



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of MUSIC
at Vytautas Magnus University

Expert panel:

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2. **Ms. Gretchen Amussen**, *academic*;
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4. **Mr. Simonas Cepenias**, *representative of social partners*;
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Report language – English

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Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	<i>Performance Art</i>	<i>Music Production</i>	<i>Performance Art</i>
State code	6121PX031	6121PX033	6211PX027
Type of studies	University cycle studies	University cycle studies	University cycle studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 4 years	Full-time studies, 3.5 years	Full-time studies, 2 years
Credit volume	240	210	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Arts	Master of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian/ English	English	Lithuanian/ English
Minimum education required	Secondary education and entrance exams	Secondary education and entrance exams	First-cycle studies and entrance exams
Registration date of the study programme	24 November 2011	29 January 2014	24 November 2011

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on *10 May, 2021*. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Review Visit was organised online using a video-conferencing tool (Zoom).

Prof. Dr. Martin Harlow (panel chairperson), *Emeritus Professor and former Vice Principal (Academic), Royal Northern College of Music, United Kingdom;*

Ms. Gretchen Amussen, *Independent consultant, France;*

Prof. Dr. Habil. Mihály Duffek, *Pianist, Head of Piano Department, University of Debrecen, Hungary;*

Mr. Simonas Cepenas, *CEO, Live music agency Rootslive, Lithuania;*

Ms. Larisa-Mirela Matei, *PhD student in Musical Education, National University of Music, Romania.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	PowerPoint presentation about music study field
2.	Information about lecturers of <i>Performance Art</i> (first cycle) and <i>Music Production</i> (first cycle) English language level of knowledge
3.	Information about lecturers of <i>Performance Art</i> (second cycle) English language level of knowledge

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

Vytautas Magnus University (hereafter VMU, University) was established in 1922 and re-established in 1989. The Kaunas Faculty of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre was integrated into VMU in 2011. VMU bases the traditions of a classical University on the common principles and values of freedom, openness and dialogue; the University is oriented towards humanistic culture. VMU offers studies in all three cycles: bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies, covering a wide range of areas from the Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts to Fundamental, Environmental and Biotechnology Sciences. The University's *Artes liberales* principles, with core emphasis on studying broadly themed subjects, ensure that the studies offered at VMU are comprehensive, not restricted to specialized, pre-defined courses. VMU's liberal study policy allows students to plan their studies themselves choosing general study courses and part of study field courses; they also have a possibility to move from one study programme to another and change the form of studies. Alongside a bachelor degree diploma of their major specialty, VMU graduates can also obtain a certificate of minor studies and later apply for Master's degree study programme of another study field.

The University consists of 15 academic units. The first cycle study programme *Performance Art* (state code 6121PX031) (hereafter the first cycle study programme, *Performance Art*) and the second cycle study programme *Performance Art* (state code 6211PX027) (hereafter the second cycle study programme, *Performance Art*) are provided at the VMU Music Academy and the first cycle study programme *Music Production* (state code 6121PX033) (hereafter the first cycle study programme, *Music Production*) at the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty of Arts and the VMU Music Academy collaborate by involving Music Production students into the recordings of music performed by *Performance Art* (the first and second cycle) students, while VMU Music Academy students participate in recording *Music Production* students' compositions.

The *Performance Art* study programmes (the first and second cycle) have been evaluated by international experts twice (in 2010 and 2014). After the evaluation improvements of the programmes have been carried out and all recommendations of the previous evaluation have been considered and implemented carefully.

The *Music Production* study programme (the first cycle) was established in 2014. Until 2017 graduates received joint degrees from both VMU and its collaborator the UK University of

Central Lancashire (UCLAN). Since 2017, the programme has been offered by VMU alone, without foreign partners.

The self-evaluation reports, one for first cycle, one for second cycle (hereafter - SERs) for the present evaluation was carried out by a team as follows: Dean of the Music Academy, Vice Dean of the Music Academy, four study programme teachers, an accompanist, departmental administrator, curator of departments, coordinator of international relations, two students, and two social partners.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Music study field and first cycle at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	28

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

Music study field and second cycle at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	28

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4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

(1) Factual situation

The aim of the *Performance Art* first cycle study programme is ‘to develop highly qualified creative artists, music performers (instrumentalists, singers, soloists, musicians of diverse composition ensembles, orchestra conductors), who will be able to perform their works professionally in solo and in ensembles as well as orchestras of various compositions, foster professional developing and creativity and enhance the continuity of musical traditions’ (SER, p.7).

The aim of the *Music Production* first cycle study programme is ‘to prepare professionals who have acquired skills and knowledge necessary to work in the dynamic field of music production and technologies, to create original works in the fields of sound recording and design, music technology and related areas, to present their personal creative works, to initiate and develop creative projects’ (SER, p.7).

The aim of the *Performance Art* second cycle study programme is ‘to develop highly qualified creative artists, music performers (instrumentalists, singers, soloists, musicians of diverse ensembles, orchestra conductors), who will have impact upon the musical (cultural) tradition not only by their creative works and other artistic means, professionally performing works solo and in ensembles and orchestras of various compositions, but also by analysing, commenting on, personally developing individual creative activities, searching for the most influential artistic work interpretations, fostering historical traditions of the music art and influencing the musical development processes’ (SER, p.6).

Learning outcomes for the first cycle study programmes are described in terms of theoretical learning, practical skills and their application, and general learning. Learning outcomes for the second cycle programme have a greater emphasis on the achievement of high levels of artistic practice, that will impact the Lithuanian musical and cultural environment. These outcomes are relevant to the Lithuanian economy and serve to support the principles of creative empowerment defined in Lithuania’s Progress Strategy ‘Lithuania 2030’. The growth of the creative industries is predicted to mirror the greater participation of the Lithuanian population in cultural activity.

The *Performance Art* programmes of the first and second cycle reside within the Music Academy, signalling their distinctive and specialised training needs, whilst the *Music Production* programme, with its greater interdisciplinary emphasis, sits appropriately within the Faculty of Arts. Many students undertake professional employment opportunities whilst still on their programme of study: from a meeting with students it was clear that employment opportunities during study were expected and usual. Employability of graduates in the music industry is above 40% for first cycle graduates and above 88% for second cycle graduates (first cycle SER, p.48; second cycle SER, p.39). These figures do not represent the actual employment as a large number of music graduates pursue freelance careers (that is, they are

not employees). Meetings with alumni, employers and social partners confirmed that graduates have the attributes to make an important contribution to the profession. In these meetings there was a clearly described need for the VMU training and confirmation of its effectiveness. Graduates from both cycle study programmes progress to the profession as instrumentalists, singers and conductors, and those who work in sound recording and music technology.

In order to refine further their artistic work many students progress to second cycle programmes within VMU or elsewhere. This is common across the EU and beyond, with many music students needing and wanting more advanced training: the competitive nature of the music business proposes these further training needs for some. The aims and outcomes of the second cycle study programme *Performance Art* describe the enhanced artistic skills and professional competencies that would be expected of such musicians in the profession. The development of the individual musician, with a unique creative voice, is at the heart of the training at both first and second cycles of the music study field.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The content and level of aims and learning outcomes of the first and second cycle study programmes are relevant for the labour market of music in Lithuania and beyond. The employment of students during their programmes (whether students of first or second cycle) is indicative of the relevance and efficacy of the music training, and of the societal need for VMU's musicians. Graduates pursue an impressive range of musical careers (freelance or employed) demonstrating the flexible skillset that they have acquired.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

(1) Factual situation

VMU's mission is as follows: 'VMU is a community-based research, art and study institution, which pursues the mission of the University of Lithuania, established in Kaunas in 1922, creates liberal education conditions for an individual, develops partnerships, takes active part in the life of Kaunas, advances the future of Lithuania, and contributes to the world cultural and academic development.'

