



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of LINGUISTICS**  
at Vilnius University

**Expert panel:**

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### Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Programme “English and Another Foreign Language (Spanish, Norwegian, French, Russian)”	Programme “English and Another Foreign Language (Swedish)”	Programme “Linguistics”
State code	6121NX012	6121NX013	6211NX013
Type of studies	Bachelor	Bachelor	Master
Cycle of studies	First	First	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (4 years)	Full time (4 years)	Full time (2 years)
Credit volume	240	240	120
Qualification degree and professional qualification (or)	Bachelor of Humanities	Master of Humanities	Master of Humanities
Language of instruction	English, Spanish, French, Norwegian, Russian, and Lithuanian	English, Swedish and Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	20-07-2010	04-05-2016	07-07-2004

Title of the study programme	Programme “Language Specific Purposes” (Legal)	Programme “Public Discourse Linguistics”	Programme “Semiotics”
State code	6211NX021	6211NX012	6211NX020
Type of studies	Master	Master	Master
Cycle of studies	Second	Second	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (2 years)	Full time (2 years)	Full time (2 years)
Credit volume	120	120	120

Qualification degree and professional qualification (or)	Master of Humanities	Master of Humanities	Master of Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English, German	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	06-03-2006	30-05-2016	03-06-2007

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

The study field is **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 is **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The study field **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

## 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was completed according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The Visit to HEI was conducted by the panel on **13-14/05/2021**.

**Prof. dr. Srebren Dizdar (panel chairperson),** *Bosnia and Herzegovina*;  
**Prof. dr. Alberto Fernandez-Costales,** *Spain*;  
**Doc. dr. Karolina Grzech,** *Spain*;  
**Mr. Snorre Karkkonen Svensson,** *Latvia*;  
**Mr. Gabrielius Simas Sapiega,** *Lithuania*.

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the 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.	<i>Final Theses</i>
2.	<i>Test/exams</i>

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

Although the interest for studying diverse language features could be traced several thousand years ago, it was only in the last two hundred years that there had been a number of attempts to establish a specific academic / scientific discipline on its own. However, despite rather productive activities and results that classical Philology studies have attained in the course of 19th century, it was in the 20th century Linguistics gained its renowned status as a vibrant research area and respective study field in Humanities and Social Studies across universities, primarily in Europe and USA, and, subsequently in other parts of contemporary world. In this ongoing process, at the outset of the 21st century and its first two decades, certain burning issues about the actual nature of these studies have remained unresolved. They mostly revolve about the interrelated set(s) of issues of how Linguistics as the field of studies should be and could be organised in everchanging approaches to phenomena in and around language as the primary focus of academic and scholarly interest. This dilemma is present not only on the theoretical level, but even more so in the practical organisation, structure, facilities, management, and, above all, in regard to the key actors – students, teachers and researchers that happen to be involved in the actual execution of different activities closely related to the manner respective departments respond to the needs and requirements that had been set up within the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA) under the auspices of the Bologna Process. That is why the international Team of experts (hereafter - the Team), having been entrusted by SKVC to perform the review of the Linguistics field of studies at Vilnius University (hereinafter - VU) at Vilnius, Lithuania, had to take into account many issues that could better illuminate how these studies could be understood from external perspectives, as well as to, in a number of online interviews with the senior management, the team that has prepared Self-Evaluation Report (hereafter - SER), teachers, students, alumni and social partners. The Team tried to gather as much as possible additional findings that, in the end, could present a larger picture in the form of the Final Report.

However, Vilnius University and its First and Second Cycles of the Linguistics field of studies proved to be quite a demanding challenge. To start with, VU, as it has been clearly written in SER, having been the oldest and the largest higher education public institution in Lithuania (established in 1579), has had an interesting history of transformation in the course of 21st century: "Studies in the Linguistics field have been carried out by the University since 2004,

when the Applied Linguistics SP was registered. In 2005, FPhil started the Semiotics SP and, in 2006, the Language for Specific (Legal) Purposes SP (with the German language of instruction). In 2010, the General Linguistics SP was registered and, in 2016, KnF started the Public Discourse Linguistics SP. In 2019, the Applied Linguistics and General Linguistics SPs were merged to create the Linguistics SP with three specialisations: general linguistics, applied linguistics and contrastive (Italian) linguistics. The last external evaluation of the programmes of the Linguistics field was conducted in 2010 – 2017 (Applied Linguistics SP in 2010, General Linguistics SP and Language for Specific (Legal) Purposes SP in 2014, and Semiotics in 2017). The “Public Discourse Linguistics” study programme was externally evaluated in 2016 for the purpose of its registration.” (SER, p. 8). It is interesting to observe that, although the studies in traditional Philology / Linguistics, had always been evaluated with highest marks in diverse aspects of teaching and research, it was pointed out in the last evaluation: “In the evaluation of the development potential of R&D activities, the experts noted that further development demands essential changes in the infrastructure, which have been taking place since 2017 and, at the time of evaluation, could not yet have given tangible results, but were being implemented in the right direction.” (SER, p. 20). Thirdly, the Linguistics field of studies currently takes place at two different locations – in Vilnius and Kaunas – and the third one has recently started as of January 1, 2021, when Šiauliai University had become a part of Vilnius University – under the name of Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University. Since SER had been finalised in mid-December 2020, and it did not cover this third extension of VU at Šiauliai, the Team was not in a position to include relevant field of study in Linguistics at this place within its evaluation report.

It must, also, be mentioned here that the Team has duly assessed diverse pieces of information that had been presented in two separate documents: the First Cycle in the field of Linguistics (

“English and Another Foreign Language (Spanish, Norwegian, French, Russian” – state code: 6121NX012; and “English and Another Foreign Language (Swedish)” - state code: 6121NX013; and the Second Cycle in the field of Linguistics (four MA study programmes: “Linguistics” – state code: 6211NX013; “Language for Specific (Legal) Purposes” – state code: 6211NX021; “Public Discourse Linguistics” – state code. 6211NX012; and “Semiotics” – state code: 6211NX020).

The BA Cycle Studies in Linguistics had been launched in 2010 and in the next nine years it opened, firstly, “English and Another Foreign Language (Spanish)” in 2010, which was followed by the second branch of the programme “English and Another Foreign Language (French)” in 2013, the third branch of the programme “English and Another Foreign Language (Norwegian)” was launched in 2017, whereas the fourth branch “English and Another Foreign Language (Russian)” began in 2019. All these studies have been organised in Vilnius, at the Faculty of Philology (hereafter referred to as: KPhil), having been established in 1968 after the reorganisation of the Faculty of History and Philology. They have been assessed two times before - in 2013 and in 2016 - and received positive evaluation. “English and Another Foreign

Language (Swedish)” BA study programme, having been offered at Kaunas Faculty (hereinafter – KNF, established in 1964), was launched in 2016 and was evaluated in the same year for the purpose of registration.

Nevertheless, there is even a rather large and complex structure of MA Studies in Linguistics within Vilnius University that include two faculties – Fphil in Vilnius and KNF in Kaunas - 5 + 2 institutes, 13 departments, and 7 centres. They are delivered in four aforementioned postgraduate programmes in Linguistics with the participation of 450 teachers of different ranks at both places.

Such a complexity and diversity of study programmes require a thorough in-depth analysis that could not have been accomplished in both SER documents, despite commendable efforts by both VU self-evaluation teams that had prepared them under the prescribed format. That is why the SKVC Evaluation Team tried to resolve this situation in separate interviews with BA and MA SER teams, as well as with the management, teaching staff, students, alumni, and social partners. Needless to say, despite large groups of interlocutors, especially in terms of teachers and students / social partners, and repeated efforts to get the answers from most, if not all of them; the Team managed to form the general picture, but with some important details missing. In other words, the sheer size and specificity of each study programme at BA and MA level reflect the development of and particular features of these constituent parts (“branches”) in the study field of Linguistics at VU as carefully laid pieces of mosaic, or a jigsaw puzzle, for that matter; but what is lacking is a sense of coherence that keep them all together. It seems to be especially true with the more recent study programmes in applied linguistics at MA level that happen to be attractive and in line with similar trends in the world (“Language for Specific (Legal) Purposes”, or “Public Discourse Linguistics”), as opposed to more theoretical (General) “Linguistics” vs. “Semiotics.” It is even more visible in relation to all of these aspects at MA when they ought to be linked with the more traditional studies at BA level, where English is studied with another foreign language. It is difficult to predict if the obvious trend of (over)diversification will continue in the future, and the new study programmes may be expected to emerge in the next 5-7 years; or the equally viable process of merging and integration may prove to be more feasible, given the position of humanities and social sciences today, in general, and the everchanging socio-political and economic environment in the contemporary world. The aforementioned recent history of changes and transformations in the last 15 years or so at VU, and with the addition of Šiauliai Academy earlier in 2021, the decade ahead will, most likely, witness new ideas, more discussions, and deliberations about the profile of Linguistics studies. Whatever the trend prevails – be it a further diversification or the functional integration – they must consider that BA and MA need to be connected both horizontally and vertically in terms of teaching and researching staff and resources. And, above all, in terms of future students, both national Lithuanian and international ones, who would want to pursue their studies in Linguistics programmes as intra-disciplinary and interdisciplinary continuity, if not the unified whole that will meet their personal expectations and comply with the needs of the society at large. These are serious

challenges that should be dealt with proper attention and careful strategic orientation, together with other interested departments, primarily in Humanities and Social Sciences, but also with other related fields of expertise within VU and its international partners.

