GENEROLO JONO ŽEMAIČIO LIETUVOS KARO AKADEMIJOS

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF

GENEROLO JONO ŽEMAIČIO LIETUVOS KARO AKADEMIJA

Grupės vadovas:
Panel chairperson:

Prof. Robin Bryant

Vertinimo sekretorius:
Review secretary:

Mr. Klemen Šubic

Grupės nariai (kategorija):
Panel members (category):

Assoc. Prof. Ms. Malena Britz (academic)

Maj. Adj. Prof. Mr. Koen Troch (academic)

Col. Dalius Polekauskas (social partner)

Ms. Ugnė Bičkauskaitė (student)

SKVC vertinimo koordinatorius:
Review coordinator at SKVC:

Mr. Sigitas Puodžiukas

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Report language – English

CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania.

Prof. Robin Bryant

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 three-day site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held, as well as communications received from stakeholder during and immediately after the site visit.

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:

   − Prof. Robin Bryant (Panel chairperson)
   − Mr. Klemen Šubic (review secretary)
   − Assoc. Prof. Ms. Malena Britz (academic)
   − Maj. Adj. Prof. Mr. Koen Troch (academic)
   − Col. Dalius Polekauskas (social partner)
   − Ms. Ugnė Bičkauskaitė (student)

4. As a result of external review the **General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy Of Lithuania** *(Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija)* is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	4
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. **13** examples of good practices were found; **20** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in May 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 43 annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information including general data on higher education in Lithuania and its higher education institutions, and the Academy, 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.

10. The Panel requested additional information, such as:

   - templates of surveys for students and cadet;
   - details of military training courses (air force command and staff course);
   - mid-term and final course feedback;
   - the survey for graduates, the survey for the leadership module;
   - the register of processes for studies;
   - the survey on the study quality assessment of the *Erasmus* Module;
   - the International Fall semester survey on the study of quality assessment;
   - the Strategy Implementation Plans for 2020, 2021 and 2022;
   - the MAL macro-scheme of operational processes, the 'register of improvements' 2021;
   - examples of senior management decisions dated April 25 2023 and examples of description of study modules.

11. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the Academy between 9 and 11 May 2023 where it had meetings with all relevant 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 June 2023.

12. In line with the Procedure the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management**, **Quality Assurance**, **Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous institutional review from 2014.

13. 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.

14. 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).

15. 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.

16. The Panel received comments from General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania and considered them. As a result three changes were made to the report (related to financing, in paragraphs 24, 92 and 129).

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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

20. The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the 'MAL' or the 'Academy') is the only military university in Lithuania. The MAL continues the traditions of the Military School of the First President of Lithuania which was established on 25 January 1919. On 16 June 1992, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania passed the Resolution on the Establishment of the National Defence Academy founding the National Defence School. On 18 January 1994, the National Defence School was reorganised into the Military Academy and on 20 November, the MAL was awarded the name of the commander of the Lithuanian partisans, General Jonas Žemaitis.

21. The MAL as a military educational institution and a State University is owned by the State, and decisions regarding its reorganisation and liquidation are made by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania based on the Government's proposal. The Ministry of National Defence exercises other rights and obligations of the owner.

22. As a public legal entity, the Academy operates as a budgetary institution and has its own seal and bank account. Information about the Academy is recorded and stored in the Register of Legal Entities. The Statute of the Academy, including any amendments, is adopted and modified by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania upon the proposal of the Minister of National Defence. After evaluating the Academy's suggestions, the Statute and its amendments are submitted to the Government.

23. The Academy's activities are guided by various legal acts, including the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service, the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research, the Republic of Lithuania Law on Budgetary Institutions, and other relevant laws. Additionally, the Academy follows the strategic action plan of the Ministry of National Defence. The Minister of National Defence approves the annual action plan of the Academy based on the recommendation of the Commandant.

24. The mission of the MAL (as, for example, reproduced on its website) is to be ''an exceptional national institution of higher education, which combines university studies and military training, qualitatively prepares and trains fully educated and responsible officer leaders, conducts research, and ensures the implementation of lifelong learning principles in accordance with the needs of the National Defence System of the Republic of Lithuania'' in order to provide the necessary high quality military officer corps for the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The MAL envisions to be an ''internationally recognized university for national security, defence, and military studies, which prepares officer leaders, as well as a competence centre, which conducts relevant and attractive

university study programmes, high-level research, and provides an effective network of cooperation with social and academic partners.''

25. Respecting traditions of European military higher education institutions, the Academy community seeks to maintain and strengthen its status as an innovative university and centre of excellence that trains current and future military leaders, where significant and internationally recognised research in the field of security and defence is carried out, and where value for the security and defence communities of Lithuania, its allies and partners is created and continued.

26. To achieve its mission, the MAL cooperates closely with the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter MND) and the Lithuanian Armed Forces (hereinafter LAF). Further, the Academy participates actively in the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers Inspired by Erasmus (hereinafter referred to as EMILYO); implements a quality management system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); supports the scientific research of the Academy's researchers; implements research projects commissioned by the MND; carries out expert activities in a variety of ways; implements international agreements on officer career courses; organises foreign language courses for the MAL officers and staff, officials of other security institutions and officers of other countries; organises national security and defence courses for Lithuanian institutions, politicians and heads of state and conducts educational and analytical activities on defence policy and innovations.

27. The MAL currently offers seven study programmes accredited by SKVC. The MND currently sets a limit of the intake 110 cadets per annum and for this reason offers programmes in three study fields.

28. The Academy runs three full-time study programmes in the study fields of Political Science, Defence Studies and Management. In addition, the MAL offers one study programme in Public Administration for part-time undergraduate (Bachelor's) students, of which 20 can be admitted each year.

29. For officers, part-time graduate (Master's) students, of whom 45 can be admitted, the Academy offers study programmes in the same fields as with the cadets. The goal is to ensure that MAL graduates are able to continue their studies later in their careers in the same field as their undergraduate studies.

30. Each year, the MAL admits up to three doctoral students in Political Science for the doctoral programme, which is run jointly with Vytautas Magnus University.

31. The MAL, having the status of a state budgetary institution, may not derive its income from commercial activities, and the quota of students that may be admitted to the Academy is determined by the Minister of National Defence. For this, and other reasons, the MAL's activities focus on quality assurance rather than on increasing the number of students.

32. The Academy is unique, in that a large proportion of its staff (including its senior staff) are members of professional military service. In Lithuania, an officers' career is based on a rotation of an average of three years, and the MAL is able to maintain a very close relationship with its main social partners, the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the other National Defence System institutions, as they are staffed by officers who have served in the MAL and/or trained with the Academy.

33. The MAL is part of the National Defence System (NDS), and its structure and staffing limits are approved by the Ministry of National Defence (MND). For any proposed structural changes, the MAL prepares justifications to the MND explaining the need for the changes. The change in the MAL structure in 2020 underwent a thorough consultation process with the National Defence Leadership, the MAL community, and the MAL Senate and was strategically significant, aligning with the implementation of the MAL strategy and objectives, such as strengthening support for the university's missions and enhancing research viability.

34. Smaller-scale changes, particularly related to military activities, may not require community-wide discussions and instead involve the chiefs of units and the MND's human resources and legal units.

35. The Academy is also particularly well placed to seek opportunities for international cooperation through the Defence Attachés at the Embassies of the Republic of Lithuania, all of whom undergo a diplomatic course organised by the MAL prior to their appointment to their post.

36. At the end of 2022, there were 310 cadets and 151 part-time students, and 12 doctoral students at the MAL. The Academy admits up to 42 cadets per year from other European higher military education institutions for part-time studies or international internships. The courses organised by the MAL admit officers from Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Sakartvelo, and Poland, following MND international agreements. In 2022, 11 foreign officers participated in such courses.

