



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## EVALUATION REPORT

### STUDY FIELD

### AREA STUDIES

At Vilnius University

#### Expert Panel:

1. Prof. dr. Jean – Luc Lamboley (team leader) *academic,*
2. Prof. dr. Kazimierz Musial, *academic,*
3. Dr. Griseldis Kirsch, *academic,*
4. Ms. Gabija Kaunelienė, *representative of social partners'*
5. Ms. Renata Rachmanovaitė, *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator - *Mr. Eimantas Markevičius*

*Report language – English*

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### Study Field Data\*

<b>Title of the study programme</b>	<b><i>Asian studies</i></b>	<b><i>Modern Asian studies</i></b>
State code	6121NX028	6211NX026
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (4 years)	Full time (2 years)
Credit volume	240	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Humanities	Master of Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Bachelor's degree or its equivalent
Registration date of the study programme	16 <sup>th</sup> of June, 2000	6 <sup>th</sup> of March, 2006

*\* if there are joint / two-fields / interdisciplinary study programmes in the study field, please designate it in the foot-note*

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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) *visit of the review team at the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of an 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 the evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

## 1.2. THE REVIEW TEAM

The review team 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 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on **25<sup>th</sup> of November, 2020**.

**Prof. dr. Jean -Luc Lamboley (team leader)**, *Bologna expert, former head of the Faculty of History and Geography at the Lumière University Lyon 2, France.*

**Prof. dr. Kazimierz Musial**, *University Professor at the Institute of Scandinavian Studies, University of Gdańsk, Poland.*

**Dr. Griseldis Kirsch**, *head of department of East Asian Languages and Culture and senior Lecturer in Contemporary Japanese Culture at the SOAS, University of London, UK.*

**Ms. Gabija Kaunelienė**, *deputy director of the public body “Jukaris”, Lithuania.*

**Ms. Renata Rachmanovaitė**, *student of Klaipėda University study second cycle programme Baltic Region History, 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>Learning facilities at Vilnius University_Area Studies.wmv</i> (video file)
2.	<i>Answers to preliminary questions</i>

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN HEI

East Asian Studies are confronted with a paradox it is not easy to resolve: on the one hand there is a low number of students engaged in this study field, and similar programmes in Vytautas Magnus University create a concurrence which could be considered as expensive and damaging, and on the other, the countries of East Asia -and China in particular - have an increasingly important place in international relations, with strong geopolitical, geostrategic and economic consequences. Therefore, it is important that Lithuanian Universities can maintain a sufficient number of specialists able to deal with intercultural issues and establish a positive dialogue with these countries. It is clear that an enlightened citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be aware of the crucial issues that contacts between the Orient and the Occident give rise to. Therefore, universities must take into consideration that studies of regional cultures develop enlightened citizens, and thus – all the more so in the context of globalisation where East Asian countries are more and more active – constitutes a strong pillar of democracy.

The review team confesses some embarrassment because two different study programmes were to be assessed altogether in a same evaluation report, one is a 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programme and the other a 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle programme; it is clear that the exigencies are not the same, especially as far as research skills are concerned. Some indicators may be positive in the case of BA programme and the same less positive in the case of MA programme. The report template is not well adapted for this hybrid situation.

Lastly, it is important to point out the abnormal conditions in which the evaluation has taken place, due to the Covid19 pandemic. It is clear that virtual visits were the only acceptable solution, and the team would like to express their warm thanks to all the organizers and technicians who allowed the reviewers to work in the best possible conditions. Nevertheless, technology cannot replace direct human contacts and we are sure that all our colleagues who are confronted with this difficulty when teaching online will share our feeling; conviviality and live dialogue are main components of academic tradition. Consequently, the quality of this peer external evaluation may lack something.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Area studies* 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	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and publicity	5
	Total:	<b>30</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 (exceptional) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

*Area studies* study field and **second cycle** at Vilnius University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Evaluation Area</b>	<b>Evaluation of an area in points*</b>
1.	Study aims, outcomes and content	3
2.	Links between science (art) and study activities	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Studying, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and publicity	5
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</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 (exceptional) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

## III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

### 3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

*Study programmes' 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*

AS and MAS programs are the only such multidisciplinary programmes of Asia region at VU. Graduates of these programmes acquire many valuable competencies needed in the international world with the growing economic and cultural power of Asia, as well as general competencies such as critical thinking, time management, working independently and in groups. The needs of the labour market are mostly evaluated by the reports from internship organisations. The most common areas of employment are: teaching Asian languages, consultancy service in Asian languages, translation, tourism, business.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

These programs are of course needed in Lithuania's international context, but even if the most common areas of recruitment are evaluated accurately, the content of the programme has not been adapted to help students to meet the requirements of the labour market. Of course, the main aim of VU is to give a broad education, not a narrow specialization like in a college, but it might be considered that the greatest flaw of this AS program is not providing any courses (even introductory) on the main sectors of possible employment.

