



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of MEDICINE**  
at VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

**Expert panel:**

1. **Prof. dr. Józef Kobos (panel chairperson)**, *member of the academic community;*
2. **Prof. dr. Andrea Olschewski**, *member of the academic community;*
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4. **Ms Rasa Zurbaitė**, *representative of social partners;*
5. **Mr Matas Strumila**, *students' representative.*

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Report language – English

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## Study Field Data\*

I-II

Title of the study programme	<b>Medical Biology</b>	<b>Medical Genetics</b>
State code	6211GX014	6211GX015
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 2 years	Full-time studies, 2 years
Credit volume	120	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master's Degree in Health Sciences	Master's Degree in Health Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	n/a	n/a
Registration date of the study programme	16 June 2000	6 October 2011

III

Title of the study programme	<b>Medicine</b>
State code	601A30001
Type of studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Integrated
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 6 years
Credit volume	360
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Health Sciences, Medical Doctor
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	n/a
Registration date of the study programme	19 May 1997

*\* 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 evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 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 (SER) prepared by HEI*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

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

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

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

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

### 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 14 November for the evaluation of Master cycle studies and 17 November for the evaluation of Integrated Medical studies, 2022.

**Prof. dr. Józef Kobos (panel chairperson)**, *Head of the Department of Pathology of the Pediatric Center, at Medical University Lodz, also Head of the Department of Histology and Embriology at Medical University Lodz (Poland)*;

**Prof. dr. Andrea Olschewski**, *Professor of Experimental Anaesthesiology at Medical University of Graz (Austria)*;

**Prof. dr. Berent Prakken**, *Professor of Immunology and Pediatrics at the Utrecht Medical Center of Utrecht University, the Vice Dean of education of Utrecht University and Director of the biomedical education institute of Utrecht Medical Center of Utrecht University (The Netherlands)*;

**Ms. Rasa Zurbaitė**, *General physician at InMedica klinika JSV (Lithuania)*;

**Mr. Matas Strumila**, *Third year student in the Information Technology study programme at Kaunas Technological University (Lithuania)*.

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER 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.	Feedback questionnaire
2.	MF_2021_22 Autumn_Semester survey results
3.	Survey on studies autumn-spring semester
4.	VU_Examples of minits of Study Program Committees meetings

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF MEDICINE FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

Vilnius University is the oldest and largest higher education institution in Lithuania. Its mission is to strengthen the cognitive and creative capabilities of Lithuania and the world, to foster academic and other spiritual and social values, and to educate active and responsible citizens and leaders of society. The University offers undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medical and healthcare, and technological sciences.

The second cycle programmes – Medical Biology and Medical Genetics – aim to prepare specialists for medical laboratory. The number of programmes being carried out is based on a social and labor needs for the specialists who have competences of different levels in the field of medicine (in a broad sense), teaching staff potential, long-time results in research outputs, prospective students' choice, possibilities of material resources. The aims and outcomes are formulated to correspond to the National Medical Standards.

The last external evaluation of the Medical Genetics Program was conducted in 2014 and the Medical Biology Program in 2014. Both were assessed positively and as a result, they were accredited for a period of 6 years. Following the switch from study program to field of study assessment in 2020, medicine studies were considered accredited until the nearest field of study assessment i.e. in 2022.

The integrated Medicine study program of the VU aims to train medical doctors. The aims and outcomes of study program are formulated to correspond to: the Lithuanian qualification levels. The benchmark is the aims and outcomes of other study programs offered in the same field by higher education institutions domestically and internationally, the needs of society and the labour market, the legal framework, scientific innovations and technological progress. The main aim of the ongoing research is to acquire new knowledge in medicine, to find ways to improve public health and to solve problems related to medicine. The Medicine Faculty (MF) academic staff also cooperates with business enterprises and other organizations. Joint research projects are implemented with Lithuanian and foreign business companies.

The last external evaluation of the integrated Medicine was conducted in 2013. The Medicine study program was evaluated for the accreditation of the study program, it was assessed positively and as a result, it was accredited for a period of 6 years in 2014. Following the switch from study program to field of study assessment in 2020, medicine studies were considered accredited until the nearest field of study assessment i.e. in 2022.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Medicine 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.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	25

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

Medicine study field and **integrated** studies 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.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	5
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	27

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

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

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

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

##### ***Second cycle studies***

The major objective of the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics study programmes is to prepare regulated profession specialists Medical Biologist and Medical Geneticist. As stated in the SER (page 4) the demand for both specialists rise in Lithuania. The reason for this is found in several factors. Firstly, the role of laboratory testing is becoming more and more important in the clinical practice. Secondly, the number and complexity of laboratory diagnostic tests is also growing at the same time. Lastly there is a pressing need for specialists who can study this rapidly evolving field. Therefore, it underscores the need for qualified personnel such as Medical Biologists and Medical Geneticists to perform, analyse and learn complex laboratory tests. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania constantly monitors the changing demand for these specialists in laboratory medicine (1.1.1).

The graduates from this second cycle program need to comply with the requirements set up by the National Medical Standards ("Medical Norms") as described in Medical Norm MN 68:2018 Medical Biologist<sup>5</sup> and "Lithuanian Medical Norm MN 156:2018 Medical Geneticist. The SER outlines the professional activity areas of Medical Biologists and Medical Geneticists. The alumni of these second cycle programmes at Vilnius University have multiple career options. Their professional activities range from working in state owned or private personal healthcare institutions to pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries (1.1.2) (see also below).

In conclusion, the programmes intended and achieved learning outcomes meet the requirements described by the "Medical Norms" and are tailored towards the societal and labour market needs of these laboratory specialists.

##### ***Medicine Integrated studies***

The integrated Medicine program at VU is aimed at training medical doctors. Vilnius University Medical Faculty (MF) operates by the University's Statute and the Regulations of VU MF. Study programmes (SPs) for the training of medical doctors are limited to two higher education institutions in the Republic of Lithuania – Vilnius University (FM) and the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU). Based on projections of the current and prospective labour market from the Lithuanian Government's Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA) these two existing SPs are sufficient to meet the needs for medical doctors in Lithuania. "Graduates from the program".

Most graduates from the VU's programme (obviously) apply for a medical doctor licence. With that license, they can work as medical doctors in various clinical settings. The majority of graduates continue in postgraduate programmes, while some choose career paths in science (like a PhD programme) and education. Thus, the integrated Medicine program at VU meet the societal and labour needs for medical doctors in Lithuania.

The aims and outcomes of the integrated Medicine SP in the field correspond to the Lithuanian qualification levels and to the general and specific learning outcomes specified in the description of the Medicine Study Field, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, the skills and knowledge competences specified in the Lithuanian Medical Standard MN7:1995 and MN 7:2022 and in line with the minimum standard set by the European Parliament and of the European Council on the recognition of professional qualifications (see also below). In addition, it meets the minimum standards for training medical doctors, defined by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania.

The 2013 evaluation committee recommended that the Study Programme should include more scientific research and independent work. To follow this recommendation, several steps were made to improve the connection with science. First, organisationally; with, among others of more vice-deans (including a vice dean for education and innovation and a vice dean for studies) were appointed and of a new doctorate school for medicine were launched. Furthermore, funding has been made available for more than 20 PhD's in medicine. This strengthens the scientific climate. Third, publication in international journals is promoted.

The learning outcomes of the Study Program are clear and well defined, and the teaching methodology perfectly fits the intended outcomes. With regard to the latter, there is now more emphasis on the problem based teaching and self-critical learning procedures. Also, structured practical activities in hospitals are organized.

### *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*

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The second cycle programmes of Medical Biology and Medical Genetics in the Medicine field are in line with the mission and goals set in the Strategic Plan of Vilnius University for 2021-2025 and the Statute of Vilnius University. It is also consistent with the fulfilment of the University's mission of encouraging student participation in experimental and theoretical research related to current developments in medical laboratory work analysis. Furthermore, the Medical Faculty has its own mission, vision, values and operational plan for 2019-2021, which was recently revised for 2022–2025. Based on the information provided in the SER and the information provided during the visit the expert panel concludes that the graduates from the second cycle programme are adequately prepared for both the national and the international labour market.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The Medicine integrated programme is in line with the mission and goals outlined in the Strategic plan of Vilnius University for 2021- 2025 year and Vilnius University statute. It is also consistent with the fulfilment of the University's mission of encouraging student participation in experimental and theoretical research related to current developments in medical laboratory work analysis. The Medical Faculty has its own mission, vision, values and operational plan for 2019-2021, which was recently revised for 2022–2025.

