



## **STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

### **LCC TARPTAUTINIO UNIVERSITETO**

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### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT**

### **LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The international review team has been commissioned by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), which by law is the authorised agency to carry out evaluations of higher education institutions and degree programmes in the Republic of Lithuania. The team has conducted its evaluation of LCC International University (hereafter: LCC) in line with the methodology and guidelines provided by SKVC, specifically the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education (pursuant Government Resolution No. 1317, 22 September 2010).
2. In line with the guidelines set down in the Methodology, the purpose of the evaluation was “to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of [LCC] and the promotion of [its] quality, also to offer recommendations for the development of the [University’s] activities”. The team was advised to take into consideration autonomy and accountability; the mission, strategy and operating conditions; the interaction and compatibility of the areas under review; stakeholder involvement; and the unity of internal and external quality assurance. LCC has not undergone any previous institutional review, therefore the examination of any follow-up actions was not relevant.
3. The review team received the LCC self-evaluation report (SER) a month before the site visit. In addition to 29 appendices with statistics and documentation from LCC, the team was provided with a website link with additional online information. LCC made supplementary documents available on request. The team found the SER thorough, informative and a good basis for its interviews at the university. The visit took place at the university’s campus in Klaipeda on 6-8 November 2012.
4. The Team was presented with the latest analysis of learning resources at LCC by the Research and Studies Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA). It is evident that LCC does not meet the required 50% “ratio of teaching staff members with advanced degrees to the total number of teaching staff”, something the University is also well aware of. The Team was told that LCC is working to improve the ratio and that it is currently discussing a separate budget allocation to support staff in obtaining higher degrees. A handout provided to the Team indicates that five faculty members are pursuing doctoral degrees, which, when achieved, will bring the ratio to 53%. This is to be obtained in two years.
5. During the two and a half days of the site visit, the team was able to interview the university’s President and cabinet members, several stakeholders and board members, members of the academic council, the self-evaluation group, the heads and representatives of the Human Resources Department and the Chief Accountant, heads of units, administrative and support staff, teaching and research staff, graduates, social partners, Student Union representatives and other students. The Team also visited the campus and dormitories.
6. The chair of the review team was Malcolm C. Cook, Professor Emeritus at the University of Exeter, UK. The members were Lena Adamson, Associate Professor, Stockholm University, Sweden; Jacques Kaat, Academic Director, Webster University, the Netherlands; Norbertas Zioba, Head of Business Development at Danske Bank A/S Baltic Banks, Lithuania; and Eglė Seiliūtė, the team’s student member from Lithuania. Christina Rozsnyai, Programme officer at the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, acted as team secretary.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

7. LCC, as Lithuania Christian College, was founded in 1991 and was the first private higher education institution in the country. It was recognised as university-level institution by the government of the Republic of Lithuania under Resolution July 21, 2000 No. 868 (License N. 002017).

8. The bachelor programmes are offered in business administration; English language and literature; psychology; and theology. A master programme in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) was launched in 2008. All programmes have been accredited by SKVC until 2014 and 2015. A joint MBA programme with Anderson University (Indiana, USA) is being prepared.
9. LCC International University is, as its name implies, an institution with an international outlook and composition. Its Board of Directors decided in 2003 that the ratio between foreign and Lithuanian staff was to be 60% to 40%. The aim, as stated in the self-evaluation report (SER, p. 17) “is to ensure that the model of education blends the North American experience with the local context.” Instruction is in English.
10. The geographic spread for student recruitment at LCC goes beyond Lithuania to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The distribution between Lithuanian and foreign students is 48% to 52% respectively. The governance of the university is both North American and Lithuanian, with key stakeholders in the 25-member Board of Directors being representatives from their US Charity and their Canadian Charity.
11. The student enrolment for the academic year 2011/12 encompassed 547 bachelors and 15 master students, with 64% female in the former and 93% female in the second category. The graduation rate over a seven-year span reached close to, and in 2012 a full 100%. The overwhelming majority, 401 students, were enrolled in the business bachelor programme.
12. The total number of the University’s employees in 2011/12 was 123, with 72 academic and 51 other staff. Of the former group, 68% were from abroad while 35% of the other staff were from outside Lithuania. Of the 72 academic staff 24 were visiting professors, 27 of them full-time and 21 part-time. Thirty-two, or 44%, hold doctorate degrees.
13. The mission reflects the university’s commitment to its Christian values, “LCC International University provides Christian liberal arts education within a diverse learning community that transforms people for servant leadership“ (SER, p. 7). On the same page, the SER also summarises the university’s core values,
  - “1. We believe that a liberal arts education integrates learning with all aspects of life.
  2. We affirm a Christian worldview that invites all people to grow in truth and restoration through the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
  3. We value community as a safe place where people are respected, affirmed, and empowered, so that their dignity is upheld.
  4. We pursue relationships that are mutual, authentic, and based on trust.
  5. We celebrate diversity of cultures and traditions, personalities and opinions.”
14. The mission and core values go hand in hand with the LCC vision, which is “To engage students in a transforming educational experience in order to create a generation of leaders for Eastern Europe who think critically, promote democratic ideals, develop a market economy, and re-build the network of civil society within the context of a Christian worldview” (SER, p. 7).

