



## **STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

## **VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETO**

## **VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

---

## **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF**

## **VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY**

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Prof. Dr Luc Weber

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Peter Wells

Dr Annie Doona

Prof. Dr Hans Robert Hansen

Aldona Savičienė

Andrius Zalitis

Vertinimo sekretorius:  
Review secretary:

Prof. Sue Frost

## CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>V. RESEARCH AND ART ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>VIII. JUDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>ANNEX. VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Vytautas Magnus University (VMU/the University) submitted a self-evaluation report (SER) that addressed the key elements required by the Lithuanian Institutional Review process. The SER was prepared by the Self-Evaluation Review Group within the University and included contributions from University managers, staff and students. The draft SER was shared widely with all stakeholders, including employers, social partners and alumni who contributed through a consultation process. Student organizations and external stakeholders confirmed that they had been involved in the consultation process and were able to make comments on the SER. The SER also drew on information from sources such as the Rector's Annual Report, student feedback surveys, and made reference to key themes and issues that VMU felt to be of significance at the current time. The SER also included self-critique and highlighted areas for improvement. The University Council, Rectorate (Rector's advisory institution) and the University Senate formally approved the SER. The Review Team (the Team) came to the view that the SER was well written and clear with an appropriate tone of self-critical comment about the issues that were presented.
2. The SER covered the information required to prepare the Team for its visit to the University. A number of appendices were included to elaborate on the detail of the following aspects of provision; University management structures, student profile data, a full list of all programmes currently on offer, information on the previous review in 2006, VMU Strategic Plan 2014-2020 and detailed information on professorial publications.

### **The review process**

3. Before visiting the University, members of the Team reviewed the SER and its annexes, commenting on the points made and the questions that were prompted. Each member prepared initial comments on the SER using the SKVC review criteria. This facilitated the development of the programme of activities of the review, and enabled identification of potential areas of enquiry for the Team. On arrival at SKVC the Team used the first day of the review to establish a clear overview of the process. The Team also undertook training and preparation from the sub-Director and staff of SKVC, including *inter alia*; the higher education system in Lithuania, the Institutional Review procedures and the protocols to be observed within the review process. An external assessment of the University's funding for learning resource was provided for the Team by Lithuania's Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA). The Team was able to learn more about the national policy arrangements including the funding arrangements that were pertinent to VMU.

4. The Team invested considerable effort on the first day to identify emerging themes. These themes were used to establish an initial agenda for the meetings that were planned for the visit to VMU. Questions were generated to prepare an agenda for the initial meetings. The Team also agreed the style, and approach that would be adopted. This approach proved very helpful to Team members, as there was a clear understanding of the questions that were used to stimulate discussions at VMU. The agenda was reviewed throughout the visit to VMU to develop further questions for subsequent meetings.
5. The Team travelled to Kaunas on the first morning of the visit to the University. The site visit to VMU took place over the three days (13, 14 & 15 May 2014) and included 12 formal meetings with the Rector, senior managers, Governors, University staff, students, alumni and external partners. A tour of the facilities on the main VMU campus was also included and supplemented with a later visit to the library. The Team spent the final day of the review day at SKVC reviewing the evidence collected during the review, discussing and agreeing the findings, and summarising the conclusions of the review. The Review Team came to a collective and full agreement on all of the judgments in the final report. During all meetings the Secretary and member of the Team, Professor Sue Frost, took detailed notes, and after each meeting the Team identified key points and areas for further exploration in subsequent meetings.
6. Additional Material was available to the Team before and during the site visit. The members of the Team were presented with the results of the review of learning resources and associated infrastructure conducted by MOSTA and with the evaluation decision of June 2013. The Team received a range of information from the University in advance of the visit including, amongst other things; the VMU Strategic Plan, annual report, University statutes, details of study programmes, organisational structures, research information, staff profiles, performance indicators and quality assurance information.
7. While on site, the Team requested and was provided with further information including; faculty annual reports, business plans and a wide range of materials relating to policies, quality handbooks and student support.
8. University staff and students participated actively in meetings and were committed to the process of review. The Team was impressed with the willingness of staff, students and external colleagues to engage with the review process and the number of external stakeholders who travelled to meetings exemplified this commitment. Additionally a large number of staff, students and employers took part in the relevant meetings. Where required, meetings were

conducted with the aid of an interpreter to support the members of the Team who do not speak Lithuanian. Many of those attending meetings were able to speak English but wanted the support of translation to ensure that they fully understood the discussion and questions.

9. It was evident to the Team that staff and students attending the meetings were initially anxious about the process because it was new to them. There was a sense of “not wanting to get it wrong”. As the review progressed this anxiety reduced and everyone participated openly with a willingness to contribute. The Team came to the view that some meetings with staff and students could have been longer as there was a great deal of information to contribute.
  
10. At the beginning of each meeting the Chair affirmed the purpose of the review, welcomed those who attended the meeting and invited colleagues to be open and frank in their responses. The meetings were held in a non-confrontational style and participants were willing to make constructive comments and answer questions openly, supporting one another in the process. In some meetings the Team was aware that those attending had been carefully selected and there was a reluctance to make critical comments although this defensiveness was limited and did not undermine the important comments that were made.
  - The review Team consisted of the following members:
  - Prof. Dr Luc Weber – Rector Emeritus of University of Geneva [Chair of the Review], Switzerland
  - Dr Annie Doona – President of the Institute of Art Design and Technology, Republic of Ireland, Ireland
  - Prof. Susan Frost – (Secretary to Panel) Professor Emeritus and former Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Huddersfield, UK
  - Prof. Dr Hans Robert Hansen – Rector Emeritus of the Vienna University of Economics and Business, former Vice President of the Austrian Accreditation Council, Austria
  - Aldona Saviciene – Manager/Owner UADBB AM Sprendimai, Lithuania
  - Peter Wells – Director, Bucharest Professional Training College, Romania
  - Andrius Zalitis – Vice President of the Lithuanian Student Union. Law Student University of Vilnius, Lithuania
  
11. The Team was supported by Rugile Bluseviciene. SKVC Evaluation Coordinator, who acted as the point of liaison with the University Team during the review programme.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