*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*

Study programs are synchronised quite well with the mission, objectives and strategies of VU, fulfilling the main aims. Strong emphasis is made on internalization which is really a strong point of the AS and MAS programmes.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There should be no doubt that all the main objectives and aims are being met, nevertheless the research conducted at National state and international level should be more and more expanded. Academic staff should be more active in research and the students should be encouraged to pursue academic research, enter third cycle studies, participating in conferences etc. Of course, state funding for universities (teacher's salaries etc) also has to be taken into consideration.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The scope of the Bachelor programme is 240 ECTS (60 ECTS by year). Credits allocated to the study field subject are 225 and credits allocated to general university courses are 15. Credits



for internship are 15; credits for final thesis are 15. The proportion of contact hours is around 35-36 %. 1 ECTS corresponds to 26 h student workload. The organisation of courses is based on modules and each module is a multiple of 5 credits.

The scope of Master programme is 120 ECTS (=2 years); the credits for final thesis are 30; 1 ECTS corresponds to 26,5 h student workload; the proportion of contact hours is 17,64 %

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

All legal requirements are observed and the programmes fit the main standards of the Bologna process. ECTS are allocated in a correct way with a good estimation of student workload. The four specialities of the BA programme are not exactly treated in the same way: 1 ECTS = 27,1 h for the Middle Eastern studies, Japanese studies 1 ECTS= 26,5 h, while for the 2 other programmes 1 ECTS = 26h. This discrepancy should be reduced.

It is interesting that for MA students all subjects are compulsory. During the visit, this issue has been discussed with the teaching staff who gave convincing answers.

#### *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 study aims and intended outcomes are listed in a very precise way, so there is no doubt that in such a broad programme, multiple teaching learning techniques are applied and most of the intended outcomes should be successfully met. 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.

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

The two study programmes are coherent and consistent, and good attention is paid to interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. According to the recommendation of the last EER, the learning outcomes of the Master programme have been reviewed and clarified, and it is now possible to ascertain that these learning outcomes can be achieved.

As MAS students have no language acquisition module, it is difficult to make a research in primary sources. Even if the students are offered a language course, their level is not enough for research. On the other hand, students who continue their studies from AS to MAS have a "bonus" and their conducted research could be more precise and thorough.

As far as the Master programme serves as a lifelong learning opportunity for the wider public, it is understandable that it is broadening the knowledge rather than deepening it. However, according to the Dublin indicators, second cycle programmes have to develop research skills in the specialty and prepare students for doctoral studies. It should be recommended to find a compromise between the two alternatives.

#### *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 AS programme has a modular and unified structure, but the Middle Eastern specialisation has a slightly different arrangement of compulsory (less numerous) and elective (more numerous) courses. In all the four specialities, the courses are divided into four well identified clusters. Since most of the academic literature is in English, C1 level is aimed at for the English language. Studies of the language of the area, starts from the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. From the second

year, the programme gradually introduces disciplinary modules. During the two last years, more area specific modules were proposed. The last semester is dedicated to professional internship and the writing of the final thesis.

The Master programme is arranged into two clusters: the first deals with methodology of a particular interdisciplinary formation. The second is concerned with modern Asia related subjects. Recent modifications have reinforced the links with social sciences. The main objective is to prepare students for independent research.

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

The integration of the Middle Eastern Studies and the Indian Studies specialisation in the one AS programme has been a success in spite of predictable difficulties. The whole programme is now coherent and sustainable. It is a rare privilege to teach Hindi and Sanskrit, and it is important that the University gives support to maintain this specialist but noble capability.

The master's programme should pay more attention to the employability of the graduates, and professional internships should be, if not compulsory, at least possible. Due to the importance of language in ethno-cultural studies, students should be given the possibility in their curriculum to deepen and develop their language skills according to their needs. The attention paid to interdisciplinarity and social sciences (sociology and cultural anthropology) is a good choice, but it should not be done at the expense of learning languages.

Both in BA and MA programmes more courses should be done in the foreign language of the specialisation, giving more room to native speakers.

### *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*

Students have several possibilities to personalize their studies: GUS, elective courses, non-credit language courses, Erasmus+ programme, minor studies etc. The number of elective courses varies according to their specialization. There is a procedure for recognising competencies acquired through informal and non-formal education.

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

It should be recommended that applicants can seek help from a tutor; but possibility is not provided in the SER. The personalisation should take into consideration different categories of students whose learning needs are not always the same: disabled students, part-time students who are likely to constitute a major part of the cohorts, students who have already a diploma and look for additional qualifications, students who want to enrol joint honours study programmes.

In the study plan (Appendix 2), there is a certain number of modules among the list of elective modules which are offered to all four specializations. The choice of topics is imbalanced for these. For example, there are a lot of courses in the Middle East and very few in China/Japan.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Each thesis is reviewed by one appointed peer reviewer. The Commission of Graduation Thesis Defence is headed by a scholar from another academic or research institution. Methodological guidelines are available online to help students. The learning outcomes of the

final thesis are clearly defined and a “final thesis module” provides the students with the criteria of assessment.

Most of the students show good results in defending their final theses. The study interests of the students vary widely, there are a lot of different themes, not only on the historical perspective, but also on contemporary issues.

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

The high quality of the thesis reflects the general quality of the study programmes and high qualification of the teachers. More attention should be paid to the monitoring of the students' progress in their works. The digital guidelines may be not sufficient. More information should be provided about supervisors, how students choose the subject of the thesis, how they receive guidance throughout their semester. It also seems that social partners are not very involved in the process.