Despite its strong tradition in the field of Philology and Linguistics and the variety of study programmes at both BA and MA level, as well as in the area of Doctoral studies, VU has not attracted more international students, which had been pointed out as the recommendation in the previous evaluation. The same can be said about the actual position of Linguistics studies at the level of the country. The Team was interested to find out how the teachers and the management at VU see themselves in comparison to other universities offering a similar profile of education in Lithuania, since there have been some indications about a collaboration with Vytautas Magnus University in the area of corpus linguistics. No such plans have been deliberated with Klaipeda University. In their opinion, they will have to remain as the leaders in this field, but they do not feel they are competing with other universities in the country. Such a self-complacent attitude can be understood to a certain extent from the VU current dominant position at the national level, but it does not seem to be proactive enough in regard to the ongoing process of internationalisation, not only within the EHEA but, also, in the larger global context. Difficulties to respond more quickly under the imposed pandemic conditions in March 2020, having required switching to online teaching almost overnight, was a real challenge. Due to its size, structure, and the complex hierarchy at the levels of university vs. Faculty vs. departments vs. study programmes, the adaptation to the online environment was slow and not efficient in terms of the overall performance, although all the teachers tried their best to accommodate the needs of students with their own methods of teaching that had relied primary on face-to-face on in-class teaching. The experience gained during the pandemic should be used towards a combination of in-class and online instruction. Blended learning methods can definitely be of great use when the idea of interdisciplinarity with other relevant fields of expertise within VU is concerned. However, it seems even more important to find the means and resources in intradisciplinary studies within the field of Linguistics studies at VU, especially in the foreseeable future with three campuses (at Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai) with their current specificities and differences, as well as in the more focused sets of responses to the needs of job market and demands of social partners. It seems to the Team members that the field of Linguistics at VU is in a dire need of re-thinking quite seriously its strategy for the future in regard to a number of interrelated issues that should bring together all the study programmes at all three cycles not simply under the same umbrella, on a different, more advanced level. It should include substantial investments not only into the existing physical facilities in terms of their enlargement and improvement of working, researching, and studying conditions, but, even more so, into IT equipment and other sophisticated digital resources. Equally important is the process of selection and preparation of the brightest students as the future researchers and teachers in this dynamic academic field, not just from the standpoints of earlier and most recent linguistics theories, but more so in relation to more propulsive areas of applied disciplines. The combination of the stable tradition, new digital technology and improved physical facilities with highly qualified and

motivated teachers, researchers and prospective students can help VU to retain its leading position in the field of Linguistics and related disciplines in the next decade.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Linguistics* study field and **first cycle** at Vilnius 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.	Study aims, outcomes and content	4
2.	Links between science (art) and study activities	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Studying, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and publicity	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>25</b>

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

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

3 (good) - the field develops 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.

*Linguistics* study field and **second cycle** at Vilnius 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.	Study aims, outcomes and content	4
2.	Links between science (art) and study activities	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Studying, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and publicity	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>27</b>

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

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

3 (good) - the field develops 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.

## III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

### 3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

*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*

Vilnius University offers two first-cycle programmes in the field of linguistics: *English and Another Foreign Language (Spanish, Norwegian, French, Russian)* (henceforth EAFL), offered at the Faculty of Philology, and *English and Another Foreign Language (Swedish)* (henceforth ESL), offered at the Kaunas Faculty. Both programmes aim to educate specialists in linguistics with solid knowledge of at least two foreign languages, in line with the needs of the Lithuanian labour market, as presented by governmental analyses and the study field's social partners. Graduates of the programme either pursue further education or work as translators, teachers, in state institutions, or in various branches of business.

As for graduate programmes, the four Masters' Degrees (Linguistics, Language for Specific – Legal– Purposes, Public Discourse Linguistics, and Semiotics) align with the aims and outcomes of the field of linguistics and the standard practices of second-cycle programmes. The study programmes aim at fulfilling the demand of Lithuanian society for graduates with knowledge in public discourse and linguistics with an interdisciplinary view on the field. The four programmes provide students with fundamental knowledge on general linguistics and each of them offer a specialisation according to its focus (contrastive linguistics, legal English, discourse analysis, and public discourse). Programmes are taught in Vilnius and Kaunas. The programmes are adequately framed within Lithuanian national strategies for development. In particular, the SER emphasises the aim of Vilnius University to be a European university.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The first cycle study programmes in linguistics offered by VU are well-adjusted to the needs of society and the labour market. This is evidenced by the figures of graduate employment, which are high, and show an upward tendency, although it remains to be seen whether the employment figures from 2019, which were almost 20 percentage points higher than in 2018, will be upheld in the future. The graduates of the programmes either continue their education (almost 19% of graduates in 2019), or work in a variety of professions, but related and unrelated to linguistics. This shows that the programmes' aims to educate versatile graduates able to adjust to the needs of the labour market.

Concerning second cycle, the needs of the labour market are analysed following the guidelines provided by the Government Strategic Analysis Centre, which identifies advertising and marketing as the two most demanded sectors in Lithuania at the moment. The University is also active in promoting cooperation with social partners, who take part in the defence committees for graduation theses. The graduates of the study programme have the possibility to continue with their PhD studies in linguistics-related areas. The graduates of the MA programmes in linguistics are usually employed in legal institutions, advertising and marketing companies, language and communication agencies, cultural institutions, the media, and also as freelancers.

### *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*

VU aims to be a European university, which contributes to the intellectual and creative power of Lithuania, fosters academic and social values, and educates active and responsible citizens. The aims and outcomes of the first cycle studies in the field of linguistics are broadly aligned with these objectives. The programmes educate specialists in linguistics, who are highly proficient in a variety of European languages. Students have the opportunities to create international networks and are acquainted with the recent developments in their study field. The first cycle study programmes in Linguistics prepare their graduates both for further study and for working in a variety of language-related professions.

The MA study programmes have been designed in compliance with the Lithuanian qualification levels and the learning outcomes of the Descriptor of Study Cycles. Besides, the MA programmes are well framed within the institutional strategy of Vilnius University, its mission, and objectives.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The Linguistics study field at VU offers high quality first cycle programmes, which educate students in line with the values professed by the University, including intellectual and creative power and academic excellence. The graduates of the programme receive up-to-date linguistics training appropriate for their study level and achieve proficiency in several languages. These outcomes are in line with the VU mission and are highly commendable.

The Masters' Degree programmes are in line with the mission and objectives of Vilnius University, and they have been designed with the aim of training graduates with a clear European vocation which also have a solid basis of the Lithuanian cultural and language identity. The MA programmes in this field may contribute to expanding the discourse of humanities in Lithuania. It is worth mentioning that the efforts to highlight the international

dimension of VU has translated into long-term partnerships with several institutions and research centres in Europe.

There is room for improvement in what concerns the effort to strengthen the potential of the study field via national collaboration and internationalisation of the Faculty. The members of the Faculty are aware of how their expertise and the programmes they offer complement similar programmes offered at other Lithuanian universities. However, little is done to create synergies in teaching and research in Linguistics on the country level, such as joint research projects or opportunities for students to learn from the expertise of colleagues at other universities. The Faculty's professed aim of creating and strengthening international networks could be emphasised more, e.g., though a greater effort to attract international students. Attracting students from abroad was mentioned as an area for improvement in the previous evaluation, and further and more decisive steps are still needed in this regard.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Both first cycle study programmes consist of 240 ECTS credits distributed over 4 years of studies. The credits are appropriately allocated to different types of courses, practical training, and the final thesis project. The SER specifies and explains how all the relevant legal requirements are met.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

All legal requirements are met, and the programmes –both, in first and second cycle– fit the main standards of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ECTS points are allocated correctly, and the programmes' scope is consistent with the requirements of first cycle studies. The distribution of contact to self-study hours is appropriate.

### *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*

The learning outcomes and teaching/learning methods are defined on the level of individual study modules and meet the requirements of the discipline. In language courses, students are divided into smaller sub-groups based on their skills. Under COVID-19 conditions, the teaching and learning are conducted online, with the use of a digital learning environment comprising Moodle, VLE and Microsoft Teams. Active learning methods are used in modules throughout the programmes.

The Masters' Degrees are structured in accordance with the scope of second cycle programmes and they clearly fall within the study field. Each course is described in terms of learning outcomes and all the results of the courses cover the expected results and goals of the whole study programme. Every programme offers general and site-specific competencies and skills according to its specialisation focus, and the 4 Masters provide an appropriate balance of theoretical lectures, seminars, and practical courses.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Both first cycle study programmes meet the academic and professional requirements for educating language-focused specialists with varied profiles and with good skills in two foreign languages. The learning outcomes for both study programmes are consistent with what is expected of first cycle study programmes in the field of linguistics. Achieving the learning objectives is favoured by the assessment method, as the courses include both cumulative assessment and final examination, although it is not clear how the final examination varies from module to module to fit with their specific learning objectives. It is commendable that in language teaching students are divided into smaller sub-groups to facilitate the learning process. However, closer attention should be paid to whether the students get sufficient practice with speaking and listening to the languages they study and feel confident using the language.

