



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**STUDY FIELD of REHABILITATION**

at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences

**Expert panel:**

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2. Prof. dr. Hector Tsang, *academic*;
3. Prof. dr. Luigi Tesio, *academic*;
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5. Ms Emilija Karaseva, *students' representative*.

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Report language – English

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### Study Field Data\*

Title of the study programme	<b>Physiotherapy</b>	<b>Occupational therapy</b>
State code	6121GX008	6121GX009
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 4 years	Full-time studies, 4 years
Credit volume	240	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Health Sciences, Physiotherapist	Bachelor of Health Sciences, Occupational therapist
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	17 February 2004	24 June 2001

Title of the study programme	<b>Health Promotion and Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Art Therapy</b>
State code	6211GX010	628B90001 <sup>1</sup>
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 1,5 years From 2021 – 2 years	Part-time studies, 3 years
Credit volume	90 /from 2021 –120	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Health Sciences	Master of Health Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Bachelor's Degree in rehabilitation (occupational therapy or physiotherapy), occupational therapist or physiotherapist	Bachelor's Degree in arts, design, media arts, restoration of art objects, art history, architecture, rehabilitation, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing, public health, psychology, social work, special education, preschool and primary education, and art pedagogy, or Master's degree in medicine
Registration date of the study programme	18 May 2015	17 June 2013

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

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<sup>1</sup> *The study program Art Therapy is a joint second-cycle program of the LSMU and Vilnius Art Academy (VAA)*

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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 the 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 *9 November 2022*.

**Prof. dr. Sandra Buttigieg (panel chairperson)**, *Professor and Head of Department of Health Services Management, Faculty of Health Science, University of Malta (Malta);*

**Prof. dr. Hector Tsang**, *Head of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong);*

**Prof. dr. Luigi Tesio**, *Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, School of Medicine Milano (Italy);*

**Ms Jurgita Veliulytė**, *Head of Dep. of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy at the Valakupių Rehabilitation center (Lithuania);*

**Ms Emilija Karaseva**, *a student in the field of Architecture, 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.	
2.	

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF REHABILITATION FIELD STUDIES AT LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) is the largest institution of higher education in biomedical sciences in Lithuania with 100 years of academic experience. LSMU integrates studies, research, and clinical practice. LSMU consists of two main academies: Medical Academy and Veterinary Academy. A total of 6,168 students' study at LSMU, of which 834 study at the Faculty of Nursing (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT, p.5). The Faculty of Nursing was established in 1992 and currently has four Bachelor's (first cycle) study programs: Nursing, Midwifery, Physiotherapy, and Occupational Therapy, and four Master's (second cycle) study programs: Nursing Leadership, Advanced Nursing Practice, Art Therapy, and Health Promotion and Rehabilitation. In the first cycle, two study programs are implemented in the field of Rehabilitation: Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. Art Therapy and Health Promotion and Rehabilitation are modern second-cycle study programs in

the Rehabilitation field of study (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT, p. 5).

Several health-related programmes are offered, namely in Food Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Odontology, Pharmacy, Public Health and Veterinary studies. The University offers a modern and innovative pleasant environment that aims to educate and train highly qualified specialists in a fast-changing world of health sciences.

Medical teaching and research are primarily based on cooperation with the largest health care institution in the Baltic States – the Hospital of LSMU “Kauno klinikos”. Indeed, students of medicine, odontology, nursing, and rehabilitation gain their practical skills at this hospital. The hospital employs more than 2,200 physicians and residents and 2,400 members of the nursing staff to take care of over 90,000 patients at the LSMU Hospital each year ([LSMU Website](#)).

With its mission “To create, accumulate, systematise and disseminate scientific knowledge, the latest scientific and academic achievements, to teach and develop a creative, honest, enterprising, educated, healthy, independent and entrepreneurial personality, to foster democracy and welfare, a healthy and educated society. The exceptional role of LSMU in this education process is the pursuit of a healthy society that guarantees social and economic progress of the country, the civilizational identity of Lithuania, creation of the country’s and the world’s culture and traditions, their preservation and development. Animal health and welfare is an integral part of that ambition” ([Misija ir vertybės](#)), LSMU is committed to offer studies in rehabilitation science by means of first (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy) and second (Health Promotion and Rehabilitation; Art Therapy) cycle study programmes as university studies, and therefore more focused on the performance and application of research. (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT).

LSMU’s vision is that of “A leading European university of health sciences for the prosperity of the society. We strive to make the University one of the top 701+ in the world by the efforts of our entire community.” ([Misija ir vertybės](#)). The University has invested considerable funds in its infrastructure and is progressing steadily towards its vision. The website provides LSMU’s [guidelines for the strategic development 2022—2026](#).

There are two previous external evaluations that took place in 2015: one for first cycle Bachelor programme in Physiotherapy and one for first cycle Bachelor programme in Occupational Therapy.

The evaluation of the Physiotherapy programme had made ten recommendations: namely that the learning outcomes be revisited and refined in all subjects to reflect the programme outcomes, as well as the alignment with assessments and learning outcomes that had to be reached and be better specified in some subjects; reviewing the number of students admitted to the course; reviewing the partnership arrangements with private companies to avoid conflict of interests; ensuring that the content of the study units be based on professional judgments, evidence based practice and requirements of current practices and not on a specific equipment; removing reference to any specific trade name in the course documents is avoided and generic descriptions maintained to preserve credibility of the programme; strengthening the international aspect of the programme; expanding the list of partners in physiotherapy area; analysing the overlapping of facilities and learning spaces used at the same time for both Medical and PT students; reconsidering students' comments on study process concerning timetables, "second class" feeling, increase of "hands on" practice, usage of qualitative research methods, usage of student centred approaches; improving the students' participation in programme management for more transparent process in the selection of student representation and to ensure that the feedback loop is closed when decisions are made; and recommending that the PTP committee together with the Council of the Nursing Faculty reassess strategies of communication with teachers, students and social partners, since communication is key to establish excellence in the programme management. The recommendations that were addressed are: the term physiotherapy was universally applied and descriptions of study subjects in English revised and corrected. The learning outcomes of the study programme were also revised.

The evaluation of the Occupational Therapy programme had made six recommendations: namely improving the OT paradigm and didactic approach by introducing less bio-medical and more occupation-based subjects and cases; implementing problem-based learning in the learning environment; including more qualitative research; including the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) databases in the library; creating an ALUMNI club and collaborating with other universities in Lithuania to lobby for more places in rehabilitation studies. Problem-based learning training sessions, which were conducted by Lithuanian and by foreign lecturers, were organised for teaching staff. Problem-based learning was introduced in the Occupational Therapy study programme in 2016/17 academic year and carried out during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> years of the course. In addition, theories and models of Occupational Therapy have been updated since the 2018/19 academic year.