The information provided both in the SER and during the visit and the discussion with the alumni leads to the conclusion that the graduates from the Integrated Medicine programme are very well prepared for both the national and the international labour market.

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

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The second cycle and integrated study programmes are performed in compliance within the competence of the “Medical Doctor” specified in the Lithuanian Medical Standard MN7:1995 and MN 7:2022; Descriptor of the Study Field of Medicine approved by Order No. V-797 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 July 2015), Description of Study Cycles (Order No. V-1012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015) and the Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies (Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016); medical biology and medical genetic Descriptor of Groups of Study Fields in Life Sciences (except for the field of Ecology Studies) (Order No. V-495 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport dated 30 March 2021) .

The planned study programme outcomes correspond to qualification level 7. One year of full-time studies in the programme comprises 60 credits. 120 ECTS credits is composed of study field course and 30 credits is dedicated to the final thesis and final examinations. Contact hour in Medicine biology comprises 34,48% and in Medicine genetics 33.83%. The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes. The workload for students is heavy – this is mostly the consequence of the need for students to have a paid job next to their studies. The field of Laboratory Medicine is rapidly changing and developing. This requires the SP a readiness to adapt to new developments. Both in the SER and during the visit ample examples were provided that showed that the SP at VU is able to do this and ensures the alignment of program aims, learning outcomes and curriculum design.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The planned study programme outcomes correspond to qualification level 7. One year of full-time studies in the programme comprises 60 credits. 345 ECTS credits is composed of study field course units (modules) and 15 credits are composed of general University education modules, and 360 ECTS awards a master’s degree. 70s credits are dedicated to the final thesis

and final examinations. Self-study comprises 53.8 % (independent work) hours. The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes.

As mentioned above, the aims and outcomes of study programmes in the Medicine Study field are formulated to correspond to: the Lithuanian qualification levels, which are determined according to the complexity, independence, and mutability of the activity (the study results characteristic for each study cycle as defined in the Descriptor of Study Cycles), and to the general and specific learning outcomes specified in the description of the Medicine Study Field, approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania; knowledge, skills and values that fall within the competence of the “Medical Doctor” specified in the Lithuanian Medical Standard MN7:1995 and MN 7:2022; minimum requirements for the training of doctors established by Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications; and order No ISAK-480/V-210 “On minimum standards for training medical doctors, dental practitioners, nurses that provide general care, midwives and pharmacists of 11 April 2003 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. Based on both the SER and the discussion with the students, staff, and teachers during the visit, the expert panel is convinced that the legal requirements are not only met but also that the current program is already prepared to adapt to new developments in the field of Medicine. This is outlined by the willingness to bring in outside expertise to increase the scientific level of the SP.

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

##### ***Second cycle studies***

The primary learning outcomes of the programme are defined as follows:

The graduates must be able to independently provide laboratory medical genetics services of high quality according to their competencies, have mastered the fundamentals of the aetiology of hereditary diseases, pathogenesis, laboratory genetic diagnostics, know and independently apply contemporary medical genetic investigation methods, know the principles of human genome structure and functions, variability and its consequences, understand the principles of diseases heritability, link and importance of genetic counselling to laboratory genetic tests, know perspectives of molecular biotechnology and bioinformatics.

Scientifically, he/she must understand new technologies and tools and implement them to practice ensuring a safe and effective working environment.

Professionally, the specialist must be able to cooperate with specialists in other healthcare fields, technologies, administration and specialists in other areas such as genetic counselling and paediatrics, obstetrics, clinical oncology, etc. In the curriculum, the main learning outcomes described above are satisfactorily addressed and thus, the program fulfils the formal requirements.

These intended learning outcomes are reflected in the curriculum design throughout the programme and in the teaching methods. Therefore, the teaching methodology is coherent

throughout the program and offers some flexibility for the students. The only (and foremost) problem here is the above-mentioned total workload for the students because of their paid jobs next to the study. Overall, there is constructive alignment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes with the programme content and learning and teaching methodology.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The learning outcomes of the Study Program are clear and well defined, and the teaching methodology fits the intended outcomes. With regard to the latter, there is now more emphasis on the problem based teaching and self-critical learning procedures. Also, structured practical activities in hospitals are organized.

Students feel that their feedback is used to improve teaching and that teachers listen to their suggestions for improvement. Also, attention is being paid to the professional development of teachers. The Vilnius University offers training for academic teachers. This training is now voluntary, but it is expected to become obligatory in the near future. At present, new faculty members join a two days on-boarding program that includes basic educational training. Also, the University is creating a network of educator consultants that are available for advice. This program will be an important step to further improve the quality of the teachers and thus of teaching and the full program. Based on the combination of a clear and well aligned programme with significant student input and willingness to train the and improve the faculty leads to a positive assessment of the expert panel.

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

### ***Second cycle studies***

The programmes are tailored towards the intended study outcomes and are learner (student) centred. Teachers seem to be intrinsically motivated for their role in the programme and explore various ways to support student centred learning. For example, students are welcome to volunteer in labs during the summer period. Though well intended this can have as a negative side effect that it can increase the burden on students. As the students already have a very high workload because they almost all have a day job next to their studies the expert panel believes that this is an important point to (re)consider by the program leadership: is it possible to change this into paid positions, or to make it a part of the study program.

Importantly, the program is in line with the societal demand in Lithuania at this moment. Interestingly and unexpectedly, the COVID pandemic gave a boost to the program as more than ever the significance of the professional figure of an academically schooled lab specialist has become clear. This obviously links to a clear unmet need for society.

A second consequence of the pandemic is an increase of intrinsic motivation and the engagement of the students. Students of this program do not feel anymore that they stand 'in the shadow' of integrated Medicine. The fact that alumni of the program easily find a suitable position underscores that study program fulfils a societal need. The expert panel concludes that

graduates of this program are competent in fulfilling the professional role of a medical biologist/geneticist. The fact that alumni of the program easily find a suitable position underscores that study program fulfils a societal need.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Medicine integrated programme complies with the specific type of University studies and provides students with systematic knowledge and skills based on theoretical training, research-based evidence, critical thinking, problem-based learning and clinical internship. The learning/teaching methods used depend on the content of each course unit (module). For example, for fundamental biomedical courses and during practical classes, all teaching material is provided online (Virtual Learning Environment), practice is based on the problem-solving learning, analysis of clinical situations and pathology test data, modelling of the disease diagnosis and treatment strategy, promoting the clinical reasoning of students, discussion in small groups, ensuring interactivity and student involvement, team-based-learning, and use of the flipped classroom method.

Students having completed the Medicine study programme and acquired subject-specific knowledge and practical skills are ready to work independently as medical doctors, engage in medical practice and/or in research activities as well as to study and train their competencies in medical residency programmes and take an active part in public life.

#### *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*

### ***Second cycle studies***

Several steps are taken to offer students the possibility to personalise their studies. In fact, second cycle students are free to choose subjects from the list of elective subjects offered, freely choose the topic of the final thesis, the location for related research work. In the SER various options are described, both within and outside the curriculum (see page 9). The options include 10 credits dedicated to elective subjects in the Medical Biology study programme during the second to fourth semesters. There are no elective subjects in the Medical Genetics programme. The recommendations made by the expert panel in 2016 are largely incorporated and the schedules for students are clearly improved. However, in the opinion from the expert panel the ability for students to freely choose any subject of interest is in practice very limited; in part though missing expertise from the staff, but foremostly because of the beforementioned very high workload of the students (combination of study and a paid day job). This is an issue that is not easy to address within the SP but should anyway get attention and may warrant looking for unconventional solutions such as consider a parttime variant of the program or include the unpaid voluntary summer work in the program.

In conclusion, the ability to personalize their study program has certainly improved but is still limited for reasons that are partly out of the control of the staff.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The possibility for students to personalize their study program is specifically outlined in the SER (see page 15) and includes among other 15 credits for general University education course units. Students mention that flexibility of the study program in terms of electives is improved on paper, but in practice still is limited.

Students feel that their feedback is used to improve teaching and that teachers listen to their suggestions for improvement. Also, attention is being paid to the professional development of teachers. The University of Vilnius offers training for academic teachers. This training is now voluntary, but it is expected to become obligatory in the near future. At present, new faculty members join a 2 day on-boarding program that includes basic educational training. Also, the University is creating a network of educator consultants that are available for advice.

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

### ***Second cycle studies***

The final theses are in line with the field and cycle requirements and aims to develop the research skills, including selecting and analysing scientific literature, applying information technology, preparing research projects, writing scientific articles, planning and conducting research or experiment by critically interpreting and evaluating results. The topics for the final theses are proposed by course lecturers and representatives of social partners as well as students. Though in theory all subjects are possible, the choice is limited because of the time constraints of the students and the expertise of the teachers. The topics of the final thesis are approved by the Study Programme Committee SPCs to be compliant with the field of study.