37. The academic staff are organised into five research groups: Management of Security Institutions; Defence Economics and Management; Logistics and Management of Defence Technologies; World Politics and Security Policy. Since 2021, the MAL has regulated and introduced studies-related research (Projects, Supporting Studies or PSS). By investing state budget funds, the Academy aims to enable researchers to carry out cutting-edge, internationally-recognised research relevant to the fields of study pursued by the MAL, thus ensuring the complementarity of study and research.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

The *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.*

38. The Panel found that both the current MAL Strategy (2018-2024), alongside the annual Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) are being successfully implemented and are in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, LR Law on the National Defence System and Military Service, the Strategic action plan of the Ministry of National Defence, LR Law on Higher Education and Research, LR Law on Budgetary Institutions and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area (ESG). For example, many of the education and training activities of the MAL are regulated by the national law on the 'Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service of the Republic of Lithuania'. Likewise, it was clear to the Panel (through examination of documentation and interviews during the site visit) that the MAL is meeting Standard 1.1 of the ESG, namely 'Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

39. Progress towards the Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) is diligently monitored on an annual basis. Each SIP is further subdivided into multiple aims, objectives, and measures, with clearly designated responsible individuals and departments. The advancement of each measure is systematically assessed using one or more quantifiable indicators. Ongoing monitoring of planned activities is ensured, and action is taken when adjustments to indicators or measures are necessary. A complex processogram (based on ISO and LEAN 6 SIGMA standards, taking into account ESG standards) has been developed to monitor the objectives and measures set.

40. All strategic documents and objectives are closely linked to the mission and vision of MAL and have been developed on the basis of previous external review (carried out by SKVC in 2014) and analysis of the current situation and emerging trends in the armed forces and national defence, and in consultation with all relevant national stakeholders (MND, LAF and MESS).

41. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution and different legal acts and international standards. During the Panel interviews with the management, it became clear that the MAL has worked in a very structured way to align both documentation and working processes with national regulations and international standards, and have taken into account the observations and outcomes from the previous strategic plan.

42. The written material provided before the visit described a clear view on different processes and responsibilities, with a structured way of presenting and analysing the current situation, priorities, aims and objectives. The KPI and SIP allow for a structured follow-up where possible risks are also identified and their severity graded (red, green, yellow). The Panel interviews conducted with the management and documentation presented on site clarified that the performance indicators not only dealt with institutional progress in terms of budget etc but also the core activities of training, learning and teaching.

43. The strategic action plan is monitored continuously and complemented with three registers: improvement, risk, and best practices. The Panel interviews with the management revealed that the first two were in use, whereas the register on best practices has not yet become active. Where registers are being used these appeared to the Panel to be effective instruments for recording progress towards meeting the action plan.

44. In terms of strategic planning, the Panel noted significant progress since the last report in 2014. However, the site visit suggested that it might be possible for the MAL to develop more indicators that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of its quality culture and processes. This is elaborated further in section 3.2 of this report.

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.*

45. The Panel examined the adequacy of MAL's current governing bodies in achieving the institution's strategic objectives. The governing bodies of the MAL consist of the Academy Council and the Senate. The Council of the MAL is the advisory body to the Commandant of the Academy for the strategic direction and management of the MAL, as well as for its operational and development issues.

46. The Council makes proposals to the Commandant of the MAL on: the vision and mission, the strategy and the annual action plan of the Academy; any amendments to the Statute of the Academy; the efficiency of the MAL's structural units; the Academy's annual activity report, compliance of activities with the annual action plan, results achieved and their impact and the MAL's material resources and endowment.

47. The Senate of the MAL is a 'collegial advisory body' to the Commandant, which contributes to the achievement of the Academy's purpose, tasks and functions in the fields of university studies and research. The Senate makes proposals to the Commandant on: the development and implementation of study programmes, research, its monitoring and results, and the quality and level of the Academy's scientific activities; the Statute of the Academy, the rules of research and studies and the internal rules of the Academy and their improvement; the internal quality assurance system; the qualification requirements for the posts of lecturers and researchers, the procedure for the certification of lecturers and researchers and the procedure for the organisation of recruitment competitions; the conferment of honorary and other titles and the status of associate researcher or lecturer; the topics, objectives and deadlines for research related to studies.

48. The Panel examined the distribution of responsibilities in the organisational structure, the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes and the MAL's preparedness for future challenges. Staff of the MAL clearly understand the existing structure and the distribution of responsibilities in the different domains. The small size of the Academy allows the quick identification of shortfalls, problems and offers the possibility to react to changing circumstances.

The process management has been executed with clear objectives and a SIP to identify the advancement of the different processes and the risks that exist.

49. Based on the site visit, the Panel concluded that the structure of the MAL is clear and well established. In addition to formal procedures, there is extensive informal communication and feedback between students/cadets and military training staff, but also with academic staff and the administration. Communication channels are short, which is made possible by the fact that MAL is a fairly small institution where everyone knows, and communicates effectively with each other.

50. The MAL demonstrates a strong sense of community, loyalty and pride among its management, academic and military staff, students/ cadets and non-academic staff, which represent important institutional values that need to be preserved.

51. The ISO-standard process management presented to us during the visit (ISO plus LEAN 6 SIGMA) is comprehensive and ambitious. However, it has been set up fairly recently which means that the process itself is used and in an implementation phase rather than analysed, which would be in a next step. With that said, the process itself is set up in a way that continuous improvement and risk management is carried out as part of the strategic action plan and its supporting registers. The strategic action plan is a comprehensive document and the interviews conducted by the Panel revealed that it is a living document with continuous updates.

52. Different stakeholders, inside and outside the Academy, appear to be involved in the various processes (such as the identification, analysis and assessment of risks to MAL activities) in a satisfactory way. The fact that the MAL budget is part of the MND budget means there is naturally a close relationship with the MND. The MND is also involved in the discussion of research projects carried out for the benefit of the armed forces.

53. There is good cooperation with external (social) partners, also in the field of research, and cadets (and other internal stakeholders) are adequately represented in various governing bodies and commissions and in decision-making processes. However, the Panel found during the site visit that part-time students rely more on informal feedback rather than formal representation in committees.

> *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.*

54. The legal status of the MAL as a budgetary institution establishes its accountability under the Law on Budgetary Institutions, the MND's legal regulations, and the Law on Science and Studies of Lithuania (referred to as LSS) and its implementing institutions' requirements.

55. The MAL consistently gathers and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data on its activities for internal and external accountability, as well as performance improvement. Examples of the kinds of data collected include student satisfaction with courses, alumni feedback on programmes and the views of stakeholders (both informally and formally, such as minuted meetings). The Panel learned from the interviews and data provided at the site visit that the MAL conducts detailed and comprehensive data analysis. The collection of responses from cadets and students varies between the military training programme and the educational (academic) part of the programme. In the educational part, students participate through traditional questionnaires, while in the military training cadets share their responses directly with the military instructors. It emerged during Panel interviews that changes in the military training are not systematically monitored and included in the self-evaluation procedures, although the Panel consider this, in itself, not to be a problem.

56. To ensure an effective performance management system, the MAL analyses data from various perspectives and provides internal justifications for decisions. Regular evaluations of the management system are conducted to ensure its continued suitability, effectiveness and alignment with the MAL's strategy and objectives. This process is an essential component of the MAL's internal control system, documenting evidence of the system's effectiveness and decisions made for improvements, changes, and resource reallocation.

57. In addition to formal internal and external reporting, the MAL follows a Military Practices-Based Management approach, formalising decisions through orders and responding promptly to emerging problems for immediate resolution.

58. The Panel learned that MAL students, including cadets and unclassified students, are integral to the National Defence System (NDS), resulting in a 100% employment rate for Academy graduates.

59. Collection and analysis of the performance data in the MAL is done in a thorough way. Graduates are consulted in a formal way (via a survey) on the quality of their education and in an informal way, on a voluntary basis. In addition, there is follow up of lecturers' and researchers' contributions by the Studies Management Section and the Centre for Research Projects and Analysis. The results from these follow-ups are disseminated to research group leaders who discuss the results and possible needs for improvement with the lecturers/researchers.

60. Regarding PR and communication, the MAL has developed both short-term and long-term communication strategies. These strategies are specifically tailored to target three main audiences: young individuals aged 14 to 18 years old, officers, and the general public. In order to reach these audiences effectively, a diverse range of media and communication channels are employed, including social media platforms and the organisation of events on national occasions. The Panel considered these to be effective communication strategies.