#### ***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. More courses should be done in the language of specialisation, especially in the Master programme.*
- 2. The masters' programmes should provide a possibility of an internship for students who are not currently in the labour market.*
- 3. The masters' programme should make it possible for students to acquire or to develop language skills, according to their needs. Optional language courses, given by visiting professors or native speakers, should be introduced.*
- 4. Social partners and stakeholders should be more involved with the study programme committee; they could be invited to participate to the defence of 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*

Circumstances for such a multi- and interdisciplinary field as Asian Studies are not favourable in the current Lithuanian classification of the study fields. With all the disciplinary limitations and challenges, it therefore has to mature under the label of “ethnology”. The ambitious endeavour to broaden the understanding of ethnology results in offering an impressive scope of research themes and activities related to the study field.

Activities related to international outreach and visibility are evident and they have resulted in a great increase in the annual evaluation of the bibliometric attainment in research. This development is a result of hiring foreign staff, which seems to have spilled over into increasing ambitions of the local academic staff to seek various national and international research grants.

The institute has developed an Action Plan and it is used as a framework to conduct annual assessment interviews and other administrative meetings with the academic staff to direct their research activities.

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

The effort made towards increasing international visibility through targeted hiring of staff and attracting international scholars is recommendable as best practice to maintain the high quality of the programme and ensure its sustainability in the long term.

The Action Plan of the Institute is the right instrument to integrate and negotiate the desired administrative outcomes for research and teaching activities. It should be maintained and further developed as a way to create an academic culture based on the foundations of internationally visible research, research-based teaching and suitable administrative support.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The academic staff in both BA and MA programmes in Asian Studies is involved in various collaborative research activities, including academic publications and outreach with reputable international partners. Explicit individual and institutional links with the latest developments in social science, art and technology exist.

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

The existing individual and institutional links with the latest developments within the study field guarantee a sustainable research development strategy. They allow for a creative interpretation and expansion of the disciplinary limits of ethnology within which Asian Studies is categorised. It might be worth considering making a more substantial institutional effort to influence this categorisation by lobbying for an official recognition of elements of cultural studies, anthropology, political science, sociology and psychology as components of Asian Studies.

It would be advisable to initiate a greater degree of consultation with external stakeholders, so that their expectations and suggestions could be used to improve the study contents.

### *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*

Good conditions for students to get involved in activities consistent with their studies seem to exist. In this regard, Professor Victor de Munck's pivotal role must not be underestimated as he is able to integrate students from several disciplines and demonstrate world-class research practice.

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

While the number of students involved in research promotion events is increasing, students should be given incentives for participation in research activities, engaging them in short-term and longer-term research internships and implementation of research projects. The potential for research at international level can be increased by nurturing collaborative research patterns, possibly linking younger aspiring academics with their more internationally established and recognised colleagues, for example, through a mentorship scheme.

### ***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. Ensure a more sustainable involvement of external stakeholders from state administration and the private sector*
- 2. Empower external stakeholders to participate as consultants in the construction of the study programmes – for example through institutionalisation of a stakeholder council or a similar advisory body.*
- 3. Make greater use of the ties to the world of politics and diplomacy in the capital city. Be ready to offer region-specific and independent academic expertise in a Think Tank fashion, including calling on the assistance of students in preparing the offer.*
- 4. Identify and list the interests of the external stakeholders from the world of business and politics and use them as opportunities for contracting academic work and independent expert knowledge with state agencies and private business.*
- 5. Provide more visibility of the academic output and research production by stimulating a greater number of deliveries of BA- and MA-theses in foreign languages, particularly in English. Develop incentives also to encourage people to publish state-of-the-art research works in the target languages of the studies where possible, by offering translation support.*

### **3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT**

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

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

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

The admissions requirements for both first and second cycle degrees are clear and well outlined. It is noteworthy that the degrees have a stable intake, indicating a sustained interest in the field. Necessarily, the MAS programmes are smaller, but still show a steady intake.

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

Apart from noting that in the report, it has not been spelled out how students from disadvantaged backgrounds would be dealt with, for example, first-generation university students that often require further assistance in easing themselves into life at a university, even if they came with the correct qualifications, the report should be commended for its clarity in admissions criteria.

*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 taken into account.

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

Due diligence is done, and the practice is in line with the rest of Europe, which enables fair access to the HEI. However, it is noteworthy that the language barrier indeed may prevent foreign students from international mobility into Lithuania.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Students partake in Erasmus + and ARQUS arrangements and also have the possibility to study abroad for a year or a semester, in relation to their degree of choice. It is understandable that mobility was curtailed due to Covid-19. The uptake in previous years has been stable. Students can also draw on scholarships and the information is well publicised, accounting for the stable uptake.

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

The conditions for academic mobility are well thought through and rigorous support systems are in place. Students are well informed and adequate information is available without much effort. The university is thus well set up to ensure 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*

All students on the relevant programmes receive support through the university, and this report relates to mental wellbeing, careers, financial, spiritual and leisure as well as accommodation. It is provided holistically to students in need and the uptake across the university seems good. In addition, students have an academic advisor. Although the university has a mentorship programme, Asian Studies does not yet participate.