12. Vytautas Magnus University is a state higher education institution functioning under the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania. VMU has its origin in the Programme of Higher Studies that was established in Kaunas in January 1920. This later led to the foundation of the University of Lithuania in February 1922. In 1930 it was granted the name of Vytautas Magnus University and in 1940 renamed as Kaunas University. In 1946 it became Kaunas State University.
13. In 1950 (when Lithuania was a part of the Soviet Union) VMU was closed and replaced with the two independent institutions of higher education: Kaunas Polytechnic Institute and Kaunas Medical Institute. At this time many subjects were prohibited and education operated under a highly vocational, skills based curriculum determined by the State.
14. A small number of academics worked hard to maintain the identity of the academy in Kaunas and the reestablishment of VMU was declared at a conference of Lithuanian Diaspora Scientists in 1989 and legitimated on 4 July 1989. The modern University of VMU was re-established with the goal of disseminating liberal humanist ideas within spheres of higher education and research in Lithuania and beyond.
15. This period of the University history is very important in understanding the importance of the establishment of a new university education in Lithuania, based on the concept of *artes liberales*. The liberal arts movement in education, while strong in USA, has not been a feature of European Higher Education. VMU is the only University in Lithuania operating entirely as a liberal arts University. Liberal Arts is a term that is used to describe education whose purpose is not focussed on professional, vocational or technical criteria. Liberal Arts education offers a broad programme of intellectual development that enables students to acquire core and transferable skills to take part fully in society. This may seem to contradict the main direction of some European Higher Education strategies (such as the Bologna Process and later the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)) that are increasingly focussed on developing vocational approaches to deliver professional and technical education. The Liberal Arts philosophy at VMU however, seeks to equip students with intellectual skills to adapt to a range of career options and quickly acquire new practical skills in the workplace. This enables the University to act freely as a place of social critique and change.
16. In 2013 VMU was organised into ten faculties, two institutes (Innovative Studies Institute and Institute of Foreign Languages), and the VMU/ Kaunas Botanical Garden. There are six University centres, twelve University central offices and six other servicing units. VMU also supports the Student Representative Council and eight public enterprises that it founded.

17. VMU has 8813 students including 6066 following undergraduate studies, 1526 Master Degree students and 289 Doctoral students. 879 students are studying in integrated study programmes.
18. VMU offers studies in the areas of Humanities, Arts, Social, Physical, Biomedical and Technological Sciences. VMU students may select from a choice of over 50 Bachelor programmes (five of which are taught in English), 58 Master programmes (22 of which are taught in English), 16 post-diploma study programmes, an integrated law degree programme, and supplementary courses for graduates from universities of applied sciences, as well as doctoral programmes in 18 study fields. In addition, there are integrated degree programmes that include the first and second cycles.
19. During the 25 years since the reestablishment of VMU the number of students has grown from 177 in 1989 to 8813 students in 2013.
20. In 2013 the average number of University staff positions was 1091, including 26 (2%) administrative staff, 512 (47%) academic staff and 553 (51%) other University employees.
21. Two collegial decision-making bodies – the University Council and the Senate – and the Rector as a unipersonal decision-making body manage the University. The Rectorate is the Rector's advisory institution which includes the Rector, 4 Vice Rectors, Deans of Faculties and Heads of Central Functions such as Human Resource, Finance and Estates and the President of the Student Representative Council.

### **III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

#### **Strategic Planning**

22. VMU visions itself as an active, modern and globally recognised classical University that fosters the principles of *artes liberales* nationally and internationally.
23. VMU has a Strategic Plan that identifies the University's direction for 2012-2020. The plan was developed by the Working Group created by the Rectorate and was submitted to the University Council and approved in February 2012. The strategic plan is derived from the core mission of VMU and confirms that the mission of VMU is that of a community-based research, arts and study institution that creates liberal learning conditions for an individual. This is underpinned by developing partnerships to play an active part in the life of Kaunas making a regional, national and international contribution to academic development.
24. Each Faculty and Centre develops a strategic action plan to contribute to the delivery of the University's objectives. The Rectorate and the Senate approve these action plans as part of the annual review and report process.
25. The strategic plan is coherent with the mission of VMU and the plan complies with regional and national policy. The Plan recognises the principles of the European Higher Education Area and

the European Research Area. The strategic plan also reflects the priorities that are highlighted in the Lithuanian Strategy for Education and indicates that VMU intends to make a powerful impact through five key strategic themes:

- a. Being a **socially active and responsible community** that: focuses on individuals; fosters culture by maintaining traditions; values and standards; actively develops *artes liberales* principles; strengthens cooperation with communities and organisations; and participates in Lithuanian public policy development
  - b. VMU as a **reliable international partner** through a range of activities that has international participation, increased international studies and develops international scientific study, art and research
  - c. Offering study programmes that are favourable for **developing talents and personalities** through expanding freedom of choice in study, sustaining the liberal arts traditions and fostering student careers
  - d. Achieving the **highest level of science and art** through creating new art and science clusters, promoting research participation, building world-class expertise and the creation of an international doctoral study school
  - e. Providing **high quality learning environments** through; effective management, diversification of income streams, high quality learning facilities, extending virtual and on line studies and being an attractive employer
26. The current plan has been shared widely with all stakeholders. The Team learned of extensive consultation with external partners who confirmed their understanding of and commitment to the strategic direction of VMU.
27. As can be seen from the list of priorities above, VMU intends to become an international leading organisation that has acknowledged leading reputation across a number of areas. There is an intention to engage in world standard scientific research, become a leading liberal arts University and support freedom within the curriculum by offering unrestricted choice for students. The Team observed that this is a very broad strategic intention and as such intends for VMU to be outstanding on every aspect of its provision. Such diversification of the strategic direction, arguably, lacks sufficient focus to inform and drive a strong investment plan. As such VMU may struggle to be ‘all things to all people’ within the current funding arrangements.
28. The Team recognises that VMU has many research strengths. The strategic plan is aligned with the research priorities of the European Research Area. The research goal to become a research-intensive University producing world-class outcomes within five years is unrealistically ambitious. Given the current profile, VMU would require sustained investment, at a significantly higher level, to reach the critical mass and quality required to realise this ambition. Currently there is a research output that matches other institutions in Lithuania but does not yet have the



capacity to reach the critical mass required to meet this goal. The current research output is highly commendable but there is insufficient publication in internationally recognised refereed journals to meet the criteria for world-class ranking in either the short or medium term. Moreover it is possible that such a broad focus might detract from the unique contribution of VMU as a leading Liberal Arts University that could see VMU become recognised as the most significant Liberal Arts University in Europe. This would not undermine the research endeavour in any way but would focus the developmental direction of VMU.