Most students have next to their fulltime study program additional jobs with a significant time load (20-30 hours per week). This limits students in exploring exchange programs and doing independent laboratory research.

Also, the program as it still is more focused on implementation of various laboratory techniques and less on becoming an independent researcher. To improve this, a stronger theoretical introduction into research (including instructions on scientific writing) could help, just as setting up a mentor/tutor system to help and support students to strengthen their scientific training (NB a mentor/tutor should be someone independent of the supervisor).

Altogether, the quality of the final theses is good, with still room for further improvement.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The aim of the final thesis is to train the student's ability to analyse and critically assess scientific literature in biomedical research, to develop analytical and critical thinking skills when analysing research findings, and to be able to form a scientific hypothesis and find appropriate scientific methods to test it. Students receive support in writing their Master Thesis and basic training in scientific methodology. The final theses are in line with the field and

integrated studies requirements. Students have the opportunity to choose topics for their final dissertation early – the list is published in the spring semester of the fourth year of studies, but still students get involved in the Student Research Network (SRN) earlier, in the initial stages of their studies e.g., from the second semester). Students under the guidance of lecturers participate in and conduct research as well as analyse the findings of their research and correctly prepare publications based on their final thesis. Thus, the quality of the final theses is good, with some room for further improvement.

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

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

1. The programmes are in line with the mission and goals set in the Strategic Plan of Vilnius University for 2021-2025 and with the societal demand in Lithuania at this moment.

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

1. The ability to personalize study program is still limited for reasons that are partly out of the control of the staff. (This is the same for both integrated medicine and the second cycle).
2. During the summer voluntary work students have little time for lab work during the regular curriculum.

## **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES**

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

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

### ***Second cycle studies***

The Medicine Faculty is one of the leading medical research institutions in Lithuania. As outlined in the SER its research potential strengthens the second-cycle study programs – Medical Biology and Medical Genetics. Students are encouraged to join research activities from the very beginning of their studies although the before mentioned time constraints for students limit this in practice. They are also offered the opportunity to present their research results in the national and international scientific conferences and peer-reviewed publications. Also, improvements were made in line with the evaluation in 2016. Specifically, more time is allocated to research (810 hours corresponding to 30 credits) and the Master Thesis. Possible research topics to choose from are provided for the first-year students at the very beginning of their studies. At the end of the first month a supervisor is assigned to each student based on the chosen research topic. Altogether this leads to a positive assessment of the expert panel.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

As stated above as discussed in the SER the Medical Faculty of VU is one of the leading research institutions in the country with broad research partnerships, both nationally and internationally and its staff is actively involved in the activities of various research and policy organizations and consortia. Over the last years there has been greatly improved research

activity. Over the last years several steps were taken, all aimed to improve the connection with science. First organisationally, with among others the appointed of more vice-deans (including a vice dean for education and innovation and a vice dean for studies) and the launch of a new doctorate school for medicine. Funding has been made available for more than 20 PhD's in medicine. Publication in international journals is promoted This strengthens the scientific climate and improves the scientific backbone of the SP.

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

#### ***Second cycle studies***

In the SER the link between the content of the field study programme and the latest developments in science, arts and technology is substantiated. Indeed, as stated above and outlined in the SER the overall scientific climate has improved. Despite this the expert panel concluded that graduates of the program are not yet optimally prepared for a purely scientific career track (PhD, Postdoc and following) for reasons discussed before (3.1.7). As this is not a primary learning outcome of the program the expert panel did not consider this as a failure of the program. If in the future however VU decides on a stronger research focus of the program significant improvement in depth and breadth of the scientific training is needed.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

As discussed above the scientific climate has improved significantly. Especially the focus on strengthening human resources has been impressive with clear positive consequences as show in the SER (see for example Table 2.1). Among others this concerned the implementation of the 'good practice of the research universities in Europe'. This has been addressed in two ways. First, by bringing in international faculty of mostly medical educators and, secondly, by supporting and facilitating international exchanges of teachers. Both initiatives have according to both teaching staff and students tangible, positive effects. Students receive support in writing their Master Thesis and get basic training in scientific methodology. Possibilities for exchanges of students are available but still restricted in practice. Also, there is not a clear policy related to new trends in Open Science and Science for Society, though this may offer clear advantages for VU. Altogether the scientific quality has improved significantly with still room for development and further improvement.

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

#### ***Second cycle studies***

As explained in the previous and outlined in the SER, several steps have been taken to improve the quality of scientific climate of the SPs. The expert panel also noted that factors outside of the direct control of VU hamper both the flexibility of the program (including exchanges) and the scientific work.

Most students experience high stress levels due to their work next to their study (20-30 hours). This work life balance of students is at odds with the open mind and creativity needed to develop scientifically. Although this is for a large part outside of the control of VU, the program could put more effort in measures that may help to prevent extensive stress and burn-out. Also, it could be considered to explore whether it is possible to allow students to do the program part-time (3 instead of 2 years) thus reducing the large pressure on students.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Multiple steps have been taken and are implemented to improve the scientific quality of the program as outlined in the SER and at length discussed with the panel. Especially the investment in human capital is clearly paying off. Students get involved in scientific activities mainly in time related to preparing final thesis. There is not a clear policy related to new trends in Open Science and Science for Society, though this may offer clear advantages for VU. Despite this, more scientific depth could improve the quality of the program.

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

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

1. Good and open relation between students and staff (Integrated Medicine).
2. Willingness to invest in clinical research by the Medicine Faculty.

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

1. Most students experience high stress levels due to their work next to their study (second cycle).
2. Most students have next to their fulltime study program additional jobs with a significant time load (second cycle).
3. There is not a clear policy related to new trends in Open Science and Science for Society (second cycle and integrated medicine).

## **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***

### ***Second cycle studies***

The rules for admission to the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics programs are presented in the Vilnius University Admissions Procedure for Second-Cycle Study Programmes. The procedure is approved by Vilnius University Senate and is available on the VU website. In order to apply for the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics study programmes, candidates should complete the first-cycle studies in Biology, Molecular Biology, Biophysics, Biochemistry, Medical Technology, Microbiology, Genetics, or Biotechnology studies. The Medical Biology programme is also available to graduates of Public Health studies. Students with Professional Bachelor's degree in Medical Technology can apply for Medical Biology study programme after completing bridging courses. The admissions grade is calculated using an accurately defined

formula in which the average of all grades in the diploma supplement (except for bachelor's thesis), grade of the final thesis and additional points are scored. These points might be added for active participation in domestic as well as international conferences and also for publication in scientific journals.

From 2019 to 2021, 169 students applied to VU Medical Biology programme as their first priority and 192 as other priorities. During the same years, 26 students applied to the VU Medical Genetics programme at VU as a first choice and 131 as an alternative choice. As a result, the number of candidates applying for the second cycle study increased from 30 (2019) to 77 (2020) and 62 (2021). The highest entrance score of students in Medical Biology was 65.50 (2020), and the lowest was 17.49 (2019), with the average from 20.07 (2019) to 36.82 (2020) and the highest entrance score of students in the Medical Genetics amounted to 29.66 (2019) and the lowest 17.58 (2022), average from 18.21 (2021) to 24.60 (2019).

The number of candidates applying for the second cycle study increased from 30 (2019) to 77 (2020) and 62 (2021).

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

As it is given in the SER students are admitted to field study programmes based on their admission score. The Admission Procedure, the minimum requirements, and the methodology for calculating the admission score to the first-cycle and integrated study programmes at Vilnius University in 2020–2021 were approved by Order No R-193 of 30 April 2020 of the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius. Candidates with secondary education are admitted to the programme. The admission score for 2017–2021 is based on the following formula: admission score = the score of the biology national school examination (0.4 points) + the examination score or the grade for the year in Chemistry or Mathematics (0.2 points) + the examination score or the grade for the year for the school subject that does not duplicate other subjects (0.2 points) + the score of the Lithuanian Language and Literature examination (0.2 points). A sophisticated system is in place for scoring additional attributes, for example, for participation in academic contests (domestic or international) as was well for citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who live abroad. Information on the admission rules is also systematically published by the MF on the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions website and other websites or information media, as well as in various publications.

From 2019 to 2021, 2,366 students applied to VU Medicine integrated programme as their first choice and 3,701 as alternative choices.