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

While student advice and support are good, the document is written solely from the institutional perspective and the student voice is lacking. For example, evidence of regular module and programme evaluation may help closing important feedback loops, and it is not clear whether, if at all, this information is collated. It would be very useful to know to what extent they feel the services provided are useful and helpful, particularly with respect to the following questions: How do they feel about the experience at VU in these particular programmes? How are learning communities forged, do they feel a relationship with their peers and in the department? The uptake of the mentorship from the AS students seems low, have reasons for this been explored? Students are very vocal, but hinted at a lack of communication and explanation from the Faculty regarding some of the decisions that impacted directly on their course of studies.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Students attend the welcome week induction training and are then passed on to centralized services. The academic unit deals with timetabling and curriculum related issues. Students have access to their own data through the centralized system and can communicate with the university effectively.

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

The available services and division of labour is good, but it is not clear how students feel about the available services and whether or not feedback is regularly collected. It is also not clear whether this split between local and central services is clear to the students.

### ***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. As it looks like students might be sent from pillar to post, a formal system of academic support should be provided.*
- 2. Very often, there is a barrier to accessing university counselling service, particularly if one is from a disadvantaged background and it has not been spelled out how students would be kept in the degree. There is equally no data about drop-out rates. The next SER should pay more attention to that.*
- 3. Asian languages (all of those) tend to be difficult to learn and require a huge personal commitment. Students should receive more support.*
- 4. The feedback loop between students and the staff needs closing.*
- 5. Academic mobility also increases in importance across the world. If the degree, however, promotes intercultural communication, and a time spent abroad is not an integral part of the programme, how is this learning outcome being met? Regarding the English language level C1 module, how do students reach this level if they have not been on a year abroad? As listed among the general recommendations, students unable to go abroad may need special support in order for them to be able to catch up.*
- 6. In sum, the document is a summary of available services, which are very good, but could have looked more closely at why certain problems seem to be recurring. A stronger reference to the experience of the students is needed. The section could also benefit from a clearer, and more visible split between first and second cycle students.*

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

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

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

### *(1) Factual situation*

The university states that they use a student-centred teaching model which should not only educate students on particular study programmes, but prepare them to live as an independent learner who is mindful and tolerant of others as well as creative etc. In the AS program, a vast variety of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods are being used. In the MAS, teaching and learning processes are more concentrated on general competencies as well as developing the methodological skills of the students. It is mentioned that the balance of contact hours and independent workload is very good for achieving the study results. There are some initiatives to foster the motivation of the students, such as expeditions, summer schools, camps in study regions as well as the internationalisation of the programmes by teaching some of the modules in English. Cumulative and formative assessment is mostly used in both programmes.

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

Student-centred learning and teaching is a very good method, but it has to be monitored very carefully. Students have to be taught how to manage their own time to be able to fulfil the requirements. Most of the approaches in teaching and learning still value the relationship between the teacher and the students, which discourages the students' creativity when applying their skills in circumstances other than university environment. Fostering the motivation and interest of the students is a very valuable practice, usually leading to best possible study results, new ideas, and even the students' engagement in pursuing further academic goals.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Theoretically, the programmes are designed to take on students from socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. However, there were no such students enrolled in AS and MAS programs.

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

The only problem noticed is that the Asian reading room in the old University library building is at the highest point of the entire university which unfortunately cannot be accessed by wheelchair users, but during the visit, the representatives of the library assured that books from the Asian room could be easily delivered to wheelchair user who have ordered them.

### *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 university monitors students at three levels: at module level, cohort level and programme of study level. In the module, usually the cumulative assessment is set after the feedback of the teacher is given for the completed tasks, emphasizing the progress made by the students. The monitoring of the student cohort is done to assess certain tendencies of their evaluations, so as to ensure fairness, appropriateness of the level in order to avoid drop-outs. The study programme is monitored to include internships and the results of the final thesis to improve processes in the programme, as well as identifying, and solving, the main problems students face when pursuing their study plans.

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

The three-level monitoring system is very good to be able to investigate some of the tendencies and problems. As the first and second level evaluations have more impact on the students' self-evaluation and study progress, the third level is more likely to prevent problems for future students.

### *3.4.4. Evaluation of the feedback provided to students in the course of the studies to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress.*

#### *(1) Factual situation*



Students of both AS and MAS programs are offered feedback from the teachers in groups as well as individually in written or oral form throughout the year of study and after their final assessments. Moreover, students are also invited to evaluate teachers' work by filling in automatically generated evaluation forms. At the time of the visit, we have discovered that data received from these questionnaires is not very valuable because students fill them without a proper understanding of the usefulness of the exercise. Moreover, students do not seem to receive the results of the evaluation, so they feel that these automatic questionnaires are even more meaningless.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The Students do not seem to be eager to receive personal feedback. It is important to analyse this situation closer to understand the reasons for this. Feedback and constant monitoring of progress are very important, especially when more than 60% of the learning time is dedicated to self-study time (especially in language learning). The practice of student evaluation of modules is a very good practice, but there are not many possibilities to change teachers (because of the lack of teachers), the goals of this exercise are not achieved, and this may lead to a decrease of student motivation. The importance of filling the questionnaires correctly, as well as the relevance of the collected data should be stressed to the students. Moreover, students should always get the final data of the questionnaires.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The three main sectors where AS students do their internship are education, tourism and culture organizations. It is mentioned that the labour market tendencies are evaluated upon the reports of the internship organisations. The employment rates are calculated according to the surveys graduates fill in after one, three and five years after their graduation. Data from various state institutions are collected, and an internal evaluation was carried out before preparing the SER, but they are waiting for more detailed information of the results of this survey. It is stated that more than 50% of AS and MAS graduates are employed after their first year of graduation and the numbers are increasing every year. Still, there is no data about students who are considered to be employed within their specialised field.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

