss with the students their timetable and preferences for optional courses. Information is collected via informal discussions or in questionnaire format.

Monitoring includes the learning process and a personalised approach to each student.

During the evaluated period, there was no disagreement between teachers and students about the quality of the assessment.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The monitoring of students' study progress and feedback to students is adequate.

3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field

(1) Factual situation

The University has an active VMU Alumni Club whose main aim is to unite VMU alumni and maintain close relations with the University. Graduates are invited to various events to share their experiences, insights and so on.

Members of the club attend the University events organised to develop students' professional and employability skills as well as get acquainted with career opportunities. Alumni Club members also actively participate as consultants and experts in study programme committees, study quality assessment groups.

Each year VMU Career Centre performs an online survey for alumni, one year after their graduation. The focus of attention is their current work situation and satisfaction with the studies they have graduated. Alumni are also asked to evaluate VMU's contribution to their preparation for the labour market. Summarised survey results are published on the University website www.vdu.lt and on the Career Centre website.

The percentage of graduates who are employed is increasing year by year: in 2018, the percentage of graduates who were employed was only 33.3%, i.e., 7 out of 21 graduates were employed; in 2019, it was 56.3%, i.e., 9 out of 16 graduates were employed; and in 2020, it was 72.7%, i.e., 8 out of 11 graduates were employed. Every year, an increasing proportion of graduates from the Programme are employed within 12 months after graduation.

The majority of graduating students who took part in the survey have a positive perception of VMU's contribution to their labour market skills (Table 14).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The percentage of graduates in employment rose significantly over the period under evaluation. The cooperation with alumni and the VMU's focus on the needs of the labour market have supported these results. The employability of the graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field are good.

3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

(1) Factual situation

The principles of integrity are defined in VMU Statute, the Code of Ethics of VMU, the Plagiarism prevention procedures of VMU, VMU Study Regulations. Non-discrimination measures are regulated by the Code of Ethics of VMU.

One case of academic dishonesty was identified during the entire evaluation period.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has clear procedures in place for dealing with cases of academic dishonesty. Such cases are not frequent in the Programme in question. The implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination is adequate.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

(1) Factual situation

Procedures for appeals and complaints of the study process are regulated by VMU Regulations for Submission of Appeals Regarding Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and/or Assessment Procedure, the plagiarism prevention procedures of VMU and VMU Study Regulations.

During the evaluation period, the students of the Programme did not lodge any appeals or complaints about irregularities in the study process or assessment procedures.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The system for the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies in VMU is clear and effective. Experts' panel considers this system to be adequate.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:

1. The study process, the system for assessing students' achievements, the monitoring of students' progress and the principles of academic integrity are clearly regulated.
2. Good conditions for socially vulnerable groups and the students with special needs.
3. Close cooperation with alumni and social partners and their involvement in programme improvement activities to enable graduates to be prepared for further academic and practical activities.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* is unique on a national scale as it is the only programme in Lithuania that blends philology with publishing, however, the VMU does not collect information on what publishing fields graduates are employed in, or whether they fulfil the needs of the publishing sector.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

According to SER (p. 53), there are 18 teachers in the Programme. All of them have extensive teaching experience of working in a higher education institution or practical work experience.

As could be judged at the meeting with the teaching staff, teachers are active in publishing research and are involved in a variety of national (6 projects) and international (2 ESFA projects, European level) research projects. They participate in international scientific conferences and seminars, give guest lectures in Lithuania and abroad, are members of editorial boards of professional associations and scholarly publications, and participate in expert activities (mainly in Lithuania, but also at European level).

