



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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

**Expert panel:**

1. Prof. dr. Sandra Buttigieg (panel chairperson), *academic*;
2. Prof. dr. Hector Tsang, *academic*;
3. Prof. dr. Luigi Tesio, *academic*;
4. Ms Jurgita Veliulytė, *representative of social partners*;
5. Ms Emilija Karaseva, *students' representative*.

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## Study Field Data\*

I-II

Title of the study programme	<b>Physiotherapy</b>	<b>Occupational therapy</b>
State code	6121GX013	6121GX014
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 degree	Bachelor degree
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	n/a	n/a
Registration date of the study programme	17 February 2004	17 February 2004

III-IV

Title of the study programme	<b>Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Arts Therapy</b>
State code	6211GX020	6283GX001 <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	Full-time studies, 2 years
Credit volume	120	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master	Master
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	n/a	n/a
Registration date of the study programme	10 July 2017	5 June 2019

*\* 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 Arts Therapy is a joint second-cycle program of the VU and Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT)*

# CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS .....	4
1.2. EXPERT PANEL.....	4
1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION .....	5
1.4. BACKGROUND OF REHABILITATION FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY .....	5
<b>II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM .....	9
3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES .....	16
3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT .....	20
3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT .....	22
3.5. TEACHING STAFF .....	26
3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES.....	28
3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION .....	31
<b>IV. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>V. SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>36</b>

# 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 7 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.	
3.	

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

Vilnius University founded in 1579, is the oldest and largest public university in Lithuania, with the governing bodies of the University being the Senate, the Council, and the Rector. The University employs over five thousand staff, of which 46% are teaching staff, 15% research staff, and 39% non-academic staff. The student population stands at 23,374 students. The University has 15 core academic units which communicate and cooperate to conduct research and teaching in the framework of implementing the Strategic Plan of the University. The core academic units include 11 faculties, one institute, one centre, one academy and one business school, and 12 core non-academic units. The University offers first, second and third cycle studies in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medical and healthcare sciences, and technological sciences. The study programmes in the rehabilitation field under evaluation are offered by the Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University, which was established in 1781, with one of the study programmes run jointly with the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. The Faculty of Medicine has four institutes, namely the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, Institute of Clinical Medicine, Institute of Dentistry and the Institute of Health Sciences. The

Department of Rehabilitation is one of nine departments. The other departments are: Department of Anatomy, Histology and Anthropology; Department of Human and Medical Genetics; Department of Pathology, Forensic Medicine and Pharmacology; Department of Physiology, Biochemistry; Department of Radiology, Nuclear Medicine and Medical Physics, Department of Nursing, Department of Public Health, and Physical and Sports Medicine. The Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy study programmes have been running since 2004; whereas the second cycle Rehabilitation study programme and the Arts therapy study programme have been running since 2017 and 2015 respectively.

The main research areas of the Faculty of Medicine are: the diversity of the human genome, its origin and phenotypic realisation; human and public health, quality of life and the environment; etiopathogenesis, diagnostics and treatment of diseases: basic and clinical research and innovative technologies. The Faculty publishes the scientific journal Acta Medica Lituanica <https://www.journals.vu.lt/AML>.

Relevant to the study field under evaluation, the academic members of staff contribute to the publication of the journals Visuomenės Sveikata (Public Health), Sveikatos mokslai (Health Sciences), and Sporto Mokslas (Sport Science).

In addition, the faculty organises national and international scientific conferences and events meant to facilitate dissemination of research and to promote collaboration.

There are three previous external evaluations: two for first cycle [physiotherapy and occupational therapy] and one for second cycle [rehabilitation] study programmes. The first cycle study programmes were scored positively but there were strong recommendations namely to improve programme aims and learning outcomes; to recruit teachers with PhDs; to motivate teacher and student mobility and to widen methodological choice for theses. The second cycle rehabilitation programme scored very low (1) on programme aims and learning outcomes, curriculum design; and study process and students' performance assessment. The scores for teaching staff and programme management also scored low (2). Therefore, the previous external evaluation recommended major changes in the programme, albeit scoring high (4) for facilities and learning resources.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Rehabilitation* study field and *first cycle* at Vilnius University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas: Physiotherapy and occupational therapy*

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	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>22</b>

\*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 at Vilnius University is given **positive** evaluation.

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

<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	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	<b>Total:</b>	22

\*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 team was asked to evaluate the 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 Rehabilitation and the second cycle studies Master of Health Sciences in Arts Therapy.