It has to be noted that VU has specific characteristics due to the size of the institution and the fact that the study programmes are delivered in several campuses. Considering the complexity of the institution, the coherence of the study programmes is good and the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes and teaching and evaluation systems has to be valued positively. The study Programmes meet the requirements set in the Descriptor of Study Cycles in terms of the Programme goals and learning outcomes that are specific for the second study cycle. The aims, objectives, and the learning outcomes are clearly specified, and they are in line with the overarching philosophy of each MA degree.

The study methods are diversified and adapted to the study subjects, with an appropriate combination of teaching techniques which is suitable to MA programmes.

### *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 modules in both programmes are organised from the more general to more specific content. The courses develop the linguistic training of the students, as well as their language skills. Over the course of their studies, the students also acquire additional skills, such as translation, and they learn the methods of academic writing and research methodology throughout the modules. Professional practice training is included in the penultimate

semester. Student placements are organised in translation companies, advertising companies, publishing houses, etc.

As for the second cycle, the organisation of the courses and the curricula of the programmes are reasonable and coherent with the specific objective of each MA. Interdisciplinarity is a key element in the MAs, and it is an advantage for the students, as it provides a broader perspective on linguistics. There is a good balance between mandatory and optional courses. Good attention is paid to skills and competencies that prepare students for the labour market, but there is also a focus on research activities to prepare graduates for their PhD studies.

The way in which possible improvements and future restructuring of the study programme for each MA are adequately discussed among teaching staff and also with the administration.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The progression of the courses is logical, and guarantees achieving the learning outcomes for individual modules, which are defined in appropriate detail.

There is one case in which the logic of thematic progression between the courses is not clear, however. According to the study plan of the SP English and Other Foreign (Spanish / Norwegian / French / Russian) Language, Introduction to 'Introduction to Pragmatics' is offered in Year 3, and 'Introduction to Linguistic Semantics' in Year 4 – this is unusual, since the understanding of pragmatics requires the understanding of some concepts of semantics. In SP English and Another Foreign Language (Swedish) Semantics and Pragmatics are combined into one course and taught in Year 2. It should be reviewed whether teaching Pragmatics before Semantics does not hinder the learning outcomes for both courses. Moreover, most of the courses dealing with theoretical linguistics are taught as optional subjects. If possible, within the regulations of the VU, a change in the curriculum should be considered to make at least some of these courses obligatory, e.g., instead of General University Study courses, which are currently obligatory in different semesters of both study programmes.

Concerning graduate programmes, the organisation of the courses and the curricula of the programmes are reasonable and coherent with the specific objective of each MA. Interdisciplinarity is a key element in the three MAs, and it is an advantage for the students, as it provides a broader perspective on linguistics.

There is a good balance between mandatory and optional courses. Good attention is paid to skills and competencies that prepare students for the labour market, but there is also a focus on research activities to prepare graduates for their PhD studies.

Efficient communication channels work with the students and the teaching staff to incorporate improvement proposals in the study programmes (in terms of timetable adjustments, etc.).

### *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 programmes can be organised according to an individual study plan. The students can participate in academic exchanges. There are possibilities of choosing optional courses throughout the programmes. Both FPhil and KNF have Erasmus agreements with a wide array of institutions. There are also multiple opportunities to participate in short-term exchange programmes.

As regards MA programmes, students can personalise them by selecting specific optional courses in each Masters' Degree. Every programme offers optional modules for the students: the MAs in Linguistics and Semiotics allocate 30 ECTS for elective courses, while the programme in Language for Specific Purposes offers 25 ECTS in optional subjects; the programme in Public Discourse Linguistics includes 10 credits in elective courses.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The curriculum of both study programmes allows for optional courses, both within the general university subjects and within linguistics. There are multiple linguistic courses to choose from, but it can be an issue that the number of credits available for such courses does not allow the students to take very many of these more linguistic-theoretical courses.

The number of collaboration agreements of both the FPhil and the KNF indicate impressive options for international mobility. Because of the limited timeframe time of the online visit, the Team did not gather sufficient information to find out the details of how the ECTS credits earned during their stay abroad are considered by VU, and how much freedom students have in the choice of their courses while abroad. We were also not able to determine whether students use the option to choose an individual study plan.

The way in which students can personalise their learning in the MAs is sufficiently explained in the SER. There is some flexibility in the programmes, as students can choose compulsory subjects from other programmes as elective subjects within their optional module. Students can also choose subjects from other programmes, creating their own individual study plan, which may be an interesting alternative for those learners seeking a specific specialisation or pursuing particular academic interest. Overall, the choices provided to students are varied and the study plans include a diverse list of courses that allow personalising the field of study according to their personal interests.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The rules for the preparation and examination of final theses are appropriately established, and the documents regarding them are available online. Students are informed about the requirements regarding their theses as part of the module within which they write the thesis. The aims of the theses are clearly delimited and defined in accordance with the requirements of the study cycle. The theses meet the requirement of scholarly research appropriate to the study cycle. The choice of topics is monitored by the lecturers and approved by the respective Study Programme Committee. The defence procedure is clear and social partners are involved. Theses are monitored for plagiarism.

In a similar vein, the elaboration of the final theses of the MA programmes is delimited by the Regulations for the Preparation, Defence and Storage of Research Papers of Students Studying at Vilnius, and the Procedure for Administering Research Papers in the Vilnius University Study Information System. The aforementioned documents, together with the specific guidelines for the elaboration of the MA theses in each programme, are available in the corporate website of VU.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The requirements related to the final theses are clearly established and made available to students. Students get appropriate assistance with their choice of topic. In this respect, greater assistance could be recruited from the social partners. Although the social partners are involved in smaller projects and student practice, there is scope for improvement in how much they participate in proposing topics for the final theses.

The students of both programmes author high-quality final theses. The theses cover different issues relevant to the study field, and incorporate up-to-date topics and recent bibliographic sources, cited appropriately. The theses are written in scientific style and language appropriate for the study cycle, and adhere to the norms of scientific writing, both in terms of structure and content.

The expected learning outcomes of the MA theses for every programme are described with sufficient detail in the guidelines of the study programmes and they are also adequately presented in the SER.

## ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The students receive good education in the field of linguistics, as well as language skills and practical skills such as translation.
2. Graduates of the first cycle are well-prepared both to continue their studies and research, and to participate in the job market.
3. The study field has a great network of institutional ties with universities abroad.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Greater attention could be paid to including innovative teaching methods into the modules of the study cycle in a more systematic manner.
2. In language courses, greater attention should be paid to speaking and listening skills.
3. The social partners could be more involved in the final theses.

### **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES**

***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***

The BA offered within this study field at Vilnius University are framed within the area of Philology (H004) included in Humanities (H000). The teaching staff of the departments engaged in the study field under review present a good track of academic papers and research projects in the areas related to the BA. Likewise, the linguistic study field offered by Vilnius University is included in the top 250 according to the World University Ranking in 2017.

Regarding MA programmes, according to the Research and Development evaluation, the university received a good evaluation in the field of philology. The teaching staff in the four second cycle programmes conduct research in the relevant fields, publish articles and books, and participate in different projects within research groups. The research is conducted in a variety of fields with relevance to the four second-cycle SPs. A system of bonuses for staff conducting research has been introduced. Also, various types of international academic events, including student conferences, are organised within different fields of study. There are several research journals where the teaching researchers are active as authors, reviewers, or editors.

#### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

The research and scientific production of the teaching staff engaged in the field of study has merit, although it could be more intense. In general terms, the teaching staff at VU publish their research results regularly in academic journals and – to a lesser extent – in monographs, book chapters and conference proceedings. Some of the works of the teaching staff have appeared in renowned publishers in the field of linguistics, although additional efforts could be made to publish research papers in high impact journals. The participation in international conferences and research projects with foreign institutions is adequate, with a good number

of joint projects with international HEIs in the last years (COST actions, EU programmes, and also proposals funded by the German Government).

The research and scientific activities of the teaching staff is related to the areas of the BAs in this field of studies.

Although there is a solid network of international collaboration with foreign institutions, more efforts could be made to cooperate with national institutions in Lithuania working in linguistics. Some other universities offer complementary programmes – as it was acknowledged in the visit to Vilnius – and cooperation could be beneficial for research and academic purposes.

As long as MA programmes are concerned, quite a considerable amount of research and dissemination activities related to the SPs is conducted. During our meeting, it was expressed that the staff felt that they were supported by the University to do research and to participate in conferences etc. and manage to keep a balance between research and teaching. However, some staff mentioned lack of an office place and even that they had to use their own computers for doing research. This is an area that should be addressed, maybe in cooperation with social partners in case VU does not have the possibility to do so with its own resources.