29. The Team came to the view that VMU needs to determine its strategic priority in terms of what sort of University it intends to become. The current range of strategic objectives may be mutually exclusive. The priority for investment should be determined to inform the medium term and longer term goals as well as the immediate operational priorities.
30. The Senate and University Council monitor the strategic plan annually through upward reporting mechanisms. The annual report is shared widely with social partners and other external stakeholders.
31. The Strategic-planning climate at VMU recognises the challenges of the changing demographic patterns of the region and of Lithuania. The University has made assumptions about a gradual decline in student numbers that will be buffered by an increase in international student numbers. The University planning climate assumes relative stability in other areas. Staff and stakeholders view a continuity of mission and funding, without being complacent. The Team observed that there seemed to be limited recognition of the consequence of wider competition from a range of factors including new pedagogical approaches, major shifts in the competitive climate and a changing and challenging resource infrastructure in Lithuania.
32. The strategic plan has a number of indicators that are coherent with the mission of the VMU. The challenge for the University, however, is that many of these indicators are largely measures that monitor the *inputs* from the University rather than being externally focussed on the *impact* of the strategic plan. The output measures that are in the strategic plan are, in the view of the Team, overly general and are insufficiently quantifiable. This does not ensure that the University Council has an effective flow of data that gives information on the real achievement of the strategic plan. The University Council and the Rectorate would be better positioned to assess the overall impact of the operational and strategic plans with more specific target values for the University objectives.
33. The lack of impact measures means that the ability of the VMU to demonstrate the significance of its contributions may be undermined. The University, in effect, cannot do justice to its achievements without indicators that demonstrate the weight and significance of its strategic outputs.

34. Many of the targets that underpin the strategic plan are found in the Faculty Action Plans. These are intended to ensure that actions are carried out. Each reflects the individual aspirations of the Faculty and Department. This secures ownership of the objectives of the University and all staff make a contribution. The strategic direction of VMU is thus driven from the Faculties.
35. Strategic objectives relating to research and to internationalisation are too overly generalised. It is difficult to tell whether the strategic plan is meeting its targets or exceeding its expectations in relation to the development of research. The strategic plan would appear stronger if it included an analysis of the external environment including competition, likely changes in the academic and Higher Education financial infrastructure in Lithuania and the impact of expanding online study programmes in Europe. Such a risk-based analysis would support the University in setting realistic and measurable objectives in the light of change over the medium- and long-term as well as meeting short-term demands. In short, the University profile rests partly on its ability to give an account of these important strategic developments and would be greatly enhanced with rigour in the evaluation and monitoring measures.

### **Quality Assurance and Academic Governance**

36. The University has an internal quality assurance system that matches the requirements of its external accreditation, as well as European and National benchmarks and Ministry of Education and Science requirements.
37. The VMU Ethics Committee oversees academic ethics and there are detailed procedures to ensure the integrity of academic work. This committee has the overarching responsibility for the oversight of academic conduct.
38. The organisational structure is highly devolved and responsibility for quality management is located within the Faculties. This ensures that staff in the Faculties and Departments take responsibility for assuring the quality of academic programmes and is a strength of VMU.
39. The challenge presented by such a highly devolved approach is that practice across Faculties and Departments is variable. While there is a robust system of upward reporting, the mechanism for academic oversight rests with the Deans of Faculty. Thus the institutional oversight of programme quality relies on the upward self-reporting from the academic units.
40. The Senate is responsible for ensuring that appropriate processes have been followed and oversees the management of quality within faculties. The Senate relies on reports from Deans, supported by student achievement data in assuring the management of quality assurance. The decision making in central committees of the University is robust and clear although largely dependent on an upward flow of information from departments.
41. The Centre for Quality and Innovation plays an important role in the management of quality at University level. This department has considerable expertise and scrutinises study proposals and

leads work to support external and internal evaluation. This Centre currently has an advisory role in relation to Faculties. This could be strengthened to enhance the management of quality at University level. The Centre for Quality and Innovation is not currently represented on any of the major decision making bodies of the University. The Team came to the view that the academic governance of VMU would be considerably strengthened by including the formal contribution of this Centre in the decision making process at Senate and Rectorate levels.

42. VMU has a Handbook of Study Regulations that describes all procedures in relation to quality assurance and study programme delivery. This handbook is detailed and highly complex. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and use Moodle to ensure that students have access to key information. Moodle is also used as an interactive learning and teaching tool. VMU may wish to strengthen the information available to students by producing a more ‘user-friendly’ guide to its quality assurance and regulatory processes to ensure students understand what is expected of them.
43. Reporting activity is largely organized in departments and an annual report is prepared for the Faculty. Faculty reports from the Dean are reported to the Rectorate and contribute to the annual report for the VMU Council and external partners. There is an annual meeting of the Rector and/or Vice-Rectors with the communities of each Faculty and other academic units and offices. The quality of programmes is considered in the meetings and reports identify strengths and weaknesses of the study programme. This includes feedback from students.
44. Assessment is managed carefully to ensure that students understand the criteria and that assessment systems are fair and free from cheating. The process of marking and grading work is systematised and meets the requirements of the national regulatory framework. There is no tradition of external examiners in developing and enhancing assessment systems. External examining and moderation would contribute to VMU’s ability to benchmark itself internationally. VMU may wish to consider taking a leading role in establishing an external examiner system. This may raise the awareness of assessment approaches in the liberal arts.
45. VMU has a unique approach to the development of its curriculum. The choices for students are extensive and enable each student to build what is approaching a bespoke programme of study. The quality assurance processes are effective in assuring the standards of awards and that quality controls are in place. The quality assurance system could be developed to focus on quality *enhancement* as well as quality control. This would support VMU in learning from its experience and ensures that all faculties are learning lessons from the very best practice of other Faculties and beyond.

### **International Strategic Planning**

46. VMU takes the national priorities seriously and is making considerable effort to ensure that its strategy reflects the national intention to increase international student numbers. As may be seen below (Academic Studies Section) the University plays an important part in developing international links with a wide range of organisations. The approach taken at VMU reflects great diversity and is driven through international activity at Faculty and Departmental level. The reliance of strategic planning in Faculties has resulted in effective outcomes but there is variability across Faculties. One Faculty secured 90% of the international students whereas others have a very modest outcome.
47. As VMU moves to become a more international, research based institution it is likely that the University needs to become increasingly strategic in its approach to international links. The experience in other countries suggests that international programmes can be expensive to deliver and may not be cost-effective if a critical mass of students is not secured. The Team came to the view that the development of a University Internationalisation Plan, with quantifiable targets would support it in understanding which activity is most valuable in realising its objectives. Additionally this might help to understand and potentially address the issue of why some Faculties are less successful in building international activity.