There is conformity of the aims and outcomes of the rehabilitation field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and labour market, in particular in response to increasing demands for rehabilitation services as a result of living more years but potentially poor health, sedentary lifestyles and stress. In addition, sports at professional level is gaining increasing importance in Lithuania, and this requires the services of rehabilitation professionals, in particular physiotherapists. Since 2019, the role of physiotherapists has been given more prominence to work alongside GPs in providing rehabilitation services and to prevent diseases. On the other hand, the demand for both physiotherapists and occupational therapists in geriatric settings and in the community in patients' homes. The interviews with the various stakeholders confirmed what is stated in SER (p.11) and also through the distinctive features of the study programmes in Annexes 1, 2 and 3 that the aims of the physiotherapy and occupational study programmes are to educate and train physiotherapists and occupational therapists respectively, and to work independently or as part of a rehabilitation team in providing highly-professional services to persons/patients in need. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists willing to progress to the second cycle level, mostly embark on the Master Programme in Rehabilitation, albeit not a requirement for employment. Indeed, the interviews with various stakeholders did not provide the expert team with clear distinction between the first and second cycle levels. On the other hand, during the site visit, Vilnius University gave a great deal of importance to the second cycle Master of Health Sciences in Arts

Therapy - in particular because of the unique opportunity to utilise art, music, dance-movement and drama in rehabilitation therapy. These studies are carried out in cooperation with the human and material resources of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Applied Sciences and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, the national professional organisations (the Lithuanian Music Therapy Association, the Lithuanian Art Therapy Association, Drama Therapy Association, the Lithuanian Dance-Movement Therapy Association), and in consultation with European and global organisation (European Consortium of Arts Therapies Education, European Music Therapy Confederation, European Association Dance Movement Therapy, World Music Therapy Federation, etc.). [SER, p. 13]. This is the only arts therapy programme in Lithuania that considers four specialisations, namely music therapists, dance-movement therapists, drama therapists, and art therapists. There is however lack of clarity as regards the professional recognition of arts therapists, as well as what job opportunities for graduates of the Master degree there are.

There is importance given by all stakeholders interviewed during the site visit to the fact that Vilnius University is the oldest University in Lithuania - the fact that it is in the capital city and with a very good reputation. This appears to also play a part in better employability chances of Vilnius University graduates.

### *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 Vilnius University, which is “to create the most favourable conditions for student self-expression by effectively representing the students of Vilnius University and fostering the university culture. Openness, responsibility, quality of work, unity and development are the principles and values on which VU SA bases its activities”. The objectives and results of the rehabilitation field studies are in line with the mission and goals of [Vilnius University as set out in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#) and [the Statute of VU](#).

This was clearly evident from the numerous meetings and interviews conducted with the senior management, teachers, students, graduates, and social partners.

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

SER p. 11 outlines a number of legal documents, which guide VU in its operations and strategic position as a specialised public higher education institution, but with competencies, standards and recommendations of national, European and world professional networks that define physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

**Table No. 1** Study programme's *Physiotherapy* compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of University level*

<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	155 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	15 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	15 ECTS
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	55 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	48.9%

**Table No. 2** Study programme's *Occupational Therapy* compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of University level*

<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	150 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	15 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	52.35%

Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	60 ECTS
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**Table No. 3** Study programme's *Rehabilitation* compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes of University level*

<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	95 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	10 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	32.1%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	68%

**Table No. 4** Study programme's *Arts Therapy* compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes of University level*

<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	80 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	0 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	25%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	75%

### *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 VU's commitment towards establishing compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field. [Self-Evaluation Report of the Study Field Rehabilitation; Annex 1 Aims and Outcomes; Annex 2 Study Plans; Annex 3 Coherence; Annex 4 Teaching Staff; Annex 5 Final Theses].

The studies of Physiotherapy aim *“to train physiotherapy specialists capable of restoring, preserving and improving maximum physical and functional movement skills of a patient/client, educating and providing recommendations on health improvement and disease prevention while working independently and as part of a rehabilitation team”*, [Annex 1 Aims and Outcomes, p.2-3], through achieving the competencies i) knowledge and application, ii) ability to carry out research, iii) special skills - to make a diagnosis based on assessment of physical and functional condition and to predict changes in the condition; to analyse alternatives to physiotherapy methods and their impact on a person's biopsychosocial functions; to design and implement an individual physiotherapy programme and evaluate its effectiveness and to develop and implement educational measures to prevent illness and injury, iv) social skills, namely to work collaboratively and in a rehabilitation team of healthcare professionals as well as with clients/patients and family members, to convey professional information and to discuss relevant issues using professional terminology, v) personal skills, namely to take decisions independently, responsibly and ethically as well as to undertake continuous self-directed learning. As indicated in Annex 3 - Coherence, p. 1-9, students are assessed through the competences by evaluating the students' knowledge and abilities in a formative and summative manner, by means of continuous assessments, examinations, assessment of an independently prepared student's work (project), Bachelor's thesis, and practical clinical assessments, tests and exams.