REHABILITATION (G06) Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (p. 11) refers to a recommendation in a previous evaluation to the Art Therapy study programme, namely that given that medicine and the arts are very different with varying levels of knowledge of students at the beginning of their studies, more elective subjects focused on transcultural topics should be introduced. This recommendation was addressed by introducing new elective subjects.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Rehabilitation* study field and *first cycle* Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences is given **positive** evaluation.

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
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.

Rehabilitation study field and second cycle **Health Promotion and Rehabilitation and Art Therapy** at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	24

\*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)*

The expert panel was asked to evaluate four study programmes in the study field rehabilitation, namely first cycle studies Bachelor of Health Sciences Physiotherapy and Bachelor of Health Sciences Occupational Therapy, as well as the second cycle studies Master of Health Sciences in Health Promotion and Rehabilitation and the second cycle studies Master of Health Sciences in Art Therapy.

LSMU has undergone a massive investment in terms of library, teaching, and laboratory facilities in the second largest city in Lithuania. The interviews with the various stakeholders confirmed what is stated in First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (p. 6-10) and Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (p. 6-11), as well as also through the distinctive features of the study programmes in First-cycle and Second-cycle studies ANNEXES.

Although there are ten specific study goals First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (p. 7) for both Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, and considered together as being both crucial in Rehabilitation, there is more emphasis given on physiotherapy with higher motivation of students to enter the Physiotherapy course than the Occupational Therapy one.

As regards the second cycle study programmes, more clarity is needed on the study aims, outcomes and content of the Master in Health Promotion and Rehabilitation and its five branches, namely Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Sports Physiotherapy, Health Promotion, or Children's Rehabilitation. This is important when it comes to satisfying the needs of society and the labour market, as well as to distinguish the competencies achieved over and above the first cycle study programmes.

The study program Art Therapy is a joint second-cycle programme of the LSMU and Vilnius Art Academy (VAA). The fact that graduates having a Bachelor's Degree in arts, design, media arts, restoration of art objects, art history, architecture, rehabilitation, occupational therapy,

physiotherapy, nursing, public health, psychology, social work, special education, preschool and primary education, and art pedagogy, or Master's degree in medicine can join the course has offered continuation of studies to a wide array of disciplines and therefore raising awareness of the benefits of art therapy in rehabilitation. LSMU is the first university in Lithuania to provide the professional qualification of an art therapist that meets the European professional requirements for specialists who have acquired this specialty. Since 2016, the Master degree in Health Sciences Art Therapy study programme is a full member of the European Consortium for Arts Therapies Education (ECARTE) (Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (p. 5).

### *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*

There is conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission statement of LSMU, which is "To create, accumulate, systematise and disseminate scientific knowledge, the latest scientific and academic achievements, to teach and develop a creative, honest, enterprising, educated, healthy, independent and entrepreneurial personality, to foster democracy and welfare, a healthy and educated society. The exceptional role of LSMU in the pursuit of a healthy society that guarantees social and economic progress of the country, the civilizational identity of Lithuania, creation of the country's and the world's culture and traditions, their preservation and development was clearly evident from the numerous meetings and interviews conducted with the senior management, teachers, students, graduates, and social partners. The first cycle study programmes in the field of Rehabilitation, namely Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy enable LSMU to develop their students into specialists that are sensitive to the changing external environment in terms of socio-economic, technological, and political-legal factors. Discussions with senior management, teachers, students, and social partners revealed the awareness of the external environment that determines the changes in the Rehabilitation study field and that requires the continuous development and improvements of study programmes. The graduate Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist holds a warrant to practise Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy to patients of all ages in establishments which, legally, can be provided by a Physiotherapist or an Occupational Therapist together with other health care professionals, or a private licensed practice of a physiotherapist. In addition, the graduates may be engaged in research in these institutions (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT, p. 7; REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies ANNEXES).

While the second cycle study programme in Health Promotion and Rehabilitation enables first-cycle graduates with Bachelor's Degree in rehabilitation (Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy), occupational therapists or physiotherapists, to mature in their studies and be more familiar with research and evidence-based practices, more clarity is needed on the study aims, outcomes and content of the Master in Health promotion and Rehabilitation in the choice of its five branches. As regards the second cycle study programme in Art Therapy, LSMU should be commended for establishing a joint programme with Vilnius Art Academy (VAA) to develop a creative and innovative aspect of rehabilitation. The Master of Science in Art Therapy is a unique programme in rehabilitation that provides a model of good practice of collaboration, in this case with Vilnius Art Academy, to a very good effect on the psychosocial aspect of care.

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

The study field, as well as first and second cycle study programmes comply with the legal requirements as specified in the legal documents provided for the study field. The Physiotherapy program's learning outcomes are in line with guidelines of the World Confederation of Physical Therapy and the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education. The Occupational therapy's learning outcomes meet the requirements of the Minimum Standard for the Education of Occupational Therapists of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, the guidelines of the European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education and the Council of Occupational Therapists.

The first cycle study programmes in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy comply with the study field of rehabilitation as follows:

**Table No. 1 Physiotherapy** Study programme and its compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes* (Computed from REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies ANNEXES, p. 7-10; 15-16) English version of Year 3 and 4 not available.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programmes</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	120 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	12 ECTS

ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	37 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	12 ECTS
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	50 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	28%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	30%

**Table No. 2 Occupational Therapy** Study programme and *its* compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes* (Computed from REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies ANNEXES, p.11-14)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programmes</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	120 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	12 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	37 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	12 ECTS
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	46 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	25.6%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	30%

The second cycle study programmes in Health promotion and Rehabilitation, and Art Therapy comply with the study field of Rehabilitation as follows:

**Table No. 3 Health Promotion and Rehabilitation** Study programme and its compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes* (REHABILITATION (G06) Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT and REHABILITATION (G06): Second-cycle studies ANNEXES)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programmes</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	90 ECTS Full-time from 2021
ECTS for the study field Information Services	No less than 60 ECTS	60 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	3 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	540 hours
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	

**Table No. 4 Art Therapy** Study programme and its compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes* (REHABILITATION (G06) Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT and REHABILITATION (G06): Second-cycle studies ANNEXES)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programmes</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	120 ECTS
ECTS for the study field Information Services	No less than 60 ECTS	81 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	9 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	30%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	70%

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

Both first and second cycle study programmes that have been evaluated through the full list of documentation provided, as well as during the site visits of physical premises and discussions with various stakeholders show LSMU's commitment towards establishing compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT; Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT; discussions with teachers on site visit).

