

Final Evaluation Report
Faculty of Catholic Theology at Vytautas Magnus University
Lithuania

Report language - English

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I. INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1922 as the University of Lithuania and renamed in 1930 after a 15th century Lithuanian politician, Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) is a public university with approximately 8.700 students and 1.000 employees, of which some 70 are full-time professors.

The initial university included faculties of Theology-Philosophy, Humanities, Law, Mathematics and Sciences, Medicine and Technical Studies. In 1944, after the brief German occupation, the Faculty of Theology was officially closed – or removed from the University and transferred to the closely controlled archdiocesan seminary. Philosophy was transferred to Vilnius five years later, where it joined the faculty of Law and the faculty of Mathematics and Science. A much reduced institution, VMU was reorganized in 1950 as Kaunas Polytechnic Institute and Kaunas Medical Institute.

VMU was re-established in 1989 with faculties of Economics, Humanities and Sciences and a statute which granted it academic independence from governmental interference (which, at the time, still meant the Soviet Union). An emphasis was placed on grounding all studies on an ample formation in Humanities during the first two years of undergraduate life. A three tier system (Bachelor, Master's and Doctoral degrees) further set it apart from other Lithuanian institutions of higher education, until the Bologna process was introduced in 1999.

The return of the Faculty of Theology to VMU in 1997 is a remarkable occurrence. It is seen, internally, as a return from exile in the archdiocesan seminary to which it was banished under the communist regime, but from the point of view of the University it is entirely in keeping with the general emphasis placed on the Humanities. The university buildings which now house the Faculty were transferred, for that purpose, to the University by the Archdiocese for 99 years, underlining the commitment of the local Catholic Church to the promotion of advanced Catholic Theological studies.

There are, in Lithuania, two seminaries affiliated to the Lateran University in Rome. The Faculty of Theology of VMU is, however, the only ecclesiastical faculty in the country and, as such, an institution recognized by the Holy See as competent to concede not only the title of “*Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus*” (STB), but also of “*Sacrae Theologiae Licentiatius*” (STL) and “*Sacrae Theologiae Doctor*” (STD).

FCT is the only ecclesiastical faculty in Lithuania, established by the Holy See and providing ecclesiastical study degrees (S.T.B., S.T.L., S.T.D.). All the study programmes of FCT have been approved by the Congregation for Catholic Education (hereinafter – Congregation) and are carried out in compliance with the normative documents of the Congregation (Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*¹, Congregation circulars, etc.).

The Faculty is represented in the Congregation by the faculty Grand Chancellor, HE Archbishop of Kaunas, S. Tamkevičius SJ. The Congregation approves study programmes and their changes, confirms the candidates suggested by the Grand Chancellor to the positions of Dean and Vice-dean, provides lecturers for speciality subjects with canonical permission (*missio canonica*) to teach, and evaluates the Faculty three year report. Upon graduation from the studies at FCT, the diplomas are signed by VMU Rector and the Grand Chancellor of the FCT.

The exclusive status of the FCT as an ecclesiastical faculty in a secular university calls for a certain amount of diplomacy from the faculty leadership and goodwill on the part of University and national authorities, since it requires maintaining a careful balance between the Holy See's criteria for studies in Theology and Religious Studies and the criteria established for Lithuanian higher education in general.

VMU and the Ministry of Education and Science recognize the ecclesiastical status of the FCT. As indicated in VMU Statute, “the FCT acts on the basis of its Statute approved under agreement

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (1979).

with the Senate, Lithuanian Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church and the Congregation for Catholic Education".² The Ministry of Education and Science legally recognizes the diplomas granted by the FCT.

The FCT Statutes defines areas of cooperation between VMU and the Congregation. All important decisions concerning FCT management and programme implementation are made by mutual agreement between VMU and the Congregation, represented by the Grand Chancellor.

From the Report and on-site visit one may conclude that there is, as yet, no defined strategy of cooperation with other faculties in VMU in joint study programmes, although interdisciplinary cooperation exists at the level of research, in centres of studies and research "clusters".

N.B. From September 2011, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) will replace the national Lithuanian credit system, but in the Self-Evaluation Report (Report) both credit systems are still in use, which at times is confusing.

The evaluation process took place in several stages:

1. formation of the Self-evaluation Team by the Dean of the FCT,
2. preparation and drafting of the Self-evaluation Report in three stages – organisation, Lithuanian version, English translation;
3. presentation of the Report to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CQAHE), in Vilnius, Lithuania and to the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Faculties (AVEPRO), Vatican, Rome.
4. formation of the team of experts for the External Evaluation in collaboration between the CQAHE and the AVEPRO;
5. distribution of the material for the Evaluation Team members;
6. assessment of the Self-evaluation Report of the Programme by one of the experts and the drafting of the preliminary assessment conclusions;
7. preparation of the external evaluation at the AVEPRO and at the CQAHE and the three-days visit and on-site in the Faculty of catholic Theology at the University;
8. summary of the results of the visit at CQAHE and at AVEPRO;
9. drafting of the Final Evaluation Report.

II. SCIENCE AND STUDY DIVISIONS IN THE FACULTY

1. Theology Department.
2. Religious Studies Department.
3. Canon Law Department (is about to close).
4. Centre of History of Lithuanian Catholic Church.
5. Research Centre on Marriage and Family.

INFORMATION ON STUDIES PROGRAMMES

I. FIRST LEVEL STUDIES - BACHELOR

I.1. Name of the study programme	<i>Catholic Theology</i>
State code	61202H101

² VMU Statute, 70; http://senas.vdu.lt/apie_vdu/VDUstatutas.pdf (in Lith)

Study area	Humanities
Study field	Theology
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level of studies	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (5)
Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	200 (300 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Theology

¹ – one credit is equal to 40 hours of student work

I.2. Name of the study programme	<i>Religious Pedagogy</i>
State code	61202H205
Study area	Humanities
Study field	Religious Sciences
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level of studies	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (5)
Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	171 (256,5 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Religious Pedagogy

II. SECOND LEVEL STUDIES – LICENCIATE (MASTER)

II.1. Name of the study programme	<i>Pastoral Theology</i>
State code	62402H103, 621V64001
Study area	Humanities
Study field	Theology
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2)

Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	80 (120 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Licenciate in Theology
Date of registration of the study programme	19 05 1997

II.2. Name of the study programme	<i>Religious Education</i>
State code	62602H203, 621V80004
Study area	Humanities
Study field	Religious Studies
Kind of study programme	University studies
Level of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1.5)
Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	63 (94.5 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Religious Studies

II.3. Name of the study programme	<i>Family studies</i>
State code	62607S125
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Educology
Kind of study programme	University studies
Level of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1.5)
Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	64 (96 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Educology

III. Third level studies – Doctorate

Doctorate in Theology [Licenciate in Theology is requested].

II. PROGRAMMES ANALYSIS

1. Programmes aims and learning outcomes

1.1. Programmes demand, purpose and aims

1.1.1. Uniqueness and rationale of the need for the programmes

The Programmes of Catholic Theology and Pastoral Theology are unique in Lithuania: these two are the only programmes approved by the Congregation for Catholic Education which can grant an ecclesiastical bachelor and licentiate in Theology (S.T.B., S.T.L.)³. Thanks to this structure of studies, after obtaining the degree of Bachelor in Catholic Theology there is the possibility for further studies at the second level (Master/Licentiate in Theology or Master of Religion Studies). Furthermore the Pastoral Theology is the only programme in the country which, in accordance with the norms of *Sapientia Christiana*, affords continuity for graduates from Bachelor Studies in Catholic Theology and whose graduates, in turn, may advance to a Doctorate in Catholic Theology. *When compared to similar programmes in other countries,* the selection of subjects provided in the Programme at VMU, with its emphasis on Youth, Vocation and Marriage, goes beyond a general approach to Pastoral Theology and *reflects very specific regional and national pastoral needs as understood by the Catholic Church in Lithuania.*

Religious education was re-established in Lithuania right after the restoration of independence. Actually throughout Lithuania, there is a lack of qualified teachers of Religion: according to the data for 2008-2009, 12.4% (191 teachers) of all Religion teachers obtained their qualification in short term courses. There is therefore a big demand for teachers of Religion with a university education in Theology and Pedagogy. The Bachelor of Religious Pedagogy and Master in Religious Studies programme is the only one of its kind in Lithuania and is mainly oriented towards the further formation of professionals employed in the religious education of adults.