The studies of Occupational Therapy aim *“to train specialists capable of analysing individuals' physical context, their social environment and their unique internal factors to promote the well-being, employment and inclusion of the individual in meaningful activities, by developing previously lost skills in everyday work and leisure contexts, within their home or community”* [Annex 1 Aims and Outcomes, p.2-3], through achieving the competencies: i) personal skills,

namely to take decisions independently, responsibly and ethically prioritising quality of life ii) social skills, namely to work collaboratively and in a rehabilitation team of healthcare professionals as well as with clients/patients and family members, to convey professional information and to discuss relevant issues using professional terminology, iii) knowledge and application, iv) special skills - to identify opportunities, needs, problems and interfaces of individual/community activities within the environment, as well as to anticipate and predict the impact of occupational therapy strategies; to carry out an analysis of an individual/community's activity, performance and environment; to plan, develop and independently implement occupational therapy programmes in clinical or community settings, to critically evaluate the effectiveness of occupational therapy tools and techniques from an interdisciplinary perspective in the implementation of occupational therapy programmes in clinical or community settings, and v)ability to carry out research. Students 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, and practical clinical assessments, tests and exams. [Annex 3 - Coherence, p.10-16.

The second cycle programmes in rehabilitation and in arts therapy show coherence as shown in Annex 3 - p.17-20 and p. 20-25. This document's information which was confirmed during the site visit shows that the competencies for rehabilitation follow the same pattern as the first cycle PT and OT, namely knowledge and application, ability to carry out research, special skills, social skills and personal skills. Indeed, the expert team did not get sufficient clarification on what distinguishes first cycle and second cycle studies. The competencies for Arts therapy are varied and reflect the creative/innovative aspect of combining the arts with rehabilitation. Assessments 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.

### *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 through the blending of study subjects with practical placements. During the site visit, we did not visit the teaching hospital/s but visited some laboratories which, however, did not reflect the real clinic environment.

Nevertheless, we were assured that students do go through the required hours of clinical placements to enable them to develop the required competences for the respective professions of physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

The second cycle study programmes in Rehabilitation, and in Arts 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. The site visit gave a great deal of emphasis on the Arts Therapy programme - this showed it to be a very interesting programme in collaboration with the human and material resources of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Applied Sciences and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, the national professional organisations (the Lithuanian Music Therapy Association, the Lithuanian Art Therapy Association, Drama Therapy Association, the Lithuanian Dance-Movement Therapy Association).

### *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 VU 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.

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

Students in physiotherapy and occupational therapy Bachelor programmes focus on their theses in the 7th semester, with final theses complying with the field and first cycle requirements. [Annex 2 - Study Plans]. The theses' topics are based on relevant problems in the rehabilitation study field. As stated in SER, p. 27, "*the aim of the Bachelor's thesis is to develop the ability to carry out research and to achieve the following learning outcomes: using basic and applied research and methods to collect and analyse data needed to address important research and professional activity problems*" - looking at the Bachelors' theses, this is accomplished.

Students in Rehabilitation, and in Arts Therapy Master programmes start preparing for final theses in the 1st semester, with final theses complying with the field and second cycle requirements (SER, p. 28; discussions with teachers in site visit).

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

There is good communication with social partners on the topics that could be researched as part of the final theses.

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

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

1. The first cycle Bachelors degrees in Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy are established, with links to the medical field that enables interdisciplinary practice.
2. Since the last evaluation the first cycle programmes have invested more in the psychosocial aspect in addition to the previously more biomedically-oriented programmes.
3. Both First cycle programmes are in line with recommendations by international and European bodies.
4. Students, teachers and graduates are fluent in English, which makes mobility outside Lithuania possible.
5. The Arts therapy is being promoted as a unique and innovative programme in rehabilitation. The University is giving this programme importance and therefore resources.

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

1. There needs to be a more clear distinction between the first cycle PT/OT and second cycle rehabilitation programmes in terms of what the added value of the Master over and above becoming PT/OT is.
2. There is lack of clarity as regards to the professionalisation of an Arts Therapist and therefore to what places of employment are waiting for these graduates.

## **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 science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the area of study are well summarised in SER (pages 32-39). Of note is the increase in peer-reviewed articles published from 2018 to 2020 (rising from 22 to 52). This data needs some comments, however. The articles with Impact Factor (see SER) seem to have raised only from 10 to 12 (with a peak of 21 in 2019). A search on the SCIVAL database (drawing on Scopus/Elsevier) can help assess this data. It must be said that information given by SCIVAL is not coincident with the information provided by the SER, referring to the “field” of Rehabilitation as defined here (in practice, Courses within a Faculty/University). SCIVAL shows (among many other indexes) the number of publications of a whole institution (here, Vilnius University) in a given “area” (“Medicine” and “Rehabilitation”), not from a given “field”. It also provides indexed Proceedings. That said, SCIVAL gave back 6, 2 and 5 items in 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively (total=13, one more than that provided by the SER), of which 5 published in the 10% of top Journals (by Cite score – SCOPUS). The total number of teachers in the field (SER, page 60) increased from 44 to 52. Therefore, the articles/teacher ratio seems relatively low and decreasing, contrary to what is declared on page 34. Only articles in top Journals appear to increase (from 0 to 5). Only four international research projects are listed in the time window beginning in 2018.