It should be noted that evaluating possible sectors of employment according to the internship organisations might give a wrong impression, because not all of these organisations offer vacancies for graduates. In a field as specific as Asian Studies, more granular data on graduate employment should be collected. For example, including whether graduates are employed within the framework of their field of study, or working in the country they chose to specialise in and the main sectors of employment for these, among others. Such surveys might be done in closer communication with the Alumni of the programme. Collecting such data would also be valuable for students to understand their opportunities and possibilities after they graduate.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

A variety of measures is taken into consideration on an institutional and university-wide level to prevent academic misconduct in the examinations and when submitting essays. VU has an electronic plagiarism identification system for final theses and essays that enables the verification of potential plagiarism with papers stored in the database. An anonymous hotline to report any violations of academic ethics also exists.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

I see no problems on this topic except the possibility for a personalised like/dislike-level evaluations which should be solved on a case by case basis. The Anonymous hotline is a very up-to-date solution.

*3.4.7. 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 procedure for lodging appeals is determined by the university. There were no cases of submitted appeals.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

No problems identified

***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. Introduce additional teaching methods which are outside of the student – teacher relationship (for example, presentations at schools, participation in events and conferences) to give more responsibility to the students which may result for higher motivation.*
- 2. Analyse the reasons for the students' reluctance to receive personal feedback from the teachers and ensure timely monitoring of the results of the students' individual work.*
- 3. Give more attention to automatically generated questionnaires at the end of each module, stressing its importance to the students as well as providing them with the evaluation data.*
- 4. Collect more specific data on graduate employment to give more detailed information on practical implementation of the students' knowledge and skills. Integrate some courses on the main employment areas in the programme to foster the employability of the students.*

### **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

*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*

26 permanent teachers and 17 lecturers are involved in the bachelor programme; 10 permanent teachers and 17 lecturers are involved in the Masters' programme; one teacher is involved only in the Master programme. The staff-student ratio is around 1:5 for 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programme and 1:0,6 for 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle programme. Practitioners are also invited.

All academic positions are represented: professors 7%; associate professors 18,5%; assistants 21%; Junior assistants 14%; lecturers 39,5%. The median age is 50 years. Half male/half female.

All the teaching staff has a level of B2 in English or in another foreign language. The teaching staff is involved in four international research projects and one national project. There are four collaborative research projects and 10 joint academic publications.

1<sup>st</sup> cycle studies: 60% of all teaching staff have a PhD (26 are researchers).

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle studies: no less than 80 % of all study subjects' teachers have a PhD. No less than 20% of major study field subjects 'volume is taught by professors or associate professors.

## *(2) Expert judgement*

The teaching-research staff meets all the legal requirements and VU study programme regulations.

The teaching staff is diverse, but the median age is a bit too high and there is an urgent need to recruit young colleagues. From this point of view, the SER does not give enough information about PhD students involved in the study programme and the possibilities of their recruitment.

The staff-student ratio is good, especially for Masters' studies. The number of teachers has increased during the period from 37 to 43 and the number of full professors, now 3, has tripled, which is very positive.

Another positive point is the strong link between research and teaching activities; most teachers are researchers of the IATS; therefore, the research activities of the teachers fit their courses and guarantee an up-to-date knowledge in the study field. All members of the teaching staff are active researchers, as is shown by the list of publications, but the number of papers published in international journals of high impact could be improved.

It seems that the high academic potential is not always fully exploited; for example, the teacher of Sanskrit, a very rare and precious field of study, is not involved in the Masters' programmes. There is a risk that this subject disappears in Lithuania.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

57 foreign lecturers have delivered lectures during the period; half of them come from Asian countries, 38% from European countries and 11% from the USA/Canada. During the same period, two long term visiting researchers have been hosted by the IATS and they have been involved in research and pedagogical activities. Each year, 22 teachers have made teaching or learning visits abroad and to other institutions in Lithuania. Teaching staff can take advantage of 20 Erasmus+ agreements (among which there are 7 with Turkish institutions), Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility with universities in Jordan and Palestine, bilateral agreements with China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, participation in the European University Alliance ARQUS activities, and with the 38 universities belonging to the Coimbra Group.

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

It is not easy to appreciate this point because the SER does not devote a specific chapter to this issue. Data is available, thanks to some tables, but they are spread throughout the. To enable a better analysis of this aspect, it would have been beneficial to present separately the

situation for each specialisation of the Bachelor programme and for the Master programme separately, and to distinguish between outgoing and incoming mobility.

Nevertheless, the situation overall appears quite satisfying. The staff has taken into consideration one of the previous recommendations by inviting two long-term visiting researchers. The percentage of teachers' mobility is good, at around 50 % which is greatly above the expected rate. Nevertheless, it may be pointed out that the many possibilities offered for outgoing mobility are not fully exploited and there is therefore room for improvement.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The appointment of the teachers is based on an open recruitment, which allows the Faculty to recruit the best people, taking into consideration all the criteria (research activities, commitment in administrative tasks, linguistic competence, international mobility, pedagogical competencies etc.). Every five years, all the teachers are evaluated according to the same criteria. It is thus possible to measure their progress. Permanent contracts are given only if teachers meet the performance criteria.