The highest entrance score of students of the Medicine integrated was 12.50 (2021) for state funded (SF) students and the lowest was 9.03 (2020) for NSF students, averaging from 9.71 (2019) for SF students to 8.91 (2019) for NSF students.

The rules for admission to the second cycle study and Medicine Integrated into the VU are clear and transparent. Students show an interest in joining Medical Biology and Medical Genetics programme because the number of candidates increased and remained stable during the

evaluated period. The fact that all study vacancies in Medical Biology have been filled is a good prognostic factor. Medicine integrated is among the most popular programmes in Lithuania.

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

As stated in the SER, VU acknowledges academic education and qualifications related to higher education that is acquired under the education programmes of foreign states and international organizations as authorized by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. Foreign qualifications are recognized as equivalent to secondary or relevant-level higher education obtained in the Republic of Lithuania if no essential differences between the general requirements of the country where the qualification was obtained, and those of the Republic of Lithuania can be identified. Each decision on recognition of foreign qualification is subject to consideration and taken individually based on provided documents and certificates.

There is an admission track for students who have studied in another country or higher education institution and are interested in continuing their studies at Vilnius University. Such candidates can submit requests to recognize formally or informally (self-education) achieved learning outcomes by the relevant procedures of Vilnius University. Formally obtained learning outcomes can be identified based on study content that may or may not be specified in the study agreement. Suppose the content of studies is similar to the VU programmes. In that case, the learning outcomes are recognised after validating whether they meet formal requirements and ensure the desired general and subject-specific competencies of the evaluated study programmes. Still, no more than 50% of the scope of a programme can be recognized.

#### ***Second cycle studies***

As laid down in the SER, SPCs take decisions regarding the recognition of learning outcomes. In 2019, there were two applications received from Medical Biology students for recognition of study course units, and they were approved. In 2020, there were 22 applications in Medical Biology SP. However, two were rejected. One application was also filed in Medical Genetics SP, and approval was granted. In 2021 - 33 registered applications in Medical Biology SP and 7 of them were rejected; no applications were received in Medical Genetics SP.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Recognition of foreign qualifications in the VU is based on Lisbon Recognition Convention, the “Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organizations”, the “Methodology for Assessment of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organizations” and other documents.

Suppose the content of studies was not standardised. In that case, learning outcomes are recognized once it is corroborated that they meet formal requirements and ensure the desired general and subject-specific competencies fostered by the study programme. A person who has

studied at another higher education institution in Lithuania or abroad and wishes to continue at Vilnius University may be accepted to study in the programmes dedicated to the discussed academic discipline. There are constraints in place on what percentage of the scope of different programmes may be recognized to validate the study under consideration. It is no more than 75% of the scope of the first cycle, second cycle or integrated study programmes, no more than 50 % of the scope of a programme studied informally or by way of self-study, or 75 % of the study programme followed in other higher education institutions. The SPC of the Medicine SP decides the recognition of courses. In 2019, 25 courses for 19 students studying in Lithuanian were acknowledged, in 2020 – 31 courses (18 students), in 2021 – 24 courses (14 students), in 2019 – 46 courses (19 students studying in English), in 2020 – 91 courses (25 students), and in 2021 – 73 courses (40 students).

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

#### ***Both programmes***

The students of the discipline of all cycles can spend up to 24 months of their studies abroad under Erasmus+. They are also obliged to complete an internship for a period specified in the study plan. In addition, voluntary summer internships are available, as are internships under Erasmus+, ISEP, the Nordplus programmes and bilateral cooperation agreements. In 2020–2021, the MF signed 42 Erasmus agreements with universities abroad. Students of the study discipline can spend up to half their study period in mobility programmes. Students apply to Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes for 12-24 months depending, on the programme (12 months for bachelor's and master's study programmes and 24 months for integrated study programmes). Students who want to go abroad for partial studies must have completed at least one year of first cycle studies or one semester of second cycle studies at VU. In the academic year 2017/2018, 137 students of the Medicine SP spent their internship abroad under Erasmus+, in 2019/2020 – 119 students, in 2020/2021 – 87 students, and in 2021/2022 – 107 students. All information about mobility opportunities is available on the websites, and in newsletters and is provided at meetings with students. In addition, information on mobility opportunities is published on social networks and in the lobbies of MF. Over the past three years, the number of international students who arrived for full-time studies in English has increased by 35% (from 86 to 116 students per year), which accounts for 30.2% of all students in 2018/2019 and 36.5% of all students in 2020/2021 in Medicine.

At the Vilnius University, there is a system of academic recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and programmes of foreign states and international organizations. The mobility and exchange programmes are top-rated, especially among students of the Medicine integrated curricula.

During the evaluated period, none of the students from the Medical Biology (MB) and Medical Genetics (MG) programmes studied abroad, and none of the international students came to study as part of these programmes at VU. Furthermore, as stated in the SER and noted during the site visit of the expert team, students pointed out that it is difficult to find a partner

University from the list that VU has agreements with, providing programmes offering similar content as Medical Biology and Medical Genetics.

#### *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*

##### ***Both programmes***

All students of the evaluated programmes can receive support such as academic information and consulting, career services, information technology services, library and information services, financial support, accommodation services, and cultural and leisure services. They may also participate in student activities, and take advantage of psychological services, spiritual and religious services and support, and services for students with special needs. In addition, student Services and Career Department provides centralized support.

The award of scholarships at VU is based on Order No. R-101 of 17 March 2017 of the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University. The most important form of social support for students is financial support. Students can receive scholarships: incentive scholarships for excellent learning results, social scholarships administered by the State Studies Foundation (in 2018/2019 – 2020/2021 m. – 510 students), one-off social grants funded by Vilnius University funds (in 2017/2018 - 2019/2020 - 28 students) and one-off earmarked scholarships funded by Vilnius University funds (in 2017/2018 - 2019/2020 - 213 students). A separate form of social support is state loans to students (administered by the State Studies Foundation) and financial aid for students with disabilities (in 2017/2018 - 2019/2020 - 4 students received disbursements for students with disabilities). The procedures for applying for these support options are described on the University website.

The best MF graduates are awarded Cum Laude and Magna Cum Laude diplomas. In 2018/2019, 13 students were awarded Magna Cum Laude diplomas, in 2019/2020 – 10 students, and in 2020/2021 – 20 students. In the academic year 2018/2019, 9 students were awarded Cum Laude diplomas, in 2019/2020 – 14 students, and in 2020/2021 – 7 students.

Students of the Medicine Faculty are eligible for the Nominal scholarship of the Presidents of the Republic of Lithuania, Raymond, Alberta, and Wanda Yankun Scholarship.

Students from other towns may apply for social support such as allocating rooms in student dormitories. The demand for accommodation of the discipline's students has been satisfied by 95 %, and students with disabilities may also apply for a discount on dormitory fees. The Sports Centre of the VU is open for students and academic Staff.

The VU has an excellent academic and social support for students of all evaluated programmes.

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

##### ***Both programmes***

Information about the study process is provided to students through the VU Study Information System (VUSIS): students can see their data, relevant official orders, the study plan,

examination schedules, scores, etc. Students also use VUSIS to register for GUE course units, electives, etc. Members of the SPCs and academic staff of the programme advise students about the intended outcomes, the content of course units, and career opportunities by appointing office hours during which they provide consultations to students. Academic support and professional development are implemented through training. Students' most popular training topics include stress management, effective learning, presenting yourself to employers, writing a CV and a cover letter, and simulating a job interview. The latest information relevant to the discipline is published in the SER and the importance and usefulness of generic competencies are presented during meetings with alumni and representatives of related organizations.

During the site visit, the expert team stated that students of the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics experience high levels of stress and would profit from a functioning mentoring system (which is currently not in place). In the opinion of the expert team, the students could get more involved in the organisation of the course, but are usually not able to do so due to the high workload of the students (both study and part-time jobs).

During the site visit the expert team also noted that students of the Medicine integrated programme are satisfied with their studies in general but their stress levels among them are high. However, they feel supported thanks to the good relationships they have with supporting faculties.

As was stated in the SER in 2019, Vilnius University introduced a mentorship programme for all academic units. In 2021, 129 volunteer mentors from various fields of science and 100 students participated in the programme, In 2020, 103 volunteer mentors and 123 students participated. In 2019, 78 volunteer mentors from various fields and 80 students were engaged in these activities. In 2021 – 488 individual career counselling sessions were held. In 2020, 499 individual career counselling sessions took place. In the Counselling and Training Centre of the University students can receive professional psychological counselling on relevant personal, family, study, social integration, and other issues. The Culture Centre of Vilnius University is available to students on a broad basis.