The studies of Physiotherapy are assessed by evaluating the students' knowledge and abilities in a formative and summative manner, by means of an examination, assessment of an independently prepared student's work (project), Bachelor's thesis, and a practical clinical examination – Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

The studies of Occupational Therapy are assessed by evaluating the students' knowledge and abilities in a formative and summative manner, by an examination, assessment of an independently prepared student's work (project) and completed with a Bachelor's thesis.

The second cycle programmes also utilise formative and summative methods of assessments, which best demonstrate the knowledge, abilities, and skills acquired by the students. The assessment methods are student-centred that aim to motivate students to make best use of resources offered by LSMU.

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

The first cycle study programmes in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy demonstrate totality in the field and respective study programmes that through the blending of study subjects with practical placements in well-established teaching hospital and clinic environment enable the students to develop the required competences for the respective professions of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. The Occupational Therapy study programme is not as attractive as the Physiotherapy study programme. The University should invest more in this programme and to establish better relationships with other Lithuanian Universities regarding this programme.

The second cycle study programmes in Health promotion and Rehabilitation, and Art Therapy also demonstrate totality in the field and respective study programmes allows students to acquire the intended knowledge and skills at Master level while gaining more maturity in the subjects.

LSMU offers the availability of medical specialities and complex case mix in a large teaching hospital thereby providing a wide exposure to students, as well as fostering learning on various disabilities.

### *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*

The site visit and interviews showed that LSMU is student-friendly with provisions for personalised learning that is oriented to suit students' professional and personal needs. The students confirmed the support that they receive from both senior management and teachers to achieve their full potential. Both first cycle and second study programs include optional credits that provide students with opportunities to study subjects of their interest to complement the mandatory subjects.

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

Students in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Bachelor programmes start preparing for their theses in the 6th semester, with final theses complying with the field and first cycle requirements. The theses' topics are based on relevant problems in the Rehabilitation study field and are usually linked to the topics of teachers' ongoing research projects (REHABILITATION (G06) First-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT p. 14; discussions with teachers in site visit).

Students in Health promotion and Rehabilitation, and Art Therapy Master programmes start preparing for final theses in the 1st semester, with final theses complying with the field and second cycle requirements (REHABILITATION (G06) Second-cycle studies SELF-EVALUATION REPORT p. 10; discussions with teachers in site visit).

For both first and second cycles, the theses that were evaluated by the experts panel show the student's ability to analyse the topic, to describe research work in a coherent manner, and to present findings logically and clearly (Annex 1.3)

More scientific research should be conducted to match the substantial infrastructural investment.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Availability of medical specialities and complex case mix in a large teaching hospital offer a wide exposure to students, as well as foster learning on various disabilities.
2. The first-cycle study programmes in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy fall under the Faculty of Nursing – thereby exposing students from the Rehabilitation study field to students and teachers of other disciplines.
3. Problem-based learning has been introduced in OT.
4. The second cycle Master of Science in Art Therapy is a unique programme in rehabilitation that provides a model of good practice of collaboration, in this case with Vilnius Art Academy, to a very good effect on the psychosocial aspect of care.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Occupational therapy study programme is not as attractive as the physiotherapy study programme. Perhaps a greater investment in this study field in terms of resources and interaction with other Universities, both in Lithuania or abroad, is worth considering.
2. More clarity is needed on the study aims, outcomes and content of the Master in Health promotion and Rehabilitation and its five branches.
3. More scientific research should be conducted to match the substantial infrastructural investment.
4. Requests for participation in Erasmus programmes still low, albeit well publicised.

### **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*

The following comments refer to both study Cycles. The LSMU as a whole has a relevant activity of Research. Of note, the University has a Journal with impact factor 2.9 (“Medicina”, MDPI

Publisher) and also has a “Student Scientific Society”. This is consistent with the declared goal 7 “to train highly qualified physiotherapists and occupational therapists who can apply modern scientific knowledge and perform critical analysis” (1st cycle SER, page 7). Also, “...the University Teaching staff devotes a third of their working time for research and experimental development...” (SER; page 11). This heavy engagement is consistent with national priorities for research, given in Fig. 2.1. It must be stressed that these priorities do not mention Rehabilitation but biological sciences, technology, and five clinical areas (neurosciences, oncology etc.). In the Nursing program (Rehabilitation is filed under the Nursing field, albeit autonomous), 19 ongoing research projects are cited) but only three of them seem consistent with the Rehabilitation field: these are

- a) The Assessment of High-Power Laser Impact for Clinically Identified Chronic Plantar Fascia, Achilles Tendon Disorder
- b) The effect of the long-term physical training effects on the cardio-respiratory function, left ventricular (LV) remodelling, the alteration of the physical strain tolerance and quality of life for the patients after aortic valve surgery

And (partially)

- c) Qualitative practice is the basis for a career.

The SER also shows that “In 2018-2021, the Teaching staff who teach the subjects of the Rehabilitation field of study Rehabilitation published a total of 120 articles in peer-reviewed journals with a citation index in the CA WoS database. Articles assigned to Q1 and Q2 quartiles accounted for 58% of all the published articles”. This information may be misinterpreted. Most of these publications are not targeted at the field (this point also emerged during the meetings between the expert panel and the teachers). A simple search on SCIVAL shows that under the sub-heading “Rehabilitation”, only 9 publications can be retrieved between 2008 and 2021 (see Figure) If one looks at the production of articles in the “Humanities” SCIVAL topic (perhaps capturing some articles from the Art Therapy master program), SCIVAL gives only one publication in 2018 (not shown). Of course, SCIVAL outputs may vastly underestimate the article production. Also, what constitutes a “rehabilitation” article is still a matter of debate across the scientific community (e.g., should an article on knee biomechanics be considered a “rehabilitation” article?). On the other hand, SCIVAL also includes other items (e. g. book chapters). In any case, SCIVAL suggests that this intense research does not prioritise

rehabilitation strictly. Consistently enough, the SER (page 12) states that “The most significant scientific publications are related to the topics of the field of nursing science”.