The following main areas of employment opportunities are indicated: the parishes, the social and educational institutions of the Church, and public Lithuanian educational institutions. The lack of Religion teachers is emphasized. The site visit, however, and the contact of the evaluation team with graduates from these programmes showed that its broad cultural profile provides a platform for a much wider range of employment opportunities and further studies. At present the number of applicants for this Programme exceeds the placements supported by State funds. Graduates from the Pastoral Theology Programme work in projects affording family support, a wide range of social services and rehabilitation⁴. They can also cooperate in prison, medical and military institutions, where chaplains and lay co-workers are in demand. Qualified personnel are needed in parishes, to improve the quality of catechetics and pastoral care in general.⁵

1.1.2. Conformity of the programmes purpose with institutional, State and international directives

The general criteria governing the Catholic Theology and the Pastoral Theology Programmes are in agreement with the directives of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*: the first cycle, which involves preliminary studies and the fundamentals of the various branches of Theology, lasts five years (ten semesters) – an alternative three year course is possible when a student already has completed a previous two year course in Philosophy; the cycle ends with the

³ Faculty of Catholic Theology. About the Faculty in Brief; <http://www.theology.vdu.lt> (*in Lith.*).

⁴ “Caritas” in Lithuania has two and a half thousand employees and voluntary aids, working in seven dioceses “Caritas”. The Catholic Church undertakes a number of projects for the socially deprived (families in poverty, lonely patients, prisoners and former convicts, victims of women trafficking, refugees and homeless).

⁵ In Kaunas archdiocese alone more than 5000 children are prepared for First Communion every year and more than 3000 adolescents are prepared for Confirmation

academic degree of Baccalaureate (*Sapientia Christiana*, Article 72), frequently referred to internationally as the *Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus* (S.T.B.); the second cycle lasts two years and provides the academic degree of Licenciante in Theology (S.T.L.)

Due to the ecclesiastical requirement of a considerable background in Philosophy and an introduction to Classical Languages before initiating the study of Theology, the indicated study volume of the First cycle Programme, in its extended form, might appear not to be in compliance with the legal requirements for first cycle study programmes in higher education in the Republic of Lithuania. However the Law Nr. V-501 (9 April 2010) issued by the Minister of Education and Sciences covers precisely this situation, since it establishes that the general requirements for higher education programmes in Lithuania are applicable to programmes in Catholic Theological Studies only to the extent that they are compatible with the requirements of the Holy See. There appears, therefore, to be no legal conflict between the Programme and State directives.

The Religious Pedagogy and Religious Education programmes are chosen by the laity, members of consecrated life institutes and clergy who work or intend to work in ecclesiastical and social organizations set up to handle urgent moral, ethical, spiritual and social problems efficiently, and to respond to the deepest needs of person, family and society. The purpose of these programmes reflects the concept of Religion Studies maintained by the Holy See – to prepare priests, laymen and members of consecrated life institutes for the work of evangelization in the present day world, professional ecclesiastical activity, representation of authentic Christian thought in the society, various Church missions and the task of teaching of Religion.

The aims of all the programmes conform to the university's mission and are in line with the *National Education Strategy for 2003-2012*, the *Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*, and the *Agreement between the Lithuanian Republic and Holy See on cooperation in the areas of education and culture*.

1.1.3. Relevance of the programmes aims

All the Programmes encompass theoretical studies and their practical applications, everyone in its specific area.

The main *purpose* of the programmes is to prepare broad-minded and highly qualified graduates in Catholic Theology and Religion Education, capable of working in Catholic institutions and improving the quality of the services they provide, as well as applying the teaching of the Catholic Church, in theory and practice, to work carried out with children, young people and adults.

The main aims of programmes are to create conditions for a student to develop human and national values; become a well-rounded personality and an active member of society; acquire a higher education based on the principles of *artes liberales*, research and professional qualification; obtain skills for lifelong learning; become an active and full-fledged participant of international research and study area; actively participate in the creation of the future of Lithuania and in the contribution to the religious, cultural and scientific development of the world. These aims derive from the understanding of Catholic theological and Religious education studies held by the Holy See, according to which these studies should seek the personal development of the student as a whole, to systematically cultivate and promote the content of Christian Revelation through scientific research, to consider in the light of Revelation the most recent progress of the sciences, to promote the continuing formation of Church ministers, to qualify students at the highest level to undertake a wide number of ministries in the Church and to participate intensely, in accordance with their own talents and in close communion with the local and the universal Church, in the development of humanity and the work of evangelization in general.

Several aims are common for all the Programmes, but there are also some differences. The main aims of the Catholic Theology and the Pastoral Theology programmes are:

- to prepare catechists or administrative officers to work in parishes as well as Youth, Family and other centres;

- to prepare teachers of Catholic Religion for technical schools, gymnasiums and secondary schools;
- to prepare graduates who can progress to doctoral programmes in Theology, or related fields in Humanities and Social Sciences.

The main aims of the programmes of Religious Pedagogy and of Religion Education programmes are:

- to provide a deeper understanding of religious education, society and the dynamics of communication to teachers of Religion and to equip them with advanced methodological skills;
- to prepare well trained catechists who are capable of working in parishes as well as youth, family and other centres;
- to prepare researchers of religious education processes;
- to prepare master degree holders able to continue studies in PhD programmes of Education Sciences and in related fields in Humanities and Social Sciences.

The extent of the Programme is satisfactory to achieve its intended purpose and aims.

The aims of the study programme are in compliance with the first and the second cycles of Theology and Religious education/pedagogy in its full/time study form.

1.2. Learning outcomes of the programmes

1.2.1. Comprehensibility and attainability of the learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of the first level programmes are comprehensible. They are compatible with Level 6 of the national⁶ and European Qualifications Framework⁷ and in general their extent makes the expected outcomes attainable and in compliance with the announced aims. However, some improvements for the programme of Catholic Theology are recommended (cfr. 2.1).

The learning outcomes of the second level programmes also are defined, taking into account the relevant international and local guidelines. They are compatible with Level 7 of the national and European Qualifications Framework.

1.2.2. Consistency of the learning outcomes

In general the learning outcomes at the specific programme level complement one another. The correlation of the learning outcomes of all the programmes with those of the subject level is satisfying and realistic, but requires good teamwork between teachers at the planning stage and the implementation of a number of different methods to be assessed effectively.

To achieve the best results in relation to programmed learning outcomes for Bachelor of Theology an introduction of some subjects (e.g. Theological Anthropology) and the clear distinction of important subject matters, at present lectured under the title of other courses (e.g. Ecclesiology, Treatise on Grace, Mariology), is both necessary and helpful. The issue raises the possibility of an increase in the number of credits and number of subjects coming into conflict with general norms for higher education. The conflict should be resolved through a general adjustment of credits throughout the Programme, as it is brought into line with the underlying logic of the European Credit Transfer System and credits are calculated on the relative student workload. The opportunity should also be taken to better structure the courses, avoiding some duplication of content and resulting multiplication of subjects (Fundamentals of Sexual Ethics: TEO2006; Special Moral Theology – 2: TEO4006; and Pastoral Theology: TEO5008).

⁶ Outline of the Lithuanian national qualifications framework. Vilnius: Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority, 2007 (in Lith.).

⁷ “The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)”, adopted by the European Commission on April 23, 2008.

1.2.3. Transformation of the learning outcomes

In accordance with VMU regulations, the responsibility for study outcome updating belongs to the Study Programme Committee⁸ (programme professors, employers, students, and former students) apposite for each programme.

The assessment of learning outcomes is performed at the end of every semester⁹. Study outcomes proposed in each study subject programme are also assessed every semester by both

Student's and staff's opinion as to the actual achievement of proposed learning outcomes has, in the past, been obtained through questionnaires. *However, the method has not been found to be entirely satisfactory and the University as a whole is looking for more effective methods to obtain feedback. Meanwhile, direct dialogue on these questions is encouraged between students and teachers.*

In 2007, during the period of self-evaluation of the Programme of Religious Education, its duration was changed from two years to a year and a half. Whilst renewing the programme learning outcomes, the study subjects relevant to the learning outcomes of the whole programme were also renewed. Information obtained from alumni as well as the experience of faculty were important contributing factors to this process. The common concern of students and alumni was that the programme should last three semesters – considered the optimal time for students to master skills and achieve the required learning outcomes.

2. Curriculum design

2.1. Programmes structure

2.1.1. Sufficiency of the study volume

The total study volume and the number of subjects (theory, practice, and assignments) generally comply with State and University legal acts and regulations (the University Statutes, the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education). According to the self-assessment material submitted and information obtained during the on-site visit, the experts concluded that the programmes are consistent with the "General Requirements for Degree conferring Second Cycle study programmes".