### **Human Resource Strategies**

48. The structure and volume of the staff workforce is based upon the student numbers, the range of programmes provided, and the specialist skills that are required. The appointment of staff meets national guidelines and there is a selection process to ensure that new academic staff meet the requirements of the post. The process is competitive and open to candidates locally, nationally and internationally. The final decision on academic staff appointment is made by the Senate or Faculty Councils by secret vote. Mechanisms are in place to welcome and offer additional support to international appointees.
49. VMU has invested heavily to increase the level of academic staff who have the opportunity to complete their Doctoral studies. Many are currently registered on doctoral programmes. Staff who met the Team were committed, enthusiastic and articulate. They confirmed the range of mechanisms to support their continued studies and shared with the Team the wide range of opportunities for professional development including conference attendance, encouragement for publication and international exchange. Staff also understand and embrace the concepts within the philosophy of Liberal Arts education.
50. The qualification base of staff is developed through strategic investment that is planned within the Departments. There is no formal peer observation of teaching scheme in place but new teachers are offered additional support and feedback from mentorship in the department. There is an annual review process in the form of Attestation that is both summative and developmental.

Staff are offered feedback and support on their performance. There is also development in pedagogical approaches as well as subject-based development.

51. Staff in the University appear to be highly professional and cohesive. They are highly valued by senior staff and by students. The faculties provide leadership to ensure focus on the business priorities of the University, and to direct staff activity towards the key priorities, to recruit and retain students. The University, at central level, does not collect and utilize systematic data on staff performance other than descriptive detail in Faculty reports. This may underplay the considerable quality of the staff resource that could be used to more effect in profiling the uniqueness of VMU.
52. Students who met the Team reported high levels of satisfaction with their teachers. A number of examples were given of teaching staff who had given high levels of support and are outstanding in their subject area. Some students chose to study at VMU because of the reputation of individual Professors. There is a sense that staff and students learn together and work as a team to develop the subject knowledge. This reflects strongly the liberal arts endeavour and is congruent with the VMU mission. The Team gained the impression of a highly supportive academic community that takes particular care to ensure that students achieve.
53. Student dropout rates were higher in the last two years although similar to the norms in some institutions elsewhere in Lithuania. The University does not have sufficiently refined monitoring mechanisms to determine which actions have been particularly useful in reducing student dropout. There is evidence in the information provided to the Team that the main issue is academic failure.
54. The view that 'standards are high here and require hard work' (summarised by one teacher) does not give appropriate recognition to the complexity of the student journey. Students are expected to identify their own learning needs and seek help rather than the institution adopting a proactive monitoring system of student performance system being in place. A student monitoring/personal tutoring system might provide a more effective framework for identifying students who are at risk of academic failure and identify more systematically the reasons behind the fluctuating dropout rate. The Dean of Faculty takes responsibility for the oversight of the learning experience for students. The Team was of the view that a more appropriate personal allocated tutoring system might reduce dropout and enhance the student learning experience for weaker students.
55. VMU is anticipating a further reduction in student numbers in the region of 20%, partly due to regional demographic change. The senior management team confirmed that the teaching staff ratio would not be reduced. The introduction of more flexible and distance learning is intended to ensure that students continue to have good academic support. Some staff reductions have been

achieved through outsourcing some aspects of campus support to avoid a shift in the academic staff-student ratio.

56. The administrative staff play a key part in the University and present as skilled, articulate and highly committed to VMU. In the event of a closure of a department or research cluster, staff confirmed that this is not a risk to jobs as staff are redeployed. The Team observed that there is limited appreciation amongst staff of the risk to the University's future sustainability in the event of major changes in the funding flow.
57. The Team came to the view that the enhancement of qualifications is impressive and staff support is strategic and planned. It was not possible for the Team to assess the impact of changing numbers at this time but the University is clear and confident that it is meeting its resource requirements to meet its obligations.

### **Finance and Budget**

58. VMU annual budget is not currently a deficit budget (a deficit occurs naturally only in the last month of a fiscal year). Managers explained that this is related to the current capital investment programme from the State. Staff and students who met the Team confirmed the high quality of resources that are available. There is no financial pressure on Departments and State budget allocations account for 47% of the current operational budget. VMU does not have a risk management system in place that addresses scenario planning or efficiency-saving. Such a system could focus re-investment if the current financial situation becomes less stable. The Team concluded that some opportunities for diversification of income, such as continuing education programmes, are possibly being missed through assumptions about stability throughout the current period of the VMU strategic plan.
59. VMU does not currently have in place a formal system of risk management that identifies the need for efficiency savings. Administrative staff who met the Team were clear that efficiency saving is not required and that activities such as shared services with other organisations would be unhelpful. Moreover staff believe that if programmes become non-viable there would be no threat to staffing levels as colleagues would be redeployed without external recruitment.
60. The University has access to funding through project and research programmes. The relationship with social partners and external stakeholders and staff in Faculties is very strong. The Team heard of many positive examples of outstanding collaboration at Faculty level. External partners have a range of ideas and contributions that could make a dynamic contribution at the strategic level. The University is encouraged to seek ways of using these contributions more strategically to raise the external profile of the University as a unique learning environment. This might help to increase the range of income sources available to VMU.

## **Learning Resources**

61. MOSTA evaluated the learning resources of the University in June 2013 and reported that VMU was assessed positively in line with the national procedures for external evaluation. VMU met all of the indicators used in the MOSTA methodology and the efficient use of funds allocated from the State Budget was assessed positively.
62. Students who met the Team confirmed their positive learning experience and spoke highly of the resources available. They confirmed that library resources met their needs although there was recognition of the current disruption due to new building works. Some of the Program level reviews that were made available to the Team included student survey results, did however point to students having concerns regarding the availability of relevant library holdings in support of their study programmes. One minor critical comment from students who met the Team was the accessibility for students who were not located near the main campus library. This was ameliorated by the provision of the on-line resource and the material provided on Moodle.
63. The Team had the opportunity to visit some of the facilities in the main campus of the University. This confirmed that the resources were congruent with the level of studies being undertaken. There are a range of teaching and performance facilities that support all levels of study. Specialist facilities are located in the research Centres and provide the technical equipment required. The standard of the teaching and performance resources, which were visited by the Team, was considered to be of an exemplary standard. The Team noted the investment in new and upgraded buildings including the Library and the Creative Arts Department.