### III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

15. The Team found that the University could boast of excellent student/staff relations. There is a friendly, almost family, atmosphere in the University with a clear sense of shared values and shared mission. The University recognises the value of the student voice and it listens carefully to its views and requests. There is a true sense of a learning community and real opportunities for students to participate in governance and quality assurance.

16. There is a welcome and unusual openness in communication in the University. The Team would like in particular to mention the accessibility of the Board of Directors and the holding of open meetings. This is unusual and to be commended.
17. However, at the time of the visit the University did not have a strategic plan formally approved by the LCC Board of Directors. Thereby it does not meet the evaluation criterion, which hinges on a strategic plan as the foundation on which a higher education institution implements its strategic management, and which is fit for purpose and is public. The Team received the *Strategic Plan for 2005*, another one for 2003-2008 and an outline for the 2012-2017 plan, which the Team was told would be presented to the Board in March 2013. The Team also received an *Action Plan Summary for 2003-2008* with a “Status Update” for 2009, the university’s *Statutes* (signed September 23, 2011) and many working documents and regulations for the university’s day to day work.
18. The Team understands the reasons for the interruption in strategic planning. There were two changes in top management since 2008 and LCC was without a President for several months, at which time the current President served as Acting President. She was finally appointed to the position in September of this year. In the interval, LCC continued to conduct its activities and even began its first master programme at this time, though it was obviously initiated earlier. Clearly, many initiatives took off only after the top management position was fully operational and the strategic planning process began again in earnest after that time. The university is aware of the problem regarding its lack of a strategic plan during the time of the Team’s visit to LCC. It states in its SER (p. 9): “In spring 2012, immediately upon the appointment of the current President and based on preliminary work from the previous year, LCC began a fast-track approach to a new formal strategic plan”. That was also underscored in several interviews.
19. The Team feels that the University must, as a matter of urgency, complete the work on the new strategy in order to define its activity over the next five years. The strategy should have clearly defined objectives that are measurable and will naturally include reference to the key performance indicators (KPIs) that it seeks to attain.
20. Although not based on a formal strategic plan, the Team nevertheless can evaluate the general direction LCC is taking based on the various existing strategic initiatives. It was also clear to the Team that the university’s Board capably sets the strategic directions for the university at its semi-annual meetings. A planning team is in place and the outline of a strategic plan was presented to the Board in September 2012 (SER, p. 9).
21. Given the awareness of LCC about its mission and strategic direction, the Team believes that the two are in alignment and that the future strategic plan may well be an operable document on which to base action plans and other documents for running the University. The documents presented in the Appendices to the SER, and not only the various strategic plans but the *Statutes*, the *Action Plan Summary 2009*, a “Sample Decision-making Grid”, extensive KPIs and numerous survey forms underscore the Team’s belief in this respect.
22. The presented activity plans are based on ongoing data collection and a large number of performance indicators. The KPIs are related to the *2003-2008 Strategic Plan* but are relevant and still in use. The Team found that there may actually be too many KPIs and believes it may be useful for LCC to define which of those in the long list are really key to the University’s mission. Clearly the University needs an individual able to analyse the data that is available and which, at the moment, is not supporting the University’s mission. Filling the position of Director for Institutional Research, which has been vacant since 2010 (SER, p. 9), should be a priority, something the University has recognised in the interviews. The Director’s task would be to manage an overall analysis of the various data collected, pinpoint the key indicators and identify relevant strategic actions for LCC.