Constraints imposed by the COVID pandemic may partly explain the above findings. Overall, however, the publication rate in the field remains low, as already outlined by the previous EER report in 2018. It must be highlighted that the teaching staff in the area (52 teachers) is minimal compared to the overall teaching staff of 2424 people at VU. That said, in 2020, the “field” achieved an article/teacher ratio of 0.23. By contrast, in 2020, Vilnius University published 443 articles in the SCIVAL area of “Medicine” and employed 582 teachers, so the articles/teachers ratio was 0.76. Of course, rehabilitation teachers may have published papers in other areas, but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

Research activities and findings are shared with students, as nicely detailed on pages 35-36, where seminars and lectures held by various teachers are summarised. International research cooperation spread across Lithuania, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Belarus. Of note, research programmes are also implemented in the field of Arts Therapy, notwithstanding the recent regulation of this discipline.

The Academic staff proposes the theses topics. Students can choose among various issues, or, they may offer their case. The theses programmes are nested within ongoing research projects, which means that students approach research methodology in realising their theses. Students from all Courses participate in Congresses, in Lithuania or abroad. Students' engagement in research is good, as summarised by Table 6 in the SER.

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

The Rehabilitation field seems to suffer from some difficulties in producing research items compared to the general area of "Medicine" at Vilnius University. The University offers more than 90 bachelor's programmes and 110 Master's programmes. These data suggest that, overall, the rehabilitation field needs perhaps more attention from the University to grow in scientific visibility. This effort should find fertile ground by rehabilitation being nested within a large University (and a sizeable Medical faculty and Teaching Hospital). This location should foster knowledge transfer and transdisciplinary research (e.g., in bioengineering and imaging). A symptom of some disconnection between "Medicine" and "Rehabilitation" is also represented by the fact that there is no reference in the SER to research relationships with the Residency program of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine in terms of sharing specific education and research programmes. The area of cognitive rehabilitation and speech therapy does not seem adequately represented in the Curricula. This reflects the very initial development of speech therapy in Lithuania.

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

Research activities and findings are shared with students, as nicely detailed on pages 35-36, where seminars and lectures held by various teachers are summarised. International research cooperation spread across Lithuania, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Belarus. Of note, research programmes are also implemented in the field of Arts Therapy, notwithstanding the recent regulation of this discipline.

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The Physiotherapy curriculum states that space is allowed to "literature search, analysis and interpretation of information are emphasised to instil in students an understanding of the unity of science and practice" (SER, page 22). The learning outcome concerning these competencies is well detailed in Annex 1. In Annex 2, credits allocated to research topics are listed:

Physiotherapy (Bachelor): 10

Occupational Therapy (Bachelor): 10

Rehabilitation (master): 20

Arts therapy (Master): 15

The amount of credits seems somewhat limited if one considers that the "research" topic, broadly considered, includes critical appraisal of the literature, online searches across databases, and technicalities concerning technical/experimental methods, biostatistics and trial design, with particular reference to quasi-experimentation and psychometrics (this is correct, given the relational nature of the "rehabilitation" field). Also, one may wonder whether such a methodological topic can be covered in "one shot" Courses, rather than foreseeing an adaptation to the progressing knowledge and skills of the students during the four years (+2 for the Master's) they spend at the University. For instance, general statistical concepts of error, variance, significance etc., may well be taught at the beginning of the Course and accompanying studies in biomedical areas. By contrast, critical appraisal of specific literature and databases (e.g., Cochrane, PeDRO, WoS, Scopus etc.), diverse trial designs (including the quasi-experimental ones), and psychometrics (e.g., recent advances in item-response theory, Rasch analysis and the related original standpoint on behavioural measurement) might accompany the practical encounter with clinical situations.

On page 36 of the SER, the methods of engagement of studies in research activities (outreach activities, methodological discussions related to lessons and seminars, involvement in experiential theses) are outlined and look satisfactory. Table 6 provides a numeric assessment of the students engaged. On page 38, a detailed description of the actions undertaken to comply with the previous EER recommendations is also provided.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Very accurate and strong involvement of students in research areas in all Courses.
2. Initial publications in top Rehabilitation Journals.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Limited number of publications, low publication/teachers ratio.
2. Limited integration with The Faculty of Medicine and other Faculties within the Vilnius University.

### **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***

The admission criteria are public, straightforward, and suitable for the programmes in question. The General admission is organised and coordinated by the Association of Lithuanian higher 14 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. All the information about students' admission order and requirements is available on the internet webpage of VU (<http://www.vu.lt>). 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. The application process for Master of Arts Therapy is gratifying – even without a degree in arts of health sciences students still have a chance to pursue the degree if their competences and motivation prove their eligibility. Furthermore, students have an opportunity to enrol in an additional introductory course that will help to fill in the gaps. However, as the student body has shared, the first year is dedicated to achieving an equal level of knowledge for everyone, thus the advertisement of the additional expensive courses seems misleading and courses itself unnecessary if the same information is planned to be provided during studies. In various meetings it was indeed mentioned that there are clear differences in the performance

of master students based on their background. While it is admirable that VU gives career changers a chance, the overall level of the program could be higher if the student prerequisites were more challenging or if the target base of knowledge in the student body was expected to be reached during the first semester, not first year. In general, VU should define a set of required knowledge and qualifications needed and assess eligible degrees based on a more substantial overlap with the defined prerequisites. A few missing skills can still then be made up with additional courses, but only to a certain degree. For the bachelor programmes it should be monitored how the increase of students impacts the quality of studies and support.

