LCC TARPTAUTINIO UNIVERSITETO

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Grupės vadovas (-ė): Panel chairperson:	Dr. Neil Sparnon
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2023

Report language – English

CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of LCC
International University

Dr. Neil Sparnon

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.

3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members:

- Dr. Neil Sparnon (chair)
- Dr. Joseph Ryan (academic & panel secretary)
- Prof. Dr. Tim Smits (academic)
- Prof. Dr. Jakub Fischer (academic)
- Ms. Danguolė Kiznienė (social partner)
- Gaga Gvenetadze (student)

4. As a result of external review **LCC International University** *(LCC Tarptautinis Universitetas)* is given a **positive evaluation.**

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	3
QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	3
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	4

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

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

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

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

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

6. **Some 13** examples of good practices were found; **12** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of LCC International University (hereafter referred to as LCC or the university) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in November 2023 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 Order No V-32 (hereinafter – the Methodology).

8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with some 24 annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the university, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-post study field reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; information on violations of academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information, such as further detail on the staff profile, minutes of deliberative governance meetings, example student calendars, and further evidence in respect of local impact.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel *visited* the university from 07 – 09 November 2023 where it had meetings with some 95 internal and external stakeholders. Subsequently, the Panel met both in-person and virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC at the beginning of January 2024.

11. In line with the Procedure the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management**, **Quality Assurance**, **Studies and Research (Art),** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the commendations and recommendations of the previous review from 2016.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the

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

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

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

15. The Panel received LCC the comments and considered them. As a result five [5] changes were made to the report.

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

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

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

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

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

− to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

− to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

− to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

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

2.2. Background information about the institution

19. LCC International University is a private, non-profit university located in Klaipėda. It was originally established in 1991 as a Christian College by a joint venture between Lithuanian,

Canadian, and American foundations. LCC was granted the status of a higher education institution by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 2000-07-21 and given a Licence Nr. 002017. In 2007 the new title of "LCC International University" was confirmed in the Registry Center of the Republic of Lithuania by certificate Nr. 105757.

20. As a liberal arts institution the university explicitly identifies and promotes itself as following what it describes as a North American model of higher education. In this context, it specifically offers programmes in the fields of arts, humanities, business, and other social sciences which are built around a set of established core competencies. These are critical thinking, conflict transformation, a multicultural perspective, effective communication, a Christian worldview, servant leadership, multidisciplinary knowledge, and community building. It states that, as a liberal arts institution, LCC is committed to a broad spectrum of learning and an interdisciplinary ethos. Among the "Core Values" of the university is the conviction that a liberal arts education "integrates learning with all aspects of life."

21. LCC offers six Bachelor programmes in International Business Administration; English Language and Literature; Psychology; Evangelical Theology; Contemporary Communication and International Relations and Development. It offers two Master (MA) programmes in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and International Management. No doctoral programmes are provided. This programme portfolio matches that offered at the time of the previous evaluation in 2016. Additionally, LCC offers community-based programmes in 5 areas: Lithuanian language courses for foreigners, English language courses (summer language institute, camps, evening courses for children and adults), Cybersecurity bootcamp and courses, SHRM bootcamp: The Evolving Human Resource Professional, TESOL certification courses.

22. The degree programmes were all accredited by SKVC and some are currently in the periodic reaccreditation process; these include the offerings in International Relations and Development and Contemporary Communications. The study of each of the BA programmes leads to an award at Level 6 of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the MA programmes lead to an award at Level 7 of the LQF. The Lithuanian Framework was referenced in 2012 to the overarching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and also to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Bologna Framework, during the same process.

23. During the 32 years of its existence, LCC has grown to a student body of 715 undergraduate students, 49 graduate students, and has more than 2500 graduates.

24. LCC's Bachelor in International Business Administration attracts the highest number of students with 235, followed by Contemporary Communication with 184, and Psychology with 121. Some undergraduate programmes are small with Theology as a major having currently 7 students enrolled. There are 27 Master students. Almost all of the university's students are full-time students.

25. Significantly, students come from a variety of countries; according to the KPI dashboard (Addendum 2.6), as of Fall 2022 Lithuanian students made up 15% of the undergraduate headcount and 29% of the graduate headcount. The university was described as East facing in the last evaluation report, but there is a conscious commitment to expanding its international student base. Most of its non-Lithuanian students come currently from countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Albania. As the review was undertaken during the

period of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Panel commends the care shown to displaced Ukrainian students. The university notes that some 29% of its students are Ukrainian.

26. There is currently a faculty and staff complement of 196 with slightly more expatriate (102) than Lithuanian (94). The SER states that LCC staff and faculty come from a diverse range of countries including Lithuania, United States, Canada, Ireland, Honduras, Nigeria, Poland, Germany, Ukraine, North Macedonia, and New Zealand. This was consistent with the experience of the Panel during the days of the site visit.

27. The Panel sought a detailed account of staff and qualifications and noted that of the 77 faculty listed some 50% have doctoral degrees within another 7 pursuing doctoral programmes.

28. The period reviewed in the self-evaluation covered 2016 to 2023.

29. LCC's ambitious vision as articulated in its current Strategic Plan (2018-2023: *LCC – A Flourishing Community*) is to be the leading Christian liberal arts university in Europe, renowned for its flourishing academic community, spiritual vitality, and global impact.

30. The mission of the university is to provide Christian liberal arts education within a diverse learning community which transforms people for servant leadership.

31. The university has developed a process whereby the strategic plan is reviewed annually and is the basis for the annual Management Plan with goals, objectives, and key performance indicators (KPIs). It states that at the level of the Management Plan each year, the leadership team ensures that each goal contributes to one of the strategic drivers that have been identified: enhancing quality, identity, and/or revenue.

32. LCC is currently embarking on the process of forming its new strategic plan. This evaluation exercise is timely in that regard and offers significant opportunity if employed to advantage.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

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

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

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

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

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33. LCC's vision 'To be the leading Christian liberal arts university in Europe, renowned for its flourishing academic community and positive global impacts' and its mission statement 'LCC

International University provides Christian liberal arts education within a diverse learning community which transforms people for servant leadership' are both concise and clear, and provide an effective framework in which its strategic plan is developed and implemented. However, while neither contradict the wider national and research and study policies of Lithuania, the European Higher Education Area, and the European Research area, nor do they address them specifically. This means that LCC does not take the opportunity to embed these policies at the strategic level. As it develops the next version of its strategic plan, LCC might usefully address this.

34. Its strategic plan and attendant processes, set out initially in meetings of Stakeholders, and subsequently the Board of Directors, are consistent with these statements. Staff throughout the institution, academic and administrative, are able not only to articulate these statements, but to indicate how they relate to their daily working lives. In turn, staff can demonstrate how, through the policies agreed by the President's Cabinet and Academic Council, these statements influence teaching and learning, research, and associated support activities.

35. The current strategic plan covers the period 2018–2023 and was fashioned around featuring and strengthening the core identity of community. Geopolitical and economic circumstances have altered considerably in that period, and this poses a distinct set of challenges for a small and international enterprise. This suggests that the succeeding plan will have an alternative focus and, as stated above, this review process should assist the university as it crafts its next strategic plan.

36. The institutional strategic plan is developed by the President's Cabinet which oversees a SWOT exercise involving a considerable proportion of staff and students over several months. Perspectives on wider, 'environmental', issues, such as national, international, economic, and/or demographic developments affecting LCC, are provided through the President and the senior management team. These issues are decanted into a draft strategic plan which is presented for consideration and approval to LCC's Board of Directors.

37. Primary responsibility for the management of strategic objectives lies with the President's Cabinet which prioritises objectives on an on-going basis and provides specific focus through an annual Management Plan. The Management Plan assigns responsibility, allocates resources and agrees timescales to appropriate institutional teams.

38. The Panel is satisfied that LCC has developed an extensive and appropriate range of performance indicators to manage and monitor delivery of its strategic objectives effectively. These include staff and student numbers, country of origin, and the academic qualifications of staff. These indicators are collected by the senior management team and monitored by the President's Cabinet as a core part of its meetings. President's Cabinet has a structured process with strategic cycles of one year and quarterly process meetings through which it monitors the delivery of strategic objectives. This process allows it to identify instances of non-delivery, and to agree appropriate remedial actions. Overall progress, including instances where objectives have not been delivered, is reported back to Stakeholders through the Board of Directors.