23. The responsibilities in strategic planning are clearly defined. “With the Board of Directors setting the strategic directions, the campus and regional communities then engage in goal setting and the development of measurable action plans. As LCC engages in the 2012-2017 strategic planning process, we are following a model of setting strategic directions, goals, measurable objectives, required resources (both financial and human), and implementation plan (including timeline)” (SER, p. 8). In addition to the outline of the new Strategic Plan, the Team received a detailed breakdown for the recent (2008-2012) strategic planning process during its visit. It presents an overview of the planning, responsibilities and produced documents.
24. The draft Strategic Plan is made available to the founders of LCC and the academic community, but not to the public at large. However, many strategic documents, such as some facts and figures, the governance structure, or the *Statutes* and funding goals, can be found on the LCC website. Communication within the University community is excellent and information is shared at every level. The website is informative about the nature of the University, its vision, mission and the University as a whole.
25. LCC conducts numerous internal quality assurance activities in the form of surveys on various stakeholders. The effectiveness of internal quality assurance at LCC is part of the ongoing evaluation process, and the Team found that it is effective on the whole. However, there are some issues to be developed. E.g. the need for the improvement of teaching staff competence is declared but is not part of a formalised process. Rather, it is the responsibility of the heads of the departments and done at the individual level. It is not managed at the university level other than via guidelines in the *2012-2013 Faculty Handbook*, which was presented to the Team. As far as the University’s compliance with Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) is concerned, the Team found that all standards are met with the exception of Standard 1; there is no formal “strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality”. The University will need to bring into a single document its quality assurance processes according to the first standard of the ESG. Staff and students need to be able to locate – quickly – areas of interest and concern. Programme evaluations have been done and found to conform to the requirements. Students are supported through a variety of means, in particular study advisors.
26. In the context of quality assurance, again, the Team would underline the need to fill the position of Director for Institutional Research to ensure that the collected institutional data is analysed systematically.
27. As regards the organisational structure of LCC in relation to studies, research and social and cultural development, the Team believes that it is appropriate for the teaching activities but not for research. For the latter there are departmental and individual initiatives but not a university-wide structure. LCC recognises the need for changes and is moving in that direction, but has not yet mapped through the consequences. With regard to the organisational structure of study programmes there are features that need to be clarified. The Team is concerned that the current structure may not ensure progression along the academic levels.
28. The academic heads of departments are not trained, and although the Team was told that the department heads get teaching load reductions, the time allowance for leading a department seems to the Team to be insufficient. There is a *2012-2013 Department Chairperson Handbook* that provides practical guidance, but there is no evidence of strategic thinking on the departmental level; the chairs of the departments were not oriented toward institutional strategic goals. The Team recognised that at the top strategic level there is evident strength but at the department level the management is weak.
29. With respect to the management of human resources, the report has already noted that there is an urgent need to fill the position of Institutional Research Director in order to draw relevant data

and project relevant actions. The Team recognises that LCC is a small institution where it is easy to manage change on day-to-day basis. That, however, is a reactive rather than strategically managed approach where the results may be haphazard rather than deliberately planned. That, in turn, affects human and financial resources.