The double system of credits (national and ECTS) used in the Self-evaluation Report and other documentation is, at present, common to all Lithuanian Higher Education which is undergoing a period of transition to the European Credit Transfer System. *However, in carrying out this transformation, the credits assigned to particular subjects should not just be calculated mathematically but should take into account the different workload required by each subject within a given semester, whilst respecting the total workload that can legitimately be required of a student.*

The criteria of students' assessment are missing from the "Evaluation of study results and criteria" in the Self-evaluation Report. The only data indicated are presented as a statistic of the final mark, which is the result of a cumulative system. The criteria of evaluation should be designed to ensure a permanent feedback of the various learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence), as requested for the different ranks of evaluation in Level 6 and the Level 7, as defined by the "Descriptors in the European Qualifications Framework" (EQF).

The only mode of exam is written. This is due to the requirements of the University and seeks greater objectivity and the protection of the students' interests.

In some courses of the Catholic Theology programme the bibliographic indications (literature) do not match the volume of credits and the description of the learning outcomes. A reconsideration

⁸ VMU Academic Regulations, Ch. 7 "Designing, monitoring and renewal of study programmes", art. 7.11 (in Lith.)

⁹ Order No. 874 of 15 September 2008 of the Rector of VMU "On the procedure of teaching quality assessment". (in Lith.)

of the bibliography proposed for each course would be desirable. Also, a clear distinction would be helpful between different types of texts and their proposed use.

The legal requirement to provide practical experience, or “practice”, in a study programme is being tested but the results are still inconclusive.

2.1.2. Consistency of the study subjects

The order of the subjects is appropriated. The logic of the structure of the courses and modules is based on the relation between and sequence of the study subjects: a gradual accumulation of learning outcomes proper for each programme determines the sequence and interrelationship of study subjects, with the conclusive written final work (thesis).

The daily and weekly distribution of subjects (the schedule) is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes.

The indicated volume of elective studies is sufficient. Most of the proposed elective courses are common to various areas of studies (Economics and Management, Social Sciences, Art, Humanitarian Sciences, Biomedicine and Natural Sciences).

Given the essentially practical and analytical nature of Pastoral Theology (at times referred to in theological circles as Practical Theology), one would expect to see more clearly included in the Programme an introduction of students to the various instruments of quantitative and qualitative analysis of social reality in the religious sphere which are necessary for at least some of the research they should be prepared to undertake.

The list of study subjects could be construed to concentrate excessively on pastoral care “ad intra” to the detriment of pastoral care understood as mission “ad extra” (i.e. pastoral care for prison and hospital inmates, schools, business and political life, trade-unions, the fields of art and culture, ...). An exchange of views with FCT staff during the on-site visit, however, helped to mitigate that view, insofar as it became clear that the Catholic Church in Lithuania has prioritized family issues and the formation of youth as pastoral areas requiring urgent attention.

2.2. Programmes content

2.2.1. Compliance of the contents of the studies with legal acts

According to the submitted self-assessment material and information obtained during the meetings on site, the experts concluded that the program is consistent with the “General requirements for degree conferring first cycle and integrated study programs” (2010), with respect to the number of credits attributed to core study subjects (149 national credits) and to the Bachelor Thesis (10 national credits). Also, there are no more than 5 subjects per semester.

The fact that the total amount of credits does not comply with the generic requirements for a bachelor degree in the law on Higher Education and Research (2009) is foreseen in the criteria for the application of the law in the “General requirements...” (2010), where it is explicitly stated that those requirements are applicable to theological study programmes only to the extent that they do not contradict the specific requirements of the Holy See (cfr. 1.1.2.).

The study contents of the other programmes comply with the legal acts for this field of study and facilitate meeting the learning outcomes. The study contents are in line with the requirements of other legal acts concerning study programmes in general: complies with the *General Requirements for the Study Programmes* and *VMU Academic Regulations* issued by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science¹⁰; it also complies with the dispositions of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, of the norms of the Congregation *For the correct implementation of the Apostolic Constitution ‘Sapientia Christiana’* and of the concept of Religious Studies maintained by

¹⁰ Order ISAK-1551 of 22 July 2005 of the Minister of Education and Science “On general requirements for study programmes, Art. 4/15” (*in Lith.*); Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania. No. XI-242 of 30 April 2009, Art. 48/2 (*in Lith.*). VMU Academic Regulations par. 3.2.24 - 3.2.28 (*in Lith.*).

the Holy See and its corresponding guidelines as well as on the requirements for Religious Studies in Lithuania.

2.2.2. Comprehensiveness and rationality of programmes contents

The initial or basic studies of the programmes are dedicated to the acquisition of the knowledge and skills and to the development of the values necessary for the theological or religious studies.

Forms and methods used in class and out of class are standard for university.

A wide variety of forms of teaching and studying are used to ensure different learning outcomes¹¹. Analytic research skills, indispensable for research, are developed during essay writing, preparing seminar presentations, analysing real life situations, producing research papers, doing thematic homework and writing the final Bachelor or Licenciante (Master) Thesis.

The study process fosters students' critical thinking skills, enhances their creative and civic participation in the social environment by performing self-study in practice placements and communities, preparing research papers and other practical tasks, presenting their own work and commenting on the work of their peers.

The content of the programmes dedicated to general education encompasses subjects related to world outlook and subjects which provide general erudition. These subjects are indirectly related to the content of Catholic Theology or of Religious Pedagogy.

The content of the specifically theological subjects is focused on the preparation of researchers in field of Catholic Theology, able to analyse the interrelation between Theology, Philosophy, History and modern sciences, and interpret the impact of faith and values upon individual and community in today's pluralistic society.

The core studies include theoretical subjects of Catholic Theology and other disciplines compulsory for first level Catholic Theology and Religious Pedagogy study programmes, providing the knowledge and skills necessary for a Bachelor qualification. A final part provides deeper knowledge and skills in the application of the theoretical principles of Catholic Theology and Religious Education. This part includes all "practices" associated to the programmes.

The description of subject annotation or subject content in some cases should be clarified and unified. The bibliography indicated for some of the study subjects, does not identify any specific publication that directly reflects the subject's theme.

Themes presented in the Pastoral Theology study subjects cover changes occurring in contemporary society, contrasting perspectives on human nature, the preparation of young people for matrimony, questions of family health and other relevant issues for pastoral care today. In practical seminars, students reflect on their own field experience and attempt to relate theoretical models to practical situations, discuss opportunities and obstacles to the application of theory to practice and develop a personal style in problem solving and dealing with practical issues. *From the Report and the on-site conversation with staff, experts got the impression of a very dynamic and creative pedagogy, calling for considerable student involvement in the whole teaching and learning process.* The enthusiasm of students and graduates with this Programme confirmed this positive impression. The general atmosphere of the course is aided by the small yearly intake of students. *Should the number of students increase, however, as we suggest it should, some adjustment may be necessary to keep the pedagogy workable.*

¹¹ For example, contact work (lectures, seminars), self-study, individual and group consultation and supervised work. During contact hours, study methods used include brain storming, focus groups, project method, cooperative learning, role playing, interpersonal exchange, visualizing of situations, learning-by-doing, inductive assignments for self-reflection, experiential learning, debate, etc. Students' critical thinking skills are fostered, creative and responsible participation in a pastoral context is enhanced, work is undertaken independently in communities, research papers are written and other practical tasks are carried out and then presented and commented on by their peers. During seminars, students analyse pastoral problems individually and in group, perform case analyses, discuss video material, participate in debates, apply theoretical knowledge to uncertain and changeable situations. Practical cases are analysed and tasks and problems solved using a group supervision method. (cfr. Report).

3. Staff

3.1. Staff composition and turnover

3.1.1. Rationality of the staff composition

Staff competence and qualification are an important part of University¹² and Faculty¹³ strategy. Academic staff is hired by public competition.

The qualification of the full-time teachers is in compliance with the “General requirements...” for study programmes, approved by the Minister of Education and Science on the 22nd of July 2005 (Order Nr. ISAK-1551). More than half of the general education subjects of the Programme, 80% of the initial basic subjects and 53% of the specifically theological subjects are taught by full-time VMU teachers who hold doctor degrees. At the second level of studies all full-time teachers have doctoral degrees. Staff also satisfies the requirement that at least 20% of study field subjects should be taught by professors – 21 out of 80 (national) credits are taught by 5 professors.

At present the ratio of students to teachers is adequate, as well as the ratio of students preparing a final Bachelor or Licenciante (Master) thesis to the number of available advisors (in this case the students are privileged).