According to SER (op. cit.), the teachers of the Programme have a full-time teaching load of one full-time equivalent (the minimum is 0.6 and the maximum is 1.5) on average. All main (i.e., at least 0.5 FTE and at least 3 years) teachers in the Programme have a PhD. There are six professors (33.3% of the staff), six associate professors (33.3%) and six teachers with PhD degrees (33.3%).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Teachers of the Programme are highly qualified and very active in both developing and updating study courses, as well as publishing of research results and application for research projects. However, the teachers are overloaded with contact hours and teaching, which is a serious obstacle to doing research. On the contrary, it is very positive that teachers can choose their research directions combining Horizon2020, national and VMU values. Such a way of research enriches the personalities of teachers because they have opportunities to participate in interdisciplinary projects thus developing fresh ideas for creating and updating their study courses.

To address the problem of overload, faculty workload calculators should be revised so that supervision includes all hours that faculty spend on reviewing bachelor theses. In order to solve the overload problem, it would be necessary to involve more new teachers in the implementation of the Program. At the moment, neither the SER nor the meeting with the faculty management and teaching staff gave a clear answer on the plans to accomplish this. In reality, PhD students do not choose to pursue a university career because of the low pay. Academic environment, community, travel and research activities (mentioned in the meeting) are not such prestigious concepts in today's youth and student environment, a very important aspect for them is good salary from the beginning and fast career opportunities.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

(1) Factual situation

Each VMU teacher has opportunities to use Erasmus+ programme possibilities: Erasmus+ teaching visits and Erasmus+ training visits. However, academic mobility of teachers has been severely affected by the pandemic (2020-2021). There were no teachers' visits in 2020 and 2021 in contrast to 5 visits in 2018, and 3 visits in 2019.
During the period under review, the Programme received 6 short time visits from foreign

institutions, both academic (2 visits) and non-academic (4 visits).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Although the teachers of the Programme use academic mobility opportunities (mainly Erasmus+ teaching visits), it should obviously be done more actively. Also, the Programme should promote the widest possible involvement of guest lecturers via academic mobility.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff

(1) Factual situation

Professional development activities of teachers at the VMU are regulated in several ways: to develop general competences (foreign language competences, intercultural communication and cooperation competences, management competences, etc.); to develop professional competences (didactic, digital and research competences, etc.); to develop personal competences.

Professional development includes teacher participation in the University-provided courses as well as ones organised by other Lithuanian institutions or international institutions. The University-provided possibilities for professional development are free of charge for VMU teachers.

Teachers also choose professional development possibilities outside the University regarding their teaching and research interests. If other institution-provided possibilities are cost-related, the teachers of the University can apply for support from their department, research clusters, Erasmus+ programme possibilities or use other potential opportunities. Professional development can be carried out both through face-to-face and distance learning.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

During the evaluation period, as indicated in the SER, the teachers of the Programme have taken advantage of various courses to improve their didactic and remote learning skills as well as digital competences. They have also participated in seminars on the improvement of general language skills.

The fact that teachers only theoretically have the opportunity to go on vacation every 5 years to improve their research or teaching competences is somewhat worrying. This is difficult due to the heavy workload. Although VMU provides some places for sabbatical, teaching staff of the Programme has to compete with other faculties.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:

1. Highly qualified teaching staff representing both outstanding scholars and professionals who are also experienced educators.

2. Diverse and innovative scientific projects (including interdisciplinary), in the implementation of which students are also involved; the results of the projects are also reflected in the offer of study courses.
3. A variety of Erasmus+ mobility opportunities.
4. A variety of improving the competences of the teaching staff.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Too much workload for teachers, which interferes with research.
2. In practice, the possibilities of academic leave have not been resolved.
3. Opportunities for attracting new teachers have not been resolved; this is an issue that needs to be addressed at both the university and national level.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

(1) Factual situation

There are 237 classrooms at the University which can be used for the study process according to teaching and learning needs. The size of the rooms varies from 3 up to 180 working places for students. Larger groups of students can have study courses in VMU Grand Hall possessing 725 seats. The schedule for lectures is designed considering the number of students in the course and the number of working places in the classroom. This allows assigning rooms of an optimal size to deliver study courses.