In the VU and FM, information about studies is provided via email conferences, and social networks. There is an information webpage of the Medicine Faculty (<https://www.mf.vu.lt/>) and as well as of the Student Services and Career Centre. Furthermore, information specific to academic units is provided in the study departments of Medicine field academic units. Also, individual meetings with academic consultants and lecturers are held.

Students who were initially accepted to study in Medical Biology and Medical Genetics programmes are introduced to their study programmes during VU integration week. Integration week is the first week of studies.

Vilnius University has implemented a very effective system for communicating information about studying in general and about evaluated programs in particular. During the site visit, the expert team also noted that students of the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics experience high levels of stress and would profit from a functioning mentoring system (which is not in

place). Medicine integrated programme students are generally satisfied with their studies, but their stress levels among them are high.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Effective system for communicating information about studying in general and about evaluated programs in particular.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

2. Personal support for students is not optimal and communication between students and staff needs improvement.
3. Students experience high levels of stress and would profit from a functioning mentoring system (which is currently not in place).

### **3.4 TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

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

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

Based on the information provided in SER, there are several special measures used by the Medical Faculty to monitor and improve student progress. These include:

- Regular individual meetings with students to discuss their progress, identify areas of difficulty, and provide guidance on how to improve.
- Periodic reviews of student performance by faculty members, with feedback provided to students to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses.
- Use of formative assessments and feedback to help students identify areas where they need to improve and develop plans to address those areas.
- Implementation of academic support programs to help students who are struggling academically or who need additional assistance to meet their learning goals.
- Overall, the Faculty of Medicine appears to have a systematic approach to monitoring and improving student progress, with a focus on individualized feedback and support to promote self-assessment and planning for further study progress.

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The intended competences and learning outcomes are aimed at both acquiring knowledge and skills within a particular field and developing general competencies that are relevant to the needs of the labor market. These are developed in conjunction with social partners, employers, and graduates of the field studies.

As part of the development of a student-centered study model, continuous and formative assessment is particularly encouraged and applied throughout all units (modules) of the field.

As part of the learning process, students receive feedback regarding their accomplishments to ensure consistency and in-depth learning that enable them to maximize progress when studying a course unit (module), while at the same time allowing them to express their individuality and abilities. Teaching staff is actively keeping students motivated, since the traditional professor-student hierarchy is changing. There are two main types of teaching/learning methods: contact hours (lectures, seminars, workshops, laboratory work, consultancy) and non-contact hours (independent literature studies, the preparation of individual project/course written papers, the performance of specific tasks assigned by the lecturer, etc.).

Working in a scientific laboratory builds practical skills and consolidates theoretical knowledge learned in lectures. Research projects aim to develop systematic practical knowledge through research in laboratories. Students acquire subject-specific knowledge and develop general skills and competencies as well as subject-specific skills.

The second cycle programs of Medical Biology and Medical Genetics adhere to the strategic plan and statute of Vilnius University. Appendix No. 1 of SER contains an overview of the goals and intended learning outcomes of the second cycle study programs. All of these have a shared ambition to train graduates with fundamental knowledge of medical laboratory work, the ability to apply critical thinking and different methods of analysis, and the ability to seek and communicate knowledge.

The study model and the assessment procedures suggest that the procedures work well. Students, lecturers, and management all contribute to ensuring the reliability of the assessment. The study program uses active teaching and learning methods. The assessment methods of student progress allow for the achievement of indented learning outcomes. Learning-based study requires also an assessment of the students' workload, as most of the students in this field combine studies with work during the course of their studies.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The study program teaching and learning process takes into account students' needs and their possible learning outcomes, also information about the teaching and learning, methods and assessment is provided in the course units descriptions, which are reviewed and updated annually. The descriptions of the modules in the Medicine SP specify the form in which information is provided and analyzed during lectures and practice sessions. Both lecturers and students know about updates. A student's performance evaluation is performed during regular, intermediate, and final evaluation, in accordance with the VU Learning Achievements Assessment Procedure. Every individual evaluation uses the same criteria for everyone. During their studies, students get feedback on their achievements. This ensures consistent and thorough learning and allows students to achieve maximum progress in a specific course. Graduates of the Medicine SP may continue their studies in the medical residency program in Lithuania and abroad and in doctoral degree studies in biomedical sciences at Lithuanian and foreign universities. As a whole, all study programs are aligned with the needs and aims of students, as well as with the learning outcomes associated with each.

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

According to SER, the Medicine Faculty supports socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs by offering consultations on access to studies, individualized study processes, and integration into the academic community. Consultations provide guidance on financial support and resources. The individualized study process accommodates special needs with tailored support services, such as assistive technology and tutoring.

According to the SER, VU environment has been adapted to meet the needs of students with special needs. In 2018-2019, two lifts and a ramp were installed to provide easy access to the ground and first floors of the main MF building. The University also provides compensatory technologies, such as alternative computer mouse, mobile stair lift, high contrast keyboards, and CRICK USB SWITCH BOX to help students with motor disabilities. The SCIC library has a Braille Room, text recognition and reading devices, and special software to aid visually impaired students. The Central Library has inclined stair lifts, adjustable height tables and chairs, and electronic magnifiers with a camera. Additionally, library self-service equipment and information terminals are of adjustable height. All personal healthcare institutions where student practice takes place are also adapted for individuals with special mobility needs.

The Medical faculty fosters a supportive and inclusive environment, promoting social interaction, extracurricular activities, and academic projects to ensure all students can succeed.

However, during the site visit to Medical Faculty old building we could observe that adaptation of the premises to the mobility needs of people with disabilities there was not optimal and thus conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups with special mobility needs are impaired.

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The study model and the assessment procedures suggest that the procedures work well. Students, lecturers, and management all contribute to ensuring the reliability of the assessment. The study program uses active teaching and learning methods. The assessment methods of student progress allow for the achievement of indented learning outcomes. Learning-based study requires also an assessment of the students' workload, as most of the students in this field combine studies with work during the course of their studies.

Information, given in SER, suggests that there is a special procedure that enables the study process to be tailored to the needs of students with disabilities, the study process can be adapted, individualized plan implemented. A flexible performance assessment process is used when evaluating students with special needs, these needs are taken into account (SER p. 29). Even socially vulnerable groups are provided with services: consulting, career services, information technology services, library and information services, financial support, accommodation services, cultural and leisure services, the opportunity to participate in student activities, psychological services, spiritual/religious services and support, and services for students with special needs. Additionally, there is a scholarship program awarded to the 100

most talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds in order to reduce social exclusion. Special Scholarship has been established for applicants from Belarus and Ukraine. These students are also provided with additional psychological assistance. Students who encounter financial difficulties can claim a social grant or request postponement of tuition fee payment if their studies are not financed by the State.

It is the VU's aim to provide equal opportunity for all students with disabilities. In general, the study process seems to be flexible and can be adapted to the needs of disabled persons. Disabled people may find it even helpful to study in a specially adapted virtual learning environment.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

According to SER, Vilnius University seeks to create equal opportunities to study and work for all members of the community. There is a Disability Affairs Coordinator who keeps contact with students who have disabilities and discuss in person their individual needs. The University has prepared a procedure for adapting studies to individual needs arising from disability that enables the tailoring of the study process to the needs of students and unclassified students with special needs. All students of the field can receive various type of support: academic information and counselling, career services, information technology services, library and information services, financial support, accommodation services, cultural and leisure services, the opportunity to participate in student activities, psychological support services, spiritual and religious services and support, and services for students with special needs. Most of these services are provided anonymously for students to feel safe when requesting support. In addition to the direct financial support for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or students with special needs, a 90% reduction of the tuition fee per semester is available.

MF's goal is to provide equal opportunity for all students with disabilities. In general, the study process seems to be flexible and can be adapted to the needs of disabled persons.

#### *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*

Based on the information provided in SER, there are several special measures used by the Medical Faculty to monitor and improve student progress. These include the following:

- Regular individual meetings with students to discuss their progress, identify areas of difficulty, and provide guidance on how to improve;
- Periodic reviews of student performance by faculty members, with feedback provided to students to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses;
- Use of formative assessments and feedback to help students identify areas where they need to improve and develop plans to address those areas;
- Implementation of academic support programs to help students who are struggling academically or who need additional assistance to meet their learning goals;
- Overall, the medical faculty appears to have a systematic approach to monitoring and improving student progress, with a focus on individualized feedback and support to promote self-assessment and planning for further study progress.

### ***Second cycle studies***

It is the VU's aim to provide equal opportunity for all students with disabilities. In general, the study process seems to be flexible and can be adapted to the needs of disabled persons. Disabled people may find it even helpful to study in a specially adapted virtual learning environment.