The ratio of full-time and invited teachers is in compliance with the requirements of the corresponding legal acts. Out of the 24 teachers who teach in the bachelor of Theology programme, 20 are full-time teachers and 4 are invited teachers. *It is, However, in the Religious Education programmes it is unclear what subjects have been lectured by the teachers invited from other institutions.*

The teachers' workload is regulated by the internal order of the University Rector and appears rational. The total work load of one teacher is 36 hours a week. Pedagogical work load is 12-18 hours a week and includes lectures, tuition and orientation of Bachelor theses. The remaining time is for research, writing publications, didactical work, and etc.

The workload of a full-time teacher is 36 hours a week. Pedagogical work is 12-18 hours a week. The rest of the time is dedicated to research, writing for publication, preparing didactical work, etc. *The Reports show that all teachers have a sufficient pedagogical workload and have published some scientific research in the proper field.*

3.1.2. Turnover of teachers

Teacher turnover (of full-time and invited teachers) during the period of self-analysis was normal, with regards to their career. Stability of the staff in some programmes can be seen as a positive factor, especially at the level of first cycle studies, since it provides a reassuring degree of stability of content and teaching methods. On the other hand, this issue should be kept in mind as it can become an obstacle to the regular updating of the programmes.

3.2. Staff competence

3.2.1. Compliance of staff experience with the study programme

Staff experience is in sufficient compliance with the first and the second level of study programmes. The competence of members of the staff is clear from the information in the Reports, both at the level of research and publication and at the level of practical involvement in their respective fields of study.

¹² Decision of VMU Senate No. 1 of 26 April 2006: “On organization of competition for VMU scientific workers...”. (in Lith.)

¹³ Strategic plan of the Faculty of Catholic Theology for 2008–2012 (in Lith.).

It should, however, be emphasised that the more notable activities are related to some professors' names: in the programmes of Catholic and Pastoral Theology – prof. Narbekovas (an expert in the Bioethics Committee at the Ministry of Health Care of the Lithuanian Republic and a member of various working groups of the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as of the Ministry of Health Care); prof. Dulskis (an expert of the international database “Lituanistica” and a member of three international societies); dr. Kėvalas and prof. Žemaitis; in the programmes of Religious Pedagogy and Education – prof. Dulskis, dr. Lukaševičius, dr. Daugirdienė and Dr. Liobikienė.

A sufficient level of pedagogical and research performance (textbooks, scientific publications, articles, conferences etc.) can be confirmed; publications by staff are adequate for positions held in the Faculty but must be further encouraged in the future.

However, the staff of the Third level studies (Doctorate in Theology) necessitates to be potentiated as required by Sapientia Christiana a.49 – 50 and Norms of Application a. 17.

3.2.2. Consistency of teachers' professional development

Methodology is in place to observe and stimulate the upgrading of teacher qualification. *Progress in qualification is one of the items requiring yearly confirmation in each teacher's personal annual activity report. VMU has developed a system of points linking salary to teacher qualification enhancement¹⁴.* The main mode used to upgrade the professional qualification of staff is participation in scientific conferences, research internships and training sessions, not only in Lithuania, but also abroad (Poland, Belgium, Austria).

Higher qualification (academic degree) allows a teacher to attain a better academic position or, at times, to replace one with lower qualification.

Among the motivations to seek for higher qualification is a scoring system whereby teachers collect points by participating in scientific activities, which in turn is correlated to benefits in salary.

According to the Report, the constant improvement of the teachers' qualification has had a noticeable impact on the quality of the study programme as a whole.

4. Facilities and learning resources

4.1. Facilities

4.1.1. Sufficiency and suitability of premises for studies

The Faculty is located in 7, 7b, 7c Gimnazijos street; the premises were transferred to the university by the Archdiocese for 99 years under a utilization agreement. The number of auditoriums, classrooms and workplaces, as well as the technical conditions and hygiene are satisfactory (75 auditoriums in the university as a whole, the largest auditoriums have 150 working places, there are 10 auditoriums in the Faculty of Catholic Theology itself and almost all have multimedia projector equipment installed).

Designing the schedule for lectures, the number of students in the course and the number of working places are taken into account. A majority of the auditoriums is occupied between 8 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. In the autumn semester the demand for auditoriums is higher than in the spring semester, when the final year students have fewer courses in order to research and write their final thesis. Vacant auditoriums are used to organize student self-study activities, individual and group consultations, students' pastoral care activities, additional seminars and other events.

¹⁴ VMU teacher salary coefficient calculation table. Approved by the VMU Senate on 20 February 2008. The calculation is based on individual scientific production and scientific activity reports. (in Lith.)

The FCT administration is located at 7 Gimnazijos str. The Deanery, Dean's and Vice-deans offices and the meeting room, as well as St. Tomas Aquinas Chapel, are on the ground floor. The Departments of Religion Studies, Canon Law and Theology, as well as the Centre of Lithuanian Catholic Church History and the Centre of Matrimony and Family Studies, the Archive and the Editorial Board of the journal "Soter" are located on the first floor.

At present, the main library for theological studies is housed in the complex of archdiocesan buildings and seminary, but is independently accessible to all readers.

For such a small contingent of students, the premises are more than adequate

4.1.2. Suitability and sufficiency of equipment for studies

Library and reading rooms satisfy the conditions required.

The Faculty owns Stasys Šalkauskis Theology Reading Room where specialised literature sources are collected (5 Papilio str.). It contains 40 workplaces and hires one employee. Students and teachers can use publications of two further libraries – VMU and Kaunas Priest Seminary (located at 5 Papilio str. 5) Libraries.

The Reading Room is equipped with 5 computers for study and research, e-mails, reading CDs and recording information. The following services are also provided: copying, printing and scanning.

VMU has a modern Library with 3 Lending Departments and 8 Reading Rooms. There are 436 working places in the Library, 74 of them computerised and equipped with the latest technologies and Internet connections.

The working hours of the library units (Reading Rooms and Lending Departments) are negotiated with faculty deaneries. Vaclovas Biržiška Reading Room has the longest working hours: from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday to Friday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. During the examination season it is also open on Sundays. If a student needs publications from a reading room which is not open on Saturdays or its working hours are shorter, there is a possibility to order them for reading in other Reading Rooms. Certain publications, necessary for a course, may be borrowed for the entire semester. If the University Library does not have a publication, a user may order it from other Lithuanian university libraries or foreign university libraries via Interlibrary Loan Service.

At the end of 2009, there were 1260 computers at the university and 13 computerised classes (total number of computers in these - 170) for student teaching and independent work. The University has signed an agreement with Microsoft to rent programme software (MS Windows upgrade and MS Office). The agreement allows the updating all university computers with the latest programme versions. As 35% of university computers are more than 5 years old, there are plans to replace at least 20% of them annually. The on-going audit of all university computer software has also identified the Faculty's needs for new software.

In the Deanery there are 12 computerised working places, equipped with 6 printers, 2 copying machines, 4 laptops and 4 multimedia projectors. Two computerised classrooms (each with 5 computers) are prepared for students at 7b and 7c Gimnazijos str.

4.1.3. Suitability and accessibility of the resources for practical training

Student "practice" has been included into the Programme only since the Autumn semester of the 2007-2008 academic year. The data about the resources for practical training is not included in the Reports. *During the on-site visit it was possible, however, to ascertain that students have access to a wide range of the Catholic Church's pastoral institutions and services in which to carry out practical assignments and acquire experience.*

4.2. Learning resources

4.2.1. Suitability and accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications

Learning resources necessary for the basic first level studies (main bibliographical positions) are satisfactory *while learning resources for the second level of studies as well as for the doctoral research should be updated.*

The repository of the specialized library consists of 9321 publications: in the areas of Philosophy and Psychology (438 publications), Religion and Theology (7651 publications) and Social Sciences (320). There are 3012 publications in Lithuanian, 2423 in English, 2967 in German, and 919 publications in other languages.

The texts indicated in the bibliography for the different subjects generally are accessible, the number of textbooks and periodic publications is sufficient and suitable for achieving learning outcomes requested by the first level studies.

Due to exchanges with other academic institutions a number of prestigious theological journals partially are received, such as *The Journal of Theological Studies, Folia Theologica, Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, Theologische Quartalschrift, Logos, Augustiniana, Louvain Studies, Nouvelle revue theologique, New Testament Studies, Theological Studies, The Thomist, Revue Thomiste, Ecole de Theologie, Rassegna di Teologia, Collectanea Theologica, Bulletin ET* and others.

On the other hand, the regular subscription to these and other journals for the economical reason practically is absent. Among the textbooks and periodical publications, for example, not one is dedicated to religious education.

4.2.2. Suitability and accessibility of learning materials

Learning materials are suitable for achievement of learning outcomes.