All the buildings are adjusted for disabled people: elevators, automatic doors, lifts for wheelchairs, and brightly marked stairs have been installed. Students with disabilities have access to parking near the University buildings; the entrance to the buildings is constantly maintained and renovated; libraries have equipment for the disabled to create working places for them; classrooms are with the necessary furniture. Students with disabilities have the opportunity to stay in dormitory rooms adapted for them, if necessary, with an accompanying person. The study process is organised according to the individual needs of students; disability education campaigns are organised; data on students with disabilities are integrated into the databases, thus facilitating the entire study process for students with disabilities.

Studies are provided in the rooms with the necessary equipment, rooms are computerised and have internet connection as well as multimedia projecting equipment, audio and video equipment.

The University Library is an attractive information environment for studies and research, ensuring effective services for members of the University community, providing access to information resources necessary for studies, science, and professional qualification.

The modern physical infrastructure of Library departments 70 has been created in faculties and academies (5227 m2 in total) allowing conditions for effective response to the research and study needs of academic units. Members of the University community can visit all departments of the Library and use its services, regardless of which faculty or academy they study or work in. The library has created a total of 637 working places for them, visitors can work with 196 Library or personal computers.

The aim of the Library is to create user-friendly conditions for access to information resources. The most necessary printed documents (almost 300 thousand publications in open funds) are freely available to users and stored according to research fields, the search for publications is facilitated by information notes and various virtual aids. All information about the available collections and access to them is available on the library website, in the virtual library, in the institutional Research Management System.

(2) *Expert's analysis*

Facilities are in outstanding condition. Everything is easily accessible via elevator or stairs. Most floors that cannot be reached via elevator have lifts (for students with special needs). The overall view of the faculties that were visited has exceeded expectations. Students are provided with places to rest or work that have WI-FI and computers.

Talking about the library, the library consists of a lot of various resources. Students with special needs are taken into account when accessing and working in the library. Individual rooms in the library that are provided for students have computers and spacious tables. Students with special needs have more spacious rooms, for example, for students with impaired movement.

In regards to the material provided in the physical library, any printed book that is needed based on student needs can be ordered and brought to the library free of charge. Number of printed books is exceptional with 300 thousand publications. Same books can be accessed through the internet databases that are provided for the students free of charge. Same principle is applied to the books that are needed based on student needs, it can be ordered and read online free of charge.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies

(1) Factual situation

Every year, VMU upgrades computers and purchases technical equipment according to the resource development plans submitted by the faculties and academies, which they prepare according to the study needs. About 20% of computers are renewed annually. Computers are connected to a common network and have an Internet connection; VMU computer network security systems are constantly updated.

(2) Expert's analysis

According to SER the only issue that they have now is with computers for teachers (computers are slow in terms of age of the computer). One more thing that needs to be mentioned is the privacy of the open library in the faculty. Open library provides a lack of privacy for students that are learning there, which may leave them uncomfortable.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Ensured accessibility for students with special needs.
2. Admirable consideration for student needs in terms of workplaces/resting areas.
3. Modern facilities.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Open library in the facility provides a lack of privacy for students that are working in the library.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies

(1) Factual situation

The system of quality assurance is multi-level. The University Senate and Rectorate discuss strategic issues of study programmes in the field, and they approve essential renewals. Studies-related decisions are made by the Faculty Council, the Study Programme Committee, the Dean of the Faculty and the Head of the Department (SER, p. 65).