39. The Panel is pleased to confirm that LCC has made significant progress to achieve the goals laid down in its mission statement through its programme portfolio at undergraduate and Masters' Levels.

40. The Panel also notes that that programme offering has not changed over the course of this review period. Even allowing for the scale of operation and the fact that LCC is not a

comprehensive university, and acknowledging also that the period under review has seen a global pandemic and hostility that directly impacts its region, this want of development should be of concern to the institution.

41. From the documentary evidence presented and following discussion through the site visit, the Panel is satisfied that regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

> *1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:*
>
> *1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;*
>
> *1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;*
>
> *1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.*

42. The history of the university and the generous and significant support it receives from North American endowments makes the governance model somewhat more complex than is the norm. But the Panel is satisfied that there is an appropriate separation of roles, that there is consistency in respect of vision and mission, and that the operational management of the university is not compromised.

43. LCC's governance structure is laid out in its statutes; Governance is undertaken by its founder members and donors operating principally through its Board of Directors. Executive management is led by the President's Cabinet while the development and implementation of polices around teaching and learning is the responsibility of its Academic Council. The operation of, and interaction between, these and other management bodies are considered below.

44. The Panel was facilitated in meeting with the chair of the Board of Directors and one other director, and with the President and senior executive including members of the President's Cabinet.

45. The Board of Directors meets twice a year for three days on each occasion. According to the SER and supported by evidence presented during the site visit, the Board of Directors approves institutional identity, mission and vision, and the strategic plan. The majority of items considered have been previously prepared and discussed through its network of sub-committees. These include a Finance Committee, a Marketing Committee, a Student Life Committee, and a Building and Properties Committee. Issues include ongoing plans for activities in these areas and requests for approval for specific actions or decisions. For example, the most recent meeting in September 2023 included approval for revisions to the 2023/24 budget, a decision to delay approval to expand the library cafeteria building and a decision on student fees and accommodation costs for the forthcoming year. Decisions are recorded through formal minutes and communicated to the Executive both formally and informally. The Panel was impressed by the openness of communications between the Board of Directors and the members of the President's Cabinet. The President's Cabinet is self-identified as the body responsible for the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

46. The efficacy of LCC's processes for governance and management is overseen by the senior management team, and in particular, the Chief Operations Officer. The Panel noted that significant efforts had been made in the last two years to streamline its processes to ensure that they were

effective, and responsive to changing needs. For example, during the Covid pandemic, when many staff were required to work from home, it introduced the LEAN management system to enhance communication and effectiveness. As staff were able to return to the workplace, use of this approach became less critical.

47. Consistent with a recommendation made in the 2016 review, LCC has made significant steps to involve students as formal members of its governance and management structures. Current students, graduates and representatives of the Student Council were able to articulate, often citing specific examples, the extent to which they are represented on these bodies, their involvement in the preparation of documents, and their engagement in discussions and decisions.

48. The exact nature of student involvement in meetings appears to be evolving with students becoming more active and engaged in discussions over time. Student representatives on the President's Cabinet and Academic Council for example, reported that while their role is largely to observe, they are sometimes invited to voice students' concerns on matters such as the implementation of new policies. The expectation is that student representatives would by right have a proactive part in the formal structures of the university. The Panel noted that the student representative on Academic Council has voting rights.

49. This is a highly commendable development. The advantages of involving the student voice in management deliberations at all levels are considerable. It not only offers insight into practical issues such as facilities management and services, but a strategic perspective into its longer-term future on which LCC's governance and management teams can draw extensively.

50. While no formal training is offered to those serving on the Students Council and LCC's management committees, student representatives were satisfied that mentoring from more senior student representatives was proving supportive and effective. The Panel accepts this but suggests that there would be merit in LCC involving itself in a national programme aimed at facilitating student engagement. In this regard it is positive to see LCC engaging with the Lithuanian National Union of Students *(Lietuvos studentu sajunga – LSS)*.

51. The Panel noted that one of the student representatives received an LCC scholarship that is contingent on undertaking the role of student representation. While this is generally supportive, care should be taken to ensure that students are able to express their opinions independently. In the interests of balance, the university noted that scholarships are not contingent on student leadership roles, i.e. students can receive scholarships without being members of student leadership organizations; for some scholarships students merely need to demonstrate any leadership activities, ex. volunteering, participating in student club, etc.

52. The Panel was highly impressed by the students it met, the members of the Students' Council, and LCC graduates. It commends LCC for seeking to harness their expertise, insight, perspectives, and energy into its strategic and operational management deliberations.

53. The Panel noted that as a small institution with a modest staffing complement, LCC has a significant number of management committees, some with elective or shifting membership. The Panel also noted that, in some cases, it was unclear where responsibility for decisions lies. For example, LCC's University Research Council focuses on building awareness of research and facilitating the support of research-active staff but, in contrast to the governance and decision making infrastructure on the teaching-side, it is not a decision-making body. The Panel observed that the Academic Council rarely considers research related matters. It noted further that while the

President's Cabinet has developed research priorities, the management and translation of these into actions at the departmental level is largely absent.

54. The Panel advises that LCC's committee structure should be proportionate to its scale, scope, and operations. There is a strong case for rationalisation and focus. In brief, the Panel senses that the university could be more effective by being less busy.

55. In this context, the panel recommends that the management and delivery of its academic activities – teaching and learning, research, and external engagement (or service) – might be enhanced through their consolidation within the remit of the Academic Council. Not only will this integrate research and external engagement activities into its more established management structures, potentially leading to greater coordination of academic endeavours across the institution, but also, it will allow LCC to benefit from economies of scale, releasing academic and administrative staff time.

56. The Panel notes that the Law on Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Lithuania (2009 and amended 2015) specifically sets out a role for the Academic Council.

57. While all those to whom the Panel spoke were able to articulate the roles of its various governance and management bodies clearly, and to demonstrate how, through their deliberations, they were able to perform these roles effectively, the Panel noted that some procedural matters, such as statutory voting practices in different circumstances were not always observed. This might be addressed either through reviewing these practices or offering developmental opportunities to members.

58. The Panel noted that the establishment of a risk register was recommended by the 2016 review panel. LCC has since established a crisis management team, which has been active in formulating strategic and operational responses to events such as the pandemic, and wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. It has not however established a formal risk register in the accepted understanding of that term. While the Panel was satisfied that the crisis management team had performed extremely well in response to these major developments, it did not feel that this was risk management in the more commonly understood sense.

59. A risk register requires the institution to identify risks, at the strategic level, of various types – for example financial, demographical, political and/or legal, as well as major crises such as pandemic and wars. The register requires the institution's executive to develop mitigation strategies that can be put into effect should the need arise. The underlying principle is that while institutions cannot always either predict or prevent crises, they can prepare strategies to mitigate their consequences.

60. In conversation, representatives of LCC's social partners noted the extent to which the institution was responsive to their detailed recommendations around academic programmes. Their involvement is formalized, and they are consulted; interestingly, they indicated however, that they had no formal role in the development of the university's strategic priorities. The Panel considered this to be a useful observation that might be addressed either through widening the membership of its Board of Directors and/or the establishment of an Advisory Board with a remit to advise the President's Cabinet on relevant developments as it prepares environmental scanning advice for the Board of Directors.

> *1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:*
>
> *1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;*
>
> *1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.*

61. LCC systematically collects, analyses, and utilises a wide range of data relating to its strategic planning objectives – for example student admission, performance, and graduate destinations - as well as numerous surveys related to the effectiveness of the various facilities and services it provides to staff, students, and social partners. The Panel noted that both academic and administrative staff were able to identify the key data sets for their areas of responsibility, and to cite instances in which this data had provided the basis for incremental change.

62. In addition, LCC solicits student feedback informally, and also organises focus groups to identify student challenges and expectations on particular issues – for example the TESOL programme in which students had indicated that they would find it useful to have more input into the job profiles.

63. Given this high level of interaction, the Panel explored the possibility that LCC risked overloading recipients with too many requests for feedback. Students agreed that levels of requested feedback were quite high, but equally were satisfied of its value. LCC was both responsive to feedback and effective in communicating outcomes.

64. By its own account, LCC records that data is collected in several ways: through activity reports, through collection and analysis of Key Performance Indicators, and through analysis of results of surveys sent out to different groups of stakeholders. This point notwithstanding, the Panel concluded that while LCC's collection and use of data was effective, there would be value in consolidating and coordinating its various surveys and requests for feedback, primarily through the student survey – a limited number of larger surveys to staff, students, and social partners, rather than a multiplicity of smaller ones. This would not only reduce the risk of overloading recipients but would enable a more coordinated approach to quality assurance management.