VMU's strategy 2012–2020 is based on five areas: 1. Socially active and responsible community; 2. Reliable international partner; 3. Studies favourable for unfolding talents and personalities; 4. The highest level science and arts; 5. Harmonious and creative environment.

The SERs (first cycle, p.10; second cycle, p.8) describe the alignment of the programmes (their aims and outcomes) with the VMU mission and vision.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The aims and learning outcomes conform with the mission, vision and strategy of VMU.

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements

(1) Factual situation

The aims and learning outcomes of the three programmes and their achievement in course studies are mapped in the SERs, Annexes 2 (two in first cycle, one in second cycle). Although not explicitly mapped against the *Descriptor of the study field of Music* (Approved by Order No. V-794 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 July 2015), it

is evident that these have been used to guide the construction of the programmes. This is confirmed in the SERs (p.7, p.9).

The *Performance Art* first cycle programme is four years duration and 240 ECTS. The *Music Production* first cycle programme is three-and-a-half years duration and 210 ECTS. Credits for the music-specific studies are 145-157 ECTS (*Performance Art*) and 174 ECTS (*Music Production*). Optional Studies are of 40-52 ECTS (*Performance Art*) and 36 ECTS (*Music Production*); internships are 15 ECTS; and the final 'theses' (art projects) are of 28 ECTS (*Performance Art*) and 15 ECTS (*Music Production*).

The *Performance Art* second cycle programme is two years duration and 120 ECTS. Credits for the music-specific studies are 60 ECTS. 30 ECTS options are selected by students. The final 'thesis' (art project) is 30 ECTS. There is appropriate scope for independent work.

The allocation of credits in first and second cycle programmes is consistent and logical and complies with legal requirements (*Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies* (Approved by Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 30 December 2016), *Descriptor of Study Cycles* (Approved by Order No. V-1012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 16 November 2016); *Descriptor of the study field of Music* (Approved by Order No. V-794 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 July 2015). Contact hours are high, particularly in the first and second cycle study programmes *Performance Art*. This teaching-intensive approach is common in practice-based music programmes across the EU.

A high proportion of teachers, 89%, (SER, Annex 4) have a scientific degree or are established artists.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Music study field programmes at VMU meet the legal requirements of first and second study cycle programmes in Lithuania. The programme aims comply with the *Descriptor of the study field of Music*. The qualifications and activities of teachers meet the legal requirements of Lithuania.

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes

(1) Factual situation

Music study field programmes of first and second cycle at VMU are formulated around the development of individual and collaborative musical practice. Two examples of the mapping of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are given in the first cycle SER (pp.14–15) for *Performance Art* (first cycle, Piano), and *Music Production* (first cycle, *Music and Theoretical Context*). One example of such mapping is presented in the second cycle SER (p.11). This approach is challenging, given the multiple specialisms in the 'principal' study areas, particularly for the *Performance Art* programmes (where each instrumental or vocal discipline requires a similar mapping). A variety of teaching methods is described in the SERs (for example, lectures, workshops, group tasks, self-study, p.16; p.10). Appropriately differentiated levels of assessment are evident at first and second cycle. The SERs describe the programme learning outcomes clearly, and these are mapped effectively.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Mapping of programme aims, through to assessment of learning outcomes clearly occurs in music study field programmes of first cycle and second cycle. Though there are clear examples of 'constructive alignment' (where all components in the teaching system – the curriculum

and its intended outcomes, the teaching methods used, the assessment tasks – are aligned to each other), a more detailed and accurate mapping of programme-level learning outcomes to those at subject-level would be beneficial. Examples in the SER indicate an approach that is adequate, but that could be improved by greater transparency.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students

(1) Factual situation

The *Performance Art* first cycle programme offers a balanced programme of practice and theoretical study (history, analytical studies, musicianship). There is within the programme a complementary balancing of training and education, of intensive practitioner training alongside supporting general and musical study. Increasing demands in the specialty study (which spans all years) permits the logical and systematic development of student competences. The liberal arts ethos of VMU and the student-centred study plans allow students to control their personal educational development.

The *Music Production* first cycle programme offers a logical and well-rounded curriculum which balances progressive technical training needs of the discipline with the development of the music producer as an artist. The first cycle study programmes permit a summative performance/project assessment in the Final thesis (performance/project) and supporting Examination (written analytical project). For students who already have a technical interest in music production (SER, p.18) there has been no desire for the design of individual study plans (which are available to all VMU students). This commends the balance and relevance of the study programme modules.

The *Performance Art* second cycle programme offers the opportunity to build upon first cycle attributes, in the further refinement of the musical artist. There is a logical and complementary balancing of high-level training and research. Increasing demands in the specialty study permits the logical and systematic development of student competences.

Performance Art programmes of first and second cycle are underpinned by the progressive development of the individual specialism with which the student was admitted to VMU. The first cycle study programme *Music Production* has a clear developing curriculum, building theoretical knowledge and skills towards the final creative project.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The first study cycle programmes have appropriate level and content. The practical nature of the study, and the theoretical underpinning are sufficient either for direct entry to the music profession, or for continuation at Master's level. Both routes are achieved in practice.

The second cycle study programme has an appropriate high level and content too. Through the 2 years of study students are encouraged to develop a unique artistic voice and extend the depth and breadth of their musical repertoire. Specialisms are relevant to the labour market. The practical nature of the study, and the theoretical underpinning are sufficient either for entry to the music profession, or continuation at doctoral level. This is achieved in practice.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The *Performance Art* programmes of first and second cycle describe generic learning outcomes. Multiple disciplines can be taken as a musical specialty (for example, piano, violin,

accordion) ensuring that the programmes are necessarily constructed around the learning objectives and intended learning outcomes of individual students. There are 31 *Performance Art* specialisms at first cycle; 36 *Performance Art* specialisms exist at second cycle. The final 'thesis' in both first and second cycle programmes is a unique and original product, derived and developed by the student. In the *Music Production* first cycle study programme students develop a range of expertise (sound engineering, multimedia production, video production) with the opportunity to specialise in their final project in one or more of these areas.

Students are able both to select their courses according to need and customise their course studies according to their specialism. Close working with a specialty study teacher enables constant review and refinement of their learning trajectories. The liberal arts foundation at VMU permits students to pursue (sometimes complementary) general studies, and there are many cross-University opportunities. The mechanisms for student choice and the creation of individual study plans are clearly described (first cycle SER, pp.17–18; second cycle SER, p.12).

VMU is international and multilingual and over 30 different foreign languages are offered to students wishing to develop their foreign language competencies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU Music students in first cycle and second cycle study programmes have excellent possibilities to customize and personalise their individual studies. This includes opportunities for development of foreign languages. Through the close co-operation with their specialist teachers they have the opportunity to tailor their studies as their musical skills develop in their chosen field. This applies to both *Performance Art* and *Music Production*, and in both cycles. The development of these unique learning packages is typical in vocational music higher education training. The approach is congruent with best practice.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements

(1) Factual situation

Students present a final 'art project' (the musical equivalent of the thesis) which is accompanied by an analytical written project ('final examination'). The written element includes a repertoire list of works studied by a student during the programme. The topics for the first cycle 'examination' therefore complements the art project that makes the final thesis. Annexes 3 of the SERs list the subject matter for first cycle and second cycle study programmes of these 'theses' and 'examinations'. A diverse range of interesting repertoire performed. The defence of the Final Theses is to a Commission of 3 to 5 members including, as chairperson, a representative from an external institution. It is the intention to include a larger pool of external examiners through Erasmus networks.