61. The MAL recruitment centre thoroughly analyses the recruitment events, assessing their effectiveness and impact. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the entire recruitment process, the Academy conducts measurements to gauge the overall impact achieved.

62. Information related to study programmes, accreditation, and quality evaluations is available on the MAL website and the SKVC website. The Academy's public activities include events such as 'swearing-in' ceremonies, bonfire presentations, and participation in national celebrations.

63. The Panel found that internal information links and communication have been improved through the synchronisation of operational processes, ensuring clear, accurate, and accessible information to the community and stakeholders.

64. Overall, the Panel concludes that the MAL demonstrates a commitment to effective communication and transparency in its activities.

65. The MAL programme structure is established by the Minister's order, and regular meetings are held with the deputy minister. If changes to key performance indicators (KPIs) are required, communication with the MND allows for proposing and implementing changes. Peer-to-peer connections are established due to staff fluctuations among the MND, MAL, and Military Armed Forces.

66. Quantitative indicators are derived from the MND's KPIs, and qualitative indicators must align with the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS). Qualitative and quantitative indicators are interconnected. Feedback is currently gathered from students and cadets, with plans to include feedback from teachers in the next semester. The programme director ensures that changes are aligned and accurate.

67. Regular meetings with the Minister occur approximately once a month, and they are considered a social document planning guideline, reporting on resource accomplishments and following planned activities. External audits are conducted every three years, examining research and study fields. The programme is aligned with the MND strategy and contributes to the planning of the Lithuanian strategy 2050, providing suggestions for the MAL's long-term development.

68. The MAL conducts systematic data collection and analysis for internal and external communication, using the MAL's Annual Report as a crucial document for effective communication. It also publishes a magazine called 'Kariūnas' prepared by cadets themselves to promote science and engagement among students.

69. The Academy utilises various communication channels such as TV, press, radio, and online platforms to disseminate information. The website of the Academy (https://www.lka.lt) is available in both the Lithuanian and English languages and is a comprehensive source of information about the MAL (for example, it contains an English language copy of the Academy's Strategy, 2018–2024). The Academy also maintains a database of experts, supports researchers' public speaking and participation in development activities, and participates in study fairs and career days.

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.*

70. The MAL is a part of the National Defence System (NDS), and its structure and staffing limits are approved by the MND. When proposing structural changes, the MAL provides justifications to the MND, explaining the reasons behind the proposed changes. This ensures that such changes are consistent with the security needs of Lithuania.

71. As an institution of both university and military studies, the MAL has a diverse staff comprising soldiers and employees fulfilling military unit-specific functions. To assess the administrative-academic staff ratio, the MAL distinguishes between different categories of soldiers and staff, including researchers, military training instructors, policy analysts, administrative staff involved in university studies, general administrative staff supporting all MAL activities, and administrative staff essential for the military unit's operations.

72. Academy teachers and research staff are recruited based on fixed-term or open-ended contracts, following the regulations on competitions and certification approved by the Senate and in compliance with the national legal framework. More recently the MAL has focused on recruiting full-time researchers, and competitions for such positions were opened from 2019 to 2022. Part-time staff can be employed on fixed-term contracts for up to two years. When possible, the MAL aims to recruit full-time candidates for fixed-term positions until full-time vacancies become available. The number of staff is determined based on the scope of the study programmes, with calculations carried out by the Studies Management Section (SMS). These calculations serve as a basis for initiating new vacancies and justifying job position changes in research teams to the MND.

73. The Panel interviews with teachers revealed that the reorganisation into research groups increased the transparency in reference to requirements for particular research but also with regard to the balance between research and teaching. As explained earlier in this document, there are regular reports (every six months) on progress in research and teaching.

74. However, the Panel also found during its interviews that there was a lack of clarity surrounding both how 'guarded' or otherwise the research time of the 'military' PhD students was (for example, in terms of continuation of research after military rotation) and also whether or not, there was a standardised workload for these researchers.

75. All lecturers/instructors must attend a one-week course for instructors and there are courses on specific topics relevant for didactic and pedagogic development such as 'war gaming', 'meta cognition' and the use of online tools for distance teaching and learning. This appeared to the Panel to be sufficient provision.

76. The military instructors are expected to undertake an 'instructor's course' and can also take part, on a case-by-case basis, in other pedagogic courses.

77. The Panel learned from interviews that the MAL plans to open a new position of an adviser to the Programme Directors, namely a teacher that would monitor quality of teaching and learning on the programmes.

78. The MAL emphasises attracting productive researchers to ensure that at least 50% of their workload can be devoted to research, experimental development, and innovation (REDIP) activities, as recommended by the MESS. The teaching workload of MAL researchers generally does not exceed 30% of their total workload. The MAL has successfully retained over 30 full-time researchers from 2018 to 2022 and aims to increase this number to 40 in the near future. To maintain the integration of science and studies, the MAL involves researchers as thesis supervisors and lecturers in some courses. Considering the current number of students, the MAL does not anticipate a higher demand for researchers in the future, and the Panel concurred with this view.

79. Recruitment process is applied for civilian lecturers, researchers and supporting staff members, but due to the external factors the attraction of newcomers remains challenging. At the same time career management of military personnel is organised in accordance with the Officer Career Concept approved by MND.

80. The MAL community emphasises the benefits of teamwork experiences to improve individual competences of personnel by applying peer assessment ('360 degree assessment') and staff being expected to be involved in different Boards, research groups etc.

81. Staff development is also facilitated through the financing of qualification courses, supporting self-development and events organised by the Study Management Section. There appeared to the Panel to be ample opportunities for all staff at the Academy to undertake professional self-development.

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. The MAL's financial planning is closely aligned with that of its main funding partner, the Ministry of Defence (MND). Given its 'hybrid' nature (the MAL is a military academy, a military service unit and a higher education institution) the financial planning is by necessity complex but appears to be conducted in an effective and efficient manner.

83. The financial resources of the MAL are distributed amongst budget areas (such as staffing, currently 60% of the budget) in a rational and coherent way and are in broadly in line with other similar institutions in Europe, such as the Royal Military Academy (Sandhurst) (the latter devotes 58% of its budget to staffing).

84. During the last five years there has been a significant reduction in overall staff numbers at the MAL (from 399 to 373), and the number of teaching staff reduced from 47 in Jan 2018 to 34,5 in 2022. (There remain some vacancies to fill). However, during the same period the number of

students increased. The MAL appears to have adapted well to these changes, as demonstrated by a number of indicators, including cadet and student satisfaction.

85. The operational processes of the MAL are formally delineated and well developed. However, during the interviews it conducted, the Panel found that participants were not able to provide examples of systematic changes based on newly developed processes, nor, in some cases, were interviewees able to adequately describe their role in regard to some of the new processes the MAL has introduced.

86. Given the nature of the MAL (an operational military unit as well as an academic institution and military academy) it is inevitable that some administrative roles will need to be performed by military rather than civilian staff (for example, in terms of security considerations). However, often the rationale for deciding whether an administrative role was to be classed as 'civilian' or 'military' was implicit rather than explicit. Those administrators at the Academy from the Lithuanian military appeared to be essentially seconded to the MAL and hence subject to frequent 'rotation'. This meant that there was inevitably, from time to time, some loss of experience and expertise.

87. The Panel found that when making major investments in new infrastructure the MAL carries out due diligence activities, including undertaking risk assessments. In the light of the planned and available financial resources, the Panel found that MAL carefully plans its infrastructure investments, following the principles of sound financial management and best-value-for-money proposals.

88. There are several spaces at the Academy that provide the students with learning resources, the library, specific classrooms for quiet self-study and specific classrooms for leadership studies and innovative learning methods ('hybrid' classrooms). During the site visit the Panel learned about ambitious plans to invest and renovate the campus in order to improve the learning environment and accommodate a larger number of cadets in the future.

89. The purchase of an urban area concept, which will be implemented in the period 2023-2025, and the execution of the Urban Design Study will allow the MAL to have, and manage, an attractive, sustainable, environmentally friendly environment where natural resources will be conserved and rationally used; where the work environment will increase the motivation and well-being of staff, and, perhaps most importantly, that will ensure the improvement of the cadets' living conditions and the quality of studies.