Teachers of the faculty have prepared educational books, textbooks and other publications necessary for the Programme (the number of main textbooks indicated in the programme of Catholic Theology is 25). Didactic publications are accessible for students in the University and FCT Libraries and Reading Rooms. Students can also find didactic publications in electronic form on the intranet as documents in study subject folders.

Much academic material is nowadays available over the Internet. Catholic Theology students at VMU have access to 17 electronic databases (JSTOR, Oxford Journals Online, EBSCO, SAGE Journals Online, etc.). A further 32 licensed and trial databases are accessible at VMU University Library, and the list is constantly being updated.

In the FCT documents folder on the intranet, students can find recommendations for final thesis preparation. Study subject folders also store recommendations for independent work, as well as supplementary theoretical and video material.

5. Study process and student assessment

5.1. Student admission

5.1.1. Rationality of requirements for admission to the studies

Admission to all the programmes is organised according to the admission criteria laid down by the Lithuanian Law on Science and Studies (Ministry of Education and Science), the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* and the admission rules of the University. All the process is organised by the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Joint Admission.

As with all second cycle Catholic theological programmes, *Sapientia Christiana* requires that candidates have a Bachelor's degree in Catholic Theology (or in Religious Pedagogy). The Pastoral Theology Programme Committee offers admission to applicants with the highest potential for

graduate studies and who are most likely to contribute substantially to their academic or professional fields through professional practice or on-going study and research.

The admission to the state funded and paid Catholic Theology or Religious Pedagogy studies is accomplished by selecting from amongst the applicants with the highest contest marks according to a predetermined methodology. In addition, a written recommendation by a priest is requested (a special form of questionnaire-recommendation has been prepared). Since 2010 the applicants to the state budget financed places have to take a motivational test. There are no differences between the conditions of admission for seminarians and lay applicants.

The analysis of the highest and lowest scores of successful applicants during the last 5 years, as well as the number of the students, reveals a generally negative dynamic. However, the high entrance competitive scores and the positive academic achievement of students in the programmes allow one to conclude that there is a substantial number of motivated applicants to choose from and that the present minimal requirements for entrants are sufficient for a successful outcome.

The fact that a Bachelor's degree in Catholic Theology (STB) or in Religious Pedagogy is required for entry the second level study programmes (Licenciate of Pastoral Theology or master of Religious Education) does considerably reduce the number of applicants to these programmes. Unless an STB has obtained abroad, the only possible candidates would seem to be graduates from the FCT's own Bachelors study programme. But such a small number of students dents the potential impact that the unique status and objectives of the second level programmes should have on the Pastoral activity of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. No mention, however, is made in the Report of a possible bridging course for those who have completed a six year course in a major Catholic seminary (there are two other major seminaries in Lithuania, besides the archdiocesan seminary in Kaunas). Such a bridging course would make the programmes accessible to a much larger number of applicants, many of whom with important pastoral responsibilities which would benefit from being carried out by someone with advanced studies in Pastoral Theology or Religious Education.

5.1.2. Efficiency of enhancing the motivation of applicants and new students

The measures taken to make the programmes known are various and satisfying. The efficiency of these measures has been confirmed by both the students and the teachers.

Although advertising is the responsibility of the Office of Study Marketing at VMU, measures to disseminate information on study programmes are also included in the FCT's Strategic Plan.

Information about the studies at VMU in general and the Catholic Theology Programme in particular is provided through: VMU newsletters (the corporate VMU publication "Studies at Vytautas Magnus University" is of the utmost importance) and other publications presenting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions; VMU Student Admissions Office; VMU (www.VDU.lt), FCT (www.theology.VDU.lt) and LAMA BPO web pages; VMU and FCT Facebook social network; study fairs; VMU "Open door days"; visits of representatives of VMU and FCT to schools; FCT radio programmes; Catholic events and websites; meetings of Religion teachers; regular meetings of diocesan priests, etc.

Aiming at broader dissemination of information, leaflets and posters presenting the FCT have been published since 2008, subsidised by social partners and other sponsors. In 2008, a video was produced about studies at the FCT.

From 2009, two months before admission to universities begins, "Radio Maria" broadcasts daily information about study programmes provided by the FCT.

VMU produces a great deal of introductory material for secondary school students about studying at the university and about its environment.

In 2008, a group for disseminating information was formed at the FCT, comprised of the Dean, a social partner, active alumni, students and a teacher. The group oversees the organization of visits to schools, the presentation of the FCT in various public events and on the Internet; the group is

also concerned with merchandizing items with the FCT symbol and logo (T-shirts, etc.) and with fundraising for these activities.

Comprehensive information about the possibility of studying at VMU and about the FCT's study programmes and admission requirements can be obtained during visits of FCT students and teachers to secondary schools and gymnasiums. Each year more than 10 such meetings are organized in partner and other schools.

Although general publicity gives brand visibility and recognition, in the case of these programmes, as with many specialised study programmes in higher education, the most effective motivation is word of mouth and information disseminated in environments frequented by clearly identified target-groups.

5.2. Study process

5.2.1. Rationality of the programmes schedule

The programmes schedule is rational and adequate for achieving aims and learning outcomes.

Teaching, learning and assessment in the programmes are regulated by normative documents of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (Law on Science and Studies¹⁵ and Order "On general requirements for study programmes"¹⁶), as well as by the corresponding VMU normative documents.

An academic year is composed of two semesters – autumn and spring. The beginning and the end of the semesters are determined by the University Senate.

The duration of Bachelor in Catholic Theology and in Religious Pedagogy is 6 semestres (with 4 semesters of preparative philosophy studies), in Licentiate studies is 4 semesters and in Master studies is 3 semesters. The academic year consists of two semesters – autumn and spring. The start of Autumn Semester is the 1st of September; the start of Spring Semester is the first week of February. The duration of each semester is 20 study weeks. The duration of a working week is 5 days. One study week represents 40 student work hours. The unit of class work duration is 1,5 academic hours (one academic hour equals 45 min.). Lectures are scheduled for three days a week.

The study process is regulated by the semester study schedule which indicates the type of classroom work, its time, duration and location, the language the course is taught in and the teacher's name. Each semester students prepare their individual study plans taking into account the study schedule, the requirements of their study programme and VMU Academic Regulations. According to the VMU Academic Regulations, at the beginning of each semester students enrol in study subjects. They have two weeks to change this enrolment. A later change is possible but according to precise rules. In exceptional cases students can study according to an individual study timetable.¹⁷

Examinations are taken at the end of each semester. The examination schedule is designed with due regard to student and teacher requests and posted no later than 1 week before the examination session. Examinations are distributed equally throughout the whole period allocated to examination sessions. Similar procedures of even distribution, taking into account student requests, etc. are also applied to other forms of assessment (mid-term exams, practical work assignments, essay presentations). The coordination of these assessments is carried out at department level.

¹⁵ Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Nr. XI-242 of the 30th of April 2009.

¹⁶ Order Nr. ISAK-1551, of the 22nd of July 2005, of the Minister of Education and Science "On general requirements for study programmes" (in Lith.).

¹⁷ Studies according to the individual study timetable are regulated by the VMU order "On individual study timetable procedures", approved by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

5.2.2. Student academic performance

Analysis of the change in the number of students enrolled in the Catholic Theology Programme between 2005 and 2009 reveals a generally negative dynamic. From 2006, the number of entrants has decreased and currently oscillates between 8 and 14. This reduction in the number of entrants can be explained by a decrease of candidates to the priesthood and a general fall in the numbers of candidates to universities. Over the academic years 2005/2006 to 2009/2010, 53 students dropped out: 16 for personal reasons, 15 due to insufficient academic performance, 2 failed to pay tuition fees, 9 failed to enrol, 6 failed to present and defend their Bachelor theses, 4 failed to complete the compulsory study programme, 1 student died.

The number of entrants to the pastoral Theology Programme in 2007-2009 was quite stable (2007 – 10, 2008 – 8, 2009 – 6). All state financed positions were filled. The number of tuition-fee paying entrants has been 1 since 2008. Such number of entrants is normal, taking into account the fact that only graduates from Catholic Theology studies can continue studying in the Programme. Over the same period, 4 students dropped out of studies for personal reasons, but there were no drop-outs due to academic failure, presumably because quality and motivation are high; 9 students took an academic leave, for family and professional reasons, but most of them returned to continue their studies.

The number of students enrolled in the Religious Pedagogy and Religious Education programmes has been stable.

There are good possibilities for students to participate in the research activities. The FCT has three research centres: “Marriage and Family Study Centre”, “Lithuanian Catholic Church History Centre” and “Christian Education Centre”. VMU also promotes inter-faculty scientific clusters, such as “Church Relations with State and Society in Lithuania” and “Search for Human Relations in Bioethics”.