Students have the opportunity to perform/present their final projects at a range of excellent venues across the city. The breadth of the material performed and the range of venues suggests that students are able to customise their project to suit their artistic needs.

In the Music field there was no commissioned student project work from social partners of VMU.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

A wide-range of challenging repertory is performed by students in the *Performance Art* final 'thesis' at both first and second cycles. *Music Production* students produce highly imaginative and distinctive art projects. Although it was not possible to view supporting 'examinations' or dissertations in English the subject matter for these appeared appropriate. For first cycle

study programmes the alignment of academic writing with the repertory performed in the final art project seems sensible and practical. It was not possible to inspect the methods of the musical 'analysis' (formal, Schenkerian, Fortian etc.) undertaken by the students in the complementary writing at first cycle level. It would be sufficient here to encourage VMU to permit differing analytical methods and encourage this diversity of approach. Second cycle final theses offer an appropriate and more wide-ranging subject matter commensurate with the level.

The final thesis requirements (first and second cycle study programmes) conform with the *Descriptor of the study field of Music*.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Study aims, outcomes and content align with employer needs in the country: this is evidenced by the employment opportunities undertaken by students during their programmes.
2. Consistent and progressive curriculum requirements promote the incremental development of students in their specialty.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

(1) Factual situation

Teachers in both *Performance Art* (the first and second cycle) and *Music Production* (the first cycle) study programmes are distinguished, active, highly esteemed professionals, and are the recipients of numerous honours and awards (Annex 4 in each SER). Results of three annual evaluations of artistic activities conducted by the Research Council of Lithuania corroborate this both through the formal evaluations and expert evaluations of teachers' works of art. Increases can be noted over the period, with the formal evaluation estimate going from 70,4 to 88, 13 (first cycle SER, p.22), and from 70,4 to 86,53 (second cycle SER, p.17). Fixed aggregates of expert evaluations of works of art rose significantly among second cycle teachers from 66,15 to 91,67 and slightly in the second cycle (first and second cycle SERs, idem). Three teachers defended PhD theses during the evaluation period, and the Music Academy has created a research cluster dedicated to "Dimensions of Artistic Education" as part of a longer-term strategy to increase teacher participation in research both in the field and with other VMU faculties (second cycle SER, p.21).

Numerous artistic projects, competitions and participation in festivals are directly integrated and linked to the first and second cycle study programmes for *Performance Art*; in *Music Production* (the first cycle), activities include recording music for film, soundtrack production, podcasts, recordings of projects by student performers, and commercial work for external clients. Festivals and collaborations are often initiated by teachers, who invite student participation (first cycle SER, p.22-23). The second cycle study programme students participate systematically in festivals, as soloists, in groups, as conductors, coaches, or as project organisers (second cycle SER, p.18).

Most ongoing applied science and artistic projects involve collaborations with the university's extensive network of social partners, which, for *Performance Art* (the first cycle), include major local, regional, and national cultural institutions as well as several major European higher music education institutions (first cycle SER, p.23-24). *Music Production* can also boast an impressive roster of social partners, and these include film production, electronic book publishing, sound recording or major cultural venues (first cycle SER, p.25). University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN), with which a joint programme was led until recently, continues to be an important partner, and faculty exchanges are now integrated into Erasmus+ exchanges.

Notable artistic projects over the last four years include the Baltic Academy, in collaboration with St Petersburg's Rimsky-Korsakov Music Academy, featuring major staged opera performances performed in Lithuania and abroad; a collaboration with Vievis Public Culture Centre in which students collaborate side by side with cultural centre artists to stage operas and tour in Lithuania; the Magnus International Piano Competition, launched in 2018, and additional competitions for piano, accordion, or string instruments. During the pandemic, VMU organised the Music@ virtual piano competition with Kaunas Music School No. 1. Additional competitions have been established for piano, accordion, and string instruments; and students participate in festivals organized by their teachers. Project-specific funding from Kaunas City and the VMU Cluster Project have supported several of these projects, and funding applications are also made to the Culture Council (first cycle SER, p.23).

In *Music Production* (the first cycle), applied science and artistic activities range from feature film soundtracks, audio collages, to video documentation, CD albums, from installation of sound systems to updating technical engineering with Lithuanian National Radio and Television. Social partners include public cultural organisations as well as commercial ventures (first cycle SER, p.24).

To further develop research activities, the VMU Music Academy intends to submit more research applications to the Lithuanian Research Council and Council for Culture and to explore longer-term research projects (second cycle SER, p.23). Of note are discussions engaged with the Kaunas Cultural Centre to hold final examinations on the principal Kaunas cultural stages, a joint Erasmus+ project submission on crowdfunding and successful project funding submitted with multiple partners, and projects involving production of soundtracks for feature films, performances of new works for chamber music and electronic, new music for children's theatre, or resident artist programmes (first cycle SER, p.25).

(2) Expert judgement/ indicator analysis

VMU plays a leading role nationally in its applied science and artistic activities, supported by a remarkable network of major social partners. Nationally and internationally recognized teachers take an active role in initiating projects in which students are given opportunities to perform or work professionally: many of these projects are integrated into first and second cycle study programmes. Ongoing collaboration with a few trusted international partners has led to meaningful artistic projects, and the first cycle study programme *Music Production* maintains strong ties with UCLAN, with which a joint programme was organised until recently. VMU recognises the need to increase staff involvement in research activities and Erasmus+ partnership agreements, which will enhance applied science and artistic activities in the first and second cycle study programmes.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology

(1) Factual situation

Performance Art (first and second cycle) and *Music Production* (first cycle) study programmes are evolving constantly, responding to changing cultural realities, new technologies, comments by social partners, and innovations in other higher education institutions (first cycle SER, p.26). Contemporary works are featured in all instrumental disciplines, and all specialisms offer both stylistic and historical freedom of choice. Repertoires are adjusted to compensate for student participation in national and international music competitions (second cycle SER, p.20). Research work and methodology in the second cycle *Performance Art* study course supports preparation for Master's theses, the topics of which are wide-ranging (second cycle SER, Annex 3).

Theoretical courses take advantage of distance learning platforms such as Moodle, and during the pandemic virtual learning platforms were successfully implemented. Master classes by leading artists are a regular feature of the first cycle *Performance Art* programme (first cycle SER, p. 26), and the first cycle *Music Production* programme features up to date ProTools for music producing and audio-visual creative work. Sound directors learn to work in a variety of settings, making recordings in studios or on location, in different genres and with varied types of ensembles. *Music Production* (first cycle) students participate in national and international industry-led conferences and training covering all aspects of the music production field, from music and sound design in film to post-production supervision (first cycle SER, p.26).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) and *Music Production* (first cycle) study programmes at VMU take a broad and inclusive view of ways in which students can work in and engage systematically with contemporary applied science and art activities. This inclusive view is responsive to the specific nature of the music study field. *Performance Art* (first cycle) study programme students benefit from master classes by world-renowned artists, are given freedom to make personal choices based on upcoming competitions or stylistic and historical interests and are exposed to contemporary repertoires. *Music Production* (first cycle) students are provided state-of-the-art technological equipment and regular national and international industry-led training. Ongoing dialogue and exchanges with the profession, innovations observed in other institutions of higher education, and needs expressed by students and teachers contribute to maintaining a contemporary, living connection with applied science and art activities in the first and second cycle study programmes.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle

(1) Factual situation

First cycle as well as second cycle students of the music study field organise or participate in applied science and artistic activities, examples of which include competitions, concerts, festivals, performance projects, recordings, industry-led training, scientific conferences, final theses or participation in master classes. *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) students also present their creative work in a variety of events organised by the Faculty of Arts; in the second cycle, they participate in training programmes with the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. *Music Production* (first cycle) students make recordings, assure creative and technical preparation for films, and generally engage in music industry activity.