30. As regards the allocation of resources, the Team found that the University's budget appears to be well structured and agreed and that the management processes are in place. As a private institution, LCC seeks external funding, much of it from donations. It set up an Advancement office in 2011 for this purpose (SER, p. 14), which works under the President, who is responsible for the overall budget. The Team heard from the Human Resources representative that 7% of operating funds go toward contingency funding, which constitutes a very strong back-up. According to a decision by the Board of Directors, 3% of operating funds are allocated toward staff development (SER, p. 19). It follows from LCC's philosophy that it provides financial support to students, both based on merit and need. Over half the students receive financial aid (SER, p. 26). Overall it is evident that finances are sound and well managed.
31. The Team was impressed by the quality of the buildings and the learning environments; there is a good library, excellent computer laboratories, as well as excellent student accommodation and sports facilities. LCC owns its campus and has renovated the original building and erected new ones, including residence halls for students and visiting faculty.
32. The Team visited the LCC library. Books are available on open shelves, there is ample reading space and the IT system is up-to-date, with access to international databases for books and journals.
33. Textbooks are provided free of charge to students. The Team was concerned, however, that there is a danger that such texts, in certain disciplines, can quickly become out of date, a point that was corroborated by the students in an interview. Therefore the Team recommends that the University take steps to ensure that its teaching and teaching material is abreast of current developments.
34. The Team was surprised, however, that a university like LCC has no clearly defined policy on the admission and support of students with handicaps, including dyslexia. There are European expectations in this area that are not being met. The Team explored this question in interviews and learned repeatedly that staff would readily accommodate such students on a one-on-one basis if they had such applicants. Nevertheless, the Team recommends that LCC develop a relevant policy and make it explicit in its documents and on the website so that the University is made attractive for such students.
35. Academic ethics are very well delineated at LCC and acted upon in case of non-observance. There is an institutional Review Board (SER, p. 47) that deals with ethical issues in research. The *2012-2013 Faculty Handbook* (Faculty Responsibilities, Professional Responsibilities, Relationship with Students, p.37; Faculty Absence, Participation at Meetings/Events, p. 39; and elsewhere) describes teacher conduct on campus. The faculty and the student handbooks delineate expected behaviour and consequences of misconduct (e.g. plagiarism and other offenses in the *2012-2013 Faculty Handbook* pp. 52-53; or in the *Student Handbook 2012-2013: Absenteeism* p. 21, *Drunkenness* p. 28, etc.).

**Judgment on the area: Strategic Management is a given negative evaluation.**

#### IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

36. The Team was impressed on hearing in many of the interviews about the high student satisfaction with LCC in relation to both their academic and non-academic student experience. Students are seen as partners in learning and personal development, which contributes to an open

and interactive learning environment and ultimately to good communication skills that external partners valued highly. Students are also involved in quality assurance, not only via their representation in the respective University bodies but through various surveys.

37. As noted, the University has undergone significant change in recent years as it has moved towards compliance with Bologna expectations. LCC describes in its SER (p. 28) how its degree programmes follow the University strategy, “The strategic nature of our majors can be seen as follows: Business Administration for economic development and entrepreneurship; Social Sciences for addressing social problems; English/Translation for participation in global business and politics; Theology for its place in developing citizens grounded in moral values and integrity; and TESOL for strengthening language instruction.”
38. All programmes follow the Bologna model in the undergraduate and graduate structure and all are accredited by SKVC; “In 2006 LCC adopted the diploma supplement requirements, and in 2011 the ECTS system as well as a change in our program structure to move from LCC’s old system of minors to the new system of modules” (SER, p. 21). LCC uses the ECTS system that builds on total workload, which was corroborated in the Team’s interviews. The system also allows for transfers, which are facilitated by their Diploma Supplements issued to all graduates. LCC has an office dealing with credit recognition; the conditions for accepting transfers are set down in the *2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Undergraduate Program* (pp. 12-13) and *2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Graduate Program* (pp. 12-13). The minimum ECTS requirement for bachelor programmes is 240 ECTS taking up an average four years of study while the master programme is 90 ECTS with two years (*2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Undergraduate Program*, pp. 27-28 and *2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Graduate Program*, p. 21 respectively). It was evident in the interviews during the Team’s site visit that the recognition of informal learning is not yet considered at LCC, as indeed it is a new concept in Europe. The Team suggests, however, that the University consider this option in its strategy in order to keep abreast of European developments and as an option in student recruitment.
39. LCC tries to meet student interests in learning content by providing numerous modules, which are organised in such a way that students from other degree programmes are able to study them to complement their major. “As one means of determining student interest, LCC has established a new academic program structure which involves the inclusion of modules within the study programs as well as options for modules outside the study programs. Seventeen modules have been launched in fall 2012. These will be useful as gauges for future program development” (SER, p. 31).
40. LCC calls itself a liberal arts university, which, as a broad category, seems to the Team to be suited for its strategic direction. As such, LCC requires its students to take such core courses as history, language and literature (*2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Undergraduate Program*, pp. 46-47). In this context the Team felt, however, that the broadness of the liberal arts offer could be extended in the future, not necessarily based on student requests but in order to provide them with a genuine all-round background, with classes in additional fields such as art and music.
41. As far as the organisation of programmes is concerned, it seemed to the Team to be somewhat haphazard at the moment, with no clear oversight of all the implications of Bologna-type learning in terms of programme structure and learning outcomes. It was apparent to the Team that learning outcomes exist only at programme/module level but not at course level where the actual assessment takes place. Although there is a clear and agreed template for the course descriptions there is some variance in the documents that are emitted.
42. Specifically, the team was concerned with the institution’s core competencies, as it understood, to be developed and achieved by all students after the completion of all LCC programmes. First, these competencies are a mixture of values, activities and indeed, competencies. Competence in