Seminars to develop teaching competence are organised by the central administration (in 2019, there were 16 different training programmes); during the period, 7 academics could attend these seminars and give feedback to their colleagues. This number is rather low (=16%).

The Erasmus + programme, the North Plus programme and different foreign grants for research allow teachers to make teaching and/or learning visits abroad. Some of them can also improve their qualifications by attending lectures given by visiting scholars and guest professors. During the period, around 50% of the teaching staff could move abroad which represents a relatively high rate.

#### *(2) Expert judgement*

The teaching staff is highly qualified, especially because most of them belong to a research centre (IATS) that is a component of the Faculty. The process of appointment and promotion of the teaching staff is strict and rigorous which guarantees that best people are recruited or promoted. The different programmes of mobility and the training sessions organised by the central administration offer teachers and researchers the possibility to improve both their research and pedagogical competence. The high international focus demanded by Area Studies offers a good potential for quality assurance.

#### ***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. Outgoing mobility towards Asian countries should be improved through incentive aids.*
- 2. The rotation of the teaching staff should be increased, and more attention should be paid to the integration of the PhD students into the teaching staff. It is important that the teaching staff gets younger.*
- 3. The teaching workload should be reduced, without loss of pay, to give more time for research activities. This issue should be tackled and negotiated with the Rector of the University.*

### 3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The premises at the Confucius Institute are mainly used for the delivery of Chinese Studies modules, General University Subjects and modules which require large seating capacity. Tables 21 and 22 in the SER provide the characteristics of the learning premises used for the delivery of the programme (e.g. number of sitting places, area available and equipment). Students of the AS and MAS programmes make use of the VU central library (CL) and the Oriental Studies Reading Room (OSRR), the Alfred Binder Reading Room (ABRR) and the Reading Room of Philosophy (RRP), all located on the Main Campus of VU. The number of workplaces is 339, and the area available encompasses more than 400m<sup>2</sup>. The CL is open from 9:00 to 21:00, Monday to Friday and 9:00 to 18:00 on Saturdays, it is closed on Sundays and offers 514 work places. Students of Vilnius University can also make use of the Scholarly Communication and Information Centre (SCIC) (Sauletekis av. 5) which houses reading rooms, study cubicles and work lounges, altogether 834 workplaces, and it is open 24/7. 322 workplaces in the libraries and reading rooms are equipped with personal computers (CL - 72, SCIC - 199, reading rooms of the faculties - 51). Because of the specific historical and heritage status of the University, there is no possibility to adapt all the rooms for people with special needs, but the faculty provides specialized technology aimed at people with special needs.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The seating areas are sufficient to host to all the students. The number of working places and the working hours of the libraries fully satisfies the students' needs. In spite of the difficulties due to the location of the buildings in the historical city centre, the Faculty ensures spaces for persons with disabilities. The processes regarding physical space and information resources for persons with special needs are constantly updated. Some old rooms need to be renovated.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

Teachers can easily suggest and order books. Once a year, academic staff provides the administration with a list of essential books and other publications required for the AS and MAS study programmes and for the library. Students can ask to buy books through their professors.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

According to the students, it can occasionally be difficult to find resources related to their study field and the topic of their final thesis, by themselves, but the supervisor is usually happy to help. Thanks to the Confucius Institute and some private donations, newspapers and sources in the original language are available.

### ***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. Renovate teaching rooms which are used for AS and MAS programmes as well as the IATS administration Office.*
- 2. Increase the number of specialised academic books and papers in the library. The Faculty administration should ensure allocation of financial resources for the acquisition of books and other academic publications in original languages.*

### **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 Study programme committees report to faculty councils, and they have to report on the implementation of the programmes at least once a year. Changes to study programmes are considered by the SPC, and if the changes are substantial, they are considered and approved by the CAU council.

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

VU Study programme committees are effective and very efficient. They benefit from a long experience which is enriched by periodic surveys.

##### *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 needed to carry out the field studies.*

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

The study programme committee analyses the academic unit, student, graduate, teaching staff and social partner feedback about the programmes and its implementation and discusses how to improve the programme and solve problems relevant to students with the aforementioned parties.

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

All members of the VU Study programme committee play an equally important part in the committee and they are working in a very effective way.

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

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

Twice per study year (at the end of each semester), VU conducts a centralised survey of first- and second-cycle students (surveys are done using the VU online survey system, which is integrated into VUSIS):

- 1) Surveys regarding specific subjects studied during the semester

This survey is carried out using the recommended university subject questionnaires. After accessing the VUSIS section "Surveys":

- the students can leave anonymous feedback about studies, including specific subjects;
- teaching staff can see direct data about student feedback on their subjects;
- the head of the study programme committee can see all student feedback about the subjects of the study programme;
- the faculty administration can directly see all student feedback about the subjects of all CAU's study programmes.

2) Survey regarding general satisfaction with studies in a given semester

Detailed survey results about CAU and the study programmes are published in the "Feedback" section of VU internal website (intranet).