The preparation of final theses in both cycles often leads to further research and/or employment: one student was invited to participate in the programme Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022 as a result. All Master's theses include research literature analysis. Examples are given of presentations given at scientific conferences (first cycle SER, p.27, second cycle SER, p.21).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Student involvement in science and art activities is varied and fully integrated into the curriculum. These range from individual research and performances to self-initiated or Academy and Faculty led projects. There exist strong connections with VMU's exceptional network of leading national arts and culture organisations which in turn provide performance and music production opportunities, often leading to employment. All students complete a final thesis at the end of the first or second cycle, and several examples are provided of research papers given at scientific conferences.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Remarkable network of stakeholders guarantees first and second cycle students of music study field first-hand professional experience which often leads to employment.
2. Broad range of applied scientific activities in the first cycle study programme *Music Production*.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process

(1) Factual situation

The admission procedure for Music field Study Programmes (*Performance Art* of first and second cycle and *Music Production* of first cycle) is described on VMU websites in both Lithuanian and English at <https://www.vdu.lt/en/studies/degree-studies/>. Also, an explicit description of entrance examination procedures is available in the LAMA BPO system at <https://bakalauras.lamabpo.lt/international-and-eu-students/list-study-programmes/>.

The Study Programmes are presented in meetings with prospective students at secondary education schools, Study Fairs, various events for school children.

Applicants to the Music field study programmes' first cycle must participate in the entrants' selection procedure. They must possess a Maturity Certificate. Foreign student candidates need proof of English language B2 level.

For Lithuanian candidates, the *Performance Art* (first cycle) study competitive score consists of the entrance exam which is worth 100 percent. During the entrance exam the applicant also participates in a motivational interview which aims to verify his/her musical knowledge. International students *Performance Art* admission score is based on: admission examination * 0,7 + motivation interview * 0,3.

Music Production (first cycle) admission score is based as follows: foreign student candidates - portfolio * 0,7 + motivation letter * 0,2 + interview * 0,1; Lithuanian candidates - 100 point

assessment scale by adding the evaluations of three parts of the entrance exam (the entrant's portfolio of creative works – 30 points, ability test – 50 points and motivational interview – 20 points) (first cycle SER pp.30-31, VMU website).

In discussions with students, they expressed their appreciation for the way in which the admission procedure was conducted: good, clear information was provided on websites, and they could request help or assistance from administrators. Consultations prior to the exam were deemed very useful, as were tasks given to help prepare the exam and the possibility of contacting teachers or tutors. Even though the Covid situation was very difficult for the musicians, the admission was a positive experience due to the professionalism of the VMU staff.

Applicants to the *Performance Art* programme's second cycle must be graduates of bachelor studies in the same or a related field. Admission requirements are made publicly available on the VMU website - [Admission to Degree Studies](#).

The competitive score for Lithuanian students is calculated as follows: weighted average of all grades in the Bachelor's diploma supplement *0.2 + artist portfolio rating *0.1 + motivational interview *0.3 + evaluation of diplomas in international competitions *0.1 + entrance examination or specialty final examination grade *0.3 (second cycle SER, p.23).

For international students admission score is based on: the average of all subject grades in the Bachelor's degree diploma* 0,3 + bachelor degree diploma examination video * 0,7 ([Performing Arts - Study programs](#)).

During the last three years, the number of students admitted to the first cycle study programmes varied between 28 and 41 (*Performance Art*), 15 and 22 (*Music Production*). Every year the number of candidates exceeds the number of state funded places and the demand for these programmes is increasing (first cycle SER, p.31).

For the second cycle, the number of students increased from 21 in 2017-2018, to 52 in 2020-2021. There is a significant change in the number of study places not funded by the state, which is due to the successful admission of foreign students (second cycle SER, p.25).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The information given on the websites and on the web pages for international applicants about the admission procedure is clear and easily accessible. It is straightforward for international students to find the information. The admission procedures are transparent and well-founded. Very good assistance is provided throughout the process. The number of first cycle students in the music study field is not very high, due to the specificity of these programmes and due to the very high costs. Even so, the demand is growing. There is a larger number of second cycle students due to the successful admission of foreign students. A positive aspect is that the number of non-state funded places is higher than those funded by the state.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application

(1) Factual situation

The procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning are regulated by the Guidelines listed in the SER (first cycle SER, pp.32-33, second cycle SER, pp.26-27). According to these, subjects and learning outcomes achieved at other higher education institutions and via non-formal education and informal learning can be recognized and included in the study programmes.

The examples given in the first and second cycle SERs demonstrate that these procedures are applied and work. There is an exception. The second cycle SER states that in the last 3 years, there has been no assessment of the competences acquired in the field of music studies in an informal and informal education (p.26). From the first cycle SER the expert panel learned that during the last 3 years, there were no cases of recognising students' competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning in the *Performance Art* first cycle study programme (p.33). It is not specified whether or not there have been requests in this regard.

From the discussions with the students the expert panel could see that they are not very familiar with these procedures.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedure for recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is fair. For the most part, these procedures are applied and followed. However, students should be better acquainted with them in order to be able to access certain procedures.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students.

(1) Factual situation

Student mobility possibilities are announced through various channels: the VMU International Cooperation Department and the faculty/academy international coordinator provide students with information about studies and placement abroad; VMU Erasmus days are organised; Erasmus+ competitions are posted on VMU website www.vdu.lt; Intranet (*Outlook*), social media etc. (first cycle SER, p.34; second cycle SER, p.27). Participants in the Erasmus + program indicated during the site visit receiving significant support from the administration in preparing required documents or in managing financial aspects of their mobility.

All VMU students and alumni within 12 months of graduation are provided with various opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ Programme. About 350 VMU students and alumni take advantage of these opportunities each year. Apart from this, VMU students can also participate in academic exchange programmes: academic exchange with mobility grants or with scholarships from partner universities and internships. About 60-70 VMU students take advantage of these opportunities per year (first cycle SER, p.34; second cycle SER, p.27).

Currently, there are 31 (first cycle SER, p.34) / 27 (second cycle SER, p.27) agreements signed. Also, the Department of Contemporary Arts of the Faculty of Arts has 15 Erasmus+ agreements signed which can be used by *Music Production* first cycle study programme students (first cycle SER, p.34).

There are situations when incoming exchange students choose to stay and continue their studies at the VMU Music Academy after their Erasmus visit. Some of them choose to progress to the second cycle *Performance Art* programme; some choose to complete the *Music Production* study programme (first cycle SER, p.34; second cycle SER, p.28).

Students participate in international competitions which correspond to academic mobility concepts. In 2019, students participated in 24 competitions, in 2018 - in 32. In 2020, the competitions were stopped by the pandemic, but those which were held in Lithuanian were attended (first cycle SER, p.35; second cycle SER, p.29).

There are almost 40 international full-time students (2018-2021) in the Music field study programmes (first cycle) coming from China, Ukraine, USA, Ghana, Estonia, Egypt, Lebanon, Ukraine, and India (first cycle SER, p.37).