65. Allowing that a more focused and systematic approach would be advisable, the Panel is pleased to confirm that the information provided by LCC is clear, accurate, and accessible to the academic community and general public, and is provided regularly to the founders and supervisory bodies. Equally, the information channels are effective and data is available for stakeholders and the general public on the website.

66. More widely, the Panel was satisfied that LCC's approach to process management analysis is appropriate and effective. Process management and review is the responsibility of unit heads and supervisors. For example, unit and departmental budgets are prepared a year in advance in consultation with the unit heads and managers. Staff were able to identify key dates in the institutional calendar, for example the agreement of the academic programme for the forthcoming year which allows institutional marketing activities to be commenced. LCC conducts a wide range

of institutional and departmental surveys of its staff, students, and partners to which appropriate staff referred frequently, and which form the basis of process review and amendment.

67. The Panel recommends that LCC establishes processes for the development of a strategic risk register and prepares mitigation strategies as appropriate.

68. The LCC website was seen by stakeholders as a strength and the university utilises multiple social media channels as part of its communication approach. That said, it was apparent that word-of mouth and recommendations from graduates and informed contacts is the key factor in student recruitment.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:
1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied; *1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;* *1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;* *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;* *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

69. The Panel noted what was provided concerning human resource management in the SER and sought additional material in advance of the site visit which was provided by the university. The Panel were cognizant of LCC's Employee Life Cycle Strategic Plan and what it terms its compensation strategy. The former details LCC's approach to attract, recruit, onboard, develop, retain, and separate [sic] employees.

70. The age profile of faculty presented in the SER shows a wide age distribution (25- >65). This balance of youth and experience is viewed as positive by the Panel. Considering gender, while there are more females than males, the balance is not unreasonable.

71. Based on the documentation provided, the Panel initially had queries on what it perceived to be a high staff turnover. This was acknowledged by the university but was also proposed as a strength in that it afforded a flow of new thinking. It was also argued that the turnover rate is inflated by shorter-term Fulbright scholars or US professors on sabbatical. The Panel accepts this argument but notes that a balance is necessary as some measure of consistency is necessary to ensure that LCC meets its strategic ambitions.

72. The profile of academic staff qualifications is considered at paragraph 29 above. The Panel is satisfied that the qualifications of academic and non-academic staff are appropriate.

73. Equally, the Panel is satisfied that LCC is committed to ensuring academic staff are facilitated to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities. LCC's Board of Directors has recommended a target of 3% of the operating budget for professional development funds for faculty and staff. It partners with the Global Leadership Summit as well as other external training and development organisations to encourage development of competencies for non-academic staff. LCC is party to a Tuition Exchange scholarships programme through which dependents of university employees may attend selected universities at reduced rates. Employees

with one consecutive year of employment at the university are eligible for tuition exchange benefits.

74. As an encompassing comment, the Panel considered LCC's approach to human resource management to be exemplary. Recently recruited staff were able to cite instances of particular support, such as assistance in relocation, and with administrative matters such as immigration and visas; both academic and administrative staff frequently referred not only to their annual performance review, but underlined that personal and professional development were ongoing matters that might be raised at any time by both staff and supervisors; staff were aware of, and utilised, LCC's range of internal and external developmental opportunities; the sense of community amongst staff and students was ubiquitous.

75. Given LCC's strategic determination to grow and deepen research, particularly in the wider context of relatively scarce resources and the likelihood that the next iteration of its strategic plan will identify several key, focused, priorities, the Panel considered how LCC might enhance the effectiveness of its training and development endeavours. On option might greater central coordination of the recruitment process.

76. In quantitative terms, LCC cites an average student count of 717 over the last 3 years. With some 74 faculty, this results in an academic staff to student ratio of 9.7. Its academic to administrative ratio cites 74 faculty and 81 administrative staff for a ratio of 1:1.1. LCC notes that its administrative staff figure includes a significant proportion of directly employed staff in roles that are often outsourced (for example cleaning). The Panel considers these ratios to be consistent with those of similar institutions. A conclusion that can be drawn is that LCC enjoys a favourable staff/student ratio reflecting its strong teaching heritage. But it also provides opportunity for reflection and action in respect of the reallocation of some resources to support the institution's research ambitions and requirements.

77. With these caveats in mind, the Panel considered LCC's staffing levels to be appropriate in quantitative terms but do please note the comment below at paragraph 82.

78. While the Panel was satisfied that LCC had appropriate policies in place to support staff in their teaching and research activities, it considered that the institution's approach to research management might be characterised as reactive. By this it means that, in contrast to LCC's more active approach to staff teaching activities, in which Heads of Department manage teaching loads, the initiative to undertake research lies primarily with individual academics. The Panel noted that teaching loads are consistently high – most academic staff indicated that they taught 24 hours per week, and those that did undertake research usually did so in addition to this load; LCC has commented on this and reported that a full faculty load is equal to 24 ECTS credit hours or equivalent work. Several staff suggested that the convention was that they would 'carve out some time' during the summer. Notably, while Heads of Department stated that they rarely encountered any problems in securing sabbaticals for their staff, only two have been awarded in the last five years.

79. The Panel notes that LCC's approach to teaching load and research is inconsistent with the recommendations of Lithuania's Ministry for Education which states:

The full-time workload of a higher education lecturer includes:

- student contact hours – the formally planned workload, expressed in hours, of a lecturer's direct contact with students;

- non-contact hours – the hours of the lecturer's preparation for contact work with students and related activities;

- carrying out research and experimental development (hereinafter referred to as R&D), participation in the development of artistic themes, artistic activities, and publication of the results of these activities

- publicity, promotion and presentation of academic and R&D activities to the public;

- competence development and organisational activities.

80. These findings are consistent with the Panel's findings related to LCC's management infrastructure for research set out above (see paragraph 57 above). Research is a relatively recent addition to LCC's academic portfolio and, while supportive policies, networks and resources have been established to facilitate it, research has largely been considered to be an addition to existing workload. While this approach will enable pockets of research to formulate amongst the more willing and able, the Panel's view is that a more active institutional approach to research management will be necessary.

81. This report will return below in more detail to the position of research within the university, but in this context, the Panel recommends that LCC considers research to be an integral, and equal, part of academic workload alongside teaching. To this end, LCC might consider:

- developing, disseminating, and pursuing an institutional research strategy consistent with its mission, vision, and values;

- building its research capacity and institutional profile through active recruitment;

- allocating designated research time to individual academic staff, in particular at the point of performance review. This allocation will be dependent on their aptitude and capabilities as they develop over time;

- in return for this allocation, agreeing expectations with research active staff around appropriate outputs – for example, personal PhD completions, research publications, conference presentations, and internally and externally funded research projects;

- empowering Heads of Academic Departments to utilise fully LCC's existing and emerging research policies, networks, and resources in pursuit of these institutional, departmental, and individual objectives.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:
1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;   *1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*   *1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*   *1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

82. LCC is a private institution and, notwithstanding, the Panel commends the university for its transparency in the section of the self-assessment report which addresses the sustainability challenge for a small institution.

83. The Panel notes that LCC anticipates a deficit for 2022/23 year, and therefore is likely to post a deficit for the second successive year.

84. As a private institution, LCC is heavily reliant on donations, and investments made on its behalf, by its founders and benefactors. Student fees are relatively low in comparison with European norms while, as indicated above, staff salaries are deliberately competitive, and supplemented by extensive personal and professional support facilities. That said, no member of faculty argued that it was the salary that attracted them to LCC.

85. The war in Ukraine is impacting the university as it is affecting energy prices, enrolments, and recruitment.

86. Discussions with LCC's senior management team, and representatives of its governance structures and stakeholders, confirmed that LCC is acutely aware of these challenges and is making appropriate adjustments to address them. LCC's Board of Directors has stated that revenue growth is a target for the immediate future, and the achievement of a sustainable community has been placed at the heart of its current strategic and management plans. LCC's aims to increase research productivity (through implementation of incentives and support groups for scholarly work) and an increase in publications produced by faculty and affiliate faculty members by 10%. Moreover, LCC is aiming to make savings through a reduction in utilities usage of 20%. It is evident that raising the international awareness of the university and recruiting students from a wider geographical area will be a key element of the next strategic plan.