This under-representation of specific Rehabilitation research cannot be ascribed to the competencies of the Teaching staff. The staff looks highly qualified. The LSMU research recently underwent a formal assessment (SER, page 11), giving rise to the following result:

2019		Medicine	FTE	RATIO
Formal assessment res.points		925,5	110,4	9,2
FTE (NURSING)	Researchers	100,1	10,9	10,2

*source: LSMU SER 2002, page 11*

The ratio of research “points” (however computed) to the Full-Time Equivalents is higher for the Nursing field, compared to the “Medicine field”. Therefore, the low rate of specific production looks like a matter of institutional policy, not individual competences. This non-specificity of the publications is at variance with the production of highly specific Theses. (see below) The Rehabilitation programmes are nested within a large general hospital. On the one side, this foster the circulation of information and multidisciplinary collaboration. On the other hand, this facilitates the dilution of rehabilitation research within non-rehabilitation research programmes so that the growth and the visibility of the discipline is attenuated. Also, there is no mention in the SER of any specific collaboration with the residency programme in the Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine at LSMU. This seems a lost chance to trigger research programmes nested in clinical activities. Consistent with this under-representation of the Field in the University, the general student’s facilities are modern and broad (e.g., the library and the primary research labs), whereas the. In contrast, the Clinical Rehab Units (the inpatient and outpatient units the Expert Committee visited at LSMU in Kaunas) are pretty small, with basic equipment.

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

In both study Cycles (Bachelor and Master degrees), the content of studies is in line with the state of the art in the wide area of Rehabilitation medicine (see Annexes 1 and 2). There is a good balance between biological and behavioural contents. The former span from cell biology to movement biomechanics, encompassing physiology of autonomic nervous system, sphincter control, and other. The scientific contents are tailored on the goals of the various Courses (e.g. psychology is given a greater emphasis on the Art therapy master; technology of aids in the OT program etc. The link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology is ensured by the competencies of the teachers: as stated in the SER, about one third of their working time is devoted to research activities. Also (SER, page 12), “improving scientific competence of the Teaching staff and the new knowledge acquired are used in teaching students as well as in planning and supervising their final theses”. Not surprisingly all of the theses look well targeted in the Rehabilitation field. The topics reveal a very good “tuning” of the teaching programs with the most recent development of Rehabilitation sciences and also of their interaction with the arts.

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

The students’ involvement seems excellent. “...students’ scientific (research planning, literature interpretation, and critical evaluation) and “soft” (professionalism, public speaking, creativity, communication skills, etc.) competencies will be developed from the first year...Corresponding changes were initiated in the organisation of the classes (see for instance SER first cycle, page 38)...”. They can specialise in various subfields (in the second cycle PT program) and are offered a research-dedicated web portal. In short, students are offered good opportunities to be involved in research programs and communicate their results (for instance, see the exhaustive SER report, second Cycle, pages 17-18). The exact number of students involved in formal research projects is not provided. The theses’ titles, however, suggest that at least some of these were nested within research projects. The clinical facilities at Kaunas Hospital seem underdosed compared to the general facilities offered to LSMU students (see above). The Clinical Rehabilitation unit shown to the Experts is small, within non-modern facilities, and without updated technologies. Research in Rehabilitation requires a suitable case mix and a modern health care context, not only biological laboratories.

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

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. High qualification of teachers
2. Very good involvement of students in research activities
3. Very good facilities for study (Library) and primary research (Labs)

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Low specificity of rehabilitation research
2. Low connection with the Residency program of Physical and Rehabilitation medicine
3. Sub-optimal clinical rehabilitation facilities

### **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***

Student admission requirements and process are comprehensive and definite. The General admission is organised and coordinated by the Association of Lithuanian higher education institutions for general admission (hereinafter – LAMA BPO), which is authorised by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania after revision and approval by the Senate of Lithuanian University of Health Science (LSMU). All the information about students' admission order and requirements is available on the [internet webpage of LSMU](#). The main admission criteria is a competition score calculated assessing the grades of state maturity examinations of Biology, Lithuanian Language and Literature, including the grades of state maturity examinations or annual grade averages of Chemistry or Mathematics and of one freely chosen subject. By the Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (LR MESS) the minimum competitive score is set annually. Admission applications and all documents are submitted only electronically. Student admissions are low, in comparison to the application numbers. A lot of students are being rejected, even with high scores. In reference to the tables and figures in SER (Table 3.1; Table 3.2; Figure 3.2) it is visible that in previous years only applicants with superb marks were admitted to university, however, overall admitted students' number was low. In the last year students' application numbers have dropped, however, more students were admitted. It must be mentioned that the marks of admitted students were overall lower than in previous years. Therefore, LSMU's admission system into the rehabilitation study field should better reflect society's needs and ensure that the intake of students in this field is increased. In particular, the

intake into occupational therapy is very low – 3 out of 73 applicants in 2018; 3 out of 72 applicants in 2019; and 6 out of 76 applicants in 2020.

For the second cycle, the criteria for admission are mostly based on the completion of a first cycle study program in rehabilitation (for the Health Promotion and Rehabilitation Study program) and a wider range of programs for ART therapy. Additional points are given for both programs. The numbers are consistent across the years mostly state-funded for Health promotion and rehabilitation - 47 in 2018, 44 in 2019 and 38 in 2020 whereas for ART therapy the state-funded are in balance with self-funded places 8/12 in 2018, 8/13 in 2019 and 8/9 in 2020.

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

The qualification of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy is recognized in accordance with the procedure developed by the SKVC. If there are no general guidelines for the recognition of qualifications, the SKVC is consulted. The entrant may apply to the SKVC for the recognition of education obtained in foreign institutions and the determination of subject equivalents. Credit for partial studies is given in accordance with the provisions set out in the [LSMU Regulation of Studies](#). Throughout the interviews no negative remarks were given, and the panel concluded that the overall process is clear

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

Students from the Rehabilitation field in LSMU have great opportunities for academic mobility – detailed information is provided on LSMU website. Students are being encouraged by their teachers, administration and are being well supported during their engagement in projects and mobility programmes. According to SER mainly international students are participating in mentioned activities, and only a small number of Lithuanian students are engaging in academic mobility. Experts panel find the conditions for academic mobility of students to be clear, however, national students need more encouragement and a campaign of academic mobility promotion is advised.