## **Summary of findings: Strategic Management**

64. The panel came to the view that there is a clear strategic planning process that is inclusive and reflects the University's mission, vision and strategic direction for the coming five years. The plan takes an account of the State requirements as well as the European academic infrastructure. The strategic plan is compliant with all of these requirements.
65. Quality systems are in place to ensure control of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. These could be developed to secure stronger academic oversight at central levels to inform the profile of the University and lead the consistency of practice across VMU, reducing the variability in Faculties. This would support outstanding practice in every Department.
66. The Team came to the view that strategic planning could be more focussed to support the appropriate and ambitious plans of VMU. More effective impact measures, greater externality and increased central criticality would strengthen academic governance and drive the University strategy forward.

67. The Team believes that VMU has a sound research output drawn from an effective research culture in Faculties. The role and function of research at VMU could be more usefully focussed to support the unique profile as a Liberal Arts University. This is discussed in more detail in the Research and Art Activity section of this report below.
68. VMU has an excellent reputation amongst its external partners. This could be used more strategically to position VMU as the leading Liberal Arts University in the European Academy and beyond.

**Judgement: The area of strategic management is given a positive evaluation.**

## IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

### Academic Planning

69. The Review Team explored academic studies and life-long learning approaches at VMU with reference to the criteria set out in the Institutional Review Methodology and considered the University compliant with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education and harmonisation with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.
70. The programmes at VMU offer qualifications at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level that are awarded and delivered in accord with requirements of a programme specification. The Team noted that the programmes and life-long learning provision offered were compliant with the University's mission and also contributed to meeting the needs of the regional economy and social and cultural development. Programmes offered are subject to external accreditation by SKVC and are fully compliant with national standards and the European Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
71. The *artes liberales* philosophy underpins the content, structure and design of the curricula. There are a significant number of programmes that reflect a diverse range of subject disciplines. Students can build their own programme from a very wide range of choices. This enables the students to combine subjects in ways that are unique. Students who met the Team highly valued this approach and talked of the significant difference that had been experienced by students who had already had a University experience elsewhere. The challenge for VMU is that there may be a duplication of parallel programmes that do not exploit the University-wide teaching resources.
72. VMU does not appear to benchmark its performance against similar institutions as part of the annual review process. This means that its achievements may remain unrecognised, as VMU appears to be making an outstanding contribution to enabling students to learn through a liberal arts education that is unique in Lithuania and limited to a few Centres in Europe, mostly in the



Netherlands. VMU is advised that external benchmarking might be extremely useful for its profile in professional liberal arts education.

### **Student Numbers**

73. The University predicts that student numbers will fall in the next three years before stabilising thereafter. This is partly due to the continued emigration patterns of young people from Lithuania and also due to a decline in the birth rate that has reduced the numbers of students leaving school.
74. Currently there are low student numbers on some programmes and the Team explored this with the University managers and teaching staff. While it is recognised that there is a challenge in providing a very favourable student-staff ratio found in classes with small numbers, the liberal arts approach is strengthened in small learning groups. Programmes are not supported if there is a cohort of less than ten students although some fall below this due to student dropout.
75. Academic plans tend to be short-term and are reviewed every year by the Dean of Faculty. There is no overarching teaching and learning strategy but Faculties do produce operational plans for the year ahead. The Team observed that there could be longer-term plans that support innovation and development in pedagogy over the medium and long term to strengthen the portfolio of programmes.
76. The University Council and Rectorate may wish to explore the challenges as well as the benefits of small student numbers in some courses that are not studio based. The current portfolio may become less sustainable as student numbers decline and external funding opportunities change. The Team suggests that the large number of programmes should be reviewed and reconsidered as part of an analysis of academic risk – but in a manner that does not affect the unique character of the University.

### **Alumni & Graduates**

77. The Team welcomed the opportunity to meet former graduates and alumni who spoke highly and positively of their experience as students at VMU. Graduate employment was significantly enhanced by the academic experience gained at University. The Alumni who met the Team confirmed their pride in their continued association with their faculty at VMU. They had many ideas of how to promote and develop VMU. The Team came to the view that the Alumni, as well as other external stakeholders could be used more effectively to contribute to the central strategic development and operation of VMU. The opportunity to meet with the senior layer and explore wider engagement with Alumni would be welcomed. The Team suggests that a more systematic approach to garnering Alumni support, such as via a formal Alumni Association might be of strategic value to VMU both in terms of programme development and fund raising.

78. Data management at VMU is emergent. Data is collected and key information is reported through the annual reporting system. The development of more sophisticated tools to map the student journey might support the University in managing key performance areas such as reducing student dropout, internationalisation of the study programme, patterns of course construction and graduate destinations. This data might include long-term career mapping, more detailed information on students who withdraw from their study and a more systematic process that compares data across the University and beyond.

### **Life Long Learning**

79. Lifelong Learning is part of the University mission. At VMU lifelong learning means continued academic development through a continuum from undergraduate studies to a range of post-graduate opportunities through to full doctoral programmes. This is reflected in the approach to staff development whereby each member of staff has support for continued academic activity and development.

80. VMU is compliant with the requirements of the EU and the European Higher Education Area for lifelong learning. The University is a member of the Association of Lithuanian University Institutes of Continuous Studies and is the administrator and convenor of this association. VMU also works with the University of the Third Age in Kaunas and participates in a range of activities to expand continuous education. VMU offers a range of non-formal education programmes that are approved by the University Committee of Non Formal Programmes. In 2012, 1765 learners undertook non-formal continuing education studies.

81. In 2013, 7689 students used the VMU distance-learning programme. VMU is member of the Lithuanian Association of Distance and e Learning and coordinates the association activity. The University is also a member of the European e-Learning Network (EDEN) and the European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning (EFQUEL). VMU was the first University in Lithuania to initiate virtual research activity and the application of virtual learning in study programmes.

82. There is no overarching strategy for the development of life-long learning that is focussed and measurable. Such a strategy could support the University in raising its profile in this area in ways that reflect the considerable contribution that VMU makes to the Lithuanian academy through its coordination and leading activity with key academic associations.

83. The Team learned from external partners of the potential market and increasing opportunities for broadening the approach to lifelong learning through a more diverse provision of continuing education for professionals in the City. Extending further the opportunity for part-time study and flexible, short courses could be a valuable addition to the academic portfolio. Such a strategy is also likely to generate additional Public-Private-Partnership funding sources to support the liberal arts research and study programmes at VMU.