90. The physical learning resources of the MAL provide the students with several different opportunities to engage in learning activities, both teacher-led activities and self-study. The number of computers on campus (in the library and in the classrooms where students can engage in self-study) were fairly few, but the Panel were informed of plans to provide each student with a personal laptop as of next academic year.

91. From 2020 the MAL has invested extensively in IT infrastructure although the IT hardware and software infrastructure must be reviewed beforehand for security reasons. The Panel learned that the Academy plans to establish a hybrid environment and cloud services that will enable each individual (staff and students) to communicate and access the internal information system.

92. The MAL is effective in getting financial resources for its higher education provision (from the Ministry of Defence (MND)) and for its research and project activities also from Ministry of

Education (MESS). In terms of the latter the MAL is particularly successful in securing EC funding.

93. Finally, the Panel noted with approval that there are ambitious but financially sound plans in place for the improvement of the MAL infrastructure, including the construction of new buildings.

94. **In summary**, the MAL has successfully implemented its current strategy and annual Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP), aligning them with relevant national laws, standards, and guidelines. The Quality assurance policy is relevant, in place and involves internal and external stakeholders in its development and implementation. The progress of the SIP is regularly monitored, with clear objectives, responsible individuals, and measurable indicators. The strategic documents are closely linked to MAL's mission and vision, based on previous external reviews and consultations with national stakeholders. The MAL has structured processes, documentation, and performance indicators that cover various aspects of its operations. Continuous monitoring is conducted through improvement and risk registers, with plans to activate a best practice register. While significant progress has been made in strategic planning, further development of qualitative indicators is required to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of its quality culture and processes.

The governing bodies, the Academy Council and the Senate, play important roles in shaping the institution's strategy and academic affairs. The MAL has a transparent organisational structure, effective communication channels, and a strong sense of community. Process management follows international standards, and stakeholder involvement is satisfactory. The MAL is well-prepared for future challenges and demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement. Process management at the MAL follows ISO and LEAN 6 SIGMA standards, emphasising continuous improvement and risk management. The strategic action plan is regularly updated and supported by comprehensive registers for improvement, risk, and best practices. Stakeholder involvement in various processes, including risk identification and research projects, is considered satisfactory. Collaboration with external partners, both in research and other areas, is also well-established. However, a need for better formal representation of part-time students in committees has been identified.

The MAL operates as a budgetary institution and is accountable under various laws, it emphasises data collection, analysis, and communication for accountability and improvement. It conducts thorough analysis of student and stakeholder feedback and employs performance management systems. The MAL maintains high employment rates for graduates and engages in effective communication strategies. It follows a structured recruitment process, disseminates information through various channels, and participates in national events. The institution's program structure is aligned with key indicators and involves regular meetings with the Minister. The MAL conducts external audits and utilises data for internal and external communication. It promotes science and student engagement through its magazine and participates in career fairs.

The Academy is part of the National Defence System (NDS), and its structure and staffing are approved by the Ministry of National Defence (MND). The MAL justifies proposed structural changes to the MND and distinguishes between different categories of soldiers and staff. Recruitment of teachers and research staff follows regulations and competitions approved by the Senate and national legal framework. The MAL aims to recruit full-time researchers and calculates staff numbers based on study programs. The reorganisation into research groups increased transparency, but there are concerns about the clarity of research time for military PhD students

and standardised workload for researchers. The MAL provides instructor courses and specific pedagogic development courses. There are plans to appoint an adviser to monitor teaching quality. The MAL focuses on attracting productive researchers and integrating science and studies. Recruitment processes are applied for civilian staff, and career management for military personnel follows MND guidelines. Staff development is supported through financing qualification courses and self-development opportunities.

Financial planning of the Academy is conducted effectively and efficiently, closely aligned with its main funding partner, the Ministry of Defence (MND). The distribution of financial resources among budget areas is rational and coherent, with a focus on staffing. Despite a reduction in overall staff numbers, the MAL has adapted well to changes and demonstrated satisfactory indicators, including student satisfaction. Operational processes are well-developed, but there is room for improvement in implementing systematic changes and clarifying administrative roles. Due diligence activities, including risk assessments, are carried out for major infrastructure investments. The MAL has plans to invest in campus renovation and enhance the learning environment. There are efforts to improve IT infrastructure and secure funding for higher education provision and research activities, including successful acquisition of European Commission (EC) funding.

95. **Judgement:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 points.

96. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The MAL should examine how part-time students may become more engaged with the governance of the Academy.

- The situation of the military PhD students should be considered. They could be of great value to the Academy in the future, but it remains unclear to what extent their possibilities to finish their PhD studies on time is 'guarded' by senior members of staff and their work load appears not to be standardised. For example, the MAL could consider career counselling for PhD students, either for the development of their academic and/or military career.

- The MAL is encouraged to implement the new role of a teaching and learning advisor to the Programme Directors and to monitor the effectiveness of this initiative.

- The set of established operational processes creates conditions to formalise planning, coordination, decision making and execution within MAL, but institutional level testing of procedures is recommended as well as better communication amongst different communities of the Academy.

97. **Good practice examples:**

- The MAL demonstrates a strong sense of community, loyalty and pride among its management, academic and military staff, students/ cadets and non-academic staff.

- Many of the representatives of the MAL (irrespective of their level within the organisational management structure) have a 'direct line' to the Commandant and this allows for the rapid and effective resolution of any issues that might arise.

- The SIP is a good example of the follow-up of the strategic plan 2018-2024 and identifies in a very good way the possible risks.

3.2. Quality Assurance

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.*

98. The MAL has established an internal quality assurance system through the MAL Quality Principles and the Integrated Performance Management and Quality Assurance System. The current version of the IQA is the 5th edition, approved in June 2022. The system follows a systematic approach to process-based and project-based performance management, incorporating various principles and standards such as the Principles for the Improvement of Public Sector Organizations, ESG, Bologna Process, National Quality Regulations for Higher Education, and ISO 21001:2018.

99. The MAL Quality Principles were approved in March 2019 and integrated into the MAL Strategy for 2018-2024. They are made publicly available on the MAL website, intranet, and information boards to guide the MAL community in adhering to quality principles and MAL values.

100. The MAL Management System is the result of collaborative efforts within the MAL community. The Operational Processes Development Project, initiated in 2019, aimed to clarify, describe, and continuously improve operational processes to align with the objectives of the National Defence System (NDS), ESG, ECTS, EQF, Bologna Process, and other regulatory requirements.

101. Key documents influencing the development of the quality management system include ESG, ISO 21001:2018, and NATO Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E & ITD) 075-007. The MAL Internal Rules of Procedure (IRP) were approved in September 2020 and are periodically reviewed and updated.

102. While ISO standards have served as guidelines, the MAL is currently working towards full compliance with ISO 21001:2018. The use of ISO 21001:2018 standard is suitable and adequate for the MAL to set up the required quality assurance system.

103. The management system document E-IRP is stored and accessible via the MAL military network – MIL. This decision was taken because of sensitive information it contains. For this reason, a shortened document was provided to the Panel, rather than the entire document, with the removal of sensitive information. (However, the network allows all stakeholders who need access to the necessary documents to do so, whilst maintaining security). Additional explanations and evidence (e.g. Strategic Implementation Plan) were presented to the Panel at the site-visit.

104. In a number of strategic directions (as described in the Strategy 2018-2024) the will to improve and move forward in terms of quality management and quality assurance was noticeable. For example, the MAL's strategic direction 2 is 'To ensure the modern delivery of quality university studies and military training at the MAL'. This is exemplified in the Academy's decision to revise the MAL Basic Officer Course in line with the NATO Generic officer professional military education reference curriculum and the subsequently issued SQF-MILOF (which in turn is linked to the EQF) and which in turn can be linked to the desire of meeting the international standards and internationalisation.

105. Strategic direction 3 states the MAL's intention 'To conduct research that meets international standards and is relevant to national security and defence' and aims at enhancing the MAL's role in supporting the achievement of the country's national security strategic objectives at the national and international levels. This should guarantee to help maintain the right focus and at the same time allow the MAL programme to meet the required national and international standards.