the sense of what someone is able to do is in fact what is meant with learning outcomes, one of the cornerstones of the Bologna process. Learning outcomes can be divided into intended learning outcomes, written statements in a course/programme syllabus expressing “what the students are expected to know, understand and be able to do after completion of a study period”, and achieved learning outcomes which are those results that students actually have achieved. As “competencies” the LCC core competencies are comparable to intended learning outcomes and thus need to be reviewed and formulated accordingly and also in the future be part of the assessment procedures.

43. The University has a long Christian tradition and the Team explored this in some detail during its visit. It sought to understand exactly what was meant by a Christian university. It found that staff were eloquent and clear about their understanding of what was meant and intended, but that the language in written documents was sometimes more forceful. The Team was concerned about the formulations regarding the core competence (core value) Christian faith; “students will understand what is meant by seeing the world as God’s creation and the object of God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ. They will explore the integration of Christian faith with all of life. Students will be invited to align their lives with God’s mission and to participate in the church as God’s community of redemption” (SER Appendix 22, p. 248). These formulations are very prescriptive and would be difficult to embrace for students with a different religious background than Christianity. The Team, therefore, suggests removing or reformulating these wordings, also to better mirror the open attitude with regards to these issues that it experienced when talking to staff and students during its visit.
44. The Team would encourage the University to look again at the whole area of academic management. The University needs trained heads of departments who are fully aware of the requirements of their post, who are given adequate professional support and the kind of training they need to undertake their jobs in a satisfactory manner. Heads should serve for a defined period and should benefit from research time allowed after their period of office. These are critical posts which the University should recognise more adequately. Heads are crucial in the area of staff development and appraisal of staff, which they undertake, should lead to more clearly defined targets.
45. As far as student assessments are concerned, any private institution needs to be confident that the grades it awards are comparable to those of competing institutions and national norms; it must ensure that assessment is fairly and carefully carried out, that there is no grade inflation, that exam and test assignments are seen by somebody other than the person doing the particular teaching. The University might want to consider working more closely with neighbouring institutions in order to show the value of its awards and the objectivity and fairness of its assessments. This applies also, of course, to research and common projects.
46. The Team was concerned that the requirement for the final graduation project does not comply with national regulations concerning the ECTS allocation that dates from 2010. The University is aware of the problem, and the Team was told in an interview that LCC is changing the credit allocation for future graduates. The Team emphasises that every attention should be paid as a matter of urgency to ensure that all degree programme requirements are compliant. The Team recommends that this final project should consist of a thesis or a business plan but not a final examination. A final project should ensure equivalence of learning outcomes. The credits for the final project (no less than 12 ECTS) should only encompass the actual project and no courses.
47. As regards non-traditional education, LCC offers numerous life-long-learning seminars for the community with various credit allocations. The Team was able to see an English course for children and learned that there are also those for grown-ups. Distance learning is offered for the master programme (*2012-2013 Academic Catalog, Graduate Program*, p. 29), while the Team was told in the visit that blended learning is offered also in some undergraduate courses.

Developing various forms of life-long-learning is discussed in the draft Strategic Plan (SER Appendix 4, p. 76). The Team commends these initiatives but would suggest that, once the new Strategic Plan is in place, the University build on it to plan its non-traditional learning modes in an organised manner.