In 2018-2020, 10 students of the program Physiotherapy and 2 students of the study program Occupational Therapy participated in the Erasmus+ exchange program. Under the Erasmus+ program, 11 physiotherapy and one occupational therapy student (from Turkey, Austria, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, and Albania) came to LSMU for traineeship. Students of the

Faculty of Nursing study program Occupational Therapy participated in the week-long international courses "Innovation and Creativity for Life" ("IC4Life"), which are also attended by students from Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, and Bulgaria.

For the second cycle programs, there were no students who came from abroad or went abroad in the study programs Art Therapy and Health Promotion and Rehabilitation.

#### *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*

Students are provided sufficiently with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. The students are given the opportunity to improve their academic results by retaking failed examinations. The students who cannot continue studies due to special circumstances can be granted an academic leave. There is a possibility to return after the academic break and resume their studies. Students are eligible for the social and incentive scholarships. Accommodation is provided for students, the applications for accommodation are submitted through LSMUSIS website. The students have the opportunity to receive psychological support from experienced psychologists. A system of psychosocial adaptation for the LSMU international students is being implemented, in which national students can also participate in: Ambassador Programme, Mentor Programme, Tutor Programme, Parent Programme, coordinators, psychologist counselling, and psychological adaptation research for better psychosocial adaptation. The students have the opportunity to implement their ideas and initiatives by participating in the activities of student organisations. The expert panel finds assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field to be good.

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

The detailed information about the study aims and the objectives of taught subjects is provided in the subject descriptions, published and periodically updated in the LSMUSIS. Students get enough information and support from administration and mentors. Great initiative of "Quality Thermometer" is being implemented, where students can give feedback about their study modules and teachers. From the interviews that took place, an expert panel concluded that this initiative is being positively evaluated by students and staff. First-year students are assigned a curator, at least once per month the curator meets with his/her student group and advises to help to overcome appearing issues. The students can communicate with the curator all the time

by e-mail or in person. The expert panel finds evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling to be good.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. LSMU rehabilitation study field programs are student-friendly.
2. LSMU is committed to academic mobility.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Low student admission numbers compared to applications.

### **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*

The way how teaching was affected and amended during the period of pandemic is clearly documented in the first cycle SER (p. 22, 2<sup>nd</sup> para.). Contingency plans included the use of online and hybrid teaching. In addition, clinical placement was rescheduled so as to avoid being affected by the quarantine procedures in the hospitals. However, this kind of information is not found in the SER for the second cycle.

In terms of teaching/learning methods and assessment, there are both similarities and differences between the two cycles of studies. For the first cycle studies, student-centred teaching/learning methods are used. The methods are selected by the teaching staff. Such methods include teamwork, concept maps, expert evaluation, case analysis, etc. But for the second cycle study programmes, the teaching/learning methods are more strictly governed by the university which has to be according to LSMU Regulation of Studies. But both classical (informational, practical, etc.) and modern learning approaches (simulations, creativity) are used.

Similarities exist in both cycles of study programmes in the collection of student feedback and teaching staff experience for further improvement of the teaching/learning process.

Assessment of students are closely related to the learning outcomes and the method of assessment is selected by the teaching staff. Meanwhile, the assessment encourages students to be active throughout the study programmes. For programmes at both cycles, a cumulative approach is used which consists of continuous assessment and a final examination. Finally, virtual tools (e.g., Moodle, Microsoft Team, etc.) are used.

The above practice is consistent with the opinions we received from the teachers we met. The teachers told the evaluation team that each teacher had to go through a course on “Introduction to university teaching”. This practice provided essential knowledge and skills teachers needed to know before they commenced their teaching career in LSMU.

According to the students we met, the comments on the teaching and learning process of the study programmes are very good. The students included a good mix of international students, with one from Hong Kong, a few from India and one from Italy.

Graduates of the first-cycle programs in the field of Rehabilitation can continue their studies in second-cycle studies at other universities offering relevant programs and at the LSMU Faculty of Nursing which offers a second-cycle study program “Health and Rehabilitation”. Students who have completed the second-cycle Rehabilitation study programs Health Promotion and Rehabilitation or Art Therapy may continue their studies in the third cycle to obtain a doctoral degree.

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

Accessibility and support given to students from vulnerable groups and with special needs are clearly documented in the SER for the first cycle (p. 23) and second cycle (p. 27-28). The principles and operation in ensuring equal opportunities and support to ensure their completion of the study are unambiguously set out. The administrative arm of this is the LSMU Coordinating Commission for Students with Disability. Financial support is available to students with disabilities and social scholarships are available to students coming from low income families. In addition, there are also project funds to increase accessibility and improve their quality of study in LSMU. In the second cycle study programs SER (p. 27, 3<sup>rd</sup> para.), the study process for these students can be tailor-made to suit individual needs.

### *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*

The monitoring system of student study progress is quite similar in both the first cycle study programs (SER, p. 24) and second cycle study programs (SER, p. 28-29). The monitoring system is reported to be effective and transparent in ensuring students' achievements and honesty. This is based on the regulations set out in Chapters IX and X of the LSMU RS. The system monitors student attendance and results of continuous and final evaluations. The student feedback on their results is recorded in the database LSMUSIS and the Moodle environment. Monitoring is done at both departmental, faculty, and university levels. The analysis of the results of the students is linked to the quality assurance process.

For the second cycle Arts Therapy programme, there is one more way for monitoring of student progress. This is the participation of the annual international scientific conference titled "Art Therapy and Personal Health" together with overseas lectures. This allows the final theses of the students to be assessed under an international context.

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

Policy and procedures of employment evaluation and career counselling are also similar in both first cycle (SER, p. 24-25) and second cycle (p. 29-30). The LSMU Career Centre implements the career monitoring with data obtained from the state information systems and departmental registers. Information is collected by the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA). In addition, there are career monitoring surveys to provide information on the employment status of the graduates of each of the study programmes.

For the first cycle of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy programmes, it ranges from 62.5% to 87.5% for the past three academic years. It is in general satisfactory. However, the recent year (2020-2021) for the Physiotherapy graduates is only 63.64% which is not good enough. One possible explanation given in the SER is that some of the students continued studies which made the employment figure slight lower. But it is good in general that a small group (less than 10) of the students in each academic year continued their study after graduation.

Similarly, the employment figures for the second cycle of Health Promotion and Rehabilitation programmes are also high (over 80%). But the drop-out rates for the past three years are remarkably high, with the figure standing at 6 in the year 2021. Reasons for dropping out are

not stated in the SER. As to the AT program, the employment figures are also reported to be very high (nearly 90%).