106. As mentioned in the SER, there is a "Regular analysis of process management is conducted, process improvement prerequisites and risk management measures are provided. The MAL has policies in place which focus on the continuous improvement of processes and the MAL carries out risk identification and analysis of management environment, assessment of risk factors and identification of tolerable risks".

107. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the ESG. As stated earlier, the Strategic Implementation Plan is very ambitious and takes into consideration measures needed in all areas of the MAL's work. However, the information given during the visit indicate that there is a lack of communication between the level of the leadership and the level of the departments, research groups and students and there is scope for improvement in this respect.

108. The military studies group on the other hand seems in one way or another to apply a different type of quality control with regular quick feedback from cadets. The feedback system on courses and modules is good and has been applied and analysed in a very detailed way. One example of this is that one person in the administrative staff has the specific task of collecting all student evaluations and feeding the results back to teachers and heads of the research groups.

109. In the military courses, best practices are identified through discussions and feedback from instructors and students. This feedback is then shared with units to assess if any improvements or changes are necessary, such as modifications to materials or learning outcomes.

110. In academic studies at the MAL, best practices are gathered through research and knowledge transfer to the study subjects. Cadets are invited to prepare theses to identify and analyse these best practices. Current issues are discussed with stakeholders to prioritise main challenges and identify new strategic objectives. Implementation of foreign practices is found to not always be beneficial or transferrable. However, this is understandable given that the MAL, as any other military academy, is bound by national legislations and rules.

111. Feedback from students/cadets is collected through a two-part questionnaire consisting of closed and open questions. The responses are analysed, and each teacher receives feedback from the surveys. The results are also communicated to the Commander. All recommendations and minutes are shared among the Academy community and included in the Quality Manual or Rules of Procedures. However, the Panel site visit suggested that the register of best practices is not yet functioning effectively.

112. Feedback on cadet achievements is also collected, and the findings are incorporated into the report for the MND, including dropout rates and progression rates.

113. The support for the cadets and students (such as psychological support) seems more than satisfactory as confirmed by Panel interviews. For example, other than during the first year of studies (when some cadets discover that the military profession is not for them) the 'dropout rate' is extremely low, with an average of over 97% of students graduating in the last four years of data made available to the Panel.

114. The teachers have identified a number of best practices and learning opportunities to improve their teaching. They also share these best practices in an informal way but the whole process lacks institutionalisation. The Panel advises the MAL to encourage the staff and academics to continue this activity and make it formal where possible. Support for the teachers is limited to a one-week course for instructors/teachers but in the future, there will be improvement (new personnel is hired to deal with this task). Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination etc exist and are known to all categories of the personnel. Everybody is aware that there is a strict application of these rules. The students that the Panel met seemed to be very well aware of rules of academic integrity.

115. The Panel learned that there is no dedicated quality department (or quality commission) at the MAL, but one individual has been appointed as a QA advisor to the MAL Commandant. Responsibilities are assigned to departments, and there are task descriptions within their scope of operation. Although all staff appeared aware of the need for quality assurance, and felt this as a personal responsibility, there were some doubts expressed about just what this meant in practice. The approach also was almost entirely reactive rather than proactive and seen mostly in terms of responding to student feedback on courses rather than taking a more active approach in a more institutionalised way. The full implementation of the quality control process and improved communication will lead in the future to a change in emphasis from the reactive to the proactive. The Panel noted that almost all the Academy staff and teachers were aware of, and supported this change.

116. As noted under the management section earlier, the MAL has undertaken ambitious changes in the organisation since the last external review (in 2014). In particular the recommendations on management and division of responsibilities in the quality assurance of education, and efficiency

in delivery of academic programmes (creating a clearer system of modules and courses), and increasing student mobility have been adhered to.

117. While recognising the significant advancements made by the MAL in strategic planning and the establishment of an internal quality system, the Panel also acknowledges a gap in comprehending the importance and benefits of a fully integrated internal quality system that encompasses all aspects of the institution's operations. The Panel urges the Academy to adopt a proactive approach and implement the quality system comprehensively across all activities and levels of the institution, going beyond procedural aspects. While precise process planning and well-defined procedures and responsibilities are commendable, the Panel emphasises the need for the institution to foster a culture of quality that encompasses awareness, commitment, and responsibility, similar to the emphasis placed on military values such as loyalty, fighting spirit, initiative, and professionalism.

118. **In summary,** the MAL has developed (and it continues to develop) its quality management system in a manner that is consistent with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and with Lithuania's legislative requirements, and the values and principles which underpin this system are set out in the Academy's *Quality Manual.*

Self-assessment is a key component of MAL's quality management system. This procedure, which is conducted at all levels within the Academy, embraces the full range of MAL's activities and it entails the annual evaluation of the institution's performance against each of its strategic objectives. The Panel observed that there has been put a lot of work in the development of a good quality assessment culture based on a thorough, critical and extensive self-assessment report which is known to most of the staff and academics.

The MAL has rigorous procedures for the approval of study programmes and for the delivery of programmes, based on national, EU and NATO standards. It is also apparent that the MAL has given careful consideration to the means by which it might ensure the viability and quality of its strategic partnership with e.g. the use of the EMILYO program, the exchange programme for young officers supported by Erasmus.

MAL provides good support for its staff and students and it has appropriate arrangements for ensuring academic integrity and the adherence of all its members to the MAL's *Code of Ethics*. The institution also has excellent procedures for handling appeals and complaints.

The recommendations offered in this section of the report are designed to support the MAL in achieving its aspiration to be designated as an HEI with the right to offer academic degrees.

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

120. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The quality assurance system is process-oriented/driven but lacks a more structured and proactive approach with an optimal division of responsibilities, to identify and share best practices and to address all MAL activities efficiently and effectively and to support decision-making (using a top-down and bottom-up approach). The Quality Manual should support the commitment to quality assurance and quality culture, be designed in the sense that it is

universally recognised and applied to all levels of the MAL's management, planning, monitoring and enhancement activities.

- The MAL should improve the internal communication on quality control and expectations in this domain. Some academics (a minority) are at this point not aware of the importance of quality management and constant improvements.

- The MAL should try to increase the visibility of the Academy's strategic plans and quality assurance mechanisms to cadets and students so that they are fully aware of the actual and future change that is impacting their ongoing and future studies.

- In increasing the support for the teaching staff with an adapted system of courses, seminars and systematically shared best practices, the MAL might achieve a better knowledge on the implemented quality assurance system which might lead to a proactive attitude towards quality improvement instead of a reactive one.

- An additional goal might be the development and improvement of existing and future cadet and student surveys that will allow to increase the evaluation of the achievement of learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the pedagogic approach adopted by instructors and lecturers.

- The MAL should consider introducing a pedagogy course for military trainers in such a way that this part of the education of the cadets is at the same level as the academic part. This can only be beneficial for the cadets and the Lithuanian armed forces.

- The MAL must fully implement the register of best practices and supervise the use and promotion of these practices.

- The Panel advises the MAL to systematically monitor changes in military practice and include the outcomes in the self-evaluation procedures.

121. **Good practice examples:**

- The evaluation and analysis of modules at the MAL is undertaken in a thorough way, ensuring relevance to stakeholders and students and which allows the Academy to deliver excellent courses which are able to rapidly respond to the meet the requirements of the Lithuanian Armed forces whilst at the same time continuing to meet NATO standards.

- The Panel has noted that the informal sharing of good practice appears well-established and working well.

- The MAL has a department responsible for the development and maintenance of pedagogical competences and a system that requires the competencies to be updated every five years. A proposed course e.g. for new staff and teachers and follow on activities will further improve the quality of teaching.

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.*

122. Programmes of study at the MAL consist of accredited higher education programmes at Bachelors, Master's and Doctorate academic levels. In addition, the Academy officers non-academically accredited short courses ('Professional Military Education'), primarily for the various functions and ranks of the Lithuanian armed services e.g. courses for battalion-level or staff officers. There are also a large number of foreign language courses which are available to all students, cadets and staff at the Academy.