48. As an international university, the LCC student body is naturally international with proportions of 52% international to 48% Lithuanians in the academic year 2011/12. As concerns visiting students, of the 547 total student number, 45 were at LCC through study abroad programmes from North America while 34 were there under the Erasmus scheme (SER, p. 30). Students reported in the interviews that many were exploring the possibility for Erasmus study. The LCC staff are also mobile, not just with respect to the international staff but all staff participating in international training and other activities. Numerous mobility schemes in which LCC is involved are described in the SER (pp. 42-45).
49. In this context the Team would like to point out that while the University seems to uphold excellent relations with the external community via seminars on campus as well as projects involving staff and students, it could make better use of its good relations with external stakeholders in terms of curriculum development, programme planning and in the establishment of joint projects. The Team heard in the interview with external partners that the local Chamber was invited to participate in planning a course a few years ago. This is not common practice although stakeholders would welcome it.
50. LCC is keen to keep contact with its alumni, not only to build on the established University community but also for monitoring employment and career paths (e.g. SER Appendix 11, pp. 121-124). The outcomes feed back into institutional initiatives, such as keeping contacts with students and seeking potential donors, but also to reflect on the success of learning outcomes. The graduate employment rate is one of the KPIs used in monitoring LCC activities (SER Appendix 5, p. 79).
51. Finally, the Team was impressed by the attention paid by the University to its scholarships and the manner in which it supports students in need. The Team heard that over 30% of the University's revenue is given back in the form of scholarships and around 60% of students receive some form of support. Also, the Team commends the University for the provision of a professional counselling service. More generally, the Team formed the impression of a university with a strong and professional administration that works to support the University in its mission.

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

## V. RESEARCH

52. LCC defines itself as an institution where teaching is the major activity. But universities are more than just teaching institutions – they are places where research is carried out, and research of a particular quality.
53. The Team received the law defining the requirements for a university, according to which universities have “to conduct high-level research ..., to train scientists, to cooperate with national and foreign partners in the field of research”. Colleges are “to develop applied research”. LCC does not fully fit the prevailing system in either category. The Team would like to point out that the Lithuanian definitions on types of research assigned to institutional categories is not in line with the European Agenda of the “Knowledge Triangle”, which emphasises a strong integration of research, education and innovation.

54. There are various initiatives at LCC to conduct applied-type research with a teaching focus, and staff reported that they introduce their research and updated professional information into their teaching. It was evident to the Team that there is individual scholarship, and there is an Institutional Review Board whose task is “to ensure the integrity and accurate procedures of all research involving human subjects” (*Internal Quality Assurance* document, p. 1, and SER Appendix 25, pp. 251-255).
55. However, no research priorities are set by the University and there is no research management at the central level. Nor did the Team see evidence of research projects or collaborative research with other higher education institutions in Lithuania or other countries. The library holdings consist of textbooks and literature to support the teaching curriculum, although subscription to numerous databases holds the potential to access literature for research. There is encouragement for staff to conduct research on the University level but it is the prerogative of the department heads to oversee, or indeed advance, such activity. As set down in the *2012-2013 Faculty Handbook* (p. 40), “full instructional load is the equivalent of teaching eight 6 ECTS credit hour courses per year (=48 ‘load hours’ per year or 24 per semester).” Academic staff may be given a reduced workload, which the Team was told in interviews is done on a case-by-case basis, although the *Handbook* mentions community activity rather than research.
56. The KPIs track the level of degrees held by academic staff (SER Appendix 5, p. 80), indicating that there is value attached to qualified staff. As noted earlier, 3% of operating budget is allocated to staff development and the Team heard repeatedly in the interviews that the University supports staff participation in conferences and seminars. As part of LCC’s mission, its staff are involved in community activity and this often generates research projects. These, and a long list of subject-related projects, conference and workshop presentations are presented in SER Appendices 26-28 (pp. 256-303). It is evident that the international faculty activities were conducted overwhelmingly in other countries, while the local staff participated for the most part in Lithuanian events, which underlines the concern that full-time academic staff are needed to ensure a reliable synergy on which to build research teams.
57. Given the nature of LCC, there are ample international staff, including several Fulbright scholars, coming to teach for a time at LCC. The University benefits from bringing in research projects from other environments on an individual basis along with its international staff as well as adjunct faculty employed at other local universities. As concerns the scholarly impact, however, the Team found from the list of staff publications that these are not internationally referenced (SER Appendices 26-28, pp. 256-303).
58. While LCC is not a research-intensive institution, there is evidence of impact on applied research from external partners. The Team heard from stakeholders and students that LCC members, as well as students, participate in numerous projects in the area. This is good and in line with the European agenda often called the “Knowledge Triangle”, meaning working towards a better integration between education, research and innovation. In a future perspective for LCC these are probably the sort of activities it is best fit to develop; to contribute with research and development projects in the nearby community, at the same time involving its students in these projects and fostering a more entrepreneurial mindset. (See for instance [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20110920\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20110920_en.htm).)
59. The Team recommends that in order to improve its research endeavours, LCC should define its objectives, give staff clear targets, appoint more staff with doctorates in order to satisfy national guidelines. It will need to manage research, allow academic staff time to undertake research activity, provide adequate funding for it, form research groups and seek research collaborations both nationally and internationally. The University might want to consider appointing a vice-president with particular responsibility for research and establishing a research office to assist with applications for external funding. The University might also want to consider the