87. The Panel appreciates the candour with which the institution is both declaring and addressing this situation. It marks a clear risk for the university, but the Panel can confirm that LCC is planning, allocating, and utilising its resources rationally.

88. Concerning physical resources, LCC has a fine open campus and plans for expansion including a new library. The on-site tour revealed several attractive, extensive and recent developments including student accommodation, classroom refurbishments, a large lecture hall, student social and catering facilities, and an on-site sports arena and training facility that were being used by national and international athletes. Our guide confirmed that several of these facilities were rented by external users and contributed to the local relevance of the institution as well as to revenue streams. LCC has current plans to expand further, including the expansion of its library. There are attractive community and sporting spaces and a fine stock of residence accommodation. The Student Council identified the desire to see more study spaces.

89. All staff and students have institutional access to Google Workspace with software that includes email, calendar functionality, 1TB of cloud-based storage, SPSS, and Microsoft Office 365. The library confirmed that it liaises regularly with academic staff to ensure appropriate stocks of student texts and access to commonly used research publications and databases. Specific requests for journal access could be managed on request.

90. The Panel noted that LCC makes appropriate provision to enable access to its facilities. These included wheelchair ramps, elevators, desks, and designated equipment. As example of improvements on foot of the previous review, LCC installed an elevator and undertook other improvements (e.g. furniture) for students with a disability.

91. **In summary,** the Panel is satisfied that LCC plans, manages, and utilises its facilities appropriately.

92. **Judgement:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 point(s).

93. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel acknowledges the quality and quantum of information supplied by the university in advance of the site visit. It also commends LCC for the ready response to the request for some supplementary information. Notwithstanding and to the benefit of the institution, the SER could be more focused and self-critical. The Panel recommends that future reflective exercises be more focused.

- The university has an overly complex organisational structure and would benefit from rationalisation. LCC should revisit the number and Terms of Reference for committees with a prime focus on locating all academic decision making in a permanent Academic Council. The Panel recommends that the management and delivery of its academic activities – teaching and learning, research, and external engagement (or service) – might be enhanced through their consolidation within the remit of the Academic Council.

- The Panel recommends that LCC establishes processes for the development of a strategic risk register and prepares mitigation strategies as appropriate.

- LCC is encouraged to become as engaged as possible with relevant national and international bodies. The university and its community will benefit from consistent networking with the relevant Rectors' Conference, the National Students' Union, appropriate research fora, and major European bodies such as EURASHE and EUA, which will offer it access to such as the annual quality assurance forum.

- Give the identification by the university of the necessity to increase revenue as one its key pillars, the Panel recommends that raising the international awareness of the university and recruiting students from a wider geographical area need to be part of the next strategic plan.

94. **Good practice examples:**

- The consistent manner in which the mission and vision informs the operations of the institution. It was also evident that the mission and vision are clear and respected.

- The impressive sense of community that is evident.

- The Panel commends the care shown to displaced Ukrainian students.

3.2. Quality Assurance

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

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:
2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;
2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;
2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;
2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;
2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;
2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

95. LCC states that its culture of quality assurance is based on the institutional mission and values balancing Lithuanian and North American requirements, as well as the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-2015).*

96. The designation of the university as embodying a North American model was explored by the Panel. It was evident that this was a conscious marketing approach, and the Panel was interested to discover what this implied for the character of the education and training offered given that the university operates within the Lithuanian system. That there is a strong interdisciplinary element to the offerings and with an emphasis on personal development through a range of softer skills was clear. Also in evidence was the intercultural awareness of students and graduates. The panel noted that this same model was described as a Western/North American approach by one external contributor. Given the marketing challenges facing the university, and the declared desire to widen its geographic focus for student recruitment, some agreement on the terminology here would be to its advantage.

97. LCC's systems to manage its performance toward delivering its strategic objectives are discussed from paragraph 38 above. These include the use of SWOT analysis, the collection and use of a range of internal and external performance indicators, employee performance evaluations, as well as to the feedback from its stakeholders. These measures all contribute to LCC's quality assurance culture.

98. The structures and guiding principles of LCC's internal quality assurance system are described in its Quality Assurance Guide. This describes LCC's management system; the process of the design and approval of academic programmes; procedures on the outgoing monitoring and periodic review of academic programmes; the principles of student-centred learning; teaching and assessment; the quality assurance system of teaching staff; the principles of student admission, progression and recognition; LCC's learning resources and student support; and information management and publicity.

99. This document is complemented by a range of detailed principles and procedures which are set out in separate policy documents. These include the Academic Catalogues and Faculty

Handbook. All are available through the LCC website and internal digital information channels (Moodle and MS Teams), and internal network drives.

100. The university maintains good internal information channels through which its employees and stakeholders are periodically updated on relevant topics. Such channels include Board of Directors Meeting Dockets, a "Monday Memo" newsletter sent to all LCC's employees by the LCC President at the start of every week, as well as regularly updated portal information for employees. The newsletter includes information about new institutional policies, departmental updates, various events, and opportunities for LCC employee professional development.

101. Externally, LCC is conscious of the requirement to report on the effectiveness of its systems. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness oversees statistical and other external reporting, facilitates study area and institutional accreditation processes, acts as an institutional liaison to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, as well as to other academic-related institutions in Lithuania.

102. Concerning benchmarking, the university is selective in the models it chooses given its distinctive ethos and portfolio. This selective approach is supported by the Panel.

103. The Panel commends LCC on the attention to its quality processes in the period since the last review. This includes the creation of a full-time position of Director of Institutional Effectiveness in 2019. Amongst other staff members, the Panel was pleased to meet with Dr Christopher Howard, the recently appointed Vice-Rector for Academics, and Ms Avital Agafonova, Director of Institutional Effectiveness. These roles will be central to enhance further the quality culture in LCC. The Panel encourages the university to support the change agenda on which they have embarked.

104. The Panel is satisfied that, collectively, these documents and structures are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

105. Regarding the application of these principles through the operation of these structures, the Panel considered the picture to be more mixed. In terms of its academic programmes, staff were able to demonstrate how student feedback was systematically collected, considered by academic programme committees, and ultimately led to programme review and enhancement – a clear, transparent, and widely understood, quality assurance system. On the other hand, there was less clarity around the quality assurance of research and external engagement (service) activities.

106. Administrative staff were also able, though with less certainty, to articulate how they collected appropriate feedback on their systems, often through the student survey, and how this data led to system review and enhancement. While these activities were consistent with the principles of internal quality assurance, the Panel's impression was that they were less embedded on the administrative side than on the academic.

107. In conversation it emerged that one of the principal responsibilities of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness was to ensure compliance by scanning appropriate sources and making colleagues aware of relevant legal and technical matters related to their areas. While this is commendable in itself, the Panel considered this to be indicative of two misconceptions around QA within LCC. The first was that the focus of QA activities should be to ensure compliance with relevant legal, technical, and regulatory frameworks; the second that the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies not with unit heads, but with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

108. Under the revised *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG-2015) quality assurance is focused on the development of an institutional culture in which the responsibility for quality is shared throughout the entire institution (academic, administrative, and technical support); moreover, while compliance within appropriate frameworks can be a key element of a quality culture, it is not, in itself, sufficient.

109. Instead, ESG-2015 encourages institutions to engender institutional cultures in which unit leaders in all areas are not only aware of concepts around quality assurance, but also their relevant legal and technical frameworks, and are in a position to develop systems and processes that apply these concepts, while ensuring effective compliance.

110. In this context, the focus of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness shifts from enforcement and compliance, towards promoting the understanding, and ownership, of quality assurance principles throughout the institution. Subsequently, the Director might advise unit heads on the appropriate and effective application of these principles in different areas and/or managing internal unit or departmental quality assurance reviews in which external perspectives might be sought on quality assurance systems and processes. The Panel encourages this fostering and supportive approach as a significant contribution to ensuring the widest understanding and embrace of a pervasive quality culture.

111. The Panel considered the extent to which LCC's staff and students are effectively supported. LCC's systems for the support of its academic and administrative staff are considered in paragraphs 72 & 76 above. In terms of its support for students, LCC has an inclusive approach in which its various offices work together to offer academic support, assistance with financial needs, support for personal and social development, and practical assistance in such matters as migration status and career development. Faculty offer several hours each week for student advice and support.