For the second cycle, almost 70 international full-time students (2018-2021) come from Kazakhstan, China, Ukraine, Czech Republic, and Latvia (second cycle SER, p.30).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution provides good conditions for academic mobility which includes recognition, support and promotion. Even so, students don't always take advantage of the mobility possibilities provided by VMU: Lithuanian students are employed in companies simultaneously with their studies and are unwilling to leave for a longer period, or they have ongoing musical projects, or roles in plays. Also, they believe that changing their specialty teacher during studies might prove problematic, either because of different learning methodologies or due to issues of adaptation to a different environment. A positive aspect is the significant number of incoming students. Academic mobility has a good impact on the number of students accessing the second cycle study programme *Performance Art* or the *Music Production* first cycle study programme: of note is the fact that the first cycle study programme *Music Production* is delivered in English.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

(1) Factual situation

Academic student support takes a variety of forms: information on studies is communicated through various channels (*Outlook, Moodle, University website, University and VMU Music Academy Facebook, newsletters* etc.). This is complemented by discussions involving students and the Study Programme Committees, the tutoring system (teachers), financial aid (scholarships, postponement of payment when reasons exists, reimbursement of expenses for those who attended music competitions, scientific conferences, seminars or other events for scientific, societal, University representation, collaborative or other purposes related to the University), social support, accommodation, free-of-charge psychological counselling services at the VMU Psychology Clinics, counselling on career planning, assistance for disabled and socially vulnerable group students, or emotional support (first cycle SER, pp.37-39; second cycle SER, pp.30-32).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution ensures an adequate level of academic, financial, personal, psychological and social support. This was clearly confirmed by the interviewed students who also highlighted that the teachers and the management were very helpful and responsive, even providing emotional support. Some suggested that students, teachers and management are "like family."

One student indicated having created her own festival, which she ran for 10 years. She had never studied management before, and learned by doing, with additional support from colleagues. Grateful now to study management at VMU, she acknowledges aspects of support she had not seen previously. Graduate students indicate they feel fully supported.

Even if the satisfaction of the students is high, there is not so much information concerning the mentorship programme, including possibilities of choosing a mentor during different phases of studies. These include peer mentors, academic mentors, career mentors and research mentors. This would create very good conditions for well-being and engagement in the studies.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

Information on studies is disseminated in a variety of ways: discussions with prospective students and their parents prior to university admission, individual consultations, master classes for prospective students, the annual event “Introduction to Studies”, discussions of students with specialty teachers and other teachers, etc.

Students are provided with timely information about studies or counselling related to student accommodation, scholarships, benefits, career counselling, etc. through personalized emails, through specially designed portal <http://student.vdu.lt/>, through Student Centre, through Facebook social network special account for VMU students, through VMU website: <http://vmu.lt>. and the VMU Student Affairs Department.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Study information and student counselling are provided in a timely manner and at a sufficient level by VMU and student associations. There is clear information about where students can get answers to various questions and concerns. The web pages contain good information for prospective students as well as enrolled students. Students indicated during the site visit that teachers and advisory staff are flexible and responsive to their needs. It is easy to get information “face to face,” something that is not always possible in other institutions. Academy environment is very human and warm. All of these have positive implications on the motivation and satisfaction of the students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Increasing number of full-time students of music study field, which enhances the quality of the learning process.
2. Friendly, supportive and motivating academic environment.
3. A meticulous calculation of entry points in the admissions process to the first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field.
4. Increasing number of incoming students from abroad to the first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field.
5. Good assistance provided throughout the admission process to the students of the music study field.
6. Successful admission of foreign students to the first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The study process in the first and second cycle of the music study field is based on best practices and theoretical traditions. As the educational process takes place in small groups,

every student receives personal attention and help from the lecturers. To stimulate the active involvement and creativity of students, different methods of active learning and self-training are applied and include: artistic self-expression (creative workshops, rehearsals, auditions, presentations of creative work, concerts, recitals); active learning methods (problem analysis, discussion, project activities, research work); interactive methods (learning using virtual environments, video lectures); traditional methods (lectures, seminars, exercises).

Studies are all focused on practice and theoretical scope. VMU has all the needed facilities, equipment and instruments on its premises and in dormitories for student practicing and rehearsing. All self-practice facilities are open all day.

Students in *Music Production* (first cycle) are motivated to choose and work on their personal career skills. They have the possibility of working independently in VMU sound studios with the supervision of professional sound technologists.

VMU has adapted to the COVID19 pandemic: all theoretical studies used on-line software such as Adobe Connect or BigBlueButton. Specialty lectures were held using BigBlueButton; teachers also used Google Teams, Messenger, Skype, WeChat, and Zoom.

Students are free to choose their final Bachelor's thesis subject; they can also choose their internship from the list of VMU partners.

Practical and theoretical evaluations assess students in both the first and second cycle of the music study field. Cumulative assessment of the *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) study programmes courses are based on intermediate evaluations, counted at 40% and the final exam for 60%. The cumulative assessment for theoretical subjects counts the mid-term at 30%, homework, 20%, and, 50% for the final exam. Testing, project design and presentation, case study, essay and other traditional methods are used to evaluate theoretical subjects.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students indicated in the site visit that teaching staff, social partners and the alumni community were excellent, and that VMU goals and aims correspond to reality. First and second cycle studies of the music study field are practically and theoretically based. Teaching staff consists of well-known professional sound recording specialists, producers, composers and theorists. VMU offers a solid infrastructure for student self-practice and rehearsals. Studios are equipped with well-maintained instruments and up-to-date software and hardware.

VMU's social partners from which students choose their internships, be they in sound and light rental organisations, music venues or theatres, are well known and respected in Lithuania. This highly professional environment offers ideal conditions for students to learn and perfect their craft while also developing a strong professional network.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

(1) Factual situation

VMU continues to improve study conditions for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. Most buildings are accessible for all students with special mobility needs. Musical software is partially adapted to suit the needs of visually impaired students. Sound studios in the multifunctional Research and Study Centre and the computer class in the Faculty of Arts are fully adapted to students with movement disabilities. All classrooms are ergonomically equipped with furniture for persons with special needs. Students can choose

dormitory rooms designated for people with special needs, and can live with an accompanying person if required.

VMU offers financial support and discounts in programmes for both first and second cycle students with special needs.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU has created good study conditions for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. Most of the premises have well adapted entrances for students with special needs, although a few are still being improved or need to be improved. VMU short-term and long-range plans include making these adjustments. VMU has been successful in adapting premises and equipment for visually impaired students.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

(1) Factual situation

Monitoring of student learning progress is regulated by *VMU Study Regulations* and the *Description of Procedure for Student Learning Achievement Monitoring and Assistance*. VMU performs regular monitoring of study achievements, while students are encouraged to self-monitor their study achievements as well. In *Music Production* (first cycle), study achievements are monitored by course teachers. In *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) study programmes, study progress is continuously monitored individually, on a course level, on the level of the study specialty, and on the chosen specialty level. Such monitoring has led to the introduction of new courses or modifications in curriculum (first cycle SER, p.46, second cycle SER, p.37).

While students self-monitor their study progress, “the administration monitors the alignment of schedules, integration of reporting assignment and exam results into the system, coordination of lecture and exam schedules. If necessary, the study administrator mediates between the teacher and the student” (first cycle SER, p.47, second cycle SER, p.37).