Much of the research is taking place within smaller projects, while large-scale projects with cross-institutional cooperation, with partners from different sectors nationally and internationally would have greater impact. More administrative help from the university would be preferable so such projects can be applied for and launched to a greater extent and that the researchers can spend most of the time focusing on research and dissemination. According to what was stated during our meetings, international connections would be stronger if they would be based to a greater extent on inter-institutional ties, not only personal connections. Within the SP of Semantics there is a high degree of inter-disciplinary research, and there seems also to be room for more inter-disciplinary research connected to the other SPs, e.g., with other faculties at VU or other institutions/social partners. During the meetings, it was suggested that an international (winter) school of semiotics would be organised, similar to the summer school in Tartu. This would be an asset for internationalisation.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Most activities and initiatives undertaken are linked to the field of philology and language learning, multilingual discourses, intercultural communication, and audiovisual translation. There is a solid infrastructure of research groups established in the field of study being evaluated. It is worth mentioning that there is an intuitional strategy to promote high-level

research outcomes (Procedure for the Promotion of High-level Scholarly Achievements issued in 2018).

When it comes to the second cycle, several members of the teaching staff are active within research conducted in areas directly connected to a number of the subjects taught. Students are also involved as several of them write their Master's theses on the research topics of teaching staff. Students get assignments to motivate them to participate in conferences as listeners. Several guest lectures by international researchers have also been organised, especially connected to the SEM SP programme.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Overall, the research conducted by the teaching staff of the BA at VU is interdisciplinary and it covers a wide area within linguistics. The SER provides a consistent and coherent justification of the integration of the scientific activities of the teaching staff with the academic and teaching modules of the study programmes. The current structure of VU in terms of research groups is well-established and there is a consistent research strategy: the research groups organise their academic activities according to a well-designed plan, and there is a review and monitoring of the strengths and weaknesses of the research outputs. This plan is discussed not only internally (within the groups) but also with the faculty administration.

The Procedure for the Promotion of High-level Scholarly Achievements seems to have stimulated the productivity of the research groups in the field in the last 5 years.

It is worth mentioning that there are several journals published by the Faculty within the area of linguistics which are indexed in Scopus (Baltistica, Kalbotyra, Literatūra). Besides, the teaching staff take part in research evaluation activities, editorial boards, and international committees. The dissemination of the research results through national and international conferences is also remarkable.

The good work linking the content of studies and latest developments in the field of study should continue, maybe to a greater extent inviting guest lectures (as done in the SEM study programme). Albeit technologies are used as a part of virtual learning, it seems that the newest language technologies could get a more important place in both studies and research. This should be developed further, possibly in cooperation with other institutions and/or social partners.

### *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*

The engagement of students in scientific activities is done mainly through their work with the final thesis and the collaboration with the teaching staff. Besides, the Faculty organises

conferences for young researchers and also promotes the participation of students in research projects and activities being implemented.

Students of the MA programmes have research activities and take part in conferences and organise popular science events. Students give talks at conferences both independently, and together with supervisors. Some of the MA theses have led to publications, and several students of the programmes continue doctoral studies.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The participation of students in research activities is appropriate for first study cycle programmes. Students collaborate with the teaching staff in national research projects, prepare papers and academic articles and have the opportunity to apply for research internships. The current structure of research groups promotes the participation of students in several research lines and guarantees they do get acquainted with research methods and trends in several lines of inquiry within linguistics.

The MA programmes have sufficient focus on research-related skills and the good work involving students in research projects should continue. It is positive that VU is involved in organising the student conference “Bridges in the Baltics”, as it helps them make international academic contacts, and also the active participation of students at the academic study week “Baltos lankos”. The student activity within research seems to be somewhat larger within the programmes of Linguistics and of Semiotics and could be encouraged to a greater extent within the programmes of Language for Specific (Legal) Purposes and of Public Discourse Linguistics. During our meetings, some graduates mentioned they lacked a more practice-oriented course of qualitative and quantitative research methods within linguistics in the Linguistics programme.

## *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

### *(1) Strengths:*

1. There is a robust research strategy promoted by the Faculty and the research groups.
2. Generally, there is a high level of research and dissemination. The good involvement of students in such activities is positive.
3. There is a well-established tradition and infrastructures that promote interdisciplinary within linguistics.
4. Solid collaboration network with foreign institutions and research groups in linguistics.
5. The Faculty publishes relevant journals in the field in the national scenario.

## **2) Weaknesses:**

1. The number of papers published in high impact journals could be higher in the fields of linguistics, multimodal discourse and translation studies.
2. There is no sufficient administrative support to initiate and carry out larger long-term projects that can have a greater impact
3. Currently, there is a shortage of working spaces for staff to conduct research activities.

### **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*

Admission criteria are clear and objective. The interest of entrants in the study of linguistics is well justified in the SER. There is a suitable number of elective choices for first cycle studies. There are fewer students who choose a Master's degree than those enrolling in undergraduate programmes, but second-cycle students are motivated towards completing their studies.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The dissemination of studies is consistent. The university presents the field of study properly, although the question remains whether the studies at this university are chosen by motivated students all the time, considering the objective criteria, i.e., after proper evaluation of the programmes offered by all universities.

Dissemination of study programs in the second cycle is properly done, but it should be noted that the biggest offer is for students who have graduated from VU. More efforts should be made to disseminate MA programmes among graduates from other universities.

*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*

Foreign degrees are evaluated in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and individual circumstances are considered.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The recognition of foreign qualifications complies with the regulations and is in line with best practices in Europe, enabling fair access to the HEI. In the online visit, students mentioned that they lacked more lectures with native foreign language skills. It is recommended that more native lecturers work at the University, as this would improve the number of international students. The university should consider having guest lectures from universities abroad online, if it is not possible to invite them for financial or practical reasons.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Students partake in Erasmus+ and ARQUS arrangements, and they also have the possibility to study abroad for a year or a semester, depending on the programme. Not surprisingly, the pandemic posed some challenges for student mobility; however, mobility was not restricted. All information about student mobility is a public variety of channels, student support must demonstrate this.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The ensuring of student mobility is impeccable, and the university provides clear scholarship terms and support to make this happen. The information provided in the SER is sufficient. Lecturers seem to be very active encouraging student mobility.

### *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, financial, social, psychological and personal support is provided to students in this field. Students are properly informed about available opportunities.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

During the meeting with the students, it was noticed that some of them evaluate everything related to the university only positively, with no critical views on any aspect. However, some issues can be identified: for instance, the fact that psychological support for students is provided by another university department responsible for the training of psychologists. It is recommended that psychological support is provided by external professionals with no connection with the university.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling.*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

During the meeting, the students emphasised only the positive aspects of the university and were reluctant to talk about any difficulties they might face. Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to interview students face-to-face, as the visit was online.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Students have no complaints, and they seem to be satisfied with the dissemination of information and means of communication; everything is properly accessible. During the meeting with the students, it was mentioned that there was a preparatory meeting before the interview with the experts. This casts some doubts on the objectivity of the answers. Due to the pandemic situation, it is very difficult to verify whether these assumptions are correct.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The strengths of the university are the dissemination and the existing strategic location of the institution, the diversity of studies, and the qualification of the subject specialists.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The university could promote a more critical thinking from the students, as this helps to assess the quality of studies and carry out a strategy for its improvement.
2. From the meeting with the students and the administration, it can be concluded that the study plans include new subject based on the topics of the final dissertations. Although this may bring new insights to the field, it should be noticed that this diversity may also soften the essence of the study field.

## **3.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

### ***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 university has a student-centred study model, with quite a large part of classroom work, and a variety of methods are used both for classroom activities and for assessment. The student-centred study model aims at taking the student's personality and talent into consideration, and at developing creativity, critical thinking and being tolerant participants of society.

There is a wide variety of teaching/learning methods, adjusted to the projected outcomes of particular teaching modules. Under COVID-19 conditions, the teaching is conducted through Moodle and MS Teams, and students are encouraged to report any issues with the virtual learning environment to a dedicated email address, serviced by a team of staff members.

Learning outcomes are assessed through a variety of methods, which include seminar participation, essays, quizzes, reports, presentations etc. Students work both individually and in groups. The transition to online teaching was challenging at first, but both students and teachers feel they adjusted successfully.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The design of the teaching and learning process aims to involve the students in a variety of ways, and teaching methods are adjusted to the intended learning outcomes. Formal ways of attending to feedback from students – such as the email address to monitor issues in online learning – are in place. Students who articulate their needs are listened to, but greater care should be taken – especially in online learning – to ensure that students for whom speaking up is more challenging are also considered. The second cycle study programmes target graduates of the first cycle from the same department, so extra care should be taken that the content of the first and second cycle courses does not repeat much of the same information. As a general recommendation, it is worth underlining that MA contents should not overlap with the ones of the BA programmes, which are more basic in nature and less specific.

The process helps the students achieve a high level of theoretical and practical language skills. During the meetings, it was anyhow stated by several of the students and graduates that compared to other skills, the fluency of oral skills was not emphasised enough. A practical course in translation tool usage was also suggested during our meetings.

A greater degree of internationalisation with students from different countries would also help the students develop their practical language skills in an informal way, as the target languages of the programmes would be used as a lingua franca between the students to a greater extent.

Though some examples of developing creativity and critical thinking are mentioned in the SER, this might be an area of further development, taking both personal development and the use for society into consideration. In both the SER and the meeting with teaching staff the elimination of mistakes was stressed. An excessive focus on correctness and avoiding mistakes might contradict the development of creativity and critical thinking.

There is a target to develop competences needed for further studies and for the labour market. Taking this into account, one could consider including development of skills that are needed both in an academic path, as well as in the labour market, e.g., project planning and management, creative writing, and some basic insights in the sectors where many graduates are employed (e.g., IT, finance and accounting, customer support, focussing on language specific issues for these fields). However, the academic foundation in linguistics should still be kept.