In 2008, the inclusion of faculty teachers and advanced students in research clusters, and the development of a system of planning, assessing and enhancing student research work were set up as important aims in FCT strategy.

From the beginning of 2010, students’ scientific research has been coordinated by the FCT Students’ Scientific Society “Signum”. The Society invites scientists from different fields to present their research themes, organizes public debates, presentations of students’ scientific work and its corresponding publication. Programme students have been invited to give theological lectures on current issues in other SSSs. In the spring semester of 2010, “Signum” organized a national students’ research section in the international scientific conference organized by the Faculty. The activities promoted by “Signum” bring together students of the Bachelor and Master level programmes and highlight research themes considered to be important for the whole Faculty. The FCT students’ “Philosophers’ Club” discusses philosophical issues and includes students from VMU’s Faculty of Humanities and from Kaunas University of Technology. The club is open to Programme students.

Students who intend to enter the doctoral study programme in Theology are invited to publish scientific articles in the Religious Science journal “Soter”, published by the FCT.

Although there are the possibilities to participate in scientific research the number of participants remains relatively low. Teachers appear not to provide sufficient incentive to increase student participation in research.

5.2.3. Mobility of teachers and students

International cooperation is very important for the FCT’s doctoral study programme and research projects, for publishing scientific articles and monographs, for organizing scientific

conferences, for enriching teaching and study experience and developing teaching methods. Particular attention is paid to the development of an international dimension in the FCT's strategic plan.

One third of the members of doctoral committee and one third of the Editorial Board of the FCT's scientific journal "Soter" are scholars from foreign countries¹⁸.

At VMU a great part of teacher and student mobility is carried out via the Erasmus programme. VMU is in third place for teacher and student mobility among all Lithuanian higher education schools participating in *LLP/Erasmus* exchange programme.

The choice of Erasmus exchange partners is determined by the intention to provide students with a possibility to hear lectures given by leading foreign theologians and provide a broader choice of institutions for out-going teachers and students. Partners are selected in a thorough way, on the basis of personal academic acquaintance¹⁹.

Increased academic mobility of teachers is one of the objectives of VMU's and the FCT's strategy implementation plans. Outgoing teachers receive additional points, with a direct impact on the increase in their salary.

Since 2005, each year 4-6 Bachelor programmes teachers travel to foreign universities to teach, participate in symposiums and acquire international experience. The data provided about the number of teachers who participated in the mobility programmes (17-25% every year) leads to the conclusion that teacher mobility is sufficient.

Every year since 2005 between 5-7 Pastoral Theology programme teachers (33%-50%) have visited foreign universities. The visits have been mainly for teaching, giving presentations in international scientific conferences, participating in symposiums of theological societies, gaining international experience and getting acquainted with achievements of partners in the same field of academic research.

Beginning with 2005, each year 2-4 Religious Education Programme teachers (22% - 44%) leave for foreign universities on the Erasmus exchange programme or as a result of other incentives for academic mobility (invitations from foreign universities and societies, personal professional contacts).

Particular attention has been devoted, since 2006, to inviting teachers from foreign countries to FCT. At least three times a year students have the opportunity to hear an incoming professor lecture on subjects related to their studies. Even when teachers were invited as part of the second cycle Master in Pastoral Theology Programme, all students were allowed to attend their lectures.

About two thirds of visiting teachers come on the Erasmus exchange programme.

The mobility of Bachelor of Catholic Theology Programme students (outgoing students) is represented by the following data: 1.5% in 2007/2008, 3% in 2008/2009, 7% in 2009/2010 out of the total number of Programme students (respectively 1, 2 and 4 students). The main institution visited was *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Belgium). Only one Pastoral Theology Programme student has gone abroad to study on Erasmus exchange. The main reason is that most students have families and are employed, and so cannot leave Lithuania for a whole semester.

There have been no incoming foreign students to the FCT.

The impact of mobility on the study programme was assessed to have been positive.

¹⁸ Polish universities play an important role as FCT foreign partners in scientific research. In 2001 and 2005 the FCT signed cooperation treaties with the Catholic University of Lublin and Nicolaus Copernicus University, in Toruń. The Faculty has close ties with Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, in Warsaw, and with the University of Krakow. It also cooperates with the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Lateran University (Rome), and with the Faculty of Theology at Frankfurt am Main University (Germany), Budapest Catholic University (Hungary). In 2010, after a visit of a delegation to the FCT, close cooperation was initiated with the Faculty of Catholic Theology at Tilburg University (Netherlands) and the International Theological Institute (Austria).

¹⁹ Between 2005–2010 the FCT signed 9 Erasmus agreements with universities in Great Britain, Belgium, Ireland, Germany, France, Italy, Holland and Latvia. Among Erasmus partners are Leuven Catholic University and Paris Catholic Institute.

Teacher mobility in the programmes is surprisingly high at the same time as student mobility is residual.

5.3. Student support

5.3.1. Usefulness of academic support

The FCT seeks to promote understanding and cooperation between teachers and students. Following established tradition, informal discussions on the study process, study specialization and future work perspectives are encouraged. Once a month the Dean meets with students-monitors and active members (“student active group”) to discuss important issues for students and faculty. During annual Faculty events special time is allotted to discussions about theological studies and career opportunities. Faculty alumni participate in all these events.

Different forms of academic and didactic support are applied constantly and consistently. All study and university life related information (Rector’s orders, rules, time-tables, events, mobility, student support information, career opportunities, etc.) are published on the FirstClass intranet system, in VMU and FCT bulletin-boards and websites. Necessary information is provided timely, allowing the students to plan accordingly. The active participation of students in Faculty life, academic and other Faculty events permits the conclusion information is disseminated effectively.

According to VMU Academic Regulations, every full-time teacher spends no less than 20 hours per semester consulting students on their homework, individual or group assignments and other study-related issues. Consulting is performed face-to-face at hours officially announced via the intranet and on bulletin-boards, as well as on-line by Skype, e-mail and discussion forums – collaboration environments convenient for students.

The Dean and Department Chairs meet periodically with students, to explain the aims of the study programme, projected learning outcomes and links, needs of the labour market and job opportunities. FCT administration office workers are available daily for students to consult on academic and organizational issues. Every semester, at the beginning of the examination session, the Dean sends an e-mail to the teachers reminding them that examination results have to be discussed with the students during specially appointed times and that the students are to be informed about the time of the meeting during the examination.

Different forms of help for career planning are available to the students. The VMU Youth Career Centre regularly organizes seminars and provides consultations on career planning issues. Regularly, at least once a year, face-to-face meetings with members of FCT Alumni are organized where they talk about their work experience, the relevance to their work of the knowledge and skills acquired through the Programme.

As FCT graduates already work almost in all social partner institutions, the Faculty has close, diverse and fruitful ties with almost all ecclesiastical institutions. One of the important areas of cooperation is providing information about vacant places in these institutions. Announcements for open job positions are posted to students via VMU intranet system, placed on FCT Facebook social net, and faculty bulletin boards. Another form of recruitment, involving Faculty staff, is in transmitting requests from social partners for job applicants.

A considerable numbers of Programme students are priests who, naturally, apply skills acquired in the Programme directly to their pastoral work.

Lectures, seminars, practical training, research assignments, and voluntary activity result in greater familiarity of students with Catholic organizations and their representatives. The importance of voluntary work of students for their future profession is emphasized from the very first year of studies. The Faculty administration acts as a mediator in posting various opportunities for voluntary activity and practical training in Lithuania and abroad.

At the beginning of the academic year, the first year students of the Programme have an orientation week. Then, approximately in October, another meeting with the Dean is organized to

discuss the first impressions of the study programme. From 2007 an official Beginning of the Academic Year has been organized at the FCT, during which students get acquainted with the faculty administration, teachers, and senior year students. These measures strengthen motivation of new entrants.

On demand, opportunities can be created for a student to follow the study programme according to an individual schedule, in accordance with the order approved by Rector²⁰. However, no Programme student made use of this possibility over the period analysed in the Report. During the on-site visit students explained that this is due to flexible timetables and easy dialogue with teachers, which allows them to adjust lectures so as to harmonize their studies with jobs and family life.

In brief: information regarding studies is transmitted consistently and timely; students are provided with comprehensive consultation on career opportunities; students can, in theory, design a personal study programme, but in practice have not made use this possibility.

5.3.2. Efficiency of social support

A number of successful full-time Programme students receive a grant from the state²¹.

Additional financial support can be obtained from various funds and students are informed about available possibilities and are assisted in preparing the necessary documents.

Onetime allowances or social grants provide direct support. The following additional grants can also be provided: social, onetime, exchange programme, honorary university and motivating grants.