Action is taken immediately to rectify problems, as indicated in the SER (first cycle, p.47, second cycle, p.38). Examples of improvements made are indicated in both the first and second cycle study programmes (SER, first cycle, p.47, second cycle, p.38) and were confirmed by students and teaching staff during the site visit. Of note is the possibility of social partners making recommendations for improvements in the first and second cycle study programmes, as confirmed during the site visit.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU has implemented an effective continuous monitoring system in both the first and second cycles of the music study field, which serves to improve study programmes and study progress. All the stakeholders are implicated in the monitoring process and thereby in improvement of study programmes.

3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field.

(1) Factual situation

VMU has a well organised graduate career tracking system and community of alumni, and maintains strong relations and communication with employers and social partners. There are no comprehensive employment statistics (SER, first cycle, p.48, second cycle, pp.39-40), as many graduates are self-employed, whereas statistics provided are only based on the

Government Strategic Analysis Center (hereafter STRATA) system and data from the portal karjera.lt. VMU has signed a contract to track graduate employment with the Lithuanian Employment Service, which provides official numbers. The SER indicates 100% employment of first and second cycle graduate students of music study field (STRATA system), with an average of 91,2% of employment in the period 2017-2019 (karjera.lt). Thanks to its well-developed alumni and student societies, VMU also monitors qualitative aspects of graduate employment. Both the SER and site visit indicate employer satisfaction with students' preparation for the labour market. The majority of first cycle graduates of the music study field go on to second cycle studies in Lithuania or abroad.

Social partners indicate a significant number of their employees began their professional careers during their studies. VMU graduates of the music study field are usually long-term employees, have good personal and musical competences, and can adapt and communicate well.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Graduates of first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field have good competences and skills corresponding to the needs of the Lithuanian and EU labour market. Statistics tracking employment rates provided through the STRATA system and the portal karjera.lt indicate employment rates are very high. Qualitative and quantitative aspects of graduate employment are studied. Social partners indicate satisfaction with employees who are VMU graduates. VMU's ongoing communications and strong relations with alumni, employers and social partners guarantee ongoing feedback.

3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

(1) Factual situation

VMU has strong principles and regulations designed to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. The principles of integrity are defined in the *VMU Statutes*, the *VMU Code of Ethics*, *VMU Provisions on Prevention of Plagiarism in Student Written Works*, and *VMU Study Regulations*. Non-discrimination measures are regulated by the *VMU Code of Academic Ethics*.

The university has strict rules regarding written examinations and plagiarism. In cases of reported dishonest behaviour, the Dean of the faculty, the Academy Chancellor, and the Department of Study Affairs are informed. During investigations of dishonesty, plagiarism or unfair behaviour, the final decision can require retaking the entire course. Both teachers and students have a right to appeal the verdict to VMU's *Academic Ethics Commission*, which makes final decisions on academic integrity. There is no indication of academic dishonesty in the second cycle study programme of the music study field, and there is one example of student dishonesty indicated in the first cycle study programme of the music study field.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU has strict regulations regarding academic dishonesty, integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. The Board of Academic Ethics ensures compliance with the Code of Academic Ethics. Evidence shows that there are just a small number of violations in the field of music studies.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

(1) Factual situation

VMU has a clear policy for application procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process. No appeals took place in 2019 – 2020. Within the second cycle of the music study field, there exists an informal way of resolving complaints that involves thorough discussions and a search for solutions. All the procedures for appeals and complaints of the study process are regulated by *VMU Description of Procedure for Appeal Investigation*, *VMU Provisions for Prevention of Plagiarism in Student Written Works* and *VMU Study Regulations*.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedures for making appeals or complaints for academic violations are clear and simple. All the procedures are regulated by official VMU policies. All procedures are accessible and transparent.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong professional and academic community, with close relations to graduates of the music study field (first and second cycle).
2. VMU prepares students of the music study field (first and second cycle) well for the needs of the labour market.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The teaching staff of the first cycle study programmes consists of 10 professors, 28 associate professors, 17 lecturers, 7 assistants. 89% of study field subjects are taught by scientists or recognized artists. In 2020-2021, the overall ratio of teachers-students was 3.3/1 (including students in both the *Performance Art* and *Music Production* first cycle study programmes). 8 teachers and professors have received awards. The majority of the teaching staff are active performers and professionals.

The teaching staff of the second cycle study programme includes 9 professors, 31 associate professors, and 2 lecturers. 7 teachers have PhD degrees. 89% of all study subject teachers have scientific degrees or are renowned artists, and 62% of the study subjects are taught by professors. The teachers-students ratio was 2.3/1. Most of the teachers (37) are employed in both cycles of the music study field.

4 teachers organized international artistic competitions and others are organizers or participants of different festivals in Lithuania. Teacher/student ratios are low due to the personalised instruction offered. The competency of the teaching staff in general is sufficient for the *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) and *Music Production* (first cycle) study

programmes (SERs, Annex 4). The average age of the teaching staff is 46.5 years and ranges from 29 to 64 years.

Due to the nature of the study field, research activity of teachers in *Music Production* (first cycle) study programme focuses on technological innovation, and at the site visit these teachers indicated that VMU offers all the necessary infrastructure to support scientific research. Teachers in *Performance Art* (first and second cycle) study programmes are primarily practising artists.

All teachers have English language competence at least at B2 level, some are fluent in Italian or German (SER, p.54). For historical reasons many teachers have fluent Russian.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The teaching staff of both cycles of the music study field is sufficient in number, qualified and competent in their respective specialisms. Teaching staff comply with the legal requirements. Teaching staff is experienced and well equipped to achieve the first and second cycle study programmes learning outcomes.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

(1) Factual situation

VMU offers good conditions and possibilities for academic mobility for staff who teach in both first and second cycle music study field programmes (*Performance Art* and *Music Production*). VMU as a whole has 516 partner institutions in Europe and 99 partners outside the EU. In 2019-2020, the Music Academy had 31 signed agreements (28 through Erasmus+ and 3 others, including Loyang Normal University in China, Russia's Krasnodar State Institute of Culture and N.A. Rimsky Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory). Participation in academic mobility takes three forms: through the Erasmus+ program, through invitations to other institutions of higher education, and through domestic and foreign festivals (SER second cycle, pp.44-47). The *Music Production* (first cycle) study programme has initiated an Erasmus+ agreement with UCLAN, with which formerly a joint study programme existed: this will allow for lectures by British professors in the programme. Teaching staff of the music study field use academic mobility actively for teaching, continued professional development, and participation in a variety of musical events. Incoming and outgoing teacher mobility is balanced.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU teaching staff members of the music study field actively participate in international academic mobility, largely through Erasmus+. Outgoing and incoming teacher mobility is balanced. Mobility activities include teaching, professional development, and participation in musical events.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff

(1) Factual situation

VMU regulates the improvement of the teachers through the *Description of Procedure for Professional Development at VMU* (2018). This is organized in 8 competence groups:

1. higher education didactics
2. digital competences
3. research competences
4. managerial competences

5. foreign language competences
6. intercultural competences
7. subject competences
8. personal competences

In-service training seminars are offered free of charge by VMU in all competence areas. In some instances, this training serves to upgrade professional qualifications (methodology, researcher's intellectual leadership, study course presentation in Moodle environment, working with "Z" generation, specificity of working with large and small groups of students, development of foreign language skills). Particularly important in this offer is the possibility to participate in master classes, led by invited schoolteachers, professors or performing artists at the VMU Music Academy or at other music institutions in the city.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VMU provides excellent opportunities for the professional development of its teachers of the music study field. Clear regulations monitor the different competence areas for which teachers can attend in-service training which is offered free of charge.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Teachers' artistry and strong pedagogical engagement contribute to the quality of the first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field.
2. The international artistic festivals and competitions organized by VMU constitute important artistic opportunities for students of the music study field.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

(1) Factual situation

The VMU Music Academy Building was fully renovated in 2015 with the support of the European Structural Fund. Equipped with a concert hall, opera studio, conference hall and dance hall, it is completed by 2 additional halls at VMU, the Grand Hall, and the Grand Aula, in which many final examinations and concerts are held. Sixty classrooms equipped with musical instruments support group and individual work.