123. There are four Bachelors, three Master's and one Doctorate offered by the MAL, leading to named qualifications and in some cases offered on a part-time basis. The Bachelor programme "Management of Defence Technologies" leads to the qualification *Bachelor of Business Management*, the Bachelor programme "National Security and Defence" leads (from 2022) to the qualification *Bachelor of Public Security*, the Bachelor programme "International Relations" leads to the qualification *Bachelor of Social Sciences*, and the Bachelor programme "Defence and Public Management" leads to the qualification *Bachelor of Public Management*.

124. The Master programme "Defence Resource Management" leads to the qualification *Master of Public Administration*, the Master programme "Defence Studies" leads (from 2022) to the qualification *Master of Public Security*, the Master programme "Military Diplomacy" leads to the qualification *Master of Social Sciences*. The PhD programme leads to a *Doctor of Political Science*.

125. All Bachelor programmes are full time, except "Defence and Public Management" which is part time, and all Master programmes are part time. The PhD programme can be taken either as full time or part time.

126. The academic provision of the MAL is clearly consistent with the Bologna process, in so far as it consists of a three-cycle higher education system and is credit bearing in a way that allows for the transfer of credit to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications in the EHA.

127. The Bachelor and Master's programmes are organised under their relevant field of study and this is reflected in the Study Programme Committee membership and terms of reference. This does

mean however that a single Study Programme Committee will often carry responsibility for monitoring programme quality at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. One positive aspect of this is that it provides the possibility to ensure proper progression of studies between academic levels between first (Bachelor level) and second (Master level) cycle.

128. Those armed forces personnel undertaking the Bachelor's tend to be referred to as 'cadets' by the Academy whilst those undertaking postgraduate study or research are called 'students'.

129. The MAL's mission statement describes itself as an institution " which harmoniously combines university studies and military training, qualitatively prepares and trains fully educated and responsible officer leaders, conducts research, and ensures the implementation of lifelong learning principles in accordance with the needs of the National Defence System of the Republic of Lithuania". The Panel found much evidence within the study and research activities of the MAL to support this claim (for example, in the way that practical training was underpinned by academic studies).

130. Cadets (and students) are the 'centre of gravity' of all the MAL activities based on the academic principles of transparency, openness, rationality, trust and responsibility-based relationships with staff and interested parties. Special attention is devoted to the professional development of lecturers and related academic staff to support the learning process of the cadets. The Academy tries to attract new specialists nationally and internationally and tries to foster a modern study environment, virtual and physical. Qualified and motivated personnel focus for this on the implementation of the strategy and changes and promote the strong values of the MAL that will allow the successful implementation of the Academy's Strategy 2018-2024.

131. The current strategic aims for the Academy stem from 2018 and are set out in a publicly-available document. The Academy's second stated strategic direction is to 'ensure the modern delivery of quality university studies and military training'; the third strategic direction is to 'conduct research that meets international standards and is relevant to national security and defence' and the fourth strategic direction is to enable the continuous development of educational, leadership and subject competences in accordance with the needs of the MAL and the NDS, implementing the principle of Lifelong Learning'.

132. The research is carried out by researchers and lecturers organised in five research groups (science groups) under the umbrella of 'small states' studies. The research groups are: the defence economics and management science group; the logistics and defence technologies management science group; the world politics science group; the security institutions management science group; and the security policy science group. Together their research covers the strategic aim that the MAL should carry out 'Scientific research in the fields of security, defence and warfare according to international standards'. The standards of research have been improved in the last years due to an explicit expectation by the management that publications in well-known international journals should be prioritised. In addition, a raise in salary is connected to publication goals.

133. However, during the Panel visit, it was noted that many students were not aware of the opportunities to get involved in research groups' activities before writing their thesis.

134. Parts of the research undertaken is explicitly carried out with the goal to provide research-based teaching. In addition, interviews with the alumni confirmed that the level of research and teaching is comparable to civilian Lithuanian universities.

135. In terms of the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning, this is achieved (where possible) through the MAL's adoption of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and in consultation with the SKVC. Teaching subjects in modules equivalent to only 5 or 10 ECTS allows cadets to make greater use of exchange opportunities and to plan more effectively their academic, military duties and volunteering activities.

136. From the interviews with both staff and students it was clear that assessment of prior non-formal and informal learning is possible. However, given the specialist nature of education and training at a military academy, and its limitation to citizens of Lithuania, the MAL does not carry out its own assessment of 'inward' credit transfer (from non-Lithuanian military academies or similar higher education institutions).

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.*

137. The MAL cooperates actively with a number of public institutions and non-governmental organisations and fosters close relations with foreign military training establishments and military HEI in Europe and abroad.

138. The Academy, in its capacity as an HEI, has a strategy for the internationalisation of its research and study activities, has developed instruments for its implementation, and measures the effectiveness of these activities.

139. The 2018-2024 Strategy recognizes internationalisation as a pivotal factor in achieving the vision of the MAL. To effectively pursue internationalisation, the Academy actively engages with international organisations and networks focused on political science, management sciences, defence, and security expertise. Membership in these organisations facilitates valuable opportunities for researchers and academics across various domains. It enables them to stay abreast of the latest research trends, participate in prestigious scientific events, and foster and sustain international scientific collaborations.

140. In the context of the internationalisation of studies, the MAL encourages the mobility of academic staff to teach in partner institutions, particularly other European higher military education institutions. However, during the site-visit the Panel observed that not all the teachers knew where, and how to find information about opportunities for mobility.

141. Exchange programmes offer, according to the MAL, opportunities for the cadets and officers to take part in international weeks abroad and for foreign cadets to visit the MAL. It was clear to the Panel that students and cadets are encouraged to take part in exchange programmes. However, this is mainly the case for the full-time students. The part time students undertake their studies while still working at their ordinary employer, which means very limited possibilities to go abroad.

This might be something that the MAL could work on in terms of encouraging part time students to also go abroad, but it is also a question for the students' employer to consider.

142. The MAL has been participating in the *Erasmus+* programme since 2005. Participation in this programme is directly related to the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Bologna Process in a military institution of higher education, the promotion of the activity of teachers and administrative staff, and the improvement of the quality of studies and is the main vehicle for all exchanges.

143. The *Erasmus+* programme aims to ''ensure the quality of higher education, to promote the mobility of students, teachers and other staff, to ensure the multilateral cooperation of higher education institutions with businesses, the transparency of these activities, and the compatibility of higher education and vocational training.''

144. The MAL actively participates in the *Erasmus+* programme mobility activities which allows for: the mobility of cadets for studies (SMS), cadet mobility for practice (SMP), short-term mobility of cadets (participation in general modules), mobility of personnel for teaching (STA) and staff mobility for training (STT).

145. A revision of the full-time study programmes and the introduction of a modular study model allowed the MAL to provide all cadets with a window of mobility for international partial studies. The MAL considers ''Cadets as a specific group of students for whom it is essential to combine university studies with military training harmoniously. Therefore, the MAL is focused not on the quantitative but on the qualitative development of partner institutions' network abroad. For this purpose, the MAL is a member of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers inspired by *Erasmus+* (EMILYO), approved by the Council of Europe in 2008 and supervised by the European Security and Defence College.''

146. The internationalisation impact on the MAL's participation in the *Erasmus+* mobility programme is assessed in a thorough way using a set of indicators which allows to measure a meaningful progress during the period 2018-2024. In the academic year 2022-2023 49,35% of cadets departed on *Erasmus+* mobility as compared to 33,3% in the academic year 2019-2020, whilst at the same time as the total number of cadets have increased.

147. The MAL has become a reliable and active partner, keen to send cadets to other military HEIs, but also willing to accept cadets from (in the main) the same military HEI and providing them with a high-quality modular exchange programme. The MAL also involves the cadets in additional activities to introduce them to the military training organised in Lithuania in order to make the experience even more meaningful.

148. By implementing international semesters, the military higher education institutions take care of the incoming cadets as part of their own and, at the institution's expense, integrate them in a wide range of complementary activities (e.g., excursions, military training exercises, etc.), giving the mobility more experience and value for professional development.