composition of its staff: are there sufficient numbers of full-time and permanent faculty members?

**Judgment on the area: Research is given a negative evaluation.**

## VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

60. The University has a strong network of local stakeholders with a keen interest in the work of the University and who are full of good will. The Team commends the University for its work in the community, working with local businesses and NGOs. This provides excellent training opportunities for students and also builds links with its region and its community. It is much appreciated by local stakeholders.
61. As noted in several sections of this report, LCC's community commitment is evident in its expectations toward staff and students. Staff are expected to "Engage in public and Christian service", as set down, among others, in the *2012-2013 Faculty Handbook* (p. 37). The University mission and strategic documents are explicit about LCC's commitment to the community and the region. E.g. in its vision states the University aims "To engage students in a transforming educational experience in order to create a generation of leaders for Eastern Europe who think critically, promote democratic ideals, develop a market economy, and re-build the network of civil society within the context of a Christian worldview" (SER p. 7). The volunteer activity of staff is listed in the SER (pp. 70-71).
62. The question arises how LCC understands the region which it aims to affect. Its Christian mission makes its impact a global one; in discussion of regional impact in its SER, LCC states that "For example, currently Social Science faculty are engaged in the following research projects: Student Attitudes About Marital Gender Roles and Household Division of Labor in the Family, Experiences of Lithuanian Deportees with Forgiveness/Reconciliation, and Experiences of Participants in Evangelical Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Programs in Russian Federation" (p. 48). The University's student recruitment focus is Eastern Europe, so that impact via returning graduates can be said to extend to Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan etc. It is clearly the local community, however, where LCC exerts tangible impact.
63. The Team was impressed to learn especially in the interview with external stakeholders and also with graduates about the work students do in the community with NGOs and local businesses. Several student projects and theses developed with the local community were mentioned, such as business plans by business students for local firms, collaboration in a human rights documentary film festival, or collecting clothes for the homeless and prisoners, organizing cultural events, providing psychological support for homeless and recent prisoners, all on a volunteer basis.

**Judgment on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given a positive evaluation.**

## VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Good practice

64. The Team was hugely impressed by numerous achievements of LCC that can stand as good practice examples for the higher education community. Many of these features were also mentioned by external partners and alumni. They include the commitment of the University members to do work in the community, thereby engaging in an ongoing dialogue with them, setting an example, networking and not least providing students with practical experience.

65. The skills students learn are very much appreciated and in demand on the part of employers. They include English language proficiency established with the teaching language at LCC; communication skills formed in the open communication between students and staff as well as the ongoing group-work, project and presentation-oriented teaching style, IT skills and commercial skills.
66. So, to sum up: there are issues to be addressed, particularly in the areas of academic management and research; this is a university with particular strengths which provide a firm platform for advancement – but there needs to be clear strategic thinking about how the next period will allow the University to move forward in a manner that will enable it to achieve its ambitions in the environment in which it operates, and to which it very clearly contributes.