## **International studies**

84. Internationalisation is broad and generic. It includes participation in, and membership of, international organisations and networks, bi-lateral cooperation and academic exchange, the development of programmes delivered in English and academic exchange through the EU ERASMUS programme. In 2013 there were 188 outgoing students through ERASMUS and 181 incoming students. This number has increased annually by a small amount and appears stable.
85. VMU is the only Lithuanian University that participates in Campus Europae, a network of 19 universities in five countries that supports international exchange, 101 VMU students have visited universities overseas through this network and VMU has welcomed 31 international placement students in return.
86. VMU staff are active in visiting other institutions of higher education to participate in conferences, seminars, traineeships and project meetings. In 2013 academic staff made 318 visits and the number of visiting staff increased to 164.
87. The international activity of the VMU is largely opportunistic and may benefit from a more strategic approach. Initiatives are generated through the Faculties, which vary in their success. One Faculty seems to be attracting the vast majority of the international student body whereas others have little student mobility and internationalisation. The impact of current activity is not measured and would benefit from more systematic measurement in order to demonstrate the real benefits on the region for student and staff mobility.
88. A more strategic approach to academic planning to meet the international targets of the University would strengthen the oversight of progress. This could support a stronger focus on the countries that are most likely to generate student exchange. The current focus is unclear and suggestions of initiatives in South America, Middle East and Far East countries might miss the real opportunities to gain more experience through other European networks, and to capitalize on the institution's unique liberal arts profile.

## **Management of Quality and Standards**

89. Programmes are drawn up according to a standard format, which involves completion of a standard description that forms the programme specification. This includes learning outcomes linked to programme content and assessment requirements. Staff understand the learning specification for programmes and use this as the basis for their teaching activity. Staff also understand the role of the national and European academic infrastructure.
90. A handbook of regulations is provided for staff and students. This details the orders and procedures that regulate study programmes across VMU. The information is detailed and technical and explains all of the requirements including the curriculum regulations, appeals and complaints procedures, assessment procedures and the management of academic misconduct.

The Team found the handbook to be thorough and extensive. This information could be presented in a more “user-friendly” way to ensure that students understand fully these processes. The student handbooks that are currently provided are very useful but tend to be concerned with practicalities of the University services. Students might benefit from a clear programme specification with a simpler set of regulatory guidelines that ensures that students understand the structures and procedures that should be followed.

91. The functions of some services seem to be less clear to students, possibly because the students who met the Team have not needed to use some services. The Careers and Competence Centre, for example, has the potential to make a significant contribution to support students in building their study programme in the light of their career aspirations. More information about these services would help students to understand the extensive range of support available to them.
92. Staff are clear about the regulatory procedures underpinning their study programmes. Students who met the Team were very positive about their study experience and spoke at length of the considerable support from their teachers.

#### **Student engagement in quality assurance**

93. Students are represented on all major decision making committees in the University, including the Senate, the University Council, the Rectorate, Faculty Councils, the Ethics Committee and other. Students were involved in the consultation about the self-assessment report and the strategic plan. There is a strong commitment in VMU to involve students and annual surveys are used to gain feedback and to enhance the student experience.
94. Students have regular opportunities to give feedback on their study experience. The Faculties take student feedback seriously and there were several examples of significant change as a result of student feedback. A survey questionnaire is completed at the end of each unit of learning and the results are collated at faculty level and feedback into the annual report.
95. Students are required to undertake final projects that are supervised through the University and many are located in work-based enquiry. All students undertake an internship and some have additional placements to meet specific needs. Student feedback in evaluation reports, seen by the Team, suggests there may be value in strengthening the ways in which learning can be applied to real world scenarios.
96. Students have a wide range of clubs, societies and facilities funded by VMU. There is a highly valued programme of extracurricular activity including periodic lectures by leading figures. This commitment to support student life creates a community of interest that brings students together. The Student Council has a parliament that ensures key issues are raised and discussed. Students confirmed that they play an active part in Senate, Council and Faculty committees.

## **Summary of Academic Studies and Life Long Learning**

97. In summary, the Review Team found great strength at VMU in relation to the quality management of academic studies. The liberal arts programme brings a wide range of opportunities in the design of study programmes. The University devolves responsibility for the management of quality and academic standards to the Faculty level. This works well although central oversight could be supported by greater use of the Centre for Quality and Innovation. Students are highly positive about their study programmes. There is evidence from students and external partners that VMU programmes produce graduates who are distinctive in their ability to reason, question and adaptability. The achievements of VMU in relation to higher education are impressive. An improved impact analysis would assist the University in its ambition to be recognised as a leading edge in liberal arts education more widely.

**Judgement: The Area of Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning is given a positive judgement.**

## **V. RESEARCH AND ART ACTIVITIES**

98. VMU is a scholarly institution and there is evidence of teaching being supported by research and other scholarly activity. Student programmes include skills in reasoning, logic and enquiry. This is reflected in the final projects that are completed by all students. This central focus is central to the liberal arts philosophy whereby core and transferable intellectual skills underpin learning.

99. The research activity complies with the mission of VMU and the principles within the strategic documents. These reflect the national priorities and the requirements of the European Research Area. The research endeavour also meets the needs of regional and city partners in Kaunas. The Team learned of many examples of research that is undertaken in partnership with companies and local industry.

100. The University research strategy exists as a general commitment in the overarching strategic plan supported by broad objectives to increase the level and quality of research outputs. There is no overarching well-balanced research strategy and action plan that would support the University in positioning its research activities in ways that make clear the expectations of teaching staff as distinct from research-intensive staff. The Team was impressed with the range and level of funding secured, research activity and scientific outputs however considered that there is an urgent need for a more strategic approach to the management of research across the University.

101. There is a strong commitment at all levels to increase the research activity and scientific output of VMU. The challenge for VMU is to achieve this with a limited State funding stream to

support this activity. VMU has sought to meet this challenge in a number of ways and has not set specific targets for income or publication/citation expectations for researchers. Research is funded through project income, normally secured through responsive bidding to tenders.

102. Research activity is located in a series of research clusters that brings together colleagues across Faculty boundaries. The research clusters participate in international research and art projects as well as regional and national projects. This creates research groups that focus on specific themes or projects. Currently there are 36 research clusters at VMU and as bids for research funding are successful this number is likely to increase. In this way there is considerable staff commitment and ownership through the devolved structures that drive the research agenda. VMU considers that the number of research clusters is appropriate for the range of activity in the institution. The Team would caution against the development of too many clusters that could potentially impact on the quality and funding of research.

103. The quality of research appears to be diverse. There are some high quality outputs that are ranked in refereed scientific journals. There is also a significant amount of research that is published in lower ranked journals. Some of the research at VMU has international significance.