149. The main achievements of the MAL during the five years of the Strategy implementation are the establishment of an *Erasmus+* International semester, involving cadets from 13 European countries and the US and a significant increase in scale and internationalisation of research activities.

150. **In summary,** the MAL offers accredited higher education programs at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate levels which is consistent with its mission and strategic aims which state that 'The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania is modern, internationally recognized university for national security, defence, and military studies'. It also provides non-academic short courses for military officers and foreign language courses for all students and staff. The academic provision aligns with the Bologna process, following a three-cycle higher education system and credit transfer system. Study programs are organised under their respective fields, with a focus on programme quality at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The MAL emphasises the development of cadets and students, attracting new specialists, and creating a modern study environment. The Academy's strategic directions include delivering quality education and training, conducting relevant research, and promoting continuous development. Research is carried out by research groups focused on security, defence and warfare. The MAL aims to improve research standards and encourages publication in international journals. In addition, some of the funding for research is specifically steered towards research that is needed for or will improve the education of the cadets. Opportunities for student involvement in research activities need better awareness. The MAL adopts the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for recognizing foreign qualifications and prior learning. However, inward credit transfer from non-Lithuanian military academies is not assessed by the MAL. Recognition of foreign qualifications are made for cadets who have participated in *Erasmus+* exchanges.

The MAL actively collaborates with public institutions, NGOs, and foreign military training establishments to foster international relations. Internationalisation is recognized as crucial in the Academy's strategy, leading to engagement with international organisations and networks in political science, management sciences, defence, and security expertise. It encourages academic staff mobility and student exchange programs, participating in the *Erasmus+* program since 2005. The program allows for various types of mobility, including student studies and practice, short-term modules, and staff training. The MAL assesses the impact of internationalisation on its participation in the *Erasmus+* program using indicators, tracking the progress of international mobility programmes. With regard to the content of the studies, integration of internationalisation in studies and research activities are a vital part of the content due to the study fields that education and research encompass.

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

152. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Involve/invite students to more actively participate in research activities.

- Inform and encourage teachers and researchers to go on traineeships abroad.

- Increase the number of incoming students for the MAL international semesters.

- Invite more international lecturers in all study programmes.

- Although in general terms there is a good balance between academic studies and professional training the MAL should assess the scope for greater articulation between theoretical study and the associated military training.

153. **Good practice examples:**

- A good balance between the academic ('civil') and military training components of the programmes, particularly at the Bachelors' level.

- Very ambitious, but feasible and realistic plans for internationalisation with 50% of cadets going abroad on military *Erasmus+* exchanges.

- A good use of indicators to keep track of the internationalisation process.

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.

154. Lithuania faces an increasingly unpredictable geopolitical situation due to recent developments and trends. The primary threat to national security arises from the Russian Federation's pursuit of imperialist ambitions through military and unconventional hybrid means, including the absorption of Belarusian military structures, the facilitation of illegal migration, and the dissemination of propaganda. The situation escalated after Russia's war in Ukraine in February 2022. Other challenges to national security include foreign influence on economic and energy independence, disruptive technologies, digitization linked to cyber threats, conflicts on social and cultural grounds, dependence on EU security factors, and climate change. In response, Lithuania must adapt to the changing security environment, enhance cooperation with allies, and strengthen the resilience of the state and society.

155. The MAL positions itself as an innovative university and centre of excellence, training officer leaders and conducting research relevant to security and defence. It implements various tasks, including university studies, research projects, language courses, and defence policy analysis. MAL communicates research results through its library, which serves the MAL community and the public, and disseminates expertise through publications, conferences, seminars, and lectures. It actively participates in national and international programmes and projects. MAL also engages in cultural activities, participating in public events and promoting cooperation with military and civilian institutions.

156. The Academy communicates its accumulated expertise through events dedicated to the general public or particular sectors, such as conferences, seminars and a series of lectures. The latter includes the Baltic Military Conference, organised in 2019 and 2021, as the only high-level conference in Lithuania discussing defence policy and strategic military issues.

157. In 2021, the MAL launched an ongoing series of lectures on topics relevant to defence innovation and capability development. The lecture series has attracted considerable interest from the defence and security community and has been extended to 2022 (eight events organised).

158. Since the MAL aims to train and educate its students and cadets within the context of social responsibility (a 'citizen in uniform'), it aims to give the general public a closer look at the Academy's activities. Therefore, events such as the cadets' oath-taking ceremony or the lieutenant rank's conferment ceremony are public events, attracting many cadets' relatives, representatives of the Lithuanian government, the Lithuanian Armed Forces, and the media.

159. On Lithuania's Independence Restoration Day, the cadets traditionally invite the MAL community and the whole society of the country to meet at the burning bonfires on Stalo Hill in Vilnius. On 23 November, the MAL community participates in events dedicated to the Lithuanian Armed Forces Day. The MAL's activities are also presented at the festival dedicated to Partisans' tribute, the army, and society's unity, organised annually in a different Lithuanian city. Between 2019 and 2022, the MAL organised over 200 events for young people, teachers, business enterprises and NGOs on military training, civic education, national security and global defence issues.

160. The MAL representatives actively contribute to Ukraine's ongoing armed forces reform, the transformation of military training to Western standards and the adaptation of NATO's education and training system to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, aiming to increase interoperability with NATO countries' militaries.

161. The MAL also provided the Panel with evidence of their engagements with national, international partners and stakeholders as such: MND, MESS, regional military academies and civilian universities.

162. Nationally, MAL staff serve as experts in various organisations such as the Research Council of Lithuania, 'Lituanistika' Database, and the Lithuanian Armed Forces Historical Memory and Military Symbolism Commission. They are also involved in activities of the Lithuanian Quality Management Association, contributing to management innovations in the public sector. Currently, the MAL has almost 100 cooperation agreements with national partners.

163. Internationally, MAL experts work with organisations like NATO STO, ISO, COST, ERGOMAS, ISMS, ESA, EDA, IPSA, ESF, V-Dem, and ECPR. Their involvement extends to providing training and consultations to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, contributing to Ukraine's armed forces reform and the adoption of NATO standards. The MAL has more than 20 agreements with legal entities (military academies) in other countries.

164. The MAL conducts a number of security and defence related research, studies, organises a national level conference and ensures the publishing at national and regional level.

165. The Academy provides an education for Government level officials by organising an annual Security Course for higher level leadership.

166. A number of MAL experts are well recognised in Lithuania due to their engagement with the media to make comments, assessments on national and international defence and security actualities. When planning the workload for teachers, 10% of their working time is estimated to be spent on outreach activities, including engaging with media.

167. The MAL takes part in support efforts to develop Ukrainian PME development.

168. The Academy invites high level officials, including the PM, the Speaker of Parliament and Government officials to take part in different levels of academic and other activities.

169. Internally, the MAL focuses on its graduates, encouraging them to become ambassadors and mentors for cadets. Many MAL graduates hold high positions within the Lithuanian Armed Forces and other NDS institutions. The Academy also organises alumni reunions and military forums on national defence, security threats, and leadership.

170. Being part of the National Defence System (NDS), the MAL fulfils the objectives set out in the MND's Strategic Operational Plans (SOPs) in line with the needs of the military, the country and the wider region. The vision articulated in the MAL strategy states that Academy is an innovative university with an effective cooperation network with social and academic partners. The Panel found evidence to support this claim: for example, currently the MAL has almost 100 cooperation agreements with national partners including schools, universities, research centres, associations, unions and institutions.

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.

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171. Lifelong learning for officers in the Armed Forces might differ slightly from that of civilian personnel working for example in other parts of the state administration or in the private sector. The Armed Forces as an employer both provide, require and expect their personnel to participate in opportunities for training 'on the job'. These opportunities are required for officers who want to advance in their careers. Therefore, the analysis of needs for lifelong learning primarily comes from the dialogue with the social partners. Such input primarily affects the part time master courses which are taken by officers in the armed forces or state employed public servants.