Study Program Committee) (SPC) Systemic monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students takes place. During a field study program, the study program committee monitors student progress. Each year, the SPC evaluates the progress of each student. In assessing a student's performance in a course unit, three methods are available: continuously, interim, and at the end of the course. Every student is evaluated according to the same performance criteria. It is the cumulative grade that represents the final evaluation of all the examinations, with each method testing a different aspect of a student's ability. Exam grades are usually based on the results of a written assignment, performance at seminars and presentations, and the final written or oral examination.

Each subject's assessment of achievements is given in its description. Every lecturer informs students about the requirements for assessment during the first lecture. During the development of the student-oriented study model, a formative assessment approach is strongly emphasized: students receive feedback regarding their accomplishments, and consistent, deep learning is encouraged to achieve maximum progress.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

As stated in the SER, field students are monitored on several levels: the course unit (module), the year, and the course program, at the Medicine SP level, monitoring of student progress is performed by the SPC, the SPC conducts yearly assessment of progress made by students during internships by collecting feedback from the institutions where the students worked as interns, the SPC also evaluates the results of final theses, students have access to academic consultants who monitor their academic performance and answer their queries concerning termination of studies or debt elimination. Lecturers monitor student progress and provide feedback throughout the semester. Feedback is provided to both individuals and groups, monitoring and assessment of students' study progress is based both on formal and informal approaches.

Students feedback is taken into account and students' opinions are listened to, they receive support and advice directly from the lecturers and from the local academic advisors in the MF.

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

### ***Second cycle studies***

Vilnius University Career Center offers career advice and expertise to help students make career-related decisions and succeed in their career goal.

After graduation, most second cycle graduates (almost 100 %) are employed within a year. Graduates of the program have the option to continue their education by pursuing a PhD. The

Medicine Faculty currently has four MB graduates and six MG graduates enrolled in doctoral studies in the Medicine field. During their doctoral studies, many of them work as University lecturers or researchers. These graduates are usually expected to continue working at VU even after completing their doctoral studies. Career tracking for graduate students is conducted through the Career Tracking Information System *karjera.lt* tools.

During a panel meeting with social partners feedback was given, employers admitted that their opinions were listened to, and their concerns were taken into account by University. In general, employers are satisfied with the graduates' abilities. Students are encouraged to participate in practical work; many of them combine work and education. Employability of graduates is excellent and the need for specialists is high.

Learning outcomes are geared toward not only acquiring knowledge and skills related to a specific subject, but also toward developing general skills determined by market needs. These competencies are developed consistently through relationships with social partners and employers.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Career tracking for graduate students is conducted through the Career Tracking Information System *karjera.lt* tools. According to STRATA data, one year after graduation more than 79% of the graduates have a job. According to QS World University Rankings, studies of Medicine at VU received very high scores (by employer reputation): in 2018 – the score of 63.5, in 2019 – 59, and in 2020 – 60.8.

The majority of integrated studies students continue their studies in medical residency. Data on graduate careers abroad is insufficient.

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

The SER outlines the measures taken by Vilnius University (VU) to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. The VU adheres to the principles outlined in the Vilnius University Statute, the Academic Ethics Code of Vilnius University, the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy, and other documents. Various means are employed to ensure that students adhere to academic integrity in their studies, including invigilation, electronic systems to detect plagiarism, and proctoring tools during online examinations. Cases of violations are handled in accordance with the regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission of Vilnius University, and a hotline is available to report violations anonymously.

Over the last three years, the MF Academic Ethics Commission has examined several appeals regarding violations of academic ethics. Most cases involve reports from lecturers regarding academic dishonesty of students, while there are seldom complaints about lecturers from students. The MF Academic Ethics Commission verifies the facts presented by all parties and takes decisions either to recognize the breach or reject the complaint. The Commission makes recommendations regarding further actions, such as suggesting clear communication of the

requirements to students and emphasizing the types of unacceptable behaviour during examinations. The Commission has made a recommendation to send a reminder to students before the examinations concerning the actions considered a breach of academic ethics.

In summary, VU has implemented several policies and processes to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and to avoid discrimination. The University is proactive in handling appeals and complaints about the study process, and the MF Academic Ethics Commission is responsible for verifying the facts presented by all parties and taking decisions to recognize the breach or reject the complaint. Cases of violations of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are handled at the University in accordance with the regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission of Vilnius University, and a hotline is available to report violations anonymously.

Both the **second cycle** studies and the **Medicine integrated** program aim to maintain diversity of opinion, promote mutual respect, openness to new ideas, trust, tolerance, and academic integrity. Both programs have established policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, and use various methods to monitor and maintain academic integrity during exams.

#### *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*

The effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies can be evaluated based on the description of the procedures for submission and examination of appeals and complaints, the number of appeals and complaints submitted by students of the evaluated field studies, and the decisions made over the last three years. In summary, based on the information given in the SER, in both **second cycle** and **medicine integrated** studies, there are procedures in place for submitting and examining appeals and complaints regarding the study process in the evaluated field studies. The number of appeals and complaints submitted by students and decisions made over the last three years are described in SER. The MF Academic Ethics Commission examines appeals, and in 2019, 7 appeals were examined, of which 2 were satisfied, 4 were not satisfied, and 1 was submitted to the Central Academic Ethics Commission of the University. In 2020, 13 appeals were examined, and irregularities were identified in 6 cases, while in 2021, 8 appeals were examined, of which 5 were recognized as irregularities, and 1 case was not within the competence of the MF Academic Ethics Commission. The University has various means to ensure academic integrity and handle cases of a breach of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. Complaints about lecturers from students are rare, and lecturers' reports regarding academic dishonesty of students dominate.

Overall, based on the information from SER, it appears that VU has established comprehensive procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study

process, and the MF Academic Ethics Commission is actively examining appeals and making recommendations for further actions.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Learning outcomes are geared toward developing general skills determined by market needs.
2. There are clear procedures for appealing and complaining about the study process at the University.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

No.

### **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*

All the staff, the site-visit team, met, whether academic, clinical, or administrative, were motivated and committed to their roles.

The composition of academic staff is well documented, including the academic and scientific degree, the pedagogical work experience, the research interests, the practical work experience in the subject field, the subjects taught, and the current workload at the HEI. Their activities are regularly monitored, and is in line with the Lithuanian legal requirements in terms of qualifications and experience. Professional competencies of the teaching personnel are based on high school education, University education (MD, MSc, PhD), and pedagogic studies, if any.

The main criterion for selecting teaching staff is competencies in the relevant fields. The recruiting procedure for the teaching positions at the faculty is enacted by the Law of Higher Education and the lecturers' pedagogical, research, and practical work experience is evaluated every five years. The student: staff ratio is documented.

Unfortunately, although it was mentioned in the SER, and it was not clear from the conversations with the students or staff, how the procedure for motivating its teaching staff for scientific achievements, academic achievements, scientific communication and expert activities really works.

***Second cycle studies***

Currently, 35 staff members are participating in the program, most of whom are in permanent or long-term positions. The staff consists of 8 professors and 10 associate professors, 7 assistant professors, 2 junior assistants, and 8 lecturers. It has remained stable since the last evaluation. Given the number of students, there is adequate teaching staff overall. 7 of 29 staff members have at least 10 years of teaching experience and app. 30% of the teaching staff has at least 20 years of teaching experience or more. This fact is beneficial for the moment but also

requires smart thinking for the future as some may retire in the following years. At least 80% of the staff have a research degree.

All the teachers are active researchers, regularly participating in scientific conferences. Although the visiting team note that the majority of academic staff is active in scientific work, periodically participating in scientific meetings and publishing a reasonable number of papers in the leading national and/or international journals in the last years, there is still considerable scope for more significant numbers of staff members to be more actively involved in research and thus publish more scientific papers. This is crucial for the program to facilitate MSc theses with a significant practical experimental contribution of the students and to secure the funding for such theses.

In conclusion, staff members have the high qualifications needed to ensure the learning outcomes and their number is adequate.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Teachers are recruited on a competitive basis for five years. If members of the teaching or research staff, win the competition for that position at the University for the second time in a row, a full-time tenure contract for this position is signed. The lecturers' pedagogical, research, and practical work experience is assessed every five years. The results of the student evaluation are also taken into account.

The total number of VU MF teaching staff has remained stable over the past three years (around 420). The ratio of the number of teachers to the number of students is 0.4 on average. At least 70% of the staff has a research degree and 80% a minimum B2 language proficiency (English). In addition, each lecturer can supervise the theses of no more than 3-4 students during an academic year in order to be able to focus and participate in the teaching.