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

Adequate procedures for the recognition of foreign, partial and non-formal/informal qualifications are in place. These procedures are in line with the Lisbon convention, and in the interviews, there were no indications of problems arising from their application.

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

It is great that the University has a professional dedicated as a foreign exchange coordinator that students can address if questions arise regarding academic mobility. VU provides students with extensive mobility opportunities. The number of students who use these opportunities as well as the number of incoming students increased in recent years but is still low overall. The panel recommends increasing the efforts to motivate students to use their opportunities for study exchange. Students specifically don't seem to grasp the value of such exchanges, and the support they could get. Better communication of the benefits and encouragement from responsible lectures may be helpful.

### *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*

VU provides students with comprehensive and adequate academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support, as is expected from a large university with a long tradition. During the site visit the evaluation group concluded that students are happy with the support given. During various interviews it became clear that students have great relationships with their teachers, however they seem to relinquish communication with faculty's administration – low activity in mandatory questionnaires and meetings.

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

VU provides students with comprehensive relevant information. During the site visit the evaluation group concluded that students are well informed. However, it was pointed out that it would be great if Art Therapy students would receive a list with possible practice and/or employment places.

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

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

1. Great success in creating a master program in Arts Therapy – a field that is gaining recognition and popularity.
2. Straightforward and clear admission process that creates an opportunity for a wide field of professionals to apply to.
3. Excellent student support base in all relevant areas.
4. Strong collegial relationships between students and staff.

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

1. The student population in second-cycle programmes is highly heterogeneous in their initial knowledge and competencies due to a surprisingly wide spectrum of eligible programmes for entry into the programmes.
2. Despite existing efforts student mobility remains low, partially due to lack of communication of benefits and lack of encouragement.

## **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 SER (p. 53) and our meetings with teachers and students, the teaching and learning process is conducted using mainly lectures and seminars. Seminars include the use of

group work, discussion, and working on specific questions. Independent work among students also plays an important role. It is good to know that there are many formats of study methods such as role-playing, group exercise, problem-based learning, etc. More importantly, there are clear differences between 1st cycle and 2nd cycle programmes with the latter having more emphasis on problem-based learning and independent research. In the eyes of the evaluation team, this is consistent with international practice. Last but not the least, it is clearly documented that there are contingencies in the teaching and learning process using online mode during the pandemic situation from 2019 to 2020.

Details on practical and clinical training are nevertheless not found in the SER. The responses of the students during the pandemic period using online mode have not been clearly reported. It is also not certain whether there are guidelines formulated for future reference in case the pandemic comes back.

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

Measures to accommodate socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are reported in the SER (p. 54-55). VU adopts the principles of equal opportunities for all members of the community and is open to students with disabilities and learning difficulties. There are assistive devices to help those with special needs in access to various facilities including wheelchair users and those with visual impairment. Advice will be provided to those with accessibility issues. Financial support is also available to those eligible for the scheme. Finally, VU has a procedure to tailor-make studies according to individual needs.

We did not hear much about this during our meetings with the students and other stakeholders. It will be better to illustrate the above to the evaluation team with at least one or two students who have had the experiences of receiving various support from the university.

#### *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*

Monitoring of student study progress is reported in the SER (p. 55 to 57). There are monitoring procedures at the subject, course, and study field program levels. At different levels, there is adequate administrative support. Ways of providing feedback to the students are also sufficient.

Examples are listed on p.56 including individual and general discussion of completed tasks, remarks, consultations, discussion of homework, etc. Communication seems to be bi-directional.

Changes made in subjects and curricula based on students' comments will inform the students via their representatives. The smooth communication between teachers and students is evidenced by the comments we heard from the students during our meeting with them.

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

There is both objective and subjective checking of graduate employment according to the SER (p. 57). Objective indicators are from the State information systems and government and departmental registers. On the other hand, subjective indicators are in the form of social surveys. As reported in the SER, employment statistics of both the 1st and 2nd cycle programmes are very high, with a range from 74.6% to 95.5%. The figures are on the whole in line with the feedback we heard from those graduated from the physiotherapy and occupational therapy programmes.

However, we heard in our meetings with the students and employers that job opportunities for the arts/music therapy students are more limited. Stakeholders of arts/music therapy programme also mentioned the limitation due to the legislature. Some of the students showed worries about their employment prospects in our meeting with them. Unlike physiotherapy and occupational therapy, our understanding is that manpower for arts/music therapy is not mandated by law in Lithuania.