According to SER (p. 65), the Study Programme Committee of Lithuanian Philology and Editing programme consists of 7 members: 4 teachers, 1 social partner and 2 students. This Committee performs an annual internal assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses of studies, following the information of studies gathered by surveys and other methods as well as integrating the results of external assessment. This analysis includes 1) compatibility between the Study Programme and newest research trends, 2) correspondence between the Programme and labour market needs, 3) demand of the Study Programme, 4) suitability and sufficiency of the Study Programme resources, 5) teachers' competence, 6) students' progress, 7) students' and teachers' mobility etc. (SER, p. 66)

The results of the analysis are discussed both with the faculty members (Head of the Department, the Dean of the Faculty, the Faculty Council) and with the Study Department and other university level units. Students, alumni, and employers also are involved in these discussions (SER, p. 66).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel made sure that the Study Programme internal quality evaluation principles mentioned in SER really work. This was confirmed both by discussions with the university and faculty management, staff responsible for the preparation of the SER and teaching staff, and especially by the responses of employers, social partners, alumni and current students. In general, everyone is informed about the Study Programme's structure, implementation, strengths and problems to be solved. Also, everyone indicates that their recommendations in the implementation and improvement of the program are respected.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance

(1) Factual situation

The internal quality assurance of the Study Programme is closely related to the opinion of students and other stakeholders. According to SER (p. 66), most of the information comes from the results of periodic electronic surveys (organised jointly for the entire VMU). The survey of teaching and learning evaluation of the study courses is conducted at the end of each semester. Special surveys have also been created for first-year students, graduate students, alumni, and teachers. For employers and social partners not only surveys are organised, but also interviews, conversations, round table discussions etc. There is also feedback because the administration and the Study Programme Committee share the aggregated surveys' results with teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Moreover, all teachers at the University have access to the detailed results of the survey on teaching and learning in the study courses they provide each semester.

Representatives of the employers and social partners are involved in the Study Programme Committee where they have an opportunity to suggest their remarks regarding the Programme correspondence to labour market requirements, the relevance of student practical skills, etc. Teachers are also invited to present their comments and suggestions regarding improvement of the Study Programme in the Department, Faculty as well as the Study Programme Committee meetings (SER, pp. 66-67).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel was able to make sure that the survey results were respected in the Study Programme implementation by meeting with students, social partners and employers. E.g., social partners and employers emphasised that the Programme respects regional needs and meets the requirements of the modern labour market while the students indicated that they gave valuable feedback about the teachers' workload and different suggestions for improving the Programme.

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes

(1) Factual situation

According to SER (p. 69), the decisions regarding studies (including issues on assessment and improvement) are publicised for stakeholders through different channels actively involving students as well. The Chairperson of the Study Programme Committee shares the information with the teachers, social partners, and other stakeholders (the Head of the Department, the Dean of the Faculty). The student representative of the Committee, on the other hand, disseminates the decisions to other students of the study programme. The results are published on VMU website, emailed to students and teachers, delivered in social media etc.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All the actions indicated in the SER are sufficient and comply with the principles of good governance. Information about the implementation of the Study Programme, its improvements as well as the opinions of students and other stakeholders are available both inside and outside the VMU. Thus, the VMU and society as a whole obtain sufficient and up-to-date information about the Study Programme.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

(1) Factual situation

According to SER (pp. 69-70), the overview of students, including last year students (exit surveys), and alumni opinion of the quality of their studies is based on data from surveys conducted centrally by the VMU. In general, all the mentioned groups evaluate the study program as good and suitable for the requirements of the modern labour market. At the same time, it is emphasised that the program successfully provides both theoretical and practical knowledge. The representatives of all surveyed groups also pointed to the stimulating study atmosphere and the good cooperation between teachers and students.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

By meeting with representatives of students and alumni, it was possible to make sure that what was written in the SER corresponds to reality. Students (in general) are satisfied and rate the studies very well. They also point out that the materials of the virtual environment are very well prepared and available in the VMU library, including different databases in linguistics and literary studies. Alumni confirm that the opinions of the students are really taken into account as the changes they asked for in the survey have been implemented. However, students and alumni say that there have been very few guest lecturers, some have had none at all.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Centralised VMU survey system, supplemented by Faculty/Programme surveys if necessary.