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

### *(1) Factual situation*

The university has a Disability Affairs Coordinator that students can contact to receive help to adapt to study processes on the faculty level, and there is a routine for how these questions are handled. In some cases, it is also possible to receive financial support and exemption from fees. If needed, the University also offers psychological help.

A VU-wide strategy promoting equality and diversity is in place. Procedures exist to individualise the study process for students with special needs and disabilities. Individual study plans are prepared upon request, on an individual basis. Both teaching and assessment can be personalised. There are currently two deaf students in the LING SP programme, who attend classes accompanied by Lithuanian Sign Language interpreter.

Scholarships and reductions of study fees are available for students from socially vulnerable groups, but such cases were not attested in the evaluated period.

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

It is commendable that a course of action is established for inclusion of students with disabilities and special needs, as well as students from socially vulnerable groups. The existence of these measures and ways of accessing them should be publicised, so that prospective students who might need to use them are aware that they exist. While there are two deaf students in the LING SP programme, it appears that their learning needs are approached on an individual, rather than systemic basis. If the Sign Language interpreter is sourced by the student, rather than provided by the VU, this situation should be revisited. Linguistics programmes should be setting an example of inclusion of deaf students, and if possible, measures should be implemented to allow such students regular access to an interpreter not only to attend classes, but also to interact with their lecturers and colleagues. The library has provisions for visually impaired students, but no facilities for deaf students are mentioned in materials made available to the Team.

### *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*

The students' progress is evaluated on the level of the module (by the lecturer), the student cohort of a given year (by the Study Department), and the whole study programme (by the Study Programme Committee). Student representatives are involved in the monitoring and receive feedback to pass to students. The final grades students receive are a combination of participation in seminars, projects and the final examination. Assessment and Feedback principals are regulated by the appropriate procedures and documents, established at the

university level. Students receive direct feedback mostly on the module level. Students who fail at least one exam in the exam sessions, and who intend to re-sit, receive letters of advice.

Students' performance on the module level is in many cases evaluated cumulatively: learning outcomes are assessed through tasks carried out throughout the semester and through a final project/exam. It is on the module level where the students receive most direct feedback, also on the exam results. Forms, methods and criteria of evaluation in every module are introduced to students at the start of the semester. MA theses are assessed on the basis of both the thesis itself, and its defence. The students are assisted in the process of writing their theses and receive feedback from their supervisor and from a designated specialist reviewer.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Procedures of student monitoring are adequate and appropriately grounded in the University-wide regulations, and capture students' progress on a variety of levels. It is great that student representatives are involved in the feedback process, but passing the feedback to other students is also potentially problematic for the cohort dynamic, especially if the feedback is negative. It is commendable that assistance is provided to students who fail an exam, but perhaps the option to send such students letters should be revisited, especially in times of online teaching when students and teachers do not regularly see each other. It could be more effective to offer such students more support options and encourage them to have a meeting with an academic mentor who could guide them in how to solve their learning difficulties.

It is commendable that the Department aims to implement a student-centred learning paradigm, and efforts in this direction should be upheld. The process should involve eliciting active participation even from the less outgoing students, who might find it challenging to participate actively in online classes. The SP-level meetings where students can discuss their progress are a great initiative. They currently take place with different frequencies across the different SPs, but efforts should be made to hold them every semester for all the SPs.

Cumulative assessment contributes to good results in achieving learning outcomes. It is now used in 'many' courses, and measures should be examined for implementing it wherever possible. The problematic aspect of such assessment is that it takes a lot of the lecturer's time, so the process should be carefully thought through, and alternative methods could be suggested, e.g., involving students in providing feedback to their peers. The teacher-student communication was not too affected by the transition to online teaching, but it definitely made it more challenging to adjust the content of the courses and the methods of assessment on the basis of observing the students' progress.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Both SER and the visit show that there is a high degree of employability of graduates in a variety of fields, far beyond the field of linguistics. During the studies, the students have internships at institutions and enterprises with high relevance.

There is a well-functioning career tracking system for the graduates, combining different types of data. The career and employment prospects for students graduating from UV within the field of linguistics are very good, and their income is comparable to the graduates of linguistics from other Lithuanian universities. Substantial numbers of graduates from the different SPs undertake doctoral studies. Graduates who do not stay in academia work in a variety of professions, and report being sought-after on the job market.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The career prospects of the graduates of all the second cycle study programmes are excellent. This is evidenced both by the graduate employment figures and by the graduates' positive assessment of their work opportunities, and of the way in which attending the programmes boosted their career chances. The graduates are well-prepared both for working in a variety of sectors, and for conducting research in linguistics. Each of the study programmes addresses a specific niche of the job market. It is also commendable that the schedule has been adjusted so that the students already in employment do not have to give it up to continue studying.

The Department already collaborates closely with a variety of social partners, but this collaboration could be made still more systematic, and the needs of the Department could be communicated to social partners more clearly.

There is room for improvement regarding the connection between university and graduates, as this would be valuable both for promotion of the programme, further development of it, and connection with social partners.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

There are different measures taken on an institutional and university-wide level to ensure academic integrity that are handled under different regulations. There is an electronic identification system for plagiarism. There is a trust line to report unethical behaviour anonymously.

Code of Academic Ethics, as well as other relevant documents, are in place. There is an anonymous, confidential hotline to inform about cases of discrimination. The Academic Ethics Commission operates on the University-wide level, and there are also respective commissions for core academic units. As stated on the UV website, very few members of the university community address the Commission, although surveys reveal that both students and staff face

discrimination on different grounds. No breaches of ethical principles related to the Master's programmes under evaluation have been reported in the last three years.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Information about addressing cases of sexual harassment and discrimination is easily accessible on the VU website. The anonymous hotline to report such cases is a good solution. The code of academic ethics is up-to-date, as it was last updated in 2018. The fact that no breaches were reported could either point to a very good situation in the study field, or to the fact that despite the apparent visibility of the procedures, there is not enough awareness of their existence. It is also potentially problematic that breaches of integrity have to be reported first on the core academic unit level – this can discourage potential complaints, as they would be addressed by people who are likely to know the person lodging the complaint, teach or supervise them.

The existence of an anonymous trust line is positive.

*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*

The University has its main principles grounded in the University Statute, the University's Code of Academic Ethics, its Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy and other documents. There is a procedure in place of handling appeals. In the period 2016–2019, the students of EAFL SP filed 5 appeals which were handled.

Regarding MA programmes, there is a clear appeal procedure for students who disagree within the exam results, approved by the VU Senate. The appeal must be submitted within five days of the exam results being published. The decision regarding the appeal has to be reached within 30 days. It is also possible to contest the decision of the appeal Commission. Two cases of plagiarism were addressed in 2020 by a working group consisting of lecturers and students. Between 2017-2020 one appeal was lodged (regarding uploading the MA thesis to the VUSIS system) but it was not satisfied.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Procedures regarding the appeals are clear, although five days can be a short time for a student to lodge an appeal, especially if they are not fully aware of how the appeal procedure works. The VUSIS and EOIS systems allow for detecting cases of plagiarism. On the basis of the information available to the Team, it is not clear whether the cases of plagiarism detected in 2020 had adverse consequences for the involved students. The students should be explicitly made aware of the possibility to appeal and the standards regarding academic ethics and

honesty, and the relevant information should be easily accessible on the Faculty website/Moodle.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. There is a high degree of employability of students.
2. Unique focus of the different study programmes, preparing students for careers in research as well as for a variety of language-related professions.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. There are still some areas of improvement when it comes to development of student skills, both directly connected to the programme (oral language skills) and general skills preparing students for further studies or work.
2. The potential of involvement of alumni and social partners is not used fully.
3. Feedback and support for students could be improved, especially in case of students who are less likely to actively communicate their needs.
4. Regarding MA programmes, more attention should be given to appeal and complaint procedures.

## **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. Entrance requirements are well-founded, consistent and transparent.*

#### ***(1) Factual situation***

The teaching staff currently working in Linguistics study programmes at Vilnius University are well-qualified, competent in both academic/professional and research/ scientific terms. They definitely meet the requirements of General Study Requirements Description. The average of over 90% of the subjects in the study programme are taught by PhD lecturers in compliance with the Lithuanian legal framework, but in some study programmes the percentage is even higher – between 95% and 100%. Due to the recent changes in organisation of MA studies in the last four to five years, the overall number of teachers in four different study programmes increased from 56 in 2017 to 62 in 2020. The most significant increase occurred in the Linguistics study programme, which had emerged from the former single applied linguistics SP and was reorganised in 2019 into three branches or specialisations: general linguistics, applied linguistics and contrastive (Italian) linguistics. The

teaching staff working in the study field being examined includes 20 professors, 29 associate professors, 9 assistants, 2 junior assistants, 1 lecturer with PhD and 1 more lecturer. There has been a considerable improvement in terms of conditions for younger staff after the structural academic staff reform at the University in 2017. The newly established position of junior assistant seems to be more favourable to doctoral students than the former position of a lecturer, and the position of assistant more favourable than that of a lecturer with a doctoral degree.