All theoretical classes are equipped with up-to-date audio and visual equipment, computers with internet access, and overhead projectors. Individual teaching rooms and classrooms are equipped with pianos or grand pianos (first cycle SER, p.62).

The extensive network of cultural institutions in Kaunas provides additional performance opportunities, and numerous cooperation agreements have been signed (first cycle SER, p.62).

The first cycle *Music Production* course, located separately within the Faculty of the Arts, has three professionally equipped sound studios; a dedicated computer classroom includes computers with music software, midi keyboards, external sound boards, and headphones. Studios enjoy a wide range of recording equipment capable of recording up to 56 channels.

Extensive external equipment completes this offer: students can borrow some of this or reserve time for individual work in sound studios.

Outlook and *Moodle* support the virtual learning environment. Dedicated student and teacher portals function in English and Lithuanian and support all aspects of the study process. Online studies are facilitated by new video conference tools (*Adobe Connect*, *BigBlueButton*), and during the pandemic VMU students were given free access to *Adobe Creative Cloud* (first cycle SER, p.64).

The VMU Music Academy supports those with disabilities through elevators and wheelchair lifts, handicapped accessible equipment is available at the library and in classrooms. Dormitory rooms can be adapted to their needs (second cycle SER, p.51).

The VMU Library includes 8 library departments; a specialized VMU Music Academy library is situated within the VMU Music Academy building. Music specific resources are extensive (27,647 documents and 164,811 electronic resources including audio and video recordings, e-books, and journals). The library offers interactive document ordering services, self-managed borrowing and returning mechanisms, and many workplaces. Workplaces for those with disabilities and discussion spaces are also available. Since 2019 VMU's CRIS Research Management System collects and disseminates VMU research.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The fully renovated VMU Music Academy offers ideal study conditions for first and second cycle students of the music study field. The three Music Production studios offer state-of-the-art equipment. The infrastructure for teaching and learning, including classrooms, auditoriums, instruments, sound recording studios and related equipment, library, computer rooms, software, and digital resources is fully up to date. In addition, the students benefit from many opportunities to work and perform in leading cultural venues of the city.

Facilities are well organized and well-equipped, allowing for optimal learning conditions. Physical, informational, and financial resources are suitable and sufficient, and ensure effective learning.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies

(1) Factual situation

Planning, renewing, and upgrading instruments, IT equipment, music production equipment, and information resources take place annually in several ways. Mechanisms for resource planning, which are pertinent to both first cycle music study field programmes (*Performance Art*, *Music Production*) and the second cycle music study field programme (*Performance Art*) are clearly described in the SERs (first cycle SER, pp.66-67, second cycle SER, pp.55-56).

Monitoring and updating hardware and software takes place through a centralized system at VMU: every six months software is audited, updated or supplemented. The *Music Production* (first cycle) study programme has studied current needs and feels they are sufficient for the next two years; a plan exists detailing longer-term programme needs. Representatives of *Music Production* look for examples of good practice to determine long range equipment needs, visiting leading programmes both in Europe and the U.S. (Site visit meeting).

Typically, the university provides funds to purchase five instruments every year. During the pandemic, particular attention has been paid to augmenting access to electric pianos in student dormitories, and while unplanned, these were purchased.

Information resources are coordinated by the Study Programme Committees and the Library, with mechanisms in place for teachers to recommend purchase of scientific documents. An

interactive ordering service on the library portal facilitates planning and allows for rapid feedback: <https://biblioteka.vdu.lt/mokslui/pasiulymai-komplektavimui/>.

Infrastructure upgrades are performed through university funding. Where opportunities exist, VMU will apply for EU structural funds to address specific needs (first cycle SER, p.67).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Resource planning and facility and equipment upgrades are well supported and managed strategically. A clear organisational structure allows for infrastructure upgrades, library purchases, and computer hardware and software at the central level, and more specific resource needs at the Faculty of Arts and VMU Music Academy level (sound equipment, instruments).

Special attention is paid to auditing, updating, or supplementing constantly evolving technological resources (computer hardware and software, and sound production material), and to maintaining and renewing instrument collections. The SER details specific resources and equipment purchases made in the last few years. An efficient system allows for updating of library resources, with input from teachers and first and second cycle study programmes of the music study field. Where opportunities exist to improve infrastructure facilities, VMU applies for EU structural funds.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Resource planning, facility and equipment upgrades are managed strategically.
2. A strong network of professional partners in Kaunas offer extensive opportunities for students of music study field to work, practice and perform.
3. Sound production equipment and facilities are of a high professional standard.
4. A renovated VMU Music Academy offers optimum conditions to the first and second cycle students of the music study field.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies

(1) Factual situation

“The development of the quality assurance system is based on the principles of openness, collegiality, academic ethics, personal responsibility, comprehensiveness, representativeness and publicity” (VMU website, home page).

The responsibility for study quality assurance is held by the Academy's Council of Music, the Study Programme Committee, the Dean and the Faculty. Quality assurance decisions are made by the VMU Music Academy's Council, which is responsible not only for studies, but for decisions relative to their improvement and changes in study plans where necessary. The internal assessment and the quality improvements are also controlled and directed by the Council. The *Music Production* Study Programme Committee is responsible for the coordination of the studies in this first cycle programme, and has direct control over study quality, programme quality assessment and renewal, and improvement plans. The Study

Programme Committee keeps in contact with the labour market, the stakeholders, and assures their involvement in the first cycle study programme of the music study field.

Another committee, the *Performance Art Study Programme Committee*, has 14 members, including 9 teachers, 4 students and 1 representative of the employers at both levels (first and second cycle). The responsibilities are divided among the members by the fields they represent. The Head of the Committee co-operates with the Head of the Department and the Dean of the VMU Music Academy when making decisions.

Regulations are based on national and legal acts and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. VMU regulations contain clear descriptions of quality procedures. Regulations and procedural documents are all made public on the VMU website.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Internal quality assurance of the music field studies (first and second cycle) is well organised and regulated at VMU. Responsibilities are clearly defined, and regulations and procedures are all available on the VMU website. The respective committees and their responsibilities are well organised. Quality management is aligned with European standards, making it compatible with those of study fields at similar institutions in the EU.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance

(1) Factual situation

The following stakeholders take an active part in the assessment of the quality of the music field studies (first and second cycle):

- Kaunas State Musical Theatre
- Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra
- Kaunas State Choir
- Kaunas State Philharmonic Society
- Kaunas Culture Centre
- Kaunas Puppet Theatre
- Various music schools and cultural centres
- Electronic Publication Company "Audioteca".

The practical cooperation with these institutions means that their representatives participate in the study programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle), examinations, and support students' musical productions and projects.