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

There are very clear principles and procedures to ensure adherence to academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination in VU and the study field programmes. There are various means for ensuring compliance to the Academic Ethics Code of VU. There is an electronic system to avoid plagiarism for student theses, which is similar to "Turnitin" we use in our parts of the world. Violations of these will be handled by the university following regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission.

#### *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*

Finally, there is also a well-defined appeal mechanism by students on their grades and marks to the university. This is in line with our discussion with the students. Students have no concerns on this matter during our meeting with them.

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

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

1. Teaching and learning process practice is in line with international practice.
2. There is a clear distinction between 1st cycle and 2nd cycle in the use of teaching methods.
3. There were well reported contingencies in teaching and learning during the pandemic period, which tried to minimise the impact to the learning of students.
4. Principles and measures to accommodate socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are in place and clearly reported.
5. Description on hardware to help people with disabilities is also well presented.
6. VU has a procedure to tailor-make studies according to individual needs.
7. There is both objective and subjective checking of graduate employment.
8. Employment statistics for the employment situation of graduates for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and rehabilitation are very satisfactory.
9. There are very clear principles and procedures to ensure adherence to academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination in VU and the study field programmes.
10. There is an electron system to avoid plagiarism among students writing theses.
11. There is also well-defined appeal mechanism by students on their grades and marks to the university.

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

1. Details on practical and clinical training are not found in the SER.
2. The responses of the students during the pandemic period using online mode have not been clearly reported.
3. There have not been examples to illustrate the measures to help students with special needs get adapted to the study programme.
4. The employment situation of graduates for music and arts therapy is not as clear as rehabilitation programmes.

### 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*

According to the SER (p.59), teaching staff are employed following regulations stipulated by VU on a competitive basis. The terms of service are set every five years. After the five-year period, certification is conducted based on some performance indicators which include number of publications, participation in conferences, research and supervision of doctoral theses. As noted in Table 18 (p.62), there are a total of 52 teaching staff in 2020/2021. Almost half of them are at Associate Professors or above. Most of the teachers are highly experienced with an average teaching years at 16.5. The composition of the staff is multi-disciplinary, consisting those with background in biomedical sciences, public health, medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, rehabilitation, and arts/music therapy. The staff to student ratio is sufficiently low ranging from 7.3 to 8.2 for the past three years to allow small group teaching. The turn-over rate is also low, suggesting a good sense of job security and satisfaction among teachers.

Despite the experiences of the staff, staff with an expertise in physiotherapy and occupational therapy are limited. Based on Annex 4, only 6 of the teaching staff have a background in physiotherapy and 6 have a background in occupational therapy. Comparing these figures against the student number, the number of physiotherapy teachers is definitely not enough. In addition, only half of the teachers have a foreign language proficiency. English however is not the only foreign language required by the university. We are of the opinion that English language proficiency among teachers has room for further improvement. Moreover, evaluation of staff performance every five years seems too long. Other than this five-year period of certification, there should be yearly or biannually review of staff performances. This is to make sure shortcomings of staff will be found out more quickly so that improvement plans may be made more promptly. Finally, we do not see clearly the differentiation of teachers in their quality and competencies between 1st cycle and 2nd cycle of study programmes.

*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)*

Academic mobility among teaching staff is reported in the SER (p. 63 and 64). This is implemented in connection with the International Relations Department and LAMT's

Department of International Relations. There is funding support from Erasmus +. There is a summary of mobility among teachers of various ranks in Table 10 (63) and places of attachment in Table 11 (p.64). Visits include both within LT and abroad.

However, the number of staff involved in these visits or attachments is limited, usually less than 10 per academic year. Moreover, the purpose of these visits is mainly on teaching collaboration, without much on research. Lastly, the visits are restricted within Europe.

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

Based on the SER (p.64-65), there have been many pedagogical competence development training for teaching staff since 2017. For example, there were 336 teachers enrolled and attended such a training in 2019. Teachers mostly could obtain benefits from such training based on the SER and observation from the evaluation team.

However, these training programmes are mainly pedagogical in nature with focus only on the teaching competencies. This is consistent with the opinion we received during our meeting with the teachers. Some of them told us that the staff development activities mainly focused on hands-on practice. There seems not enough training targeting other competencies such as research and knowledge transfer.

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

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Teaching staff are employed following regulations stipulated by VU on a competitive basis.
2. There is a regular certification of teachers to make sure their performances are up to standards.
3. The composition of staff is multi-disciplinary covering most of the specialties needed by the study programmes.
4. The experience of staff is rich in general.
5. The quality of staff is also adequate constituting a very low staff to student ratios allowing small group teaching to be put in place.
6. Academic visits among staff within Lithuania and overseas are adequate.

7. Staff development activities for improving teaching competencies are adequate.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The quantify of teaching staff having a background in physiotherapy and occupational therapy is limited, especially physiotherapy.
2. The monitoring of teachers at five-year intervals is not frequent enough. Plans for rapid improvement cannot be done.
3. The English language proficiency of the teaching staff is not entirely satisfactory.
4. Academic visits of staff are only short term in nature.
5. Overseas academic visits of staff are restricted to Europe.