The scientific staff has been active in research, regularly attends scientific conferences, and has been a reasonable number of articles published in good national and/or international journals in recent years. Thus, the research activities of the teachers are appropriate.

In conclusion: The composition of the teaching staff and the number of staff are appropriate to ensure the proper delivery of the study program and the fulfillment of the learning outcomes.

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

According to the SER, academic staff is encouraged to improve their competencies by participating in local and international scientific and educational conferences. The University staff is routinely informed about calls for applications for mobility grants, including ERASMUS and other European calls. Co-funding (up to 50%) of staff mobility is available through the University's strategic fund for the support of study internationality initiatives.

International HEIs for the VU academic staff exchange are not listed in SER (List of the Universities for outgoing visits), but the number of the visits are documented (Table 24), and regularly monitored.

The academic mobility funded by ERASMUS and other European calls is still low. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited incoming or outgoing visits from 2020.

It remains unclear whether academic mobility at VU is an integral part of the regular staff workload (paid absences outside of holidays) or the annual staff evaluation (relevant part of the assessment).

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

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The site-visit team was informed that the University had developed a range of training for teachers and established the Center of Educational Competences in 2017. The teaching staff is very much interested in constantly improving their teaching competencies, and they are encouraged by the University to participate in training to update teaching and scientific qualifications. Active participation is only compulsory for teachers who are just starting their teaching career and teaching activities seem to need to be sufficiently recognised in academic development and promotion, compared to research activities. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be enough protected time for training.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The expert panel was informed that the University offers a range of training for teachers and they are appreciated by the staff. The VU constantly monitors these activities. The University encourages the staff to participate in training to update teaching and scientific qualifications.

Unfortunately, there was no information in the SER and it was not clear from the interviews with the staff whether participation for teachers is mandatory and whether teaching is sufficiently recognized for academic development and support compared to research activities.

It could be considered to develop different career models for teachers: focus on research skills or focus on teaching skills.

*For the Medicine integrated program:*

1. Lack of standardized educational program for staff.
2. Lack of considering interprofessional competences in teacher training.
3. Lack of mentoring programs for (young) teachers.

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

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

1. Experienced and stable academic teaching staff.
2. Existing Center of Educational Competences for the “Second cycle studies”.

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

1. Teaching activities of the staff are under-recognized for academic development and promotion.
2. Lack of protected time for training in research and teaching skills for the staff.
3. Lack of measures to strengthen staff mobility.

## **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*

### ***Second cycle studies***

The study programs are mainly implemented in the facilities of the Medical Faculty, but some teaching activities occur at the Faculty of Chemistry and the Life Science Center.

Classrooms are equipped with whiteboards and projectors. Practical training takes place in well-equipped laboratories (e.g., Laboratory of Molecular Genetics, Cytogenetics, Pathology and Biochemistry Laboratory). The Microscopy class has a digital microscopy system. The analytical equipment meets the requirements of the teaching. The teaching staff provides sufficient supervision and they seem to be enough for the number of students.

The Library of the Medicine Faculty is available for the study programs. It is well-equipped and has access to a broad range of educational and methodical resources, including major databases.

Essential IT services (e.g., email service) are provided, and high-speed and wireless internet access, including Eduroam is available in all University buildings. Computer access (along with internet service) to students is provided in the specialized facilities at the Medicine Faculty.

Dormitories have reading rooms, and every room has internet access.

In conclusion, the Medicine Faculty has the necessary infrastructural conditions to implement the programs and meet outcome requirements, and the University is constantly improving its facilities and resources.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The main courses in the Medicine are conducted in the central building (M. K. Čiurlionio 21/27, Vilnius), clinical courses are conducted at VU hospitals (Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Klinikos (VUL SK), Vilnius University Hospital Žalgirio Klinika) and other outpatient and inpatient personal healthcare institutions of the city of Vilnius.

The list of the premises for the implementation of the study programme shows the impressive number of auditoria, rooms, laboratories, simulation rooms (SER (Annex 6)). However, the conditions of classrooms, and facilities (practical laboratories) in the central building are outdated and need improvement. There is almost no space for the students to sit down to prepare etc. There are not enough research laboratories in the main building, so the possibilities for the staff as well as for student scientific work are very limited.

The clinical laboratories at VU Hospital are well-maintained and equipped providing a good environment for the program. The teaching staff provides sufficient supervision and is enough for the number of students. Some research laboratories are still empty.

The Medicine Faculty has recently invested in developing and constructing a new research centre next to the University Hospital (currently under construction).

There is no Centre of Medical Simulation. The classrooms are distributed around the clinics and access for students is limited, only possible during the sessions. A central facility with hybrid self-simulation learning and remote assessment labs supported by extensive IT facilities to help teachers and students develop their practical and theoretical skills would be a significant improvement.

The Library of the Medicine Faculty is sufficient and well equipped. Unfortunately, it was not clear from the conversations with the students or staff whether the opening hours of the library of the Medicine Faculty allow the students to study independently.

Essential IT services (e.g., email service) are provided, and high-speed and wireless internet access, including Eduroam is available in all University buildings. Computer access (along with internet service) to students is provided. Dormitories have reading rooms, and every room has internet access.

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

#### ***Second cycle studies***

The University is constantly improving its facilities and resources. However, the number of available laboratories for practical training and, more importantly, the diversity of research topics where students perform their experiments for the preparation MSc thesis instead of just analyzing previous studies could be further increased.

#### ***Medicine integrated studies***

The need for equipment and tools is analysed every year, identifying priority areas whose material base needs to be updated and the University is constantly improving its facilities and resources.

The infrastructure and available resources satisfy the needs of modern medical training at the VU. However, the facilities at the Central Building need improvement and a thorough renovation.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Sufficient resources for the successful implementation of the programs.
2. The University is constantly improving its facilities and resources.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Lack of a centralized Medical Stimulation Centre.
2. Poor conditions in the Central Building (poorly equipped: limited internet access, only few places for independent learning).
3. Adaptation of the premises in the old medical faculty building to the mobility needs of people with disabilities is not optimal and thus conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups with special mobility needs are impaired.

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

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

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

***Second cycle and Medicine integrated studies***

Vilnius University (VU) has developed a study quality assurance system based on the project “The Development and Implementation of an Internal Study Quality Assurance System at Vilnius University”. The system fulfils the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and is related to the University mission. The rules for the management of the study programme are set out in the Faculty Medicine resolution “Regulations for the Management of Study Programme of the Medicine Faculty of Vilnius University” (approved by Resolution No. (1.2) 150000 TP 13 4 of 30 October 2020 of the MF Council). The Medical faculty established The Study Programme Committee (SPC), which is responsible for the analysis of the content of courses, the time allocated for study, and the assessment system, as well as the feedback concerning the programme from academic units, students, graduates, teaching staff and social partners. The Faculty Study Programme Committee consists of teaching staff and student representatives (usually two persons).

There is a multi-level system of internal quality assurance system in place in the University. A survey of opinions of members of the teaching staff and students, as well as course descriptions are analyzed and revised according to postulated changes, especially those submitted by the students. Informal individual contacts of the students with the teaching staff are a good example of effective interpersonal communication in the Vilnius University.

In the VU, various procedures for internal quality assurance are provided, for example: SP approval, monitoring, and evaluation; the monitoring and analysis of the study process;

implementation and improvement of student performance evaluation, blended learning, computer testing and plagiarism screening systems; teaching staff competence improvement and evaluation methods in the study process to implement student-centered learning.

Another activity of the SPC is to evaluate the competencies acquired by students in other institutions or under other programs, for example, realized in foreign Universities or informally. It is also up to the SPC to decide on the recognition of study achievements or approve individual study plans of students. Genetics SPC usually meet about 3 times per semester, and at least one meeting is organized to discuss the study issues regarding the forthcoming semester.

In general, there is an effective and the multi-level system of internal quality assurance developed in the Vilnius University. The system is related to monitoring, valuation and analysis of the study process. In addition, plagiarism screening systems is active.

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

The Student representatives, as well as the social partners, are involved in the decision-making of SPC. Student representatives take part in the organization and analysis of the results of student surveys and focus groups. It is important to emphasize that SPC takes its decisions by a vote of majority. Student representatives also have an active role in other aspects of Faculty life. The faculty council is made up in 20% of student representatives. The social partners are involved in the management and improvement of the study process. Representatives of social partners are also the leaders and directors of the institutions where students are employed.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Following the amendment to the Medicine SP for students who were admitted in 2018/2019, the course of the formation of clinical skills was introduced, the length of the internship was extended, the list of hospitals for student practice was expanded. Also, as a result, the amendment of the content and scope of some courses (e.g.: Biochemistry, Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology) was revised and the list of hospitals for student practice was expanded.