Certain segments of course units (modules) are taught by doctoral students and practitioners. 100% of subjects in the linguistics field are taught by staff with a doctoral degree (professors, associate professors, assistants), with a few exceptions determined by particular needs of a programme. The majority of academic staff have been teaching for 10 or more years and are highly qualified specialists and recognised as researchers in their areas. Many professors and associate professors from the Faculty of Law working in LSP SP have practical professional experience from their former positions within the legal system.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The teacher-to-student ratio is acceptable, although there is a substantial difference in it between the study programmes, which should be remedied. The qualifications of the teachers in both programmes are adequate and the teachers are well-distributed across the different career levels. Good efforts are being made to employ more teachers as the student numbers increase; They should be upheld to keep the teacher-to-student ratio at the current level or increase it.

If the Team understood the terms of the certification of staff correctly, passing the procedure requires producing research outputs. It is not clear how the process works in case of lecturers whose contracts do not give them research time: they cannot be expected to produce research outputs for the benefit of the competition unless they are also given research time.

It is commendable that the admission requirements are clearly described, and made available on the VU website, along with an email the prospective students can contact if in doubt.

As for the second cycle, the teaching staff working in this study field does have long-term pedagogical experience at university level and their expertise and research track in relation to the subjects being taught is quite adequate.

Since teaching and research staff (except for visiting teaching and research staff) are appointed to primary or higher positions after passing with success a public competition for a position at the University, they can sign the teaching contract for five years. Those members of the teaching or research staff who have a primary position and have been approved, after the public competition, for the same position at the University for the second time in a row, can conclude an open-ended, i.e., permanent, employment contract for this position. This policy provides stability among all the ranks of the teaching staff, but it is competitive enough to provide quite a proactive interest to keep the position, according to actual performance.

The staff turnover in the field is mainly due to promotion to a higher position inside the University rather than hiring new staff from outside. In general, the Department will prioritise giving full time employment to the existing staff, so they will usually argue to assign the courses to people already employed. However, when the staff with specific skills is needed, it becomes necessary to hire people on a part-time basis. The academic staff meeting qualification requirements enter competitions for higher positions and young researchers are promoted and ensure a steady renewal of competent teachers within the MA studies. That is why the teachers in recent years have remained steady, with the most qualified academics helping the younger fellow-colleagues to assume responsibility and gain the necessary experience. The student-teacher ratio is more than appropriate, with 62 teachers covering the total of 80 students, or 0.78.

The lecturers engaged in the programme show a high profile in terms of their research activities in regard to their academic productivity and output (especially when it comes to publications in peer-reviewed and impact journals outside Lithuania) could be more remarkable.

### *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*

As many as 184 agreements regarding staff mobility and training are in place, especially with academic institutions from outside Lithuania. New collaboration agreements are being secured, e.g., the one with the Swedish Institute. Teaching staff participate in exchange programmes – each lecturer can go for one visit per year.

Regarding MA programmes, although the administration of the CAUs running the field SPs encourage the mobility of academics through exchange programmes and projects, as a rule, the realisation of such activities mostly depends on personal initiative. In order to make such initiatives possible, the organisational assistance has been ensured. It allows for adjusting the schedule of work with students, assigning business trips, and providing a system for the payment of salaries during internships.

One of the most popular ways of lecturers' training has been carried out in the form of academic exchanges through the ERASMUS+, NORDPLUS, ISEP (in-service training courses, monitoring visits, international cooperation visits, teaching visits and staff study visits to foreign universities and non-university institutions). Another possibility is to seek both national (Lithuanian) or EU sources for financing opportunities for exchange visits, which are often sought by the teaching staff of the Linguistics field of study. The objectives and duration of project-based activities determine the involvement of researchers in specific fields, with the ratio 2:1 in favour of visits abroad as compared to the visits within Lithuania. Due to the Covid-19 pandemics in 2020, such plans had to be recalled, as well as the continuous visits of foreign lecturers (4 to 5 average from 2017-2019) to their fellow-colleagues at VU.

There is significant participation at national and international scientific gatherings. In 2017, the VU lecturers participated in 5 national and 40 international conferences; in 2018, in 6 national and 49 international conferences; in 2019, in 20 national and 63 international conferences. They presented the results of their own research at such conferences and took active part in ongoing discussions in diverse areas of Linguistics.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Institutional possibilities for academic mobility are good, with multiple agreements in place, especially with institutions abroad. The new collaboration with Swedish Institute looks very promising. Overall, the participation in teaching/learning visits at other institutions is on a good level. Participating in academic mobility schemes, and especially visits to other institutions in Lithuania and teaching visits, should be particularly encouraged among the more junior staff and among lecturers. Practical conditions should be created for them to allow for participating in exchange programmes – e.g., allowing inviting colleagues as guest lecturers to take over some of their classes while they are away.

As for the second cycle, it is commendable that both the university and the department encourage teaching mobility under diverse mobility and project-based programmes activities providing suitable means within the existing framework of usual courses of instruction, office work and examinations to create opportunities for the teaching staff to be involved in the programmes available for such purposes. Nevertheless, there should be more co-ordination between the personal initiatives and the overall institutional planning and realisation of those activities, especially for younger researchers.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Professional development at VU is promoted in order to improve pedagogical (didactic) competences of the teaching staff. Different and frequent means of trainings and seminars with the purpose to implement the changes in the study process, had been offered by the University, and organised centrally since 2017. Similar trainings were also organised for study administrators. The participants welcomed the opportunity to meet one another, learn together, and share experiences with colleagues from other fields of study and other departments of the University. This was particularly important under the Covid-19 lockdown conditions, when academics had to adjust to online means of teaching through crash-courses and learn, through training and consultations, how to use the VLE Moodle and MS Teams more actively in the spring of 2020. It should also be mentioned that the teaching staff of the field SPs arranged sessions of mutual assistance, since they felt the need to share their competences and skills in a more flexible forms than the previous classroom-based targeted training.

Certain issues related to the shortcomings of information technology and its application under the new conditions have been resolved through joint efforts of all the teachers, and in a close co-operation with appropriate technical experts. It also meant necessary adjustment to the schedules of classes in the active communication with students, who have also been interested in maintaining and improve their studies under such adverse conditions.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

It is possible that the need to re-certify every five years motivates the staff to update their competences. Care should be taken that this certification is not only used to check if the staff comply with the minimum requirements, but also to recognise those whose competences exceed those required for their current position. Staff whose competences significantly exceed what their job requires should be given opportunities for promotion or other incentives.

It is very positive that lecturers have the opportunity to go on sabbatical every five years. The Team did not manage to collect sufficient information about how this process works for those on non-permanent contracts, who need re-evaluation every five years. If staff who are subject to re-evaluation cannot apply for the sabbatical, more options should be given for training in pedagogical/research competences to more junior staff who cannot access the sabbatical leave.

Financial incentives for high-quality research outputs encourage more high-quality research, which is very positive. On the other hand, the documents made available to the Team are not clear on how the staff is systematically supported along the way to achieving the research outcomes on which the incentives depend. This suggests that the development of competencies, rather than being supported systematically on the institutional level, is left to the individual initiative of the members of staff. More systematic support for competence development should be introduced, especially in case of junior staff and people on teaching-only contracts. Part of such support should be the provision of adequate working space to all members of staff. The Team is aware that this is complicated because the VU is located in historical buildings, but the plans to secure offices – which, as the Team was made aware, are already underway – should be a priority for the management. Lecturers and researchers alike should be given working space. Equipment shortages could be addressed with social partners, some of whom might be able to provide computers and other office equipment needed for the new offices.

The conditions to improve the competence of the teaching staff in MA programmes are adequate, and teachers are provided with sufficient opportunities to progress in their careers. Suitable training and support are offered by administration, and teachers can update their skills and competencies, but more active involvement of the teaching in such activities should be more proactively promoted and organised among some study programmes.

## ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The teaching staff of both first cycle study programmes is highly professional and has a diverse set of skills, which reflect positively on the quality of the study programme.
2. Many opportunities exist for staff academic mobility.
3. Participation at national and international level, as well as the visits of foreign experts on a regular basis is definitely a solid basis for ongoing and future activities.
4. There are enough opportunities to develop existing study programmes in view of interdisciplinarity, and to strengthen the international dimension of the teaching staff in various academic exchanges and project-based activities at home and abroad.

### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The staff certification process is potentially unfair to those on full-time teaching contracts, as they cannot be expected to produce research outputs in their working hours.
2. Many members of the staff, especially lecturers, do not have sufficient workspace and equipment.
3. Despite the solid results, which have been achieved despite recent transformations in the Linguistics study field at VU, and due to its size, structure and the complex hierarchy at the levels of university vs. Faculty vs. departments vs. study programmes, the adaptation to the online environment was slow and not efficient in terms of the overall performance, although all the teachers tried their best to accommodate the needs of students with their own methods of teaching that had relied primarily on face-to-face on in-class teaching. The experience gained during the pandemic should be used towards a combination of in-class and online instruction.
4. Blended learning methods can definitely be of great use when the idea of interdisciplinarity with other relevant fields of expertise within VU is concerned, not only within the EHEA but, also, in the larger global context.
5. It seems even more important to find the means and resources in intra-disciplinary studies within the field of Linguistics studies at VU, especially in the foreseeable future with three campuses (at Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai) with their current specificities and differences, as well as in the more focused sets of responses to the needs of job market and demands of social partners.