## Recommendations

67. In the following, the Team repeats its key recommendations in order to facilitate an overview.
  - a. Complete the work on the new strategy with clearly defined objectives that are measurable and include reference to the KPIs;
  - b. define which of the KPIs are key to the mission;
  - c. fill the position of Director for Institutional Research who can manage a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the various data collected, and pinpoint the key indicators and project relevant strategic actions;
  - d. bring into a single document the quality assurance processes according to Pat 1, Standard 1 of the ESG;
  - e. train heads of departments who are fully aware of the requirements of their post and who are given adequate professional support. They should serve for a defined period and should benefit from research time allowed after their period of office;
  - f. develop a university-steered strategy for staff training and development and take steps to ensure that teaching and teaching material is abreast of current developments;
  - g. develop a policy on the admission and support of students with handicaps, including dyslexia, and make it explicit in documents and on the website so that LCC is made attractive for such students;
  - h. consider setting up a policy for the recognition of informal learning in order to keep abreast of European developments and as an option in student recruitment;
  - i. consider expanding the broadness of the liberal arts offer in order to provide students with a genuine all-round background, with classes in additional fields such as art and music;
  - j. review and reformulate core competencies to distinguish from intended learning outcomes and make them part of student assessments;
  - k. consider working more closely with neighbouring institutions in student assessment procedures in order to show the value of awards and the objectivity and fairness of assessments;
  - l. pay urgent attention to ensuring that all degree programme requirements are compliant with national 2010 regulations. For future graduates, final projects should consist of a thesis or a business plan but not a final examination. A final project should ensure equivalence of learning outcomes. The credits for the final project (no less than 12 ECTS) should only encompass the actual project and no courses;

- m. make better use of good relations with external stakeholders in terms of curriculum development, programme planning and in the establishment of joint projects;
- n. in order to improve research endeavours, define objectives, give staff clear targets, appoint more staff with doctorates so as to satisfy national guidelines; appoint a research coordinator, allow academic staff time to undertake research activity, provide adequate funding for it, form research groups and seek research collaborations both nationally and internationally.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

LCC International University is given a negative evaluation, which is based on the negative evaluation of two of the four areas evaluated.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Malcolm C. Cook
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Lena Adamson Jacques Kaat Norbertas Zioba Eglė Seiliūtė
Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Christina Rozsnyai

## ANNEX. LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

Dear Members of the SKVC Institutional Review Team,

On behalf of LCC International University, I wish to acknowledge the receipt of the Institutional Review Report, received on December 11, 2012. LCC administrative and academic leadership have reviewed the report, and offer the following comments:

The Institutional Review Report that was submitted by the international review team on behalf of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) is generally a correct representation of LCC institutional strengths and weaknesses. We are in agreement that the evaluation of the university was conducted in an open, transparent manner and in accordance with the methodology and guidelines specified in the Procedure for External Review in Higher Education.

LCC International University acknowledges that the purpose of the evaluation was to improve the performance of LCC and to receive recommendations that will lead toward enhanced quality of its educational program. It is our view that the institutional review achieved these objectives.

### **i. Area of misinterpretation:**

The review report seems to suggest that LCC textbooks may be outdated in certain disciplines. As a point of clarification, the university expends considerable financial resources to enable students and instructors to purchase updated material. It is the responsibility of the Department Chair, in consultation with each individual instructor, to recommend new purchases for textbooks, periodicals and on-line/database resources. Instructors are free to use other textbooks if they choose to do so, but we make a concerted effort to replace textbooks when the content becomes outdated. The Library Director monitors all holdings and provides periodic reports to the Academic Vice President regarding requisition needs.

### **ii. Areas of immediate action:**

**a.** As stated in the report, LCC is aware of the need to bring the final graduation project into compliance with national regulations (effective for the incoming class of 2010) concerning the ECTS allocation. As such, the university has taken immediate action to ensure that the credits for the final project encompass only the actual project.

**b.** LCC is taking immediate action to compile all quality assurance processes into a single document, according to the standard of the ESG. This document will be completed by January 31, 2013 – thus enabling students and staff to quickly locate information.

**c.** As a part of new program development, LCC has already established a Program Planning Task Force that will be responsible for reviewing program and course learning outcomes.

### **iii. Areas included in the 2012 – 2017 Strategic Plan:**

Since April 2012, the university has been in the process of drafting a strategic plan that will have measurable objectives (KPIs). (The preliminary draft was available in Appendix 4 of the Self-Assessment Report.) The new five-year strategic plan will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval when it meets in March, 2013. This plan will include specific action plans to improve structures of professional development, academic research, adult or informal learning, and liberal arts expansion.

### **iv. Area of improvement:**

LCC's admission policy is to provide access to students with disabilities. Having said this, we are aware of the need to strengthen our current descriptions to ensure that all disability groups understand this access.

Again, we are thankful for the thorough review undertaken by the Institutional Review Panel, and we look forward to receiving the final report in the near future. LCC is committed to taking the appropriate steps to further improve the quality of our academic program in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Marlene Wall

President