



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**OVERVIEW REPORT FOR MUSIC STUDY FIELD**

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Prepared by the chairperson of the expert panel:

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# I. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the Music study field in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions: at *Kaunas University of Technology (KTU)*; at *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA)*; at *Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences (VIKO)*; at *Vytautas Magnus University (VMU)*.

The external evaluation was organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for Music study field in each evaluated Higher education institution (separately for first and second cycle) and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Music study field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of music study field evaluation, expert panel have come to a decision to give **positive** evaluation to HEIs: at *Kaunas University of Technology*; at *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre*; at *Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences*; at *Vytautas Magnus University*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field and cycle for 7 years.

## II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

All institutions offer Music study field programmes that are being developed systematically with distinctive features; two institutions (the *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre* and *Vilniaus kolegija*) offer Music programmes that have features which are exceptional in national and international contexts.

### 1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Music study field programmes are clearly based on the needs of Lithuanian economy and society. There are strong connections between the music industry and taught programmes, and curricula are dynamic and evolving. There was clear evidence of a link between curriculum design, teaching and learning and assessment, and the successful achievements of graduate students. The Music study field programmes comply with legal requirements. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

### 2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

It is a feature of all Music study field programmes offered by the four higher education institutions that they reflect the latest developments in either music research, or high-level musical practice or both. Students can engage in practice-based activities throughout their studies, often working with teaching staff in the development of new artworks and projects. It remains a challenge (one that is not unique to the Lithuanian context) to distinguish between high-level music practice and artistic research. The development of clearer research strategies, distinguishing activity driven by a research enquiry is to be encouraged. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

### 3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

There was clear evidence that all higher education institutions offering Music study field programmes had clear procedures to select, admit and support students. Meetings with students confirmed this to be the case. All institutions had well developed and well documented procedures for the financial and pastoral support of students. International mobility is proving challenging, particularly where students wish to retain continuity of their studies over the duration of a programme (for example, when working with a specialist instrumental or vocal teacher). This challenge is one that is common across Europe and beyond. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

### 4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

There was clear evidence that all higher institutions offering Music study field programmes were effective in delivering Music field study programmes that prepared students for lives as autonomous members of the music industry. This applied to all the different areas of music activity (classical and popular performing, recording, technology and so forth). Clear mechanisms for recording student destinations were evident. Policies on academic malpractice, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeals were implemented and appeared to be fair and effective. The close working relationships between teaching staff and students, enabled many teachers to facilitate paid work experience in the profession for their students during the studentship. Many students are active in the industry before the completion of their studies. This is an excellent feature of the Music study field. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

## **5. TEACHING STAFF**

All higher education institutions that offer Music study field programmes have a proportion of staff members who are excellent. In the case of LMTA (with its very large staff group) and VIKO (with its relatively small staff group) this quality extends throughout the staff personnel and is therefore an exceptional feature. Staff-student ratios are appropriate for the intensive nature of study in the discipline. Relevant staff professional development opportunities are available in all institutions. Promotion and visibility of mobility schemes such as Erasmus+ would be beneficial. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

## **6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

All higher education institutions that offer Music study field programmes have appropriate resources to support the learning needs of their students. Practice facilities, rehearsal studios, laboratories and studios, library and IT resources are adequate or more than adequate in all cases. LMTA is embarking on a major infrastructure project (due 2023) which will offer state-of-the-art facilities and revolutionise the potential connections between music and other artistic studies. All higher education institutions will need clear financial strategies which cater for the provision of facilities and equipment which respond to the rapid developments in the music industry. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 4 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

## **7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

All higher education institutions that offer Music study field programmes have quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms that are clear, and shared between stakeholder groups (for example, students, teaching staff, alumni, employers). All have student feedback processes designed to further enhance the quality of the students' experience. Information collected from surveys is made available (where appropriate publicly) by all institutions. In a situation common to many institutions outside of Lithuania, and common across study fields, students are sometimes reluctant to participate in formal surveys. In the Music study field this is often because lines of communication between staff and students are strong, and corrective actions can be taken quickly. In spite of this all institutions would wisely find means to incentivise students' completion of surveys. Institutions received grading from 3 (good) to 5 (excellent) in this evaluation area.

### III. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

#### Overview:

It is a striking and excellent feature of the Music study field programmes – across all four institutions – that they are so well engaged with the needs of the music labour market and so industry focussed. This pertains to all the diverse specialist fields which constitute ‘music’ study (classical, popular, jazz, composition, technology and so forth). Stakeholder engagement is uniformly purposeful and well-developed. The four higher education institutions that offer music programmes at first and second cycle therefore have what the panel considered to be an excellent engagement with the music profession, be this at local, national, or international level.

The panel was impressed with the quality and commitment of teaching staff, and the fact that so many are top industry experts (as music performers, composers, technologists). The intersection between the music industry and the higher education environment is a distinctive and excellent feature of the Music study field. The *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre* stands out as an institution as having an exceptional international reach, and a teaching staff and student body of exceptional quality.