## **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***

In regard to the assessment of the VU facilities, both the premises at Vilnius and Kaunas campuses were taken into consideration, although the questions targeting the Library at Vilnius campus had to be answered by the fellow-colleagues from Kaunas, due to the illness of the person in charge of the VU Central Library (Universiteto St. 3). Nevertheless, the Library facilities must be seen from two different angles, since VU KNF's new library, with the money from EU funds, was opened in 2015 on Muitinës St. 18. With the emphasis on the use of IT equipment and resources KNF Library offers most of the printed books and periodicals required for studies under the ESL SP. The Central Library in Vilnius with its well-stocked library funds grant open access to their holdings, and although library facilities are equipped with computers, and the necessary conditions to work with personal laptops have been ensured, it seems that there is still room to improve IT equipment and relevant digital resources. It can be illustrated by the claim that the most frequently visited reading rooms of Philosophy, Philology and Lithuanian Studies have a total of 110 workplaces, of which 29 are computerised, and there are spaces assigned for informal communication. Students have a possibility to use existing electrical outlets in the library, as well as in a number of classrooms, for their own digital equipment. In 2019, the University's virtual teaching system was updated and the electronic VLE (virtual learning environment) platform was installed, where each course unit lecturer can share and organise various study-related activities with their students remotely.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic showed that in such adverse conditions, or in the situation designated for blended learning, these facilities could not be sufficient to meet most of the demands. Some teachers had to deal with the situation in whatever way available, because they did not have laptops or cameras of their own, which was a real challenge at the time. They had to organise hybrid lectures, with people going to the Faculty and other participants following the sessions from home, which was often accompanied with some problems in regard to schedules and functioning of IT equipment with too many users.

This situation showed that the process of instruction even under the "normal" conditions was not an easy task to organise despite the fact that over the last three years (2017–2019) the students of EAFL SP have been using about twenty lecture rooms located at the University's Faculty of Philology and 12 other reading rooms at the Central Library. The actual number of students determines the size of groups that are formed to follow certain classes, which can work out nicely with the specific number of participants, but it can prove a major difficulty with a lot of smaller groups that need to be accommodated within the schedule of classes. It seems obvious that physical facilities have been used in the best way possible, and that there is little or no room for their expansion. That is why the possibility to make them hybrid classrooms or digital workspaces has been envisaged in the current limited infrastructure, although it was claimed that, if need be, they could be transformed into several smaller classrooms by using the partitions.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The current facilities seem to satisfy the process of instruction only to the extent of a careful allocation of classrooms within a well-planned and organised schedule of classes. Despite the investment in refurbishing and equipping these premises with IT equipment in the previous

years, all the physical spaces need to get more digital resources, primarily portable and wireless ones that will not require major renovation activities within the existing situation. However, it is recommended that additional space should be earmarked for out-of-class activities – be it for office hours, research or recreational purposes – at suitable locations in the vicinity that could serve the purpose and meet the projected needs for the future.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Given that Vilnius premises belong to historic heritage buildings, where any physical improvements require considerable financial and architectural efforts, it was noted that, in the 2014–2020 period, almost all FPhil lecture rooms have been refurbished (LLS is the only facility that is still awaiting renovation). They have been and equipped with all that was needed to use audiovisual material. In addition, furniture was replaced, computers, internet, sound systems, projectors, and drop-down screens were installed.

The office space for teachers remains the big issue, since most of the teachers had to share the space with a number of fellow-colleagues. It creates all kinds of difficulties that cannot be easily overcome, even with the careful distribution of office hours per person who shares the same space. From the meetings held with the university representatives, it can be concluded that this will be improved somewhat in the future, and that working conditions, especially for younger academics and researchers, will be secured.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The current situation needs urgent improvements in terms of both physical premises and IT equipment available. In order to resolve the limitations of the number of classrooms available, as well as other physical rooms, diverse methods of blended or hybrid learning should be introduced on a more regular level than before. Substantial funds should be secured, primarily with the financial support of the government and social partners who can contribute in many ways to upgrade the current facilities. It is highly recommended that more proactive interaction between the management and teachers with alumni and social partners in this respect should be undertaken as the major strategic plan for development of the Linguistics field of studies in the near future.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. A diversified number of classrooms suitable to organise different kinds of classes under the traditional face-to-face situation and with the carefully planned and managed timetables, where teachers and students can attain direct communication when working together in a pleasant environment.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. A limited number of IT equipment and access to diverse electronic resources can seriously affect the possibilities to combine the traditional methods and resources of learning and researching, and, therefore, produce the much-needed quality of studies at both BA and MA level. The allotted limited space for teachers outside their respective classrooms is a threat that ought to be resolved before long as one of the priorities for the future development plans.

### **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY**

***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 internal quality assurance of Vilnius University is regulated by the “Development and Implementation of the Internal Study Quality Management System”. The management of internal quality is aligned with the standards and best practices operating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The procedures, agents, and general effectiveness of the internal quality system is appropriately described in the SER, and it was also consistently explained in the virtual visit to the university.

There is a thorough review and monitoring system of the quality of the studies offered in this field of studies. The SPCs are responsible for ensuring the quality and continuous improvement of the study programmes, which depend on specific committees (one for the EAFL and another for the ESL. Committees hold regular meetings to discuss quality management and assurance and information is also exchanged with the Dean and the Faculty. The changes undertaken in the study plans of both programmes are adequately justified in the SER.

##### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

The quality assurance system for the study field is appropriate and efficient. There are adequate tools and communication systems to guarantee quality assurance in the field. The procedures to propose modifications and check the progress of the Bas and MAs are satisfactorily described and presented in the SER: the communication channels and the structure which governs the decision-making process –SPC, College of Studies, Faculty Board– is appropriate. The way in which changes to the study programmes were implemented are specified in the SER. The SPC is supported by the University Study Information System. It is

also worth mentioning that the meetings held with the teaching staff and the students of the MA programmes after every semester provides valuable feedback to the SPC.

### *3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources need to carry out the field studies.*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The SPCs analyse the feedback provided by all the stakeholders involved in the programmes: students, graduates, lecturers, and social partners. Student and graduate surveys are organised regularly to provide them with the opportunity to express their satisfaction with the study programmes and propose suggestions.

Stakeholders are engaged in internal quality assurance at VU through the mechanisms and bodies of the institution. Students and social partners are involved in university governing bodies and operating committees.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Students and stakeholders are included in the SPCs, and they also take part in the main government bodies of the institution. The way in which the participation of students in the quality assurance is encouraged is adequately presented, and there seems to be a solid communication channel by which students can express improvement proposals. Students may provide feedback through internal meetings with the SPCs after every semester. The suggestions of the students regarding the timetable or the organisation of the courses is taken into consideration, according to the SER and the interviews held in the visit to the university. The participation of social partners is also guaranteed in the SPCs and quality evaluation meetings; they also take part in the evaluation committees that assess the MA theses of the study field.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Satisfaction surveys are passed twice a year (at the end of every semester). The results are public and available. Specific surveys on every module and course are passed, together with global satisfaction questionnaires. Regular meetings are held by the SPCs to monitor the satisfaction levels and analyse the feedback provided by students, teachers and social partners. The way in which possible shortcomings or improvement proposals are discussed and implemented is also adequately addressed in the SER, and it was also sufficiently justified during the visit to the University. The information of the programme is available on the website in a detailed and transparent way.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The study Quality management is in line with the standards and Guidelines for Quality assurance in the EHEA. Systematic surveys, analyses of the data by all the stakeholders, and wide publication and dissemination of the process and results are the main elements which guarantees the efficiency and the success of this management. The process of the evaluation regarding the information available for the students is transparent and efficient. Similarly, feedback provided by students is regularly checked by the administration of the Faculty and the University, and actions are designed to improve the overall quality of the programme.

### *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*

The information provided by the SER presents an overall positive evaluation of the field of studies by the students taking part in the survey. In particular, EAFL was evaluated positively (“somewhat satisfied” or “satisfied”) by 60.8% of participants in 2017–2018, 67.3% in 2018–2019, and 65.4% in 2019–2020. Regarding ESL, the positive perception of students reached 68.7% in 2017–2018, 74.2% in 2018–2019, and 76% in 2019–2020.