### **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*

In Vilnius University, the premises for rehabilitation studies are located in 7 different parts of Vilnius city. Auditoriums and laboratories for theoretical lectures, seminars and practicals are new or renovated, equipped with the necessary tools for visualisation and practical classes. In addition, studies of clinical subjects are carried out in the university's teaching bases: Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Clinics, Children's Hospital, VšĮ Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Clinics Branch, Nursing Study Center. The joint Art Therapy Program uses the premises of four LAMT-owned buildings in different parts of the city. Such a wide distribution of premises throughout the city requires a very good lecture schedule, occupancy of premises and planning of teachers' activities. When planning the distribution of the infrastructure, the teachers' suggestions and wishes are taken into account. During the visit, the students did not complain about the study facilities or the lack of equipment. Although students confirmed that learning would be more convenient if lectures were held in one building, they are satisfied with the current situation.

During the visit, the experts visited the facilities of the joint Arts Therapy program located in the main building of the LMTA, where there are enough rooms for teaching dance, theatre,

improvisation, and music. The need for additional inventory is ensured by cooperation with different Art Associations.

The premises of the newly renovated Department of Rehabilitation, Physical and Sports Medicine and the premises of the Nursing Study Center located on the 4th and 5th floors of the building at Akademijos st. 4 were also visited. It houses six new auditoriums with a capacity of 180 students, as well as student leisure areas, a student study room and a dining hall. The classrooms intended for developing practical skills have all the necessary equipment (massage couches, multimedia, screen, computer, sports equipment), but the experts noticed that there are no practical tools for learning: anatomy posters, mannequins, anatomy models, etc.

According to the information provided by SER (page 60), the laboratories located in the premises of the Department of Rehabilitation, Physical and Sports Medicine at Žirmūnų St. 124 have the diagnostic equipment required for different study programmes and devices for assessing the condition of patients. The existing equipment is suitable for the scientific activities of the first-cycle students, but the experts agree that the equipment is not sufficient for the research activities of the students of the second-cycle studies and for teachers.

The study premises meet all the requirements of work safety and hygiene norms, but are only partially adapted for persons with special needs: persons with mobility restrictions would face obstacles in entering all the buildings visited by the experts.

Free wireless Internet connection is available in all classrooms, laboratories and library reading rooms. The academic community of the university uses a virtual teaching and learning environment (Moodle program).

Rehabilitation students can use the wide network of Vilnius University libraries for independent study. Methodological resources (textbooks, books, periodicals, etc.) are suitable, sufficient and available. In libraries, students can work in modern reading rooms. The library's working hours are favourable for everyone to study independently, as the Medical and Geosciences Reading Room and MKIC are open 24/7. There is an independent book collection and return system.

The university, depending on the study program, cooperates with 18-23 social partners, in whose bases students carry out internships. During the visit, the students expressed positive assessments of the quality of the practice bases. Students of Art Therapy are faced with the offer

of practice places, because it is still a new profession in Lithuania, so there is a lack of places for professional practice. As for rehabilitation students, also for art therapy students, part of the practical lectures take place at practical workplaces. Part of the lectures for art therapists are organised in the premises of the Union of Lithuanian People with Disabilities.

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

The project of the planned new second building of the Faculty of Medicine, which is intended to be implemented by the end of 2023, was presented in the self-analysis. In addition to the conference centre, auditoriums and laboratories, a Simulation Center will be established here, designed to develop practical skills in an environment as close as possible to real working conditions. This will increase opportunities for students of Rehabilitation field study programmes to conduct scientific research.

In 2023, LMNT is also going to implement a part of the construction project of a new study campus. As a result, art therapy studies will take place in one premises and art therapy specialties will be developed in Lithuania.

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. A wide network of libraries throughout the city of Vilnius. This increases accessibility. Works 24/7.
2. All study rooms of Vilnius University are equipped with all necessary equipment for learning. High-quality, comfortable, creativity-stimulating rooms are intended for the study of art therapists.
3. Part of the practical lectures in both rehabilitation and art therapy studies take place in practical training bases.
4. 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.

#### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. The equipment presented by SER and seen during the experts' visit is insufficient for the second-cycle rehabilitation students and teachers to carry out scientific research.
2. Art therapy students have limited professional practice options due to the lack of internship places.
3. The schedule should be arranged properly so that the students do not have to travel a lot across the city, because the premises are located in several places in Vilnius.

### **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 Quality Assurance mechanism in VU is clearly reported in the SER (p. 82-83). This was developed within the framework of the project “Development and implementation of an internal quality management system for studies at VU” and is implemented according to the European QA framework of higher education. VU has various internal quality assurance processes and procedures. There is the Study Programme Committee (SPC) which needs to submit reports to the Faculty Council. The report consists of contents on the number of students admitted, students’ satisfaction with the study programme, the need for material resources, etc. The main purpose of the SPC is to improve the study programmes in terms of objectives, integrity of the content, methods of assessment, etc.