The meeting with students and graduates of the various FCT programmes permitted the experts to conclude that the student grant and allowance system is considered to operate fairly.

Due to the worsening financial situation at the university, all events for students as well as trips and weekends depend on resources obtained from sponsors through the mediation of social partners and the Grand Chancellor. Students of the Pastoral Theology programme participate in almost all events organized by the FCT and are therefore also considered to be recipients of this kind of support.

Students also receive effective psychological, sport, health, and cultural support.

There is no problem in finding accommodation.

5. 4. Student achievement assessment

5.4.1. Suitability of assessment criteria and their publicity

The description of precise qualitative criteria for the assessment of student is missing.

However, students are acquainted by teachers, at the beginning of each semester, with the subject learning outcomes, study achievement evaluation structure, and evaluation criteria. Student achievements are evaluated according to the accumulative mark achievement system approved by the University (colloquium 15-35%, intermediate work 15-35%, and examination 50%) and the requirements for the examination at the beginning of every semester, during the first session of each course. The final mark integrates the marks received for interim work and examination. In the opinion of the students, the publicity of these assessment criteria appears to be sufficient.

No clear definition is provided of the criteria, if any, for assessing a student's scientific and academic activity outside individual courses.

²⁰ Order No.73 of 4 February 2008 of VMU Vice-Rector for Studies "On the order of providing individual study schedule". (in Lith.)

²¹ In first level programmes, 65% of the first year students receive grants of 1 MGL (minimum subsistence level), 5% of the second, third and fourth year students receive 2 MGL and 25% receive 1.75 MGL. During the first semestere of 2009, a total of 21 FCT students received grants from the state in all programmes; during the second semester 38 students received grants from the state.

5.4.2. Feedback efficiency

Effective feedback measures are in place for student achievement. Teachers provide feedback in written and oral form. After the written examination the final results are posted on the Intranet in 5 work days and then discussed in the student group. Participation is not compulsory. Teacher and student conversation aims at clarifying the achievement of the learning outcomes. The mark for the written final exam can then be changed, but no more than by one point.

The student has a right to appeal to the Dean within 3 days of the evaluation being posted. The Dean appoints an Appeal Committee which consists of 3 persons. The teacher and the student have to present all the relevant information to this Committee. The appeal must be examined within 5 days.

Feedback is, therefore, sufficient for students to obtain and question information concerning their achievements.

At the end of every semester, students are given evaluation forms to assess every course as well as the quality and method of teaching. This feedback provides the Faculty and the Department with the information on the quality of teaching, expectations of the students and suggestions for improvement.

Experts were informed that VMU is reviewing the evaluation forms and that staff at the FCT find direct dialogue with students efficient in contributing to changes in study subjects and in the Programme as a whole.

5.4.3. Efficiency of final thesis assessment

The requirements for the final thesis at the end of each programme are comprehensible and take into account the requirements of research methodology in general and the methods of theological studies in particular. The responsibility for these requirements belongs to the Vice-Rector of VMU.

Master – Licentiate final thesis is defined as an analytical and applied independent research project. Final thesis is prepared in compliance with the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, and the general rules on final theses preparation and defence approved at VMU²². The requirements and schedule are posted publicly on the FCT information system and are discussed in detail with the final year students at the beginning of the third semester. The requirements for final thesis preparation are modified and approved annually, after the quality of that year's final theses have been discussed.

Students are free to choose the advisor of their final thesis and negotiate the chosen theme. While preparing the thesis, themes may be adjusted to take into account new findings obtained during the research. One month prior to the public defence, they are approved by the Rector of VMU. During the approval of the chosen themes for final theses, due regard is paid to the compliance of the theme with the programme aims. If the theme does not correspond to the programme aims, the student corrects and modifies the theme.

A proper assessment procedure is in place, involving a Committee for the public defence of the final theses which consists not only of students' teachers, but also of representatives from other institutions of higher education: a) the advisor writes a review about the adequacy of the work to the set requirements, evaluates student's independent work, the performed research, presents an overview of the final thesis preparation process; b) the reviewer, appointed by the Department, evaluates the thesis and presents his/her opinion in the written review; c) during public defence, members of the Committee listen to the student's final thesis presentation and evaluate the final thesis by mark in a closed Committee meeting, taking into account evaluation criteria of final thesis. Each member of the Committee evaluates the final thesis separately. Rules are clearly established for working out the final mark.

²² Order No.74a of 6 February 2008 of VMU Vice-rector for studies "On general order of final theses preparation". (in Lith.)

The grades of final theses correspond, in general, to their quality. *However, there is a noticeable trend to high marks.*

In most cases there is full compliance of final thesis topic with learning outcomes.

5.4.4. Functionality of the system for assessment and recognition of achievements acquired in non-formal and self-education

As yet there is no formal system of assessment and recognition of achievements acquired in non-formal and self-education. It is a relatively new requirement and VMU is still working on developing effective criteria and methodology. The University Competence Centre will provide students with the possibility of having their non-formally acquired skills and competence recognized and assessed. Some students, who combine pastoral work and study, have expressed their interest in this possibility. But as yet none of them have applied to be assessed.

5.5. Graduates placement

5.5.1. Expediency of graduate placement

At the end of 2009, VMU Strategy for Student Career Projecting and Graduate Career Observing was approved, and corresponding instruments for data collection and analysis were designed. VMU is also planning to join the national project for a system for graduate career observance. These measures will help to have more exact data on graduate careers.

The Catholic Theology Bachelor Programme graduates should acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to work in various Catholic institutions and improve them, as well as to apply Catholic Church teaching, in theory and practice, to pastoral work with youth and adults. The main activities engaged in by graduates are: 1) graduate clergy usually perform pastoral work in parishes and other structures of the Catholic Church, 2) lay graduates usually work as catechists in parishes and other centres, as teachers of Catholic Religion, etc.

The Pastoral Theology Programme graduates met by the team during the on-site visit had entered a wide variety of occupations, such as working in Caritas, in Family and Youth centres and teaching Religion in secondary schools and gymnasiums.

Religious Education Programme graduates are expected to gain sufficient knowledge and skills to work in and improve a variety of religious education structures. They also learn to evaluate and apply new developments in the theory and practice of religious education. Graduates have found employment in two major areas: as teachers of Catholic religion at schools and as catechists or administrative workers in parishes.

However, the broad cultural formation provided by the Programme means that alternative placement opportunities have also been found by graduates over the years, in a wide variety of political, cultural and economic professions

6. Programmes management

6.1. Programmes administration

6.1.1. Efficiency of the programmes management activities

The administrative units for running the each programme are: the Study Programme Committee, the Departments, and the Faculty Council. The Programme Committee organizes the quality assessment of the Programme and decides on the strategy of improvement. The Faculty Council approves any changes, the Department implements these changes and generally coordinates the Programme.

The Programmes are approved by the Congregation for Catholic Education. Every three years the Dean prepares a report on the Faculty and any major changes in the study programme, and submits it to the Grand Chancellor who then presents it to the Congregation for approval.

The Study Programmes Committees consists of qualified and experienced Programmes teachers, students, alumni representatives, social partners and external experts.

Programmes administration and programme quality assurance processes are regulated by VMU documents. In 2009, a VMU Intranet catalogue was designed, which gathers all the information related to study programme self-evaluation. Statistics on student and teacher mobility, student progress and drop-out data are kept and stored at the FCT and the Office of Academic Affairs. Final theses, examination and colloquium papers are stored in the Dean's office. Lists of topics for final theses are kept on FCT and VMU databases. Alumni contact data are stored and updated regularly.

6.2. Internal quality assurance

6.2.1. Suitability of the programmes quality evaluation

The internal quality assurance system has been set up according to VMU regulations and is performed at the end of each semester.

A standardised assessment is performed at the end of each semester of two or three compulsory and elective subjects.

The Study Programme Committee and the Departments discuss programmes assessment issues regularly. Faculty, students, alumni and social partners meet to discuss study quality issues more than once a year.

The data required for programmes quality control has led to the development of a number of different questionnaires: 1) study subject teaching quality evaluation – student's approach; 2) study subject teaching quality evaluation – teacher's approach; 3) teacher and student's approach to the achievement of learning outcomes laid out in the subject programme; 4) evaluation of the quality of the supervision available to students in preparing course papers and final theses; 5) quality evaluation of study organization.

Closed type questions are supplemented by open-ended questions: a) study programme aims, demand, relevance, changes in purpose and demand since the last updating; b) programme study outcomes (intended competences), their change and coherence with similar study programmes in other, including foreign, universities; c) programme structure and content; d) compliance of study subjects with all the required structural parts and their volume in credits; f) study programme plan; g) distribution of subject hours; h) assessment of subject learning outcomes; i) final assessment of the Programme results.