172. During the interview with the social partners, the Panel encountered an illustrative instance pertaining to the training provided to cadets at the MAL. Specifically, the Panel inquired about the adequacy of knowledge and skills acquired by the cadets, a concern to which the social partners affirmed their satisfaction. Additionally, they expressed their belief that regardless of the specific skills required in the cadets' future roles upon completing their studies at MAL, ample opportunities would be available for on-site training in their respective positions. This is a good example of the kind of general knowledge skills that the MAL provides and monitors through their work, employing a taxonomy of learning outcomes that forms an important part of preparing cadets for a job that requires lifelong learning in successively new fields.

173. The Academy engages with alumni, but the Panel found that opportunities were missed in terms of the longer-term collection of information from graduates of the MAL, and particularly several years after they had completed their studies. Given that most of the alumni remain within the Lithuanian military, and hence relatively easy to 'track down', the opportunities to collect observations concerning the subsequent value and relevance of their training and education at the MAL seemed, to the Panel 'too good to miss'.

174. The MAL itself offers courses that are part of an officers' life-long learning. The Academy also offers language courses for state employees outside the armed forces and in this way provides possibilities for (non-accredited and hence non-evaluated) lifelong learning for a broader group. Student evaluations of part time courses take into account the conditions for lifelong learning (although some part time students that were interviewed during the site visit appeared unaware of the possibilities, they had to give feedback through the Academy's Student Council).

175. **In summary,** the challenges Lithuania faces are related to security threats from the Russian-Ukrainian war, including military and hybrid forms. Other challenges include foreign influence, disruptive technologies, cyber threats, social conflicts and climate change. This broader picture together with a close dialogue with the social partners result in the identification of what the needs for the education of officers are, as well as what research needs to be carried out. In response, MAL operates as an innovative university and centre of excellence, training officer leaders, conducting research and promoting defence policy analysis. They also engage with the media to provide expert commentary and assessments on defence and security matters. It is involved in national and international partnerships, participates in programmes and projects, and cooperates with organisations such as NATO and the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Academy also contributes to public discourse by engaging the media, organising conferences and promoting alumni networks.

The MAL actively collaborates with national and international partners, including military and civilian institutions, research organisations, and associations, fostering knowledge exchange and a comprehensive understanding of security and defence issues. The needs for lifelong learning are primarily identified in collaboration with the social partners. Furthermore, the MAL extends lifelong learning opportunities beyond the armed forces by offering language courses to state employees outside of the military, emphasising the importance of continuous professional development. The Academy prepares cadets for careers that require lifelong learning, focusing on developing general knowledge and skills to adapt and learn in evolving fields throughout their careers. Due to the specific character of the MAL, the diversity of forms and conditions for lifelong learning is not that big, but the Covid -19 pandemic meant that more courses are given in digital form. Which is a diversification compared to the situation before the pandemic. Evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning is carried out in the student evaluations of the courses.

176. **Judgement:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 points.

177. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Develop a 'hand-over' course for cadets moving on from Bachelor's to take up more senior officer positions.

- Better utilise the alumni network to help further develop the curricular and research profile of the MAL.

- Collect feedback from alumni in a more systematic fashion, not only immediately after graduation but at subsequent periods e.g. after two and five years.

178. **Good practice examples:**

- The MAL actively engages with various national and international partners, including military and civilian institutions, research organisations, and associations and this very effective collaboration with stakeholders from different sectors contributes to a comprehensive understanding of security and defence issues and enables the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

- Engaging with media and public outreach: the MAL recognizes the importance of engaging with the media to provide expert commentary and assessments on national and international defence and security matters.

- Offering lifelong learning opportunities beyond the armed forces: the MAL extends its lifelong learning offerings beyond the armed forces by providing language courses for state employees outside of the military. This broader approach to lifelong learning expands the academy's reach and contributes to the professional development of a wider group of individuals.

- Emphasising lifelong learning: the MAL prepares cadets for jobs that require lifelong learning in successively new fields. The Academy focuses on developing general knowledge and skills that enable officers to adapt and continue learning throughout their careers.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in:

Management:

- The MAL demonstrates a strong sense of community, loyalty and pride among its management, academic and military staff, students/ cadets and non-academic staff.

- Many of the representatives of the MAL (irrespective of their level within the organisational management structure) have a 'direct line' to the Commandant and this allows for the rapid and effective resolution of any issues that might arise.

- The SIP is a good example of the follow-up of the strategic plan 2018-2024 and identifies in a very good way the possible risks.

Quality Assurance:

- The evaluation and analysis of modules at the MAL is undertaken in a thorough way, ensuring relevance to stakeholders and students and which allows the Academy to deliver excellent

courses which are able to rapidly respond to the meet the requirements of the Lithuanian Armed forces whilst at the same time continuing to meet NATO standards.

- The Panel has noted that the informal sharing of good practice appears well-established and working well.

- The MAL has a department responsible for the development and maintenance of pedagogical competences and a system that requires the competencies to be updated every five years. A proposed course e.g. for new staff and teachers and follow on activities will further improve the quality of teaching.

Studies and Research (art):

- A good balance between the academic ('civil') and military training components of the programmes, particularly at the Bachelors' level

- Very ambitious, but feasible and realistic plan for internationalisation with 50% of cadets going abroad on military *Erasmus+* exchanges.

- A good use of indicators to keep track of the internationalisation process.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The MAL actively engages with various national and international partners, including military and civilian institutions, research organisations, and associations and this very effective collaboration with stakeholders from different sectors contributes to a comprehensive understanding of security and defence issues and enables the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

- Engaging with media and public outreach: the MAL recognizes the importance of engaging with the media to provide expert commentary and assessments on national and international defence and security matters.

- Offering lifelong learning opportunities beyond the armed forces: the MAL extends its lifelong learning offerings beyond the armed forces by providing language courses for state employees outside of the military. This broader approach to lifelong learning expands the academy's reach and contributes to the professional development of a wider group of individuals.

- Emphasising lifelong learning: the MAL prepares cadets for jobs that require lifelong learning in successively new fields. The Academy focuses on developing general knowledge and skills that enable officers to adapt and continue learning throughout their careers.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- The MAL should examine how part-time students may be better engaged with the governance of the Academy.

- The situation of the military PhD students should be considered. They could be of great value to the Academy in the future, but it remains unclear to what extent their possibilities to finish their PhD studies on time is 'guarded' by senior members of staff and their work load appears not to be standardised.

- The MAL is encouraged to implement the new role of a teaching and learning advisor to the Programme Directors and to monitor the effectiveness of this initiative.

- The set of established operational processes creates conditions to formalise planning, coordination, decision making and execution within MAL, but institutional level testing of procedures is recommended as well as better communication amongst different communities of the Academy.

Quality Assurance:

- The quality assurance system is process-oriented/driven but lacks a more structured and proactive approach with an optimal division of responsibilities, to identify and share best practices and to address all MAL activities efficiently and effectively and to support decision-making (using a top-down and bottom-up approach). The Quality Manual should support the commitment to quality assurance and quality culture, be designed in the sense that it is universally recognised and applied to all levels of the MAL's management, planning, monitoring and enhancement activities.

- Improve the internal communication on quality control and expectations in this domain.

- Increase the visibility of the Academy's strategic plans and quality assurance mechanisms to cadets.

- Increase the support for the teaching staff with an adapted system of courses, seminars and systematically shared best practices.

- Develop the existing cadet and student surveys to increase the evaluation of the achievement of learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the pedagogic approach adopted by instructors and lecturers.

- Consider introducing a pedagogy course for military trainers.

- Fully implement the register of best practices.

- Systematically monitor changes in military practice and include the outcomes in the self-evaluation procedures.

Studies and Research (art):

- Involve/invite students to more actively participate in research activities.

- Inform and encourage teachers and researchers to go on traineeships abroad.

- Increase the number of incoming students for the MAL international semesters.

- Invite more international lecturers in all study programmes.

- Although in general terms there is a good balance between academic studies and professional training the MAL should assess the scope for greater articulation between theoretical study and the associated military training.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- Develop a 'hand-over' course for cadets moving on from Bachelor's to take up more senior officer positions.

- Better utilise the alumni network to help further develop the curricular and research profile of the MAL.

- Collect feedback from alumni in a more systematic fashion, not only immediately after graduation but at subsequent periods e.g. after two and five years.