104. The ambition of VMU is to become a research institution at the highest level – which assumes world-class quality. The current profile would suggest that VMU has developed significantly and makes a real contribution regionally and within some subject disciplines. The intention to reach world-class status by 2020 may however not be particularly helpful, in order to direct and drive the research endeavour. In the current funding plan of VMU it is unlikely to reach the critical mass required to produce outputs that would achieve world-ranking in a short time.

105. Research topics arise out of Departmental responsiveness. Research is highly responsive. The success at VMU is largely due to the leadership and skills of the individual professors. As such research is opportunist, diverse and reactive to inputs from individuals. There is support through the faculties for international mobility of researchers. Additionally there is a programme of visiting professors that contributes to the development of research at VMU and makes an impact on the study programmes for students. In order to move towards the ambitious objectives in the strategic plan there may need to be a more aggressive institutional approach to secure international research funding.

106. Research leadership operates at the level of the Faculty and Research Cluster. There is some research oversight in the Rectorate but could be strengthened to give additional support needed to expedite research outputs and improve skills in bidding and preparing high-level research proposals. Faculties support Departments and the research clusters are important in supporting new researchers and developing skills relevant to the subject area. Research staff felt

supported in their role and many are involved in prestigious projects that have attracted significant funding.

107. Social and business partners make an important contribution to research activity. They fund projects and make available in-company facilities and laboratory services to VMU research staff. Incentives for researchers include salary enhancements for senior researchers who secure large grants. There is a range of opportunities to share research findings with colleagues including research seminars and presentations organised by the research cluster. Other incentives such as a sabbatical programme with agreed outputs, for all staff might be explored to encourage research activity.
108. VMU makes a major contribution to the artistic and cultural life of the city and region. It provides a wide range of opportunities for student performance. The music academy within VMU approaches conservatoire status in its performance orientation. This is highly valued by Kaunas. The Team heard of a number of examples from external stakeholders of the important contribution that the institution makes in theatre, art, museum curating and music.
109. In 2008 the VMU Art Gallery was founded which has organised over 60 exhibitions and 160 cultural events. The Music Academy, founded in 2011 is a notable centre of culture in the region and organises concerts across Lithuania and abroad. The VMU Botanical Garden, for example, is an important part of the City and has supported world class research.
110. The University devotes attention to environmental protection. There is also an environmental protection policy at VMU that conserves resources, provides environmental education and hosts a number of activities at the Botanical Garden.
111. It was clear to the Team that without VMU in Kaunas, the artistic and cultural life of the region would be greatly disadvantaged. The University plays an important role in building the culture and prestige of the City.

### **Summary of Research and Art Activities**

112. Research and Art activities play an important part of the academic life at VMU. There is a strategic commitment to develop the highest quality outputs. Investment is made to support the development of staff skills and achievements. There is evidence of a research culture that is scholarly and reflects the principles of the *artes liberales* underpinning at VMU.
113. The research functions at VMU are ambitious and the Team came to the view that the University should review and consider what sort of institution it intends to become. As indicated above there has been considerable achievement and development in research and scholarship that could be focussed more specifically to strengthen its wider reputation and leadership, internationally, as a Liberal Arts University. This, in the view of the team is more likely to support the intensive investment that will underpin the VMU recognition outside of Lithuania.

114. Research outputs match those expected from a European University of this size and reflect a growing number of publications and an increase in the quality of research activity. The achievement by VMU is to be commended and supported. The research endeavour is growing and producing a range of important project outcomes.

**Judgement: The area of Research and Art Activities is given positive evaluation.**

## **VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

115. A socially active and responsible community is one of the key themes in the VMU strategic plan. The University has 522 cooperation agreements with a wide range of business organisations, economic entities, non-governmental organisations and other Lithuanian universities. There is currently a development plan in Kaunas to establish a consortium of provision across the City's Universities through increased collaboration and joint projects.
116. VMU is strongly rooted in the region and makes a significant impact to regional growth and development. External partners explained that this is so important to Kaunas that any threat to the viability of the University is also a threat to the local economy. Business enterprises and other organisations drive the development of many projects with VMU that reflect some of the most important issues for Kaunas and beyond. One example is that of the strategic importance of the research programmes associated with study into the Lithuanian Diaspora and its support and engagement. Each year twenty scholarships are awarded to the best VMU students in relation to study of the Diaspora.
117. VMU staff are actively engaged in regional public affairs especially in relation to public policy development. The University is very proud of its regional standing and has a number of examples where recognition has been gained for its contribution to particular projects. The University staff includes 53 Chairs/Presidents of Lithuanian organisations including professional associations, societies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). 186 members of staff are also Board members of NGOs.
118. The Faculty of Catholic Theology has staff who actively participate in the work of a wide range of organisations and contribute to the work of the Church at national level.
119. Approximately 35% of the University staff are involved in public activities. This is important in the context of understanding the liberal arts mission of VMU. There is less evidence provided in terms of measures that enable VMU to quantify the impact of these important contributions and assess the impact of different types of engagement. Indeed, the Team came to the view that VMU is much better than its measures allow it to demonstrate in relation to its



goals for regional impact. To this extent the University is encouraged to find ways of improving its impact measures in ways that demonstrate regionally and nationally the significance of its contribution.

120. All students undertake a practical project that is assessed as part of their course of studies, many are undertaken in local companies and services. Partners who met the Team spoke highly of the valuable contribution made by student placements and graduation projects both locally and regionally.

121. Kaunas is very proud of VMU and its impact on the local labour markets as well as the cultural landscape is undoubtedly positive. The outcomes of the institution's considerable research endeavours are not, however, systematically analysed for their impact in changing practice regionally and beyond. Strengthening the assessment of regional impact would highlight and strengthen the external profile of the VMU. It would also highlight the scientific potential of VMU, which the Team believes is significant. The University could consider expressing its regional impact goals more clearly in the strategic plan, and communicate that, more effectively to the wider community.

### **Summary of Impact on Regional and National development**

122. There is considerable evidence of the contribution that VMU makes to the region and nationally. The University plays a significant role in the business and cultural life of the City. One external partner summarised this as being unable to envisage the City without VMU. The University is unique in its mission and plays an important part in the regional and national associations that bring together academics both across Lithuania and internationally. The Team came to the view that the impact assessment and measurement of its activities could be strengthened to reflect the significance of VMU as a European institution. In short VMU is much better than its impact profile would suggest – it sells itself short and underplays its significance. VMU is modest in its claims and could do more to raise its profile and recognition in terms of its regional and national impact.