Assessment results are treated in a confidential manner, oriented to individual teacher's self-reflection and self-development. The summarised ratings are discussed in a meeting of the Departments. Individual ratings are confidential: each assessed teacher is acquainted with his or her personal results.

VMU regulations provide a very effective mechanism for evaluating the Programme. The requirement to analyse the Programme in comparison "with similar study programmes in other, including foreign, universities" (see above 119) seems particularly relevant.

6.2.2. Efficiency of the programmes quality improvement

The results of quality evaluation are used to eliminate weaknesses and improve planning from the individual level (teacher) to the level of the Faculty Council.

For best results, two types of assessment are used: standardised quantitative (diagnostic) and discussion-based qualitative (constructivist).

The general results of the programmes quality assessment are discussed at meetings of the Study Programme Committee and the Departments. In accordance with the requirements of the Order, is also considered the opinion of students and faculty in general.

The Dean or Department Chair may initiate a confidential discussion with a faculty member on the results of her/his teaching quality assessment, oriented to self-reflection and self-development and a general improvement of the quality of their teaching. Individual ratings are confidential – each assessed teacher is acquainted with his/her own results. A summary of the study subject quality assessment results is kept in the Department's archives.

Publicity of programme quality is foreseen in VMU Statute. A working group has been set up at university level to create a university teaching quality assessment database which will allow publication of certain data.

Although the Self-Evaluation reports state that the Faculty invests in quality assurance in order to promote constant improvement in the programmes, the return on this investment is not critically analysed.

6.2.3. Efficiency of stakeholders participation

There is a close relationship between the FCT and many stakeholders, as was visible during the on-site visit.

The opinions of the alumni and social partners are considered to be an important factor in enhancing the quality of the study programmes. The feedback from alumni is collected mostly via face-to-face meetings and on-line discussions. The opinion of stakeholders is sought after by various means.

Teachers summarise in publications and conferences their experience at organizing and implementing the programmes. Surveys are also performed of social partners.

However, are the right questions being asked: are the programmes being considered by all as mostly profession-centred? The team of experts got the impression that the stakeholders were more interested in the professions they would have or the professionals they do or wish to employ, than in the increased understanding of the world and of the pastoral challenges facing the Catholic Church which could and should come from the programmes of basic and advanced studies in Theology and Educology and the on-going research and publication which should accompany it.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Related to the first level of studies (Bachelor)

1. A valid solution should be found to the conflict between the requirements of Lithuanian State legislation for first cycle University studies (max. 240 ECTS) and the requirements of The Holy See for the first canonical degree in Theology (300 ECTS). The possibility of the State agreeing on an exception to the general rule in the case of the Bachelor's degree in Theology (STB) is present in the ministerial Law Nr. V-501 (9 April 2010). Other alternatives would have to be discussed directly with the Holy See.

2. The design of the Bachelor of Catholic Theology Programme needs correcting. Some content needs redistributing and some study subjects need alteration – especially in the areas of Fundamental, Dogmatic and Moral Theology – to avoid duplication of content and develop a more universally recognized pattern of subjects. This is of particular importance for students who wish to move between faculties of Catholic Theology before completing the Programme

3. In the description of individual subjects: a better correspondence should be attempted between learning outcomes established, student workload – bibliography indicated as required reading – and credits assigned. The bibliographical indications might be renewed (In some cases the bibliographical indications [*literature*] for the study subject do not match the description of the learning outcomes. The main reason of this deficiency is the insufficient subject volume in credits or the excessive list of bibliographical positions, or the kind of the indicated text ['study tools', sources, i.e. Holy Scripture, Council Documents, Catechism, etc., without any specification]. In other cases the indicated texts are not suitable because of the date of publication adequate. [to be noted *Introduction to Theology*: TEO1006, *Natural Theology*: TEO1007, *Philosophy of Nature*: TEO2004, *General Introduction of the Holy Scripture*: TEO3001, *Fundamental Theology-2*: TEO3005, *History of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*: TEO3008, *Liturgy*: TEO4001, *Fundamentals of Sexual Ethics*: TEO2006, *Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostols*: TEO3009; *Pentateuch*: TEO3011, *Special Moral Theology-1*: TEO4002, *Special Moral Theology-2*: TEO4006, *Theology of Spirituality*: TEO5003, *The Wisdom Literature*: TEO 5005, *The Johannine Tradition*: TEO5007, *Pastoral Theology*: TEO5008]. The suggestion to distinguish the types of indicated scripts could be valid.

4. The current change underway from national credits to the European Credit Transfer System should be seen as an opportunity to ponder a more accurate distribution of credits between subjects.

5. A precise system of criteria for student assessment needs to be developed based on a clear understanding of the different levels of learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competence. This will be necessary to fulfil requests for data relevant to Level 6, as defined by the *Descriptors in the European Qualifications Framework* (EQF).

6. A system of permanent assessment of quality improvement is necessary, covering all possible levels – the entire Programme and individual subjects, separate sections of the Programme, premises for studies, equipment, learning resources, study process assessment, programme administration and internal quality assurance.

7. The phenomenon of duplication of some theological subjects (courses), due to mixed group of the students (seminarians and secular students) might be avoided. At present time the seminarians usually do not attend courses in the Faculty, some theological subjects are held in the Seminary and are not necessarily offered by the professors of the Faculty.

8. Teacher and especially student mobility need promoting.

9. Publication of research by teachers should be promoted as well as research carried out in cooperation with the students.

10. The selection of topics for final Bachelor theses should obey objective criteria, as should the final evaluation. A lack of actuality of the final works of STB as well as an inadequate level of evaluations (too high) have been observed.

II. Related to the second level of studies (Licentiate or Master):

1. The small number of students studying in this Pastoral Theology Programme is particularly striking when one takes into account the unique character of this Licentiate in Lithuania. The Programme needs to be opened to a wider public in order to build up, in Lithuania, a critical mass of graduates without which Pastoral Theology will not fully mature as a field of scientific research

and publication. Each diocese in Lithuania would surely benefit from having at least one student a year in the Programme – though this would naturally call for further funding, possibly by the respective diocese, and a bridging course for those who have studied Theology at a seminary or have a degree in Religious Studies.

2. Although the focus on Marriage, Youth and Vocation is understandable, given the present situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuanian and the quality of some of the leading teachers in the Programme, some provision should be made for grounding students in branches of Pastoral Theology which deal with other issues such as ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, social transformation (especially in the religious sphere), justice, Church-State relations, art and culture, ect.

3. We recommend a more explicit inclusion in the Programme, though not necessarily as an autonomous subject, of an introduction to the various instruments of quantitative and qualitative analysis of social reality in the religious sphere which are necessary for at least some of the research students will be called upon to undertake in the future (and some have already shown an interest in undertaking, as can be seen in the topics of their final theses).

4. There is need for clearer criteria as to the complementary studies necessary for those who choose the Religious Education programme yet have had no previous university formation in the areas of Theology or Religious Studies. Such students should be required to obtain a minimum number of credits in certain basic areas of Theology (Scripture, History, Fundamental, Dogmatic and Moral Theology).

5. The Religious Education programme's quality evaluation criteria should be clearer, more systematic and more consistent.

6. Within the Programme, more of the subjects should be directly related to Religious Education (for example, "History of religious education", "Religion, education and society", "Religion, Art and the Transmission of Culture", and so on).

7. Student participation in scientific research activities (both in the Faculty of Catholic Theology, and in international programmes and projects) should receive greater encouragement and lead to an increase in student mobility.

8. An effort should be made to renew the main bibliographical resources in the library for subjects taught in the Religious Education and other programmes. Lists of bibliography in individual subjects should also be subject to closer scrutiny and renewal where necessary (and should include, at the level of a second cycle programme, at least some recent research papers).

II. Related to the third level of studies (Doctorate in Theology):

1. The necessity to resolve an inadequacy of requirements for admitting to the third cycle of Doctorate in Theology: at the present time the FCT confers the licence in Pastoral Theology exclusively, whereas the same Faculty proposes to continue the doctoral studies in all the areas of Theology (Dogmatic, Fundamental, Morale, Biblical etc.). [N.B. This Faculty is the unique institution in Lithuania for conferring the academic grade of Licence in Theology].

2. Considering that between the main teaching Staff some degrees of Doctor of Theology have been obtained by *nostrification* procedure, the potentiating of the Third level of the research studies as a

future project would be advantageous (cfr. *Sapientia Christiana* a.49 – 50, *Norms of Application* a.17).

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