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

The systematic centralised surveys of first- and second-cycle students, with a large dissemination of the results to all the stakeholders is a good practice which fully responds to the recommendations of *the Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA*. However, during the visit, some students confessed that they filled the questionnaire "as quickly as they can" and consequently the provided information is not always correct.

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

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

The data of centralised student surveys are analysed by the operators of the study programmes to improve the programme or its subjects (modules):

- by the SPC or the CAU administration for continuous quality assurance and improvement;
- to prepare self-evaluation reports for external evaluations;
- when conducting an analysis of planned study programmes;
- by the evaluation commission during teaching staff evaluation;
- for the improvement of other faculty and University activities.

The data from the centralised surveys about AS and MAS programmes are analysed from 2017–2018 Autumn semester until 2019–2020 Spring semester. Students had to rate their satisfaction with the content of study modules, quality of teaching and general satisfaction with studies at Vilnius University, from 1 to 5. Students were also asked to evaluate whether they would recommend their study programme to their friends or relatives.

As for the AS programme, the majority of students are satisfied with the content (38,7 % rated 5/5 and 41,6 % rated 4/5) and the teaching quality (32,5 % rated 5/5 and 45,4 % rated 4/5). When they evaluate their general satisfaction with the studies at VU, 46,2% of students are completely satisfied, while 30,9% rated their satisfaction 4/5. 78,9 % of first-cycle students would recommend the AS programme to their relatives or friends. As for the MAS programme students, they are mostly satisfied with the study content (29,3 % rated 5/5, 41,7 % rated 4/5), teaching quality (28,5 % rated 5/5, 38,7 % rated 4/5) and they evaluated the studies in VU more positive than negative (38,8 % rated 5/5, 27,7 % rated 4/5). 64,7 % of second-cycle students would recommend the MAS programme to their relatives or friends. Additionally, the students were surveyed separately for the completion of the SER during the period of July 5th until August 10th 2020. The survey was disseminated amongst BA and MA students – including those who graduated in July 2020. The survey consisted of 20 open-ended questions regarding the study workload, the evaluation system, the quality of feedback, the logic and structure of the study programme, the programme's flexibility, teaching methods, academic

integrity, e-learning platforms and professional competencies. As is evident from the analysis of student surveys presented in this part of the SER, students give positive feedback regarding SPC activities and problem-solving strategies, ensuring the quality of the study programmes.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

During the visit, all the students said they were fully satisfied, which can be checked also through the periodic students' surveys. There is no discrepancy between the very complete information given in the SER and the general feeling from the visit.

***Recommendations for this evaluation area:***

- 1. The only recommendation is to carry on in this excellent way. The process to enhance quality at programme level is directly inspired by the Tuning dynamic quality development circle.*

## **IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE**

The study programmes are managed directly by the Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies which creates an optimal connection between academic and study activities. The research activities of the teachers fit their courses and all the specialisations can be regrouped inside the same study programme in which the content is very consistent and of high quality.

The expert team was very impressed by the excellent relationships between teachers and students and the close collaboration among the teaching staff; the family-like atmosphere within the IATS creates a very good environment, the main consequence of which is the high rate of employability. All the graduate students who choose not to enrol in MA programmes (about 80%) easily find employment, often in areas not directly connected with the subject field.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS\***

1. Master programme should pay more attention to foreign language acquisition giving possibilities to students to acquire or develop language skills according to their needs. Optional language courses, given by visiting professors or native speakers, should be introduced.
2. Consider the possibility of introducing an optional internship for Master's student not currently in the labour market. (i.e. direct graduates from a BA programme)
3. Both student and teaching staff mobility towards Asian regions should be improved.
4. Teaching workload should be reduced without loss of pay so that teachers could have more time dedicated to research activities, especially for young teachers who need more academic outcomes to advance in their academic career.



5. Strengthen bonds with social partners also with the aim to enable partners to commission research from students.
6. Review the allocation of credits across modules, taking into consideration student feedback and workload. As a general rule the same number of credits should be awarded for the same workload.

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

## VI. SUMMARY

The evaluation team has been pleased to note that there was no discrepancy between the data provided in the SER and the information collected during the visit. Asian Studies moved from philology to philosophy one year ago, and it is clear that this strategic choice which privileges a social science approach, fits better onto the needs of the labour market. Otherwise, the evaluation team has been impressed by the high language attainment of the graduates. Nevertheless, in terms of priority at the level of the Faculty and University, Asian Studies seem rather hidden and need more visibility. Therefore, a close collaboration with departments or faculties recognising the Asian regions as a priority is recommended. Otherwise, the two study programmes meet all the requirements of levels V and VI of both Lithuanian Qualification Framework and European Qualification framework.

1. The study programme committee within the Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies is responsible for the quality of the programme; the immediate and natural connection between teachers and researchers guarantees an excellent academic environment, but it would be profitable to strengthen ties with social partners.

Especially impressive in terms of curricular design is the varied nature of the skills and competencies addressed, and the range of forms of assessment used to test these. Particular strengths include the scope that the degree provides for fieldwork and professional practice in a variety of areas chosen by the students themselves. So, the two study programmes are coherent and consistent, and good attention is paid to interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. According to the recommendation of the last EER, the learning outcomes of the MA programme have been reviewed and clarified, and it is now possible to check that these learning outcomes can be achieved.