**Judgement: The Area of Impact on Regional and National Development is given a positive evaluation.**

## **VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendations for VMU, SKVC and the Ministry**

#### **Recommendations for enhancement at VMU**

The Review Team recommends that VMU should:

##### **(in relation to strategic management)**

- consider the way in which it consolidates its identity as a Liberal Arts University that positions itself nationally and internationally, making a unique contribution to the European Academy
- establish a more effective institutional approach to setting strategic targets that are measurable and capable of efficient monitoring and evaluation. This should include establishing quantitative indicators that are measurable and specific to identify progress in the outcomes and impact of key strategic activity
- develop strategic targets that address the long-term and mid-term planning to support change management and institutional future positioning
- reconsider the current approach to risk identification and management that supports visioning a range of possibilities and future scenarios
- examine ways of securing more diverse and additional income streams to support the future viability of VMU in a changing demographic, financial, political and academic landscape
- review the role and function of the Centre for Quality and Innovations to strengthen the governance of academic quality and its enhancement across the University
- reduce the dropout rate by ensuring that there is a more effective and systematic overview that tracks and supports individual student progress
- review the way in which external partners contribute to strategic planning. The relationship with social partners and stakeholders at the level of the faculty is very strong, this could be developed to contribute more strategically to the strategic planning of VMU
- review the centralisation of administration services to explore the potential to build efficiency savings

##### **(...in relation to Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning)**

- review the opportunities for lifelong learning that could be exploited to develop further learning possibilities for the wider community and industry

- consider whether the choice and flexibility of programmes could be managed to avoid parallel programme development and duplication of programmes that might add to workload demands and costs
- develop a more targeted approach to international activity that focuses on the key areas that could increase international students, particularly in the less active faculties
- consider ways of strengthening the external contribution of benchmarks and external examining (and moderation) in the assessment process to enhance the range of approaches to quality assurance

**(...in relation to research and scholarship)**

- to review and consider the function of research in the institution in ways that determine whether the priority is to become the leading research informed liberal arts institution in Europe or a research intensive institution that has international significance and world standing for its research outputs
- develop and focus on the research priority areas for the University in order to intensify research activity and outputs and meet its strategic direction

**(...in relation to Impact on regional and national development)**

- undertake activity to raise its unique profile as a liberal arts University nationally and internationally that signals a significant contribution to Higher Education and the labour market in Lithuania and beyond
- exploit the goodwill towards that exists towards VMU to take forward the liberal arts movement in education and work in *strategic* partnership with external stakeholders
- examine ways of supporting and utilising Alumni in a more systematic way to support the strategic direction of VMU

**Commendations/best practice**

The Team noted many features of excellence and best practice at VMU. These included, amongst other things;

- The liberal arts mission of the University is strong, coherent and embedded in activity
- The climate and culture of learning is one of support with a focus on the student
- There is strong collegiality that promotes collaborative working and flexibility, especially in the research clusters.
- VMU is central to the cultural and academic life of Kaunas. Without VMU the city would be greatly disadvantaged

- Students are exceptional ambassadors of the University and represent the high level transferable skills of knowledge attainment and intellectual abilities
- External partners and alumni value the flexibility, adaptability and critical thinking of VMU graduates
- External partners have a strong relationship with faculties that could contribute strategically to the development of VMU
- The commitment to internationalisation is embedded in VMU and supports student and staff mobility.
- There is support for people with learning and physical disabilities. Good service support is available and VMU cares for its students effectively.
- The facilities and resources are impressive. Learning environments are of a very high standard, notably the performance and classroom environments.
- Student representation is strong and the voice of the students is heard and taken seriously.
- There is a good gender balance in the staffing profile of the University that offers good career opportunities for all.

### **Recommendations for the Ministry of Education:**

- The expert Team recommends that the Ministry undertakes stronger activity to promote and value the unique contribution to the Lithuanian and European Academy played by the Liberal Arts mission of VMU. This institution is different from others in Europe and could position the Lithuanian as a leader in Europe and beyond.

### **Recommendations for SKVC**

- Embed enhancement-led quality review at institutional level that supports the development of quality systems. Where higher education institutions are in full compliance with national and European requirements, this would support self-reflection and deeper criticism that enhances the educational provision locally and nationally.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

### Vytautas Magnus University is given a positive evaluation

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Dr Luc Weber
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Peter Wells Dr Annie Doona Prof. Dr Hans Robert Hansen Aldona Savičienė Andrius Zalitis
Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Prof. Sue Frost

# ANNEX. VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT



VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO  
UNIVERSITETAS  
— HCMXXII —

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centro  
Institucinio skyriaus vedėjai  
Norai Skaburskienei

2014-08-01 Nr. 1-477

## DĖL VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETO VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ

### **Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto veiklos vertinimo ekspertams, Studijų kokybės vertinimo centrui**

Dėkojame Tarptautinių ekspertų grupei ir jos vadovui prof. dr. Luc Weber, taip pat Studijų kokybės vertinimo centro darbuotojams už atliktą itin kvalifikuotą Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto išorinį institucinį vertinimą.

Universiteto bendruomenė vertintojus laiko kompetentingais, dėmesingais, didelę patirtį turinčiais ekspertais, jų pateiktos pastabos ir palinkėjimai Universitetui yra labai prasmingi, tobulinant vykdomas veiklas ir jų valdymą.

Tuo pačiu leiskite pasiūlyti kai kuriuos teksto korektūras, o taip pat atskirų faktų ar Išvadose naudojamų VDU Statuto nuostatų pataisymus.

### **To Experts of Vytautas Magnus University Self-Evaluation Review, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education**

We are grateful to the International Expert Team and its leader prof. dr. Luc Weber and also to the representatives of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for the highly qualified external institutional review of Vytautas Magnus University.

University community appreciates the competence, consideration and huge expertise of the experts whose remarks and recommendations for the University are highly valuable for the development of its activities and their management.

We would also like to take this opportunity to offer a few corrections regarding some factual information (in line with VMU Statute provisions) and some minor inadequacies of the text.

Rektorius

Zigmantas Lydeka

Viešoji įstaiga, K. Donelaičio g. 58, 44248 Kaunas, tel. (8 37) 222 739, faks. (8 37) 203 858, el. p. info@adm.vdu.lt  
Duomenys kaupiami ir saugomi Juridinių asmenų registre, kodas 111950396, PVM mokėtojo kodas LT 119503917.