Some examples for the involvement of the social partners in the study programmes of music study field (first and second cycle):

- First and second cycle study programmes' graduation ceremonies are always held at the Kaunas State Philharmonic Orchestra Society;
- The Kaunas Tauro Lions Club gave an electric organ to the VMU Music Academy;
- Master classes are regularly held on the premises of social partners;
- The concerts of the VMU Music Academy Orchestra are regularly featured in city events;
- VMU students of the music study field (first and second cycle) participate in the Kaunas Jazz Festival;
- *Music Production* study programme (first cycle) students work for the electronic publication company "Audioteka";

- Music producers offer the students of the music study field opportunities to participate in creative projects.

Stakeholders provide feedback through periodic surveys. The SER indicates how the information in surveys, complete with recommendations, are then integrated into university quality management. Surveys of students, teachers and employers all provide valuable information on the study programme of the music study field (first and second cycle).

The survey results are used in making plans for yearly study programme improvement plans by the Study Programme Committee. Stakeholders can participate in different ways in quality assurance feedback: teachers can give comments, recommendations, or suggestions about study programmes to the leadership, as can students through surveys. Social partners, alumni and employers also can make their suggestions known as well.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The involvement of VMU study programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle) stakeholders in internal quality assurance is comprehensive and effective. Stakeholders' opinions and recommendations are integrated into internal quality assessment procedures, as are those of teachers, students and alumni. Feedback thus provided is discussed by the relevant VMU committees and when approved, integrated into improvements made to study programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle).

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes

(1) Factual situation

Information concerning the study programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle) is regularly collected, analysed and evaluated, and contributes to ongoing programmes self-assessment and improvement. Teaching and learning quality assessment are organized at the end of each course. Results of internal assessments (surveys results, stakeholder discussions etc.) are used to improve study quality. Areas identified as areas of improvement in student surveys often result in significant changes in study programme courses.

Teacher Quality Assessment is used to improve studies and enhance teachers' professional development. Summarized results of feedback are in turn shared with social stakeholders, and results are published on the VMU website and other social media.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Clear and transparent procedures exist at VMU to ensure that comprehensive information on teaching and learning in all aspects of the study programmes of music study field (first and second cycle) is regularly collected and evaluated, often leading to important changes in courses or programmes structure. Internal assessment results include survey findings, stakeholder discussions, and statistical data. Teacher Quality Assessment enhances teaching and supports professional development of teachers. Decisions regarding studies, including issues related to assessment and improvement, are provided to all stakeholders through a variety of media channels. Final results of feedback are publicized on the VMU website and made available to students and social stakeholders.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

(1) Factual situation

Student feedback is collected on a regular basis and used to improve study programmes of music study field (first and second cycle) quality. Despite a relatively low response rate, information is analysed and suggestions are made for improvement. The EXIT survey, provided at the conclusion of studies, focuses on the labour market. Results provided in the SER indicate relative stability over the last three years. Concrete examples are provided in the SER as to how VMU has responded to these surveys.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

A clear system exists by which VMU collects feedback from students, in particular at the conclusion of music field studies (first and second cycle). The SER details numerous ways in which the programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle) have responded to survey results. The SER does note, however, that there has been a low response to these surveys.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Systematic, comprehensive and well-organized procedures are in place to ensure study programmes of music study field (first and second cycle) quality management; information collected and evaluated leads to course improvements which are then shared with all relevant stakeholders.
2. VMU and the Music Academy quality assurance mechanisms ensure that students, teachers and social stakeholders all play a major role in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in study programmes of the music study field (first and second cycle).

(2) Weaknesses: None.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

V. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a clearer described 'alignment' between overall programme aims and outcomes (first and second cycle), and aims and outcomes at course (module) level. ● Diverse analytical methods should be encouraged in 'Final Examination' (first cycle)
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reinforce staff (of the music study field, first and second cycle) participation in and development of joint research and artistic projects internationally, taking advantage of existing Erasmus+ agreements.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure students of music study field (first and second cycle) are familiar with the procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning. ● Review the student mentoring system to ensure maximum effectiveness. ● Encourage student involvement with Erasmus+ study programme opportunities.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop clearer statistical data on national and international employment of graduates of the music study field (second cycle). ● Strengthen formal relations between postgraduate students, social partners and VMU.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Favour younger age profiles in future teacher recruitment (for teachers the first and second cycle study programmes of music study field).
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversify and increase funding sources to sustain costly upgrades in the first cycle study programme <i>Music Production</i>.
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mitigate low response rates by considering mechanisms to incentivise students of the music study field (first and second cycle) to complete formal surveys.

*If the study field is going to be given negative evaluation (non-accreditation) instead of RECOMMENDATIONS main **arguments for negative evaluation** (non-accreditation) must be provided together with a **list of "must do" actions** in order to assure that students admitted before study field's non-accreditation will gain knowledge and skills at least on minimum level.

VI. SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the findings of the expert panel based on the Self-Evaluation Reports and the interviews with the University administration (senior management and faculty administration staff), staff responsible for the preparation of the SER, teaching staff and stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, social partners). The expert panel gives a positive evaluation to the implementation of the first cycle music field studies (study programmes – *Performance Art* and *Music Production*) and the second cycle music field studies (study programme – *Performance Art*) at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), with all areas assessed as very good.

The first and second cycle music field studies at Vytautas Magnus University are relevant to industry and the labour market and are well structured. The first and second cycle study programmes *Performance Art* are offered in Lithuanian and in English; the first cycle study programme *Music Production* is offered in English. Student level at recruitment is high and getting steadily higher. Given the excellence of its music field studies, VMU needs to re-enforce its international partnerships in the development of joint research and artistic projects, taking advantage of many existing Erasmus+ agreements.

The aims and learning outcomes of music field studies conform with the mission, vision and strategy of VMU. While there are clear examples of 'constructive alignment,' a more detailed and accurate mapping of programme-level learning outcomes to those at subject-level would be beneficial.

Remarkable connections exist between the first and second cycle music field studies and the music industry locally, nationally and internationally, rooted in an extensive network of stakeholders. Graduate employment is high, with many students beginning employment during their music field studies. Graduates pursue an impressive range of musical careers (freelance or employed) demonstrating the flexible skillset that they have acquired.

A wide-range of challenging repertory is performed by students in the study programmes *Performance Art* final 'thesis' at both first and second cycles. The first cycle study programme *Music Production* students produce highly imaginative and distinctive art projects. Second cycle final theses offer an appropriate and more wide-ranging subject matter commensurate with the level.

Teaching staff of music field studies (first and second cycle) consists of well-known professional sound recording specialists, producers, performers, composers and theorists who take an active role in initiating projects, offering students opportunities to perform or work professionally. Many of these are integrated into music field study programmes. Staff willingly share their professional connections with students, and the links thus offered between academic training and professional practice ensure cutting edge practices. Clear mechanisms exist to foster teacher development, although VMU needs to better ensure staff involvement in research and artistic activities.

The management structure of music field studies (first and second cycle) is effective and efficient. Responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement are clearly delineated, and feedback is regularly collected from students, social stakeholders and alumni to improve study programmes. However, low survey response rates from students of music field studies suggests that VMU incentivises participation. Close connections with the industry, particularly in first cycle study programme *Music Production*, ensures that the programme offer is up to date.

The fully renovated VMU Music Academy offers ideal study conditions for students of the music study field. The three *Music Production* (first cycle) studios offer state-of-the art

equipment. The infrastructure for teaching and learning is fully up to date. Resource planning and facility and equipment upgrades are well supported and managed strategically. Physical, technological and financial resources allocated are sufficient to ensure effective learning in VMU's music field studies (first and second cycle).

Expert panel signature:

Prof. Dr. Martin Harlow (panel chairperson)