112. The Panel observes that some 62% of all LCC students receive financial assistance through a range of different types of financial mechanisms. The university records that on average, the financial aid that students received in 2022-2023 equated to 40% (1,339 EUR). There are also a limited number of opportunities for students to work on campus; during the last academic year (2022-2023), LCC offered 15 on-campus positions for students.

113. The Panel commends LCC for the range of supports it provides students from vulnerable social groups and students with disabilities. This is reflected in the recorded satisfaction rates including feedback on the sufficiency of student support.

114. LCC acknowledges the need for additional counselling resources. The Panel notes that, in the wake of the Covid pandemic and major international conflicts in the areas from which it draws its students, this is a common experience across higher education internationally.

115. Given LCC's commendable record to date in support of displaced students, the Panel suggests that LCC might explore the notion of a University of Sanctuary. This is founded in the City of Sanctuary movement which began in October 2005 in Sheffield. It celebrates the good practice of universities welcoming sanctuary seekers into their communities and fostering a culture of welcome and inclusion for all. A University of Sanctuary should be a place where anyone can feel safe, welcome, and able to pursue their right to education.

116. The Panel confirms that LCC has provisions and procedures in place to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. These include a Code of Academic Ethics, an

Academic Integrity Policy, Final Exam Retake Policy, Academic Standing Policy, Faculty Rank and Promotion Policy, Sabbatical Leave Policy, Data Collection and Use Policy, Research Productivity Data Management Policy, Study Leave Policy, Students with Disabilities Policy, Academic Foreign Qualification Recognition Policy, Human Resources policies: Educational Assistance Policy.

117. LCC has recently introduced an Academic Appeal Committee (autumn 2023), which enables students to appeal the final course grade to an impartial committee consisting of faculty and student representatives.

118. Both staff and students were aware of LCC's academic integrity policies and able to cite particular instances in which they had been appropriately utilised. The Panel was satisfied that LCC's policies to ensure academic integrity are appropriately specified and applied.

119. Turning to the process of external review, staff and students made it clear that they saw external review as an opportunity to reflect critically on their own practice, and to draw on informed external perspectives and expertise as appropriate. In addition, they cited several instances, to which reference is made throughout this report, in which they had drawn on previous recommendations to enhance their performance and services.

120. Mention was made of LCC joining the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference. The Panel strongly supports this initiative to enhance its quality culture.

121. There are cases identified within this report – the risk register being an example (see paragraph 61 above) – where the university has made changes since the previous review but there is more to be done; this report is advising that these matters be addressed by LCC. In the round and in light of comments in preceding paragraphs, the Panel is satisfied that LCC makes good use of the results of external reviews.

122. Of interest to the Panel were the areas for quality improvement as identified by LCC. These were:

- the continued usage of stakeholders' feedback for improvement of university activities, and
- continued annual internal academic programme review, based on KPIs.

123. The Panel concurs with these reflections. LCC can be more systematic in closing the loop on feedback and in consciously collecting, evaluating, and actioning the output from KPIs and other sources of feedback.

124. **In summary,** LCC is consciously building a quality infrastructure that can deliver a cohesive quality culture.

125. **Judgement:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 point(s).

126. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel encourages the institution to embrace an inclusive understanding of QA/QE as pervading all areas and activities of the university and in which compliance is part of wider quality culture rather than its primary objective;
- LCC engages in a range of surveys. The advice is to be selective in this regard to guard against overburdening either staff or students;

- The Panel would encourage a more systematic approach to measuring and reflecting upon KPIs and recording the resulting changes and impact of same.

127. **Good practice examples:**

- The manner in which LCC onboards new students.

- The inclusive approach to student support including students with disabilities and those from socially vulnerable groups;

- The Panel commends LCC on the attention to its quality processes in the period since the last review and encourages the university to continue in this vein in order to ensure the universal embrace of a quality culture mentioned in this report.

3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

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

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:
3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;   *3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*   *3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*   *3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

128. The evaluation of this area was challenging for the Panel. This is because LCC was an avowedly teaching organisation and has built considerable and commendable experience in this regard but is, at the institutional level, a novice in respect of research. Thus, the evaluation is richer and stronger in respect of evidence for studies while the research endeavour is as yet nascent. There is evidence of good practice and growing output in respect of research and the Panel is satisfied that the university is determined to foster this area. As noted above (see section on Management), the difference in credentials between both aspects is also present in the management and governance structure. This part of the report will not reiterate what the Panel believes to be management comments concerning teaching and research.

129. The university notes that as a privately funded institution it directly recruits many of its applicants rather than through the LAMA BPO Lithuanian common admission system. This follows from the fact that in 2018, LCC was granted legal permission by the Ministry of Education and Science to process academic recognition of foreign qualifications for students who apply for admission.

130. The review explored with the university whether this had any implications for the indicative student success rate. Following from the site visit, the Panel can confirm that the recruitment process is well managed and the many students and graduates that the Panel was privileged to meet attest the quality of the student body. Moreover, LCC manages to supervise students (formally,

and via tutoring programmes and a strong social network) to the extent that they stay on track and are able to complete the programme without delay.

131. The Panel can also confirm that the alignment between the study programmes and areas of research is consistent with the mission and strategic aims of LCC. This conclusion is founded on the documentation provided and from meetings with management, teachers, and researchers during the on-site visit to the university. In addition, the Panel can attest that the LCC mission and vision provide profound guidance and an actual lived experience on campus. Staff and students alike referred to the mission and vision in different meetings and could illustrate their relevance for both studies and research in different ways. As such, the on-campus experience of LCC University goes far beyond the written reports and documentation. The university states that its mission is expressed through teaching and research across three broad themes: 1) liberal arts, 2) servant leadership, and 3) diverse learning community.

132. As set out from paragraph 116 above, the support provided to students is commendable. The institution also pointed to the unique relationship between student and professor and described LCC as a place where the student feels heard, welcomed, and understood. This was later attested through the input from students.

133. An evident strength for the university is the liberal arts dimension of the study programmes that is reflected in the required courses. These deliver what are termed the key institutional student learning outcomes of:

- Good citizenship;
- Critical thinking;
- Christian world view;
- Conflict transformation;
- Leadership that serves;
- Multicultural perspective;
- Multidisciplinary knowledge;
- Effective communication;
- Community building and civic engagement.

134. From interaction with the many students and student leaders met by the Panel, it was clear that softer, transferable skills are in evidence. This was attested by the external stakeholders met with by the Panel.

135. The Panel explored with students whether they were aware of the assessment criteria and expectations in advance. Students confirmed that there is clear communication around this. Rubrics are employed and shared beforehand. In the first class of the semester there is considerable attention given to course evaluation.

136. LCC offers six bachelor programmes and two master level programmes. Two of the bachelor programmes (Theology; English Language and Literature) and the two master programmes attract far fewer students than the other bachelor programmes. These sharp differences in student numbers are not reflected in the number of faculty and staff within the respective departments, resulting in differences in teaching load and teaching approach (e.g., time allocated to the supervision of bachelor theses). Some of these discrepancies in teaching load are resolved via the common courses, but the potential impact of this situation on the research capacity within the departments

should be reflected upon. Based on the research output and the conversations with faculty, the panel can conclude that, for now, the development of research and research strategy is more evident among the staff responsible for the smaller programmes. Given that these disciplines typically have a larger proportion of courses (and credits) in the common part of the programmes, LCC guarantees that all programmes build on this research-based teaching. At the student level, research is also integrated in the programmes themselves. For instance, the psychology programme does have an appropriate and strong methodological training in statistics, complemented with actual research cycles in which they carry out (supervised) experiments. At the time of the visit, the panel was pleased to observe dynamics within LCC to boost the research in all departments and in the courses specific to the programmes.

137. It was apparent that the programmes showed little change since the previous evaluation. In between the liberal arts approach with a strong *truncus communis* and the regulatory framework concerning disciplinary programmes, there are only limited degrees of freedom. However, this static nature of the programmes is in sharp contrast with the staff turnover and interviews also suggested that courses are considered to be a given where faculty and staff need to adapt. A couple of courses are put in place that follow a *capita selecta* approach where guest lecturers and temporary staff can fit in, but the Panel believes that the international nature of LCC and the high turnover could catalyse innovation in programme design to a more considerable extent.