The expert team during the site visit stated that social partners, for example, directors of the University Hospitals and Private Employers have no real impact on the content of the study program, but during the meeting, they proposed to prioritize the so called “soft skills” in order to improve graduates’ communication with the patients.

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

### ***Both programmes***

The MF administration, teaching staff and students widely use the VU Study Information System named (VUSIS) comprising a number of useful applications for the collection and use of study information such as examination results, uploading course descriptions, reviewing the list of students in the course and also to have the feedback from students about the courses.

Twice per study year (at the end of each semester), VU conducts a centralized survey of first and second-cycle students (surveys are done using the VU online survey system, which is integrated into VUSIS about specific subjects studied during the semester. For this survey, a recommended University subject questionnaire is used and presented in the VUSIS section entitled "Surveys". The students can leave anonymous feedback about studies, including specific subjects. Moreover, teaching staff can see direct data about student feedback on their subjects. The faculty administration can directly see all student feedback about particular subjects. It is important to stress that detailed survey results about CAUs and study programs are published in the "Feedback" section of VU internal website.

The e-learning platform contains all the material related to lectures, practice, tasks and examinations, and it also enables communication with students. The procedure of study results evaluation is published on the vu.lt website, the MF websites, the VU intranet and in the information system. On the MF website one may find information about decisions of the VU Senate, the MF Council, resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, opportunities and requirements for undergraduate studies, academic exchange issues and student organizations.

Twice a year, at the end of each semester, VU conducts a centralized survey of students of the first, integrated and second study cycles using the VU e-survey system integrated into the VUSIS. Each semester, a survey of MF students concerning their studies in a course are carried out. Student are also required to complete surveys of at least 2 courses/teaching staff members in a semester.

Vilnius University organizes courses for teaching staff training their teaching, pedagogical, and communication competencies, but during the site visit the expert team realized that the system for monitoring staff achievements has not been yet introduced.

### ***Medicine integrated studies***

VU disseminates information about quality assurance, good study quality practice, and student involvement on the University as well as Faculty websites. As a result of student postulates, two revised/supplemented courses covering the basics of first aid (An Introduction to Medical Studies, first semester, 5 credits) and communication skills (Psychology, basics of professional communication and psychosomatics, second semester, 5 credits) were introduced in the first year of studies. Also, gradual training of practical skills on Formation of Practical Skills in Nursing in the third semester was provided. Research Methodology and Biostatistics have been introduced earlier in the programme, in the eighth semester, because the topic for the thesis is also chosen by students in this semester.

The MF takes an active part in the activities of the international higher education and research organizations and associations (annual participation in the (Association for Medical Education in Europe) (AMEE) conferences; the virtual international conference of the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE) organized in Vilnius in 2021). Since 2018, the MF has had an international advisory board for studies which advises on the improvement of study programs.

In general, the VU created very useful applications for collection and use of study information for MF administration, teaching staff and students and the faculty administration can directly see all student feedback about particular subjects. The procedure of study results evaluation is published on the vu.lt website, the MF websites, the VU intranet and in the information system.

#### *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*

##### ***Second cycle studies***

As stated in the SER, around 80% of all students fill out the centralized surveys at VU, but the numbers are much lower among the students of second-cycle studies in Medical Biology and Medical Genetics and sometimes only half of students filled the surveys. The results of surveys show the overall rate of student satisfaction with their studies. As high as 65 to 85 percent of the students were satisfied with the study quality and content, but the lack of pedagogical competence of some of the teachers is the main source of students' dissatisfaction. As noted in the SER and during the site visit, the expert team remarked that there are differences in knowledge and skills acquired in various first cycle studies. For some students, parts of course material might be a repetition from first cycle courses. The expert team proposes to introduce the possibility to individualize study plans based on the first cycle study's field.

##### ***Medicine integrated studies***

Overall satisfaction rates with the studies over a particular semester and detailed survey results are published in the "Feedback" section of the VU intranet. The data from centralized student surveys serves the certification commission as an important element for teaching staff evaluation. Students take part in the election of the best teaching staff member of the year.

In case of student's dissatisfaction with the quality of courses, the MF administration and the SPC initiate meetings with lecturers and the coordinator looking for solutions. In individual cases, a decision is made to replace a member of the faculty.

As was stated in the SER, Student Representation plays an active role in the quality assurance system in the VU. Students participate in the dispute committees, monitor academic integrity and are entitled to submit proposals for improvement of teaching methods, and for adjusting the Medical Doctor Standard.

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

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

1. The Student representatives, as well as the social partners are involved in the decision making of SPC.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The system of monitoring of the staff achievements is neither organized nor introduced.
2. Lack of a sufficient system for improvement the pedagogical competences of the teaching staff.

## **IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE**

**Core definition:** Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>Improve the possibilities for students to personalize their study program.</p> <p>Clarify the need of doing 'voluntary' laboratory work of the students in the summer period.</p> <p>Create possibilities for students for more flexibility in their study program (examples from other European medical schools can be helpful).</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>Improve theoretical introduction into research including instructions on scientific writing and other transferable skills.</p> <p>Create space in the study program for more in depth scientific work.</p> <p>Incorporate and apply the principles of Open Science.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>Set up a mentor/tutor system to help and support students to strengthen their scientific training (NB a mentor/tutor should be someone independent of the supervisor).</p> <p>Explore more possibilities for international exchanges.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Implement obligatory educational training modules for faculty.</p>
Teaching staff	<p><i>For the "Second cycle study":</i></p> <p>Develop a long-term development strategy for academic staff, which includes digital skills and active learning techniques. Remuneration of the good practices of the Medicine Faculty to motivate teachers to develop their educational knowledge and skills could support the strategy.</p> <p>Give greater emphasis on employees' educational skills through protected and documented time to attend training courses under transparent regulations.</p> <p>Encourage and financially support staff members to participate in academic mobility calls.</p> <p><i>For the "Medicine integrated":</i></p>

	<p>Develop a long-term development strategy with a different focus for academic staff development (research professorship or teaching professorship).</p> <p>Establish a standardized educational program for staff.</p> <p>Incorporate interprofessional competences in teachers training.</p> <p>Establish mentorship for staff members (regardless of hierarchical relationships in the workplace).</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>Establish a centralized Medical Stimulation Facility with hybrid self-simulation learning and remote assessment labs supported by extensive IT facilities.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<p>Establish and introduce a system of monitoring of the staff achievements.</p> <p>Implement a system to improve pedagogical competence of the teaching staff.</p>

## VI. SUMMARY

The Vilnius University Medicine Faculty is one of the leading research institutions in the country and has a wide network of research partnerships that includes various VU faculties, Lithuanian and foreign universities and companies. The academic staff of MF also cooperates with business enterprises and other organisations. Joint research projects are carried out with Lithuanian and foreign companies.

The current evaluation of the study programmes shows that the objectives, curricula, number of teaching hours and division of individual subjects comply with European and Lithuanian regulations, but that more flexibility along the lines of European medical schools could be beneficial. Reference should also be made to the programmes for in-depth scientific work. The social partners should have real influence on the content of the study programmes.

Students could be more involved in the organisation of the study programmes, but this is currently not possible due to the heavy workload of students. In addition, most students are exposed to high stress levels due to their work alongside their studies (studies and part-time jobs).

It should be noted that the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are really well established and implemented and the study process is adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Students are selected in accordance with legal and institutional standards. Opportunities for student exchange and mobility programmes are available but still limited in practise. There is no clear strategy regarding the new trends of open science and science for society.

The staff of the Medical Biology and Medical Genetics programmes have the necessary qualifications to ensure the learning outcomes and are sufficient in number. However, the teaching activities of the faculty for the programmes are not sufficiently recognised for academic development and promotion. There also is not sufficient protected time for training.

There are sufficient resources for the successful delivery of the programmes, such as the existing Centre for Educational Skills. It is worth highlighting that the University is constantly improving its facilities and resources.

Although a multi-level evaluation system has been introduced at the University, the system for monitoring staff performance should be organised and implemented. The system for improving the teaching skills of the teaching staff should also be introduced.

In conclusion, the Integrated Studies (Medicine), Medical Biology and Medical Genetics programmes conducted at Vilnius University Medicine Faculty positively meet the evaluation criteria and the recommendations implemented in the report can contribute to the improvement of the programme.

On behalf of the expert team, I would like to thank the authorities of Vilnius University for their efforts in preparing the self-evaluation report, organising the site visit and the very productive discussions.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. dr. Józef Kobos