The high employment figures may be related to the good comments of the employers we met. They spoke highly of the graduates of LSMU that they had a very good foundation of anatomy and physiology, good sense of self-confidence and good communication skills. Despite the high employment figures reported in the SER, social partners we met pointed out that most of the employment opportunities are from conventional hospital and rehabilitation settings. Opportunities for private practice are still limited. This will limit the job market and employment prospects of the graduates in the long run. In addition, it seems that the employers and social partners did not care a lot about the differences of the graduates from the first and second cycles. They put attention only on their clinical and practical skills. The research knowledge and skills of the second cycle graduates are not much appreciated by the social partners. Finally, social partners seem not fully aware of the importance of Occupational Therapy in the Rehabilitation process. Job opportunities are more limited for the Occupational Therapy graduates. This may also have an adverse effect on the admission of Occupational Therapy students.

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

In both cycles of study programmes, there are clear principles and procedures of ensuring academic integrity. The principles of academic honesty are set out in the LSMU Regulation of Studies. If a student is found to commit a mistake related to academic integrity, the case will be investigated in the commission with representatives from teaching staff, faculty administration and students.

In the first cycle study programmes (SER, p. 25-26), elaborations are mainly on maintaining student behaviours during assessment and examinations.

In the second cycle study programmes (SER, p. 30-31), more elaboration is on plagiarism, falsification of research data, etc. Meanwhile, there are also mentions of regulations to maintain tolerance and non-discrimination and observance of equal opportunities.

#### *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*

There has been a transparent and seemingly effective appeal mechanism in study programmes of both cycles. Students have ways to launch their appeals in case they do not agree with the assessment and examination results. Nevertheless, there have not been any cases of appeals in all study programs in both the first and second cycle.

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

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

1. The system monitors student attendance and results of continuous and final evaluations. The student feedback on their results is recorded in the database LSMUSIS and the Moodle environment. Monitoring is done at both departmental, faculty and university levels. The analysis of the results of the students is linked to the quality assurance process.
2. The high employment figures may be related to the good comments of the employers we met. They spoke highly of the graduates of LSMU that they had a very good foundation of anatomy and physiology, good sense of self-confidence and good communication skills.

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

1. Most of the employment opportunities are from conventional hospital and rehabilitation settings. Opportunities for private practice are less.
2. The drop-out rates for some programs are high. Employers and social partners did not care a lot about the differences of the graduates from the first and second cycles. They put attention only on their clinical and practical skills. The research knowledge and skills of the second cycle graduates are not much appreciated by the social partners. This will in the long run discourage graduates of the first cycle studies from continuing studies in the second cycle.
3. In the first cycle study programmes, concerns about academic integrity are mainly on maintaining student behaviours during assessments and examinations. But the importance of plagiarism is not mentioned. This should in fact be included in the first cycle studies as well.
4. Social partners seem not fully aware of the importance of occupational therapy in the rehabilitation process. Job opportunities are more limited for occupational therapy

graduates. This may also have an adverse effect on the admission of occupational therapy students.

### 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*

The quantity and quality of teaching staff for the first cycle and second cycle programmes are separately reported in the first cycle SER (p. 27 and p. 29) and the second cycle SER (p. 33 to 35). There are many similarities among these two cycles of studies. These similarities are listed as follows. First, the selection criteria for the appointment of teaching staff are based on teaching competencies. This is to make sure the goals of the study programmes are achieved. The recruitment is based on requirements set out by legal acts. Second, all teaching staff are evaluated every five years for certification purposes. Staff having gone through the second certification become permanent staff of the university. Third, the staff to student ratios for all study programmes are extremely low (less than 1:10) in comparison with international standards. Fourth, all teaching staff update their clinical skills by taking part in clinical practice in the LSMU University Hospital. Fifth, most teaching staff are highly experienced in teaching. Finally, all teaching staff are required to speak on foreign language, but not necessarily English. The main difference is that the teaching staff of the second cycle programmes are required to take part in research activities and publish papers as dissemination of their study results. All the above information is consistent with the message we received in our meetings with the senior management and SER writing group.

According to the study field programmes' plans and teaching staff list provided by LSMU, 24 out of the 37 subjects (i.e., 65% of the subjects) are coordinated by teachers with science degrees and/or science research interests for the first cycle Occupational Therapy programme, and 38 out of the 50 subjects (i.e., 76% of the subjects) are coordinated by teachers with similar portfolio for the first cycle Physiotherapy programme. The teaching staff list of the second cycle programmes show that 29 out of the 34 lecturers (i.e., 85%) possess a science degree. These

demonstrate that the staffing composition of both the first and second cycle programmes comply with the legal requirements.

### *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)*

The information for this point of the two cycles is documented separately in the first cycle SER (p. 29 to 31) and the second cycle SER (p. 35 to 36) separately. The administration and implementation of the two cycles is essentially the same. There is a central administration in LSMU to oversee academic mobility of teaching staff. Teaching staff may initiate their mobility programmes. But the selection is competitive. The mobility programmes are short-term, lasting mainly from 2 days to 2 months. The mobility programmes are funded by LSMU. These programmes are bi-directional, consisting of both outbound and inbound visits. But the international partners are mainly in Europe although there are a few reports of China, Japan and USA. This is regarded as part of the workload of teaching staff. The actual percentage of teachers taking part in these mobility programs is less than 25% for the past few years.

The main difference is that teaching staff of the first cycle mainly focus on development in teaching methods while those of the second cycle give attention to the development of research activities at the same time. But in our meeting with the teachers, the impression we received is that LSMU actually pays much attention to research competencies in the process of promotion. Teachers expressed that funding for conducting research activities was not adequate.

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

In this part, the SER for the first cycle study programmes is integrated into 3.5.2 (p. 29 to 31). The information related to the improvement of the competencies of teaching staff is limited. It is reported that the Senate mandates this in accordance with the LSMU procedure. It is reported that all teachers went through a distance-training course to transfer the study process to online platforms. This is because of the pandemic taking place two years ago worldwide.

For the SER of the second cycle study programmes, the information is reported from p. 36 to 38. The report contains more information compared with the one for the first cycle study programs. It is reported that improvement in the competencies of teaching staff is linked to the five-year periods of certification described earlier in this report. At each certification, the university will set out conditions for improvement for teaching staff so that all of them need to

work hard and improve their competencies towards achieving the conditions. In addition, it is also mentioned that similar actions need to be done by the teaching staff on an annual basis for more short-term improvement.

However, it is not known to the evaluation team what are aspects of improvement needed from the university's perspective and their weights. It is also uncertain if similar requirements are needed in the teaching staff of the first cycle study programmes.