138. The Panel noted that faculty, staff, and students tend to talk about their bachelor programmes as a liberal arts programme with disciplinary majors, instead of labelling them as separate programmes. This aligns with the liberal arts and holistic approach that is integral to LCC's vision and mission. Interviews with graduates and social partners made clear that this approach does not conflict with or limit the disciplinary employability of LCC graduates and students even referred to recent alumni that enrolled in prestigious second cycle disciplinary programmes. The review Panel therefore believes that LCC adequately combines the liberal arts approach with disciplinary training.

139. Following from the previous point, the Panel believes that LCC has potential to start a designated liberal arts programme, and this could potentially attract more students than a new second-cycle programme.

140. It is noted that in the university's own strategic planning (2018-2023) SWOT analysis, research was identified as the single weakness.

141. Concerning research, the Panel noted that, prior to 2016, LCC positioned itself as a teaching university. Consequent to recent reports and the previous evaluation exercise, LCC has put more emphasis on research. The 2016 Institutional Review encouraged the university to bring to completion the establishment of a specific vision and strategy for the further development of research activities and a research culture for LCC. The current Panel notes the steps taken to boost the quantum of research activity including the development of a Research Action Plan and engagement in a Comparative Research Analysis reporting to the Lithuanian Research Council. During the site visit it became apparent for the Panel that LCC is also starting strategically to leverage its appeal for incoming sabbatical visits and other short-term academic affiliation to the institution (e.g. Fulbright) to catalyse the research. The intention further to build on this was also expressed. The outputs of this research are not always visible in the institutional records, but faculty, staff, and students reported that these international scholars do give impulses to research and research strategy. Students are also exposed to these visiting scholars via topical courses that

offer freedom to incorporate the expertise of such short-term faculty. It is commendable that LCC now reports receipt of funding on an annual basis for research activities from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education. While this is as yet modest, it points to the university's commitment to grow its research profile systematically.

142. The university has also updated its Faculty Rank and Promotion Policy, where internal research metrics have been articulated. It is positive to see staff responding to the encouragement provided to make use of internal policies, which allow faculty to take sabbatical leaves and/or course-release for research. The fruits are demonstrated in the increase between 2018 - 2022 in the total annual output of publications for the faculty which is reporting an increase from 11 to 65. Theological research has been identified as the strongest in the university and, unsurprisingly, it contributes disproportionately to this number.

143. The evaluation was interested to establish the impact of increasing research quantity and quality on teaching within the university. LCC proposed that this is done in two ways: 1) through the use of most up-to-date research within a given field, conducted by non-LCC researchers, and 2) through the integration of LCC faculty research in their classrooms.

144. The areas self-identified by the university for improvement under the summary of the study and research evaluation area are both operational and appropriate. The Panel would encourage advancement on these fronts in the interest of further embedding and fostering the research culture.

145. Staff were cognizant of the need to move to second cycle programmes and that this will be a challenge. However, the Panel is conscious of the resource constraints and of the requirement for the university to come to prioritised decisions. In this context, staff recognise that they need to grow as researchers and that presents a clear capacity issue. In an earlier section of this report (paragraph 79 above), the Panel has commented on the staff/student ratio and the potential for the university to reflect on the potential to increase the resource and time that it affords its research ambition.

146. While the research ambition is accepted, there is a strong recommendation from the Panel that the university crafts an institutional level research strategy that documents a prioritised approach over the coming years. This needs to align to an organisational structure where responsibility for research, including appropriation of resources, is agreed and recognized. This was echoed by some of the students who wanted to see research being facilitated more and structurally at the student level, beyond the mandatory methodology courses.

147. This is proposed as the university is not resourced to engage with research on too many fronts; its current approach is too reactive. It should focus its research attention and leverage better its international contacts. Its recruitment approach needs to be informed by this strategy. The strategy must also include an approach to workload that seeks consciously to release time for staff to engage in research. There is much to be gained from increasing collaboration with other research active institutions both in Lithuania and abroad, for instance also with a strategic approach to embed the incoming sabbaticals within LCC's research programme. The university will find it challenging to realise a baseline scale of research activity outside such a network.

148. This recommendation is linked to the structural advice provided under the management section (paragraph 84 above), which proposes greater consolidation and an enhanced role for the Academic Council.

149. That more central involvement of the Academic Council can ensure greater alignment between studies and research affording greater assurance that its teaching is informed by relevant and current research.

> **3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):**
>
> *3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);*
>
> *3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.*

150. The international dimension is at the core of LCC's DNA. The university draws an appreciable number of students from abroad and is experienced in assessing and processing applications from diverse theatres. It is the case that Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, Partial Studies, and Prior Non-Formal and Informal Learning is managed through the Admissions Office, such procedures being carried out in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary documents as well as recommendations from SKVC. The Admissions Office collaborates with a Qualification Recognition Council, which includes representatives from the Center for International Education (CIE), the Registrar's Office, and the faculty. The Council establishes requirements and procedures for recognition and appeal, and it reviews decisions in order to improve the process. In questionable cases, LCC's Admissions Office seeks counsel from SKVC. The Admissions Office publicises the criteria and procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications, communicates with persons seeking recognition, reports decisions both to applicants and internally within LCC, and assembles data for required reporting to SKVC.

151. In the course of the site visit, students, administrative staff, and faculty with whom the Panel met confirmed that the procedures in place for recognition of foreign qualifications and prior learning are indeed working effectively. Students and staff appreciated the admission approach and support for international students.

152. The programme portfolio is imbued with an international dimension and this internationalisation of the curriculum is adjudged a strength of the university.

153. Encouragement of student exchange is another aspect of internationalisation in LCC. The university actively promotes student exchange and even facilitates international internships. Students reported that the guidelines for exchange are clear and that they feel motivated to apply and meet the selection criteria. While the numbers are modest, it is commendable to see the use of Erasmus or International Exchange programmes. Students from other universities are encouraged to experience Lithuania, arriving by Erasmus and International Exchange, "Study Abroad Lithuania", "Gap Year", and Summer programmes. For staff, LCC focuses on short-term incoming faculty (e.g. taking up sabbatical leaves at LCC or Fulbright scholars) and it facilitates sabbatical leaves for outgoing staff mobility (although only few had taken up this possibility at the time of the evaluation).

154. The study-abroad program which had been a flagship for LCC is now in decline due in part to the pandemic, the drop in North American schools providing financial aid for study-abroad, and the loss of a Russian trip. The university is conscious of this as a challenge.

155. The Panel can attest that LCC has in place a process of credit transfer for students who proceed on mobility programmes is described in LCC's Internal policy AC 4.01 on LCC International University Regional Impact. In short, LCC students, who are intending to go on mobility program must choose the courses in the host institution in advance and coordinate it with LCC's Center for International Education (CIE). Upon return, students submit the transcript of records certificate issued by a receiving (host) university to CIE. When transferring credits from partner institutions recognition is based on a total number of ECTS credits as per LCC's available course loads.

156. **Judgment:** the area is being developed consciously and systemically albeit more advanced in respect of studies than research.

157. As an addendum to the judgment above, the Panel has reflected that the university is performing better than "good" in respect of studies, but also better than "adequate" in respect of research and is thus given 3 point(s) but with the comment that building research capacity in a cohesive manner must be a prime focus for the coming period. There is a design question here: the collocation of studies and research under the one heading necessitates a Panel to elect for moderated response and especially where the record to date between the two areas is distinct.

158. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The institution should, as a priority, commit to the crafting and adoption of an institute wide research strategy.

- The institution wants to attract more students and management and faculty believe that this should be via a second cycle programme. The Panel does recommend looking into the expansion of what clearly works well for LCC and that is the liberal arts approach at the bachelor level.

159. **Good practice examples:**

- The Panel was impressed by the supportive environment for learning including the tutoring and pastoral support available through the Student Success Centre.

- The focus on intercultural awareness and development of softer skills including public speaking is regarded as a significant strength.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

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

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;   *4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

160. The Panel is conscious that LCC is a small university with an avowedly international outlook and with a significant proportion of students and some 50% of its faculty hailing from abroad. As

the university itself states, it is an international community; its students come from all over the world, mostly from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Middle East, whereas its faculty comes mostly from North America and Europe. This poses some distinctive challenges in respect to the regional and national dimensions. Notwithstanding, the commitment of the university to its region and the value that the locality attaches to the work of the university was apparent during the site visit.