#### Institution-specific:

##### ***Kaunas University of Technology***

1. Student’s opportunities to undertake employment in the music industry is an excellent feature of the first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field. It is an excellent commendation of the musical and technological skills that are being developed by students on their study programmes, and of the relevance of the programmes to the Lithuanian labour market.
2. KTU’s website is excellent and accessible, providing comprehensive information about the University, admissions to programmes, as well as information about study programmes, subjects, and teaching staff.

##### ***Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre***

1. LMTA is connected to the most significant cultural organisations within Lithuania. This ensures that its first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field remain current, and that its students and graduates progress into employment and make an important contribution to the musical life of the nation.
2. The teaching staff of music field studies is of exceptional quality, including many established performing artists, composers, and musicologists. They are committed both to the further advancement of their own artistic work, but, equally, also to the development of LMTA’s music students.
3. LMTA’s participation in diverse and extensive international networks, joint projects and programmes offer a wide array of discipline-specific and interdisciplinary opportunities for teachers’ continuing professional development and training for students of music field studies.
4. The Academy is dynamic and has a commitment to diversify its musical study specialisms to retain its relevance and currency.

5. The Academy has a rich history but is not burdened by this: it has a refreshing self-critical ethos and a passionate desire to improve itself.
- 6.. The Academy has an excellent and efficient quality management system. This is not overbearing and permits focus on its core mission and vision.

#### ***Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences***

1. The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* offers unique industry focused studies, exploiting interdisciplinary opportunities with the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies, and offering a proto-professional training environment which ensures the development of outstanding popular music artists.
2. Teachers of music field studies are active, renowned national and international artists, and they readily share their experience and networks, collaborating regularly with students.
3. Internal quality mechanisms offer an exceptional model, with efficient mechanisms for all stakeholders (students, teachers, social partners), facilitating rapid and meaningful ameliorations of the first cycle study programme of the music study field.

#### ***Vytautas Magnus University***

1. VMU's extensive network of stakeholders constitutes a major asset for the music field studies of the first and second cycle. These connections provide students with high level professional experience and employment, and stakeholder feedback ensures study programmes of high quality.
2. Study aims, outcomes and content of the music field studies (first and second cycle) are admirably aligned with employer needs in the country: this is evidenced by the employment opportunities undertaken by the students during their music field studies.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

### MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN MUSIC STUDY FIELD

#### **Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):**

- There are no urgent strategic recommendations that should concern the four higher education institutions which offer Music study field programmes.
- The panel would suggest the following recommendations (reported in full in the *Evaluation Reports*, Section V) be given consideration:

#### ***Kaunas University of Technology***

- The development of a long-term strategic financial strategy for the music study field integrating infrastructure improvements, equipment purchases, and use of space.
- The development of a clear, subject-specific research strategy for both the first cycle study programme *Music Technologies* and the second cycle study programme *Composition and Performance for Electronic Music*, one which distinguishes research from scholarship.
- Review the accuracy of published information on Music programmes available through the KTU website.

#### ***Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre***

- Through a period of significant diversification of programmes and specialist areas of music study the panel recommends that attention be given to the maintenance of LMTA's high academic standards in 'new' specialisms.
- The development of the best mechanisms to promote its excellent music study field programmes to prospective international students.

#### ***Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences***

- Broaden international partnerships with higher education institutions (in the EU and beyond) that offer popular music as a practical specialism.
- Increase investments to a) address IT infrastructure needs, and guarantee internet access throughout the facilities; b) facilitate the installation of a new sound laboratory on the premises, thus reducing VK's reliance on an external partner.

#### ***Vytautas Magnus University***

- Encourage greater engagement (students and staff) with the Erasmus+ mobility scheme.
- Develop clearer data on graduate destinations.

### **Strategic recommendations at national level (for the Ministry of Education and Science):**

- There are no urgent strategic recommendations that should concern the Ministry of Education and Science regarding the Music study field programmes of the four Lithuanian HEIs that offer degrees at first and second cycle. At present there is an admirable and complementary relationship between the Music study field degree programmes offered within Lithuania. It is clear to students who wish to study in the many different specialist fields which make up 'music', broadly defined, to whom they should apply for their studentship. There is also evident quality in the teaching staff, student populations, quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. Resources available to support the music discipline are clearly adequate or more than adequate.
- Higher education in the Music study field remains, in Europe and elsewhere across the world, an expensive discipline to support and maintain. Lithuania can be rightly proud of the quality of the achievements of its institutions, students and teaching staff which offer Music degrees, and the way they support the Lithuanian labour market. If the excellence of the *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre's* music offer is well-known worldwide, there was also evident quality and distinctiveness in the other three institutions. In particular, the single first cycle programme at *Vilniaus kolegija* is an excellent example of a vocationally orientated, commercially relevant Music programme at a technical university.
- The expert panel would hope that continued financial support for those institutions which offer programmes in the Music study field would serve to further Lithuania's cultural ambitions enshrined in *Lithuania 2030*.