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

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

1. The selection criteria for the appointment of teaching staff are based on teaching competencies. This is to make sure the goals of the study programs are achieved.
2. All teaching staff are evaluated every five years for certification purposes. This is to make sure the quality of the teaching staff in terms of teaching and research.
3. The staff-to-student ratios for all study programmes are extremely low (less than 1:10) in comparison with international standards.
4. All teaching staff have to keep updated on their clinical skills by taking part in clinical practice in the LSMU University Hospital.
5. Most teaching staff are highly experienced in teaching.
6. Finally, all teaching staff are required to speak in a foreign language.
7. Teaching staff of the second cycle programmes are required to take part in research activities and publish papers as dissemination of their study results.
8. The administration and implementation of the two cycles study programmes are clearly reported to make sure there is adequate academic mobility of teaching staff.
9. LSMU funds the mobility programs of teachers.
10. These mobility programs are bi-directional, consisting of both outbound and inbound visits.
11. Staff development programmes of teachers of the second cycle are more focused on the development of research activities.
12. During the pandemic period, there was training among teaching staff on the use of online teaching.
13. There are measures to ensure the teaching competencies of teaching staff per year and per five years.

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

1. English is not a mandatory foreign language to be mastered by teachers. This will limit their collaboration with English speaking countries.
2. The mobility programmes among teachers are mainly short-term, lasting only from 2 days to 2 months.
3. The mobility programmes among the teachers are restrictive mainly to Europe, with limited opportunities to go beyond Europe to North America and the Asian Pacific region.
4. The actual percentage of teachers taking part in these mobility programmes is less than 25% for the past few years. This figure has room for increase.
5. Although staff development of teachers in the second cycle is more focused on research, it is expressed by the teaching staff we met that research funding support is not adequate.
6. It is expressed by teachers we met that promotion is primarily based on research. The expert panel suggests, however, there should be a more balanced approach between teaching and research performances.

## **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*

The premises for Rehabilitation field studies at LSMU are located in the common premises of the university, the faculty and individual departments. Also, in the departments of Kaunas Clinics of LSMU Hospital, Kulautuva Rehabilitation Hospital, Children's Rehabilitation Hospital, Kaunas Clinical Hospital. LSMU Study Centre coordinates lecture times and room availability. In addition, the premises of the Kaunas faculty of LSMU and VDA and the premises of all departments of VDA are used for the studies of the Art Therapy second degree study programme. Art Therapy programme students have the opportunity to use a gallery where they can exhibit their artwork. Auditoriums are equipped with video and audio demonstration tools – multimedia and computers.

The laboratories have diagnostic equipment and devices for assessing the condition of patients required for different study programmes. During the visit, the students did not complain about the study facilities or the lack of equipment. The premises used for studies meet all the requirements of occupational safety and hygiene standards and are adapted for persons with special needs. Free wireless Internet connection is available in all classrooms, laboratories and library reading rooms. The university has installed virtual distance learning platforms: LSMU - Microsoft Teams and VDA KF - Google Meet.

The university cooperates with more than 30 hospitals and rehabilitation centres located in different regions, so students have the opportunity to practise throughout Lithuania. In the Health Promotion and Rehabilitation programme of the second cycle studies, practice is not provided, but practical training takes place in the training rooms of the Rehabilitation Clinic of LSMUL KK, the outpatient department of the Sports Medicine Clinic and the Children's Rehabilitation Clinic.

During the visit, the experts visited the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of the LSMUL KK Rehabilitation Clinic, it was noticed that the rooms and hydrotherapy procedures in the department are not adapted to persons with mobility disabilities or disorders, electrotherapy services are performed by FMR nurses and doctors, which reduces the student's options for choosing a target group during thesis research.

LSMU has a modern health sciences library with public reading facilities. Methodological resources (textbooks, books, periodicals, etc.) are suitable, sufficient and available. In the library, students can work in modern reading rooms. The library's working hours are favourable for everyone to study independently, because the library is open 24 hours a day, and an independent system for taking and returning books is installed.

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

The new building of the Faculty of Nursing will open its doors to the study process, the infrastructure of which is dedicated to the study process, scientific research and practice conducted by students and teachers. The process of planning and upgrading the resources needed to carry out the field studies is described in the light of changing student and teaching staffs' needs.

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

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

1. Learning spaces and the library are very attractive, innovative and encourage the desire to study.
2. A wide network of social partners, in whose bases students can develop professional practice skills.

### **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***

The principles and procedures of the internal and external quality assurance system of both the first (SER, p. 34 to 37) and second (SER, p. 45) cycle study programmes are almost identical. The QA system is based on the principles of student-centeredness, partnership, transparency, subsidiarity and publicity. The internal QA is well documented in LSMU documents and is under the governance of the Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance. The QA procedure is ensured through both external and internal evaluation. Internal quality has various levels of evaluation from subject to institutional levels. External evaluation consists of programme and institutional levels.

In the second cycle SER, four assessment and indicators are listed in the internal QA process which include meeting the expectations of the labour market, society and students; having an efficient process and course of studies; continuous improvement of teachers' qualifications; and provision of study resources. It seems to be the preliminary adoption of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which is now commonly adopted in departmental and programme management in many prestigious and high-ranking universities around the world. But, how these four factors are used in the entire QA process is not well articulated in the SER.

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

The engagement of students and stakeholders in the QA process is reported for the first cycle study programs in the SER (p. 37 to 38) and for the second cycle study programmes in the SER

(p. 45 to 46). The practice and structure of both cycles are similar. Student representatives are participating in the study issues of LSMU at various levels, from working groups at the programme level to the University Council. Similarly, external stakeholders are heavily involved in the different matters of the study programmes, especially in the provision of clinical placement, review of final theses of students. In addition, it is good to know that there is engagement from overseas partners who are invited to discuss matters of the study programmes. But most of the partners are from Europe such as Albania and Belgium. There is only one partner from the USA according to the SER.

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

This point is not clearly reported in the SER of the first cycle study programmes. Fortunately, there are a few paragraphs in the SER (p. 46) of the second cycle on this point of concern. According to the report, there is a clear mechanism for collecting qualitative and quantitative data at the university for quality assurance purposes. The information is collected via surveys of the students, teachers, and graduates; and statistical figures relevant to the programmes. The University's Commission uses the data for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance. The results of the analysis of the information are released to the university academic community and the public via the University Weekly and website.