161. The Panel was also informed by a diverse group of external stakeholders representing regional public institutions such as Lithuanian Public Employment Service, Klaipėda Social and Psychological Help Center, International House Klaipeda, schools (Klaipeda Herman Zuderman Gymnasium, Klaipėda Medeine School), employers ("Vlantana" Ltd, „Western Union"), US Embassy, a non-governmental organisation („Lyderiams") that LCC has become increasingly embedded in, and valued by its community.

162. LCC offers the city an opportunity to attract international talents and is considered as a partner for promoting the Klaipėda region as a prospective labour market; some 79 per cent of the LCC student body are international students representing 64 different countries; half of the graduates remain in Lithuania (SER, p. 11); social partners stated that LCC contributes to the alleviation of the shortage of skilled workforce in Klaipėda region.

163. LCC is viewed as a trustworthy partner for educational exchange (for example., LCC hosted some 30 Fulbright scholars). We find other evidence that indicates strong partnership building in the educational exchange (there are 33 institutions in the United States, 32 in Europe, and 7 in Asia that are official partners for study-abroad, Erasmus, and International Exchange programs. – Activity report, 2022-2023). International mobility of students contributes to the enriched cultural identity of the Lithuanian and international students, whose intercultural competences are appreciated by the employers in Klaipeda region.

164. LCC actively seeks, provides, and promotes opportunities for engagement with social partners and employers: mentorship, employment fairs, guest lectures, practicum placement opportunities, intellectual expertise, business specific research opportunities, etc. which results in a wide network of diverse partners.

165. The formal participation of social partners is mostly organised through Programme Committees. There seems to be multiple initiatives at the "grassroots" level (individual faculty members, at the department level, Career Centre). An impressive number of practicums are arranged for students ("Since 2015, the academic departments have placed students in over 160 businesses or professional sites or their practicums" (Activity report. 2022-2023). (The SER provides a list reaching up to 300 Student practicum sites). According to the President, the university has no problems arranging internships or practicums. Another commendable aspect is that final thesis topics are linked to the regional issues, some of which have received awards from Klaipeda Industrialists association. LCC encourages their students to choose thesis topics from the strategic topics related to Klaipeda City and Klaipeda Region that they receive each September from Klaipeda City Municipality. All these examples testify a strong network which seems to be based mostly on informal relationships with local businesses and social partners. It is recommended that LCC works more strategically towards engaging social partners and employers. One way suggested is by establishing an Advisory or Consultative Forum, other formal ways of identifying and engaging strategic partners could be considered as well. The LCC is taking steps towards this; the review found evidence in the Activity report (2022-2023) of the development of

the employer engagement framework and reflecting recommendations made by other SKVC reports.

166. The university is to be commended for its contribution to intercultural awareness in the region. LCC is up to 80 per cent international, having half of the graduates remaining in the local labour market, through active involvement in volunteering and other engagement opportunities focused around Klaipėda, LCC contributes significantly to the understanding and appreciation of diversity in the region. This reflects the commendation recorded under the Studies & Research section above.

167. The previous institutional evaluation in 2016 recommended that the university would benefit from the establishment of a Consultative Forum through which local social and businesses partners can participate in idea sharing and generation. That has not transpired to date and this Panel repeats the recommendation that a stakeholder advisory body be established to inform and support the university. A meeting with a broad cross section of stakeholders held on the final day of the site visit confirmed that stakeholders would welcome such a body. The university can fashion such a body to reflect what it regards as its key theatres of operations.

168. LCC argues that its regional impact may be categorised in two dimensions: Missional Impact and Strategic Impact. The former may be rooted in LCC's Christian mission while the latter is viewed as more intentional, as it deliberately addresses regional needs. LCC's regional and national impact is informed by analysis of key strategies of the European Commission, national Lithuanian strategies such as Lithuanian 2030, Lithuanian Educational strategies and other strategic documents as well as by the market analysis. Involvement of social partners in the degree program committees' further strategies and the regional needs and demand for the specific programmes. LCC university has identified and analysed six regional impact areas such as support for small and medium-sized enterprises, research and innovation, green and digital agendas, life-long learning, and sport and society. A number of regional impact examples highlight LCC's engagement with the region: Student Practicums in SMEs, and student final theses related to the regional needs, which was recognized by Klaipėda Industrialist Association by granting awards to the best final thesis of LCC students on topics relevant to the Klaipėda region and its development; faculty scholarly publications on Christian and Regional topics and disseminating research in a number of conferences or workshops (e.g. Interdisciplinary Perspective on Trauma Conference, Stories Shaping Peace Conference); the long-standing practice of LCC to provide English language classes for mainly Klaipėda community contributes to the competitiveness of Klaipėda labour force; a ten-year old partnership with the Employment Agency on the provision of English language training; new initiatives such as boosting digital skills (e.g. Cybersecurity boot camps), trauma competent caregiver training shows LCC responsiveness to emerging new needs in the region. LCC's contribution to the sport and healthy lifestyle in the region manifests itself through cultivating strong basketball traditions in the university which was recognized by the Municipality by granting (2022) 243,609 EUR to the LCC Women's Basketball. Summer basketball camps for children, university sports facilities used by the local community are among other LCC sports examples. For the past several years LCC has been a co-organizer of Lithuanian Global Leadership Summit. One of the most significant impacts that LCC has on the region is the attraction of international talents and contribution to the internationalisation of the Klaipėda city which aims to be an international marine city (Klaipėda strategic plan-2021-2030). By teaching Lithuanian

language to all LCC students, LCC facilitates the integration of international graduates into the labour market.

169. Students, as everywhere, make an impact in the local community. The university's regional impact through student service learning and volunteering has been highlighted by the graduates and social partners as one of the unique contributions to the region. The university has goal is to engage at least 20% of students with volunteering a year, the numbers of active volunteers vary from 150 (2021-2022 academic year) to 120 (2022-2023 academic year), among them 80 students engaged with service learning in fall of 2022 and 40 in the spring of 2023. The main topics of service learning are raising awareness about human trafficking, sustainability, and intercultural education. The university has got strong links with the local schools not only providing pedagogy trainings for English language teachers, but students are trained to engage with students at schools and lead presentations on various topics.

170. The university maintains a network of social partners which involves itself in degree programming (through their participation in Programme Committees, employment of LCC students and alumni, providing practicum placement), research and other academic collaboration (joint projects and conference organisation), and the creation of regional impact and life-long learning programming. Though the network of partnerships is mostly informal, the expert panel was convinced that the network is extensive, diverse, and vibrant. The network of partners provides ample opportunities for practicum assignments, the list of workplaces exceeds 270, out of which almost 70% are based in Lithuania. The network of partners is managed by Academic Department heads or individual faculty members, LCC Career Development Counsellor, or Corporate Communication Office. Some informal partnerships are as strong and long established as 10 years (e.g. Lithuanian Public Employment Service); others are newer as the recently established International House of Klaipėda. There are some attempts to formalise partnerships as an emerging MOU was mentioned during the interview session with the social partners (e.g. MOU with the US embassy). The panel of experts suggests building on this strong informal network of social partners and formalising some of them to provide more continuity and sustainability. The outreach extends to a range of community programming, starting from singular seminars given by LCC faculty and staff in local high schools or other institutions, and ending with fully developed certificate programming.

171. In 2021 LCC created a new department - LCCx, which develops strategy and agenda for community-based and revenue-generating Lifelong community-based programming. In future planning predictions, the university had ambition for new and growing revenue from the LCCx division. The Panel notes that to date this growth has been modest and shy of expectations. During the visit, it was confirmed that LCCx operations have been suspended and good reasons for this were provided. While acknowledging the circumstances and recognising the challenges, the Panel would encourage LCC to reconsider the use of a vehicle such as LCCx as it could be a valuable instrument in harnessing the evident external goodwill there is for the university.

172. The LCC has developed some regional impact KPIs which are proposed to review the stakeholder engagement and faculty, and student engagement in the broader community. These KPIs have been set by LCC's Executive Cabinet and imprinted in the 2018-2023 LCC Strategic Plan. KPIs are monitored by President's Cabinet, and department, responsible for their implementation provides progress reports on them every quarter. Event attendance rate is also monitored.

173. However, by way of critical comment, the Panel noted that LCC has yet to develop a clearer set of KPIs and an agreed method of measurement in respect of external engagement. This resulted in it underplaying its achievements and potential under this heading and the testimony of stakeholders did much to rebalance that account.