The MA programme is open to the wider public, because there are no prerequisites regarding previous Asian studies, which indicates a need in the population, and the programme serves as a lifelong learning opportunity for the public. Therefore, it is understandable that it is considered to be widening rather than deepening. However, according to the Dublin indicators, second cycle programmes have to develop research skills in their study field and prepare students for doctoral studies. It is recommended to find a compromise between the two alternatives. First of all, the expert team recommends that possibilities are given to students to acquire or develop language skills according to their needs; optional language courses, given by visiting professors or native speakers, should be introduced.

2. There is a real effort to increase international visibility which is the best way to maintain the high quality of the programme and ensure its long-term sustainability. The Action Plan of the Institute is the right instrument to integrate and negotiate the desired administrative outcomes with research and teaching activities. The existing individual and institutional links with the latest developments within the study field guarantee a sustainable development strategy. They allow for a creative interpretation and expansion of the disciplinary limits of ethnology within which Asian Studies is categorised. There are good conditions for students to get involved in activities consistent with their studies, but it is necessary to provide incentives for student participation in research activities, engaging them in short-term and longer-term research internships and implementation of research projects. The IAST should provide more visibility of the academic output and research by stimulating a greater number of deliveries of BA- and MA-theses in foreign languages, particularly in English. It should be also advisable to initiate a greater degree of consultation with external stakeholders, so that their expectations and suggestions could be used to improve the content of the study and

research programmes. For example, it might make greater use of the ties to the world of politics and diplomacy in the capital city.

3. There are three very positive points: admissions criteria are clear for both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle programmes, the student mobility is good (students are well informed and adequate information is available without much effort.), and there is an efficient and consistent academic support system. The procedure of recognition is in line with the rest of Europe, which enables fair access to the HEI. However, a stronger reference to the experience of the students is needed and for this the feedback loop between students and the staff needs closing. In fact, if students meet some difficulty during their curriculum, it is not sure that they can find easily a support from the Faculty or University counselling service. Students unable to go abroad may need special support in order for them to be able to catch up.

4. The teaching/learning approach is student-centred and a vast variety of teaching learning methods is used as well as a lot of different ways to assess students' progress and skills. However, most of the teaching and learning methods still depends on the student/teacher relationships which can hinder students' creativity when applying their skills in circumstances other than a university environment. The three-level monitoring system is very good to be able to investigate some tendencies and occurring problems, but it may also be recommended to collect more specific data on graduate employment, giving the students more information on the practical implementation of their knowledge. Courses on the main employment areas should be integrated in the programme to foster student's employability. During the visit, it appeared that students were not eager to receive personal feedback; it would be important to analyse this situation closer so as to understand the reasons for this.

5. The teaching staff is highly qualified, and a majority is involved in research projects, both at the national and international level. It is notable that staff workload is rather high. Consequently, the qualification of the teaching staff is more than sufficient to ensure the intended learning outcomes of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle study programmes. The presence of a colleague able to teach Sanskrit (apparently the only one in Lithuania), as well as a famous American professor among the staff, show a high academic potential and a wide range of disciplines and areas that covers all the fields within Asian Studies. The research activities of the teachers fit well with their courses and guarantee up-to-date knowledge of the study field. The attractiveness of the academic environment offered by the IATS may be appreciated by the presence of eight PhD students who could be more integrated in the teaching activities. It could also be a way to increase the rotation of the staff. The devotion of the teachers, their passion for teaching their subject, and their involvement not only in academic activities but also in a wide range of cultural events explain the high degree of motivation and satisfaction of the students. Because the number of teachers has increased (16%) during the period, the staff-student ratio is good, especially for Masters' studies. Nevertheless, two aspects linked to internationalisation could be improved: first, staff mobility. It is true that the relatively low number of outgoing staff is well balanced by the high number of visiting professors from foreign universities, which shows that the IATS is very attractive. Secondly, because most of the papers are written in Lithuanian and published in Lithuania, the number of publications in

international peer-reviewed journals does not reflect the high academic level of the academics.

6. Owing to a straightforward collaboration with the Confucius Institute in Vilnius, students have more working spaces and are able to find material in original languages. In spite of the difficulties due to the location of the buildings in the historical city centre, the administration does its best to care for people with disabilities and makes use of modern technologies to respond to their needs. There is no doubt that the academic environment, the quantity and quality of the premises available for students, the arrangement for students' practice, the teaching and learning materials, and the modern digital equipment permit students to implement the curriculum in optimal conditions. The central administration has to carry its efforts to renovate old rooms and update the equipment.

7. There is a good balance between the different actors involved in the process of quality assurance. All the recommendations of previous evaluation have been taken into consideration. The study programme committees are effective and very efficient because they benefit from a long experience which is enriched by periodic surveys, for which the results are widely disseminated. The management of study quality is based on the Bologna standards as defined in the Guidelines for Quality assurance in the EHEA. The quality enhancement at programme level is directly inspired by the Tuning approach that may be considered as "the" reference. The only recommendation is to continue on this good path.

**Expert panel signatures:**

1. Prof. dr. Jean – Luc Lamboley (team leader) *academic*,
2. Prof. dr. Kazimierz Musial, *academic*,
3. Dr. Griseldis Kirsch, *academic*,
4. Ms. Gabija Kaunelienė, *representative of social partners'*
5. Ms. Renata Rachmanovaitė, *students' representative*.