### *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*

Similar to the previous point of concern, this is not well documented in the SER of the first cycle of study programmes. However, there is a clear report for second cycle studies (SER, p. 46 to 48). According to the report, the QA is highly dependent upon the opinions of students and other stakeholders which are collected via various surveys and student questionnaires. In 2019, there was the launching of the "Quality Thermometer", which detects the quality of the study programmes by allowing students to answer only a few well-thought-out questions. This QA mechanism allows senior management of the programs and LSMU to have a quick understanding of some abnormalities in the quality of the programmes.

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

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

1. There is engagement from overseas partners who are invited to discuss matters of the study programmes.
2. There is the “Quality Thermometer”, which detects quality of the study programmes by allowing students to answer only a few well-thought-out questions. This QA mechanism allows senior management of the programmes and LSMU to have quick understanding on some abnormalities as to the quality of the programmes.

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

1. Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is now commonly used in departmental and programme management in many prestigious and high-ranking universities around the world. But there is limited mention of the use of KPI in the entire QA process.
2. Most of the external partners are from Europe such as Albania and Belgium. There should be more from places other than Europe.
3. Similarly, information on the evaluation of the opinion of the field students in relation to the QA process is limited for the first cycle study programmes.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
<p>Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the first cycle study programmes, it is recommended that LSMU invests more resources in the Occupational Therapy study programme, which seems to be less attractive than the Physiotherapy study programme. This is important to achieve a more holistic approach towards integrated PT and OT as part of Rehabilitation. This may be achieved by collaborating with other Universities, both in Lithuania or abroad.</li> <li>2. For the second cycle study programmes, it is recommended that the study aims, outcomes and content of the Master in Health promotion and Rehabilitation and its five branches are better clarified.</li> <li>3. Common to both first and second cycles, it is recommended that better communication with social partners is achieved to identify relevant topics that could be researched as part of the final theses. In addition, more scientific research should be conducted to match the substantial infrastructural investment.</li> <li>4. Participation in Erasmus programmes should be encouraged and supported as this is still low, albeit well publicised.</li> </ol>
<p>Links between science (art) and studies</p>	<p>It is recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to improve on the number of publications, and publication/teachers ratio, and</li> <li>2. to improve links with related Faculties in particular the Faculty of Medicine.</li> </ol> <p>Given the competencies and the resources available, a larger investment in this field is recommendable:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specific rehab research should be incentivised and supported.</li> <li>2. Cultural/scientific exchanges with related areas in Lithuania or abroad (Physical Medicine &amp; Rehabilitation Specialization, Occupational Therapy, Speech therapy, Cognition sciences) should be increased.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To encourage higher student applications in particular in occupational therapy.</li> </ol>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To establish contacts with the private sector so as to improve the job market and employment prospects of the graduates in the long run.</li> <li>2. To monitor the drop-out rates of students.</li> <li>3. To ensure clarity with employers and social partners on the differences of the graduates from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles.</li> <li>4. To ensure the importance of plagiarism in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle studies as well.</li> <li>5. To raise awareness with social partners on the importance of occupational therapy in the rehabilitation process. Job opportunities are more limited for occupational therapy graduates. This may also have an adverse effect on the admission of occupational therapy students.</li> </ol>
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve opportunities for academic mobility.</li> <li>2. To improve research funding</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To encourage the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation department of the LSMUL KK Rehabilitation Clinic to adapt the premises for persons with mobility disabilities and to expand the positions corresponding to the competences of physiotherapists.</li> </ol>

Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="635 165 1522 259">1. To develop Key Performance Indicators as part of the QA process.</li><li data-bbox="635 277 1522 371">2. To widen collaboration with external partners beyond Europe.</li></ol>
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## V. SUMMARY

Overall, the Rehabilitation field of the LSMU deserves a positive evaluation in all six areas of assessment, i.e.

1. Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum
2. Links between science (Art) and studies
3. Student admission and support
4. Teaching and learning, student performance, and graduate employment
5. Teaching staff
6. Learning facilities and resources

Correspondingly, on a 1 to 5 scoring system, scores ranged from 3 to 4 across the areas (see Table on page 10 of the present EER).

In general, the Rehabilitation field seems to benefit from the overall excellence of the LSMU in terms of cultural tradition, modern and comprehensive medical premises, modern facilities of teaching/learning, established attitude to research, and proper procedures for the government of communication and teaching/learning processes. This nature of the Rehabilitation field being “part of the LSMU” is reflected by the various strengths evidenced under the multiple paragraphs of this EER. At the same time, the experts panel shared the impression that this may be, paradoxically, a relative weakness, given the relevant human and technical resources available in this outstanding University (and its teaching Hospital), somehow overshadowing the specificity and the importance of the Rehabilitation field. The following examples seem to support this impression:

- a) For the research area, the low production of specific indexed articles, compared to the output in the Nursing or the general “Medicine” areas, Also, the limited resources devoted to individual laboratories and, (to the least, in Kaunas Hospital) to clinical rehabilitation which is the requisite for specific research.
- b) For the first cycle programmes, the low attractiveness of the Occupational Therapy Programme, which perhaps deserves more visibility across both students and other stakeholders
- c) For the second cycle programmes, the still blurred identity of the Health Promotion Programme.

This point needs some argumentation. The second cycle of Programmes aims to improve the student's overall cultural/methodological competencies and their personal "maturation" (a word that repeatedly emerged during the meeting of the panel and LSMU representatives). This goal is commendable, but in itself does not aim at satisfying specific market requirements. The original Art Therapy programme seems to meet such a specific academic goal. Still, this goal appears scarcely pertinent to the Health Promotion programme, articulated in 5 branches (yet, with no practical training). This ambiguity (theoretical specialisation, with no specific clinical practice) may explain the modest interest from the market stakeholders, which continue to consider the Bachelor and the Master levels as equivalent from their perspective (a problem not unique to Lithuania, by the way). Suppose these Courses (particularly the Health Promotion one) are intended to build research-oriented (and academic career-oriented) professionals. In that case, this goal should be emphasised, made more explicit to the students, and heavily substantiated in the student's selection and the Course programmes. In short, Rehabilitation programmes at LSMU are good, while to the panel, it seems that LSMU is probably more than that. The Rehabilitation programmes, therefore, have room to shine more on their own, not only with reflected light. This perspective is underlying the weaknesses and strengths suggestions given in the present EER.

**Expert panel chairperson signature:**  
**Prof. dr. Sandra Buttigieg**