174. LCC hosts an annual national public speaking competition and this was cited by stakeholders as being a considerable boon to the region. LCC has been promoting the culture of public speaking, intercultural communication, not only in Klaipėda but Lithuania as a whole for more than two decades by organising this national competition among the Lithuania schools. The graduates and employers recognize the value of transferable skills, and communication is one of them.

175. The university has established a world-wide network of alumni (over 2,500). The alumni that the Panel met are proud to have graduated from LCC International University and appreciate the power of informal network opportunities that they have, to engage with the university by offering internship or employment opportunities for LCC graduates. LCC actively engages alumni through events, social media, and website and other regular communication. LCC launched an Alumni Mentorship Program in Autumn 2021 and they are planning to grow the number up to 30 (Activity Report).

> **4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:**
>
> *4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;*
>
> *4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;*
>
> *4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

176. LCC states that it offers a range of community programming, starting from singular seminars given by LCC faculty and staff in local high schools or other institutions, and ending with fully developed certificate programming.

177. LCC International University demonstrates resilience by turning crises into opportunities. Initiatives such as providing scholarships for Middle Eastern students during the Syrian Migrant crisis, introducing online education during the Covid pandemic, and establishing a peace centre in response to the war in Ukraine showcase the institution's adaptability.

178. From the interaction during the site visit, it was apparent that the definition of Lifelong Learning (LLL) lacks clarity within the institution impacting its proper implementation. The Panel would recommend that LCC rescope, define, and communicate what it intends through the use of the term lifelong learning and that such an understanding be consistent with that provided by UNESCO as a concept of learning as a process that continues throughout life to address an individual's learning needs. The term is used widely in adult education to refer to learning processes in many forms and at many levels.

179. There is opportunity for LCC in this. They have successful and established English language and pedagogy offerings as well as new successful sporadic initiatives like Cybersecurity workshops; we heard from alumni and social partners that there is an appetite for more such offerings from the LCC. Further alignment between internal resources and expertise, market needs, and strategic involvement of partners can bring benefits to LCC and the region.

180. The Panel took particular interest in the student profile in LCC. The university prides itself, correctly, on its international composition and outlook. It scores well also on gender balance. However, in terms of age profile it is not diverse with its student body being in the main below the age of 32. There is considerable scope to address this through external engagement and through the fullest use of lifelong learning.

181. Arising from above, LCC has the potential to diversify the student body, which is currently dominated by young population, traditional school leavers. This can be facilitated, at least in part, by considering offering part-time degrees or non-degree programmes to a wider range of audience in terms of age and professional background. It is commendable that opportunities are explored to offer micro-credentials and other non-degree, certificate programs. By exploiting the strong LCC brand and reputation, and by listening to market needs, these opportunities could become reality. It is also through this approach that LCC can respond dynamically to the evolving need of its region.

182. The Panel was privileged to meet with a wide cross-section of external stakeholders including voices from education, enterprise, an NGO, and a diplomat. It was evident from that meeting that LCC is held in high regard and that the attributes of its graduates are regarded as both distinctive and attractive to employers. It was stated that graduates are highly motivated and have strong business skills. Furthermore, the stakeholders would welcome, and were willing to pay for, a range of shorter programmes or micro-credentials tailored to meet local requirements. Stakeholders would also be prepared to contribute to the advisory forum recommended by the Panel.

183. As provided above in paragraphs 63 and 173, stakeholders would welcome a formal role in the development of the university's strategic priorities. This is informing the recommendation in respect of a stakeholder advisory body.

184. **In summary,** this was a revealing section within the review. It provided example of where the institution's deficits in respect of closing the feedback loop and harvesting the fullest potential of well-designed KPIs, resulting in its own report underplaying the quality of the impact that the institution is having regionally and nationally. There is much to be celebrated here and the institution is encouraged to continue its good work but also to document this more fully and consistently. The Panel can confirm that LCC systematically analyses national and regional demands and reflects those demands in its activities.

185. **Judgment:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 point(s).

186. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The university should harness the ready support from stakeholders and constitute a permanent Advisory Council.

- LCC should re-examine its understanding of, and approach to, Lifelong Learning.

187. **Good practice examples:**

- LCC is proving to be a significant contributor to the attractiveness of the region and its graduates are valued and find ready employment.

- It is strong on volunteering and service learning.

- It offers a commendable range of engagement opportunities for social partners and businesses through a wide network of partners. The responsive to emerging regional and national needs is evidenced through the provision of Lithuanian and English language courses to Ukrainian refugees on a voluntary basis and multiple initiatives to provide and coordinate support to Ukrainian refugees.

- It is to be commended on its contribution to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. LCC has organised and initiated a number of trainings on conflict transformation workshops, advocacy awareness, and peace training. (example from SER: The SER: LCC Center for Dialog and Conflict Transformation conference "Stories Shaping Peace," which took place on 16-19 March 2022 hosted 400 participants from countries such as Lebanon, Germany, USA, United Kingdom, Oman, Israel/Palestine, Lithuania, and Canada). The LCC expertise of peacebuilding and conflict resolution was recognized nationally when the Lithuanian Government asked to provide peace and conflict resolution trainings for refugees in 2022. The 2021 LCC established a Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation (CDCT) to create a stronger regional impact in the field of peacemaking. Peacebuilding is becoming a new strategic distinctive feature of LCC.

- It is consciously growing alumni engagement.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in:

Management:

- The consistent manner in which the mission and vision informs the operations of the institution. It was also evident that the mission and vision are clear and respected.

- The impressive sense of community that is evident.

- The Panel commends the care shown to displaced Ukrainian students.

Quality Assurance:

- The manner in which LCC onboards new students is worthy of commendation.

- The inclusive approach to student support including students with disabilities and those from socially vulnerable groups.

- The Panel commends LCC on the attention to its quality processes in the period since the last review and encourages the university to continue in this vein in order to ensure the universal embrace of a quality culture mentioned in this report.

Studies and Research (art):

- The Panel was impressed by the supportive environment for learning including the tutoring and pastoral support available through the Student Success Centre.

- The focus on intercultural awareness and development of softer skills including public speaking is regarded as a significant strength.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- LCC is proving to be a significant contributor to the attractiveness of the region and its graduates are valued and find ready employment.

- It is strong on volunteering and service learning.

- It offers a commendable range of engagement opportunities for social partners and businesses through a wide network of partners. The responsive to emerging regional and national needs is evidenced through the provision of Lithuanian and English language courses to Ukrainian refugees on a voluntary basis and multiple initiatives to provide and coordinate support to Ukrainian refugees.

- It is to be commended on its contribution to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. LCC has organised and initiated a number of trainings on conflict transformation workshops, advocacy awareness, and peace training.

- The manner in which it is consciously growing alumni engagement.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- The Panel acknowledges the quality and quantum of information supplied by the university in advance of the site visit. It also commends LCC for the ready response to the request for some supplementary information. Notwithstanding and to the benefit of the institution, the SER could be more focused and self-critical. The Panel recommends that future reflective exercises be more focused.

- The university has an overly complex organisational structure and would benefit from rationalisation. LCC should revisit the number and Terms of Reference for committees with a prime focus on locating all academic decision making in a permanent Academic Council. The Panel recommends that the management and delivery of its academic activities – teaching and learning, research, and external engagement (or service) – might be enhanced through their consolidation within the remit of the Academic Council.

- The Panel recommends that LCC establishes processes for the development of a strategic risk register and prepares mitigation strategies as appropriate.

- LCC is encouraged to become as engaged as possible with relevant national and international bodies.

- Give the identification by the university of the necessity to increase revenue as one its key pillars, the Panel recommends that raising the international awareness of the university and recruiting students from a wider geographical area need to be part of the next strategic plan.

Quality Assurance:

- The Panel encourages the institution to embrace an inclusive understanding of QA/QE as pervading all areas of the university.

- LCC engages in a range of surveys. The advice is to be selective in this regard to guard against overburdening either staff or students.

- The Panel would encourage a more systematic approach to measuring and reflecting upon KPIs and recording the resulting changes and impact of same.

Studies and Research (art):

- The institution should, as a priority, commit to the crafting and adoption of an institute wide research strategy.

- The institution wants to attract more students and management and faculty believe that this should be via a second cycle programme. The Panel does recommend looking into the expansion of what clearly works well for LCC and that is the liberal arts approach at the bachelor level.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The university should harness the ready support from stakeholders and constitute a permanent Advisory Council.

- LCC should re-examine its understanding of, and approach to, Lifelong Learning.