2. The effective VMU multi-level quality assessment system that also includes different types of feedback.
3. The serious attitude of the Study Programme management towards survey results (including different types of feedback) and improving the quality of programme and studies.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. A part of students, alumni and employers are passive survey takers and are not interested in providing feedback.
2. There is some risk of overloading students, alumni, teachers etc. with surveys.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	A more thorough consideration of the practical elements is recommended to make minor studies more attractive to students and to help reduce early dropout rates. Perhaps individual faculty members should partner mentoring with a small group of students and "monitor" them throughout their studies and intervene when problems arise.
Links between science (art) and studies	Improve the working conditions of teachers (teaching load, research support system, etc.) to enable the research potential to reach international quality
Student admission and support	VMU can further promote internationalisation by actively attracting and accommodating foreign students. Develop targeted marketing strategies and English-taught models in regards to this program to attract international students to full-time studies.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	The programme is unique and much needed. It is recommended to strengthen the specialisation in the field of publishing, to clarify the needs of employers, and to personalise the students' experience in response to them.
Teaching staff	It is recommended to attract more new teachers and researchers to the study programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing*
Learning facilities and resources	It is recommended to address the current known issue about the teachers computers.
Study quality management and public information	Supplementing and clarifying the centralised VMU surveys so that they are more attractive to students, alumni and employers.

V. SUMMARY

Main findings of the expert panel:

The objectives and learning outcomes of the Study Programme are consistent with the activities of Lithuanian philologists and publishing specialists because its structure meets the legal requirements established for higher education curricula in Lithuania: the subjects are evenly distributed and the modules correspond to the level of study. The Study Programme is student-centred and develops competencies seemingly necessary to meet societal and personal development needs, contemporary labour market demands, and help students acquire competencies compatible with a bachelor's degree. They also prepare students for work in relevant fields of study/research or further study (MA program) and research (*Academia cum laude*). Study Programme/university administrators should do more to enable, promote, and encourage the exchange of incoming faculty and outgoing students so that they can gain international exposure and experience.

The link between teaching and research is very good in this study programme. The specialisation in publishing is strategically a very good choice, and the research conducted by the teachers is sufficiently dynamic to ensure a favourable development of the field. However, if the working conditions of the teachers are not improved, and in particular a reduction in their contact hours is not implemented, this development will remain uncertain.

Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) is a reputable institution that prioritises academic excellence, fosters internationalisation and mobility opportunities, and offers robust support for career development. With its dedicated faculty, diverse academic programs, and commitment to student success, VMU provides a valuable educational experience that prepares students for future challenges and opportunities.

Student achievement is guaranteed by clear assessment criteria, feedback, personalised learning opportunities, and close links with alumni and social partners. The quality of the programme is demonstrated by the good employability statistics of graduating students.

One of the strengths of the study programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* is highly qualified teaching staff representing both outstanding scholars and professionals who are also experienced educators. Another strength is the fact that teaching staff carry on diverse and innovative scientific projects (including digital humanities and other interdiscplinary projects), in the implementation of which students are also involved. In addition, the results of the projects are also reflected in the offer of study courses. However, attracting young teachers and researchers to the programme and the university is a very important and urgent issue.

Vytautas Magnus University offers a range of facilities that contribute to a favourable learning and research environment for its students and faculty. The university's investment in modern

infrastructure, well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, and libraries supports academic excellence and fosters a conducive atmosphere for intellectual growth.

Regarding study quality evaluation and public information the serious attitude of the study programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* management towards survey results (including different types of feedback) and improving the quality of programme and studies is highly appreciated.

In conclusion, the expert panel would like to thank Vytautas Magnus University and representatives of the study programme *Lithuanian Philology and Publishing* for the very well prepared and very clear self-evaluation report. Also, the evaluation team would like to express its gratitude for the excellently organised site-visit at the Faculty of Humanities.

Expert panel chairperson signature: **Andra Kalnača**