Regarding MA programmes, the statistics presented in the SER show a positive perception of the students regarding the 4 MAs in this study field: namely, 74.4% of respondents are satisfied or rather satisfied, 17,8% have a neutral opinion, and only 7.9% are dissatisfied with the study programmes. The SER also shows that 80.2% of the students would recommend the MA study programmes.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

During the visit, students showed a good satisfaction level with the study programmes, the learning outcomes and the skills and competences learned. Their perception of the performance of the teaching staff is also rather positive, although some participants mentioned they would have expected some more innovative insights regarding online classes from the teaching staff. Also, it is worth mentioning that some students commented they miss more practice in speaking and listening in their language classes.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Internal quality system is well established and complies with the guidelines and best practices for quality assurance in the EHEA.
2. The tools to receive feedback from students, employees and social partners are appropriate. Information is analysed consequently, and action plans are taken by the administration.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Although relevant efforts have been made, the current network of social partners in MA programmes could be larger.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation area	Recommendations for the evaluation area at HEI (study cycle)
Study aims, outcomes and content	<p>Although allowing teachers control over their courses is generally very positive, steps should be taken to ensure that the quality of teaching across the courses offered in the study programmes is consistent.</p> <p>Efforts towards internationalisation and attracting greater numbers of foreign students must be continued.</p> <p>A more proactive role of social partners in the proposal of topics for MA theses is recommended.</p>
Links between science (art) and study activities	<p>Although the scientific productivity of the teaching staff is good, they should be encouraged to publish their research in (more) high impact journals in the field of linguistics outside Lithuania.</p> <p>There should be effort and found support to initiate large-scale projects with cross-institutional cooperation, with partners from different sectors nationally and internationally. It should also be considered to do more inter-disciplinary research. The physical conditions with appropriate work-space for staff to conduct research should be ensured.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>We recommend that the university nurtures the development of critical thinking among the students to a higher extent.</p>
Studying, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Significantly more effort must be done to ensure internationalisation, attracting students from other countries, the measures taken since the previous recommendations were not satisfactory. Moreover, there should be more focus on development of oral skills in language learning. Development of skills that are needed both in an academic path, as well as in the labour market, e.g., project planning and management, creative writing, critical thinking, should be considered introduced/strengthened. The connection with programme alumni should be strengthened.</p> <p>The study field would benefit from taking student feedback into account on a more systematic level.</p> <p>Efforts should be made to organise the SP-level</p>

	<p>meetings where students can discuss their progress every semester across all the SPs.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>Appropriate workspace should be provided to both teaching and research staff.</p> <p>The research support for staff should be comprehensive, so as to encompass all steps of the research process, rather than focus on rewarding high-quality outcomes.</p> <p>The process of certification of the teaching staff should reflect the evaluation of their contractual responsibilities.</p> <p>Substantial investments are required not only into the existing physical facilities in terms of their enlargement and improvement of working, researching and studying conditions, but, even more so, into IT equipment and other sophisticated digital resources.</p> <p>Equally important is the process of selection and preparation of the brightest students as the future researchers and teachers in this dynamic academic field, not just from the standpoints of earlier and most recent linguistics theories, but more so in relation to more propulsive areas of applied disciplines.</p> <p>The combination of the stable tradition, new digital technology and improved physical facilities with highly qualified and motivated teachers, researchers and prospective students can help VU to retain its leading position in the field of Linguistics and related disciplines in the next decade.</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>Providing more physical space for the process of instruction, as well as for teachers for their office hours and out-of-class consultations with students.</p> <p>The urgent acquisition of a substantial number of sophisticated, portable and wireless IT equipment that should be readily available for use to students, researchers and teachers alike in classrooms, offices and library and recreational premises.</p> <p>Larger access to selected and licensed digital databases and other electronic devices and resources that can complement the existing library collection of</p>

	printed materials (books and magazines).
Study quality management and publicity	Continue with the strategy to enlarge the network of social partners.

## V. SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the findings of the expert panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and the interviews with the university / college 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 assessment of the study field of linguistics at Vilnius University due to the fact of the particular characteristics of this university, which is the oldest and the largest higher education public institution in Lithuania, carrying studies in the field of linguistics since 2004. The size of the institution, the number of Faculties, Campuses and departments, and the teaching staff engaged in the aforementioned study field were a challenge in the assessment process. Also it has to be noticed that first and second cycle were evaluated for this study field.

Regarding the study aims, outcomes and contents, the BA and MA programmes taught at VU align with the aims and outcomes of the field of linguistics and the standard practices of second-cycle programmes. The study programmes aim at fulfilling the demand of Lithuanian society for graduates with knowledge in public discourse and linguistics with an interdisciplinary view on the field. The first and second cycle study programmes in linguistics offered by VU are well-adjusted to the needs of society and the labour market. The outcomes of both cycles are in line with the VU mission and are highly commendable. However, there is room for improvement in what concerns the effort to strengthen the potential of the study field via national collaboration and internationalisation of the Faculty. Creating and strengthening international networks could be emphasised. Also, attracting students from abroad was mentioned as an area for improvement in the previous evaluation, and further and more decisive steps are still needed.

Considering the complexity of the institution, the coherence of the study programmes is good and the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes and teaching and evaluation systems has to be valued positively. The organisation of the courses and the curricula of the programmes are reasonable and coherent with the specific objective of each BA and MA. Overall, the choices provided to students are varied and the study plans include a diverse list of courses that allow personalising the field of study.

The expected learning outcomes of the theses for every programme are described with sufficient detail in the guidelines of the study programmes and they are also adequately presented in the SER. The preparation and defence of the final theses meet all the legal requirements, and the information provided to the students is appropriate regarding the elaboration of their dissertation, editing issues, the preparation of the defence and plagiarism. As a recommendation, social partners should be more clearly engaged in the final theses.

As for the links between science and study activities, the research and scientific activities of the teaching staff is related to the areas of the BAs and MAs in this field of studies. Although there is a solid network of international collaboration with foreign institutions, more efforts could be made to cooperate with national institutions in Lithuania working in linguistics.

Some other universities offer complementary programmes – as it was acknowledged in the visit to Vilnius – and cooperation could be beneficial for research and academic purposes.

Overall, the research conducted by the teaching staff of the BA at VU is interdisciplinary and it covers a wide area within linguistics. Much of the research is taking place within smaller projects, while large-scale projects with cross-institutional cooperation, with partners from different sectors nationally and internationally would have greater impact. More administrative help from the university would be preferable so such projects can be applied for and launched to a greater extent and that the researchers can spend most of the time focusing on research and dissemination.

The participation of students in research activities is appropriate for first and second study cycle programmes. Students collaborate with the teaching staff in national research projects, prepare papers and academic articles and have the opportunity to apply for research internships.

In general terms, there is a robust research strategy promoted by the Faculty and the research groups, with a high level of research and dissemination. However, the number of papers published in high impact journals could be higher, and there is no sufficient administrative support to initiate and carry out larger long-term projects that can have a greater impact. Also there is a shortage of working spaces for staff to conduct research.

Regarding student admission and support, admission criteria are clear and objective, and the dissemination of studies is consistent, although more efforts should be made to disseminate MA programmes among graduates from other universities.

The ensuring of student mobility is impeccable, and the university provides clear scholarship terms and support to make this happen.

It would be advisable that more native lecturers work at the University, as this would improve the number of international students. In addition, the university should consider having guest lectures from universities abroad online, if it is not possible to invite them for financial or practical reasons.

Concerning student performance and graduate employment, There is a wide variety of teaching/learning methods, adjusted to the projected outcomes of particular teaching modules. A greater degree of internationalisation with students from different countries would also help the students develop their practical language skills in an informal way, as the target languages of the programmes would be used as a lingua franca between the students to a greater extent.

Regarding students with special needs, It is commendable that a course of action is established for inclusion of students with disabilities and special needs, as well as students from socially vulnerable groups.

There is a well-functioning career tracking system for the graduates, combining different types of data. The career and employment prospects for students graduating from UV within

the field of linguistics are very good, and their income is comparable to the graduates of linguistics from other Lithuanian universities. The career prospects of the graduates of all the second cycle study programmes are excellent, although there is room for improvement regarding the connection between university and graduates, as this would be valuable both for promotion of the programme

As long as the teaching staff is concerned, teachers working in this study field do have long-term pedagogical experience at university level and their expertise and research track in relation to the subjects being taught is quite adequate. There is significant participation at national and international scientific gatherings. The lecturers engaged in the study field show a high profile in terms of their research activities in regard to their academic productivity and output (especially when it comes to publications in peer-reviewed and impact journals outside Lithuania) could be more remarkable. It is very positive that lecturers have the opportunity to go on sabbatical every five years. However, the documents made available to the Team are not clear on how the staff is systematically supported along the way to achieving the research outcomes on which the incentives depend. It has to be noticed, that many members of the staff, especially lecturers, do not have sufficient workspace and equipment. Also, the certification process is potentially unfair to those on full-time teaching contracts, as they cannot be expected to produce research outputs in their working hours.

As for the learning facilities and resources, the current facilities seem to satisfy the process of instruction only to the extent of a careful allocation of classrooms within a well-planned and organised schedule of classes. However, it is recommended that additional space should be earmarked for out-of-class activities.

The office space for teachers remains the big issue, since most of the teachers had to share the space with a number of fellow-colleagues. Substantial funds should be secured, primarily with the financial support of the government and social partners who can contribute in many ways to upgrade the current facilities.

Finally, regarding the study quality management and publicity, it is appropriate and efficient. There are adequate tools and communication systems to guarantee quality assurance in the field. Systematic surveys, analyses of the data by all the stakeholders, and wide publication and dissemination of the process and results are the main elements which guarantees the efficiency and the success of this management.

**Expert panel signatures:**

1. Prof. dr. Srebren Dizdar (panel chairperson), *academic*
2. Prof. dr. Alberto Fernandez Costales, *academic*
3. Doc. dr. Karolina Grzech, *academic*
4. Mr. Snorre Karkkonen Svensson, *representative of social partners'*
5. Mr. Gabrielius Simas Sapiega, *students' representative*