However, the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which are now common in high-ranking universities around the world is still not fully developed and integrated into the QA system of VU. This is reflected in our discussion with the senior management that the members did not answer our questions on the use of KPI well.

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

The Quality Assurance mechanism in VU is clearly reported in the SER (p. 82-83). This was developed within the framework of the project “Development and implementation of an internal quality management system for studies at VU” and is implemented according to the European QA framework of higher education. VU has various internal quality assurance

processes and procedures. There is the Study Programme Committee (SPC) which needs to submit reports to the Faculty Council. The report consists of contents on the number of students admitted, students' satisfaction with the study programme, the need for material resources, etc. The main purpose of the SPC is to improve the study programmes in terms of objectives, integrity of the content, methods of assessment, etc.

However, the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which are now common in high-ranking universities around the world is still not fully developed and integrated into the QA system of VU. This is reflected in our discussion with the senior management that the members did not answer our questions on the use of KPI well.

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

Collection and use of the information on studies is clearly reported in the SER (p. 84). This is implemented via the University Study Information System (VUSIS). This system consists of many relevant functions and integrates various applications. It is also the information base for the management of the study programmes. A lot of information is made public on this system and the CAU websites.

### *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*

In the SER (p. 92), it is clearly documented that there are regular surveys among students in different study programmes, including physiotherapy and occupational therapy. The contents of the survey are on the satisfaction of the students on different subjects of the study programmes. The results are analysed seriously by the senior management and teaching staff for further improvement. This also echoes our observation that students in general feel that their opinions are heard by the senior management for improvement. During our meeting with the students, we were told that students had to fill in questionnaires at the end of the semester giving feedback to the study programmes on the performances of the teachers. While this is good practice, we are not certain if the students have a choice to give or not to give feedback. According to international practice, this should not be mandatory.

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

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

1. The principles and procedures of the QA system in VU and the study programmes are well defined and reported.
2. The information needed for the QA system is well set out and reported.
3. The internal QA system has adequate coverage of stakeholders.
4. Collection and use of the information on studies is clearly reported in the SER (p.84). This is implemented via the University Study Information System (VUSIS).
5. VU takes a serious approach in collecting and analysing the opinions of the students using regular survey for further improvement of the programmes.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which are now common in high-ranking universities around the world are still not fully developed and integrated into the QA system of VU.
2. Our observation suggests that direct communication with teachers with senior management of VU has room for further improvement.
3. It is not certain if the students have a choice to fill or not to fill in the questionnaires providing feedback to the study programmes about the teaching of the subjects. According to international practice, this should not be mandatory.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>1. It is recommended that a more clear distinction between the first cycle PT/OT and second cycle rehabilitation programmes is established in terms of what the added value of the Master over and above becoming PT/OT is. This is not clear enough for the students, teachers, graduates and social partners. In view of the great emphasis that Vilnius University is putting on the Art Therapy Programme, it is recommended that the University also works to achieve the professional status of the Arts Therapist. This would facilitate a better professional profile for employers to identify with, and therefore ensure the right places of employment for these graduates.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>Two weaknesses have been outlined: 1. A Limited number of publications, low publication/teachers ratio, and 2. Limited integration with The Faculty of Medicine and other Faculties within Vilnius University. Both seem to reflect an ancillary role assigned to the Rehabilitation field within the large and prestigious VU. Given the competencies and the resources available, a more significant investment in this field is recommendable. Specific rehab research should be incentivised and supported. In addition, cultural/scientific exchanges with related areas in Lithuania or abroad (residency programmes in Physical Medicine &amp; Rehabilitation, Occupational Therapy, Speech therapy, and Cognition sciences) should be increased.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>1. To improve student mobility.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>1. To acquire equipment that would encourage teachers and students to carry out higher-quality scientific research.</p> <p>2. Expand the list of professional practice options for Art Therapy students.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Create a schedule of lectures taking into account the place of study, so that the lectures take place as concentrated as possible in one building.</li> </ol>
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To increase the number of teaching staff having a background in physiotherapy and occupational therapy.</li> <li>2. To shorten the five-year interval in the monitoring of teachers</li> <li>3. To improve the English language proficiency of the teaching staff.</li> <li>4. To encourage overseas academic visits of staff even beyond Europe.</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve the equipment needed for the second-cycle rehabilitation students and teachers to carry out scientific research.</li> <li>2. To provide internship opportunities for the Arts therapy students.</li> <li>3. To improve the course schedule so that the students do not have to travel a lot across the city, because the premises are located in several places in Vilnius.</li> </ol>
Study management and public information quality and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To establish the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which are still not fully developed and integrated into the QA system of VU.</li> <li>2. To improve the direct communication between teachers and senior management.</li> <li>3. To ensure that filling of student feedback forms to the study programmes about the teaching of the subjects is not mandatory.</li> </ol>

## V. SUMMARY

Overall, the Rehabilitation field of Vilnius University 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
7. Study quality management and public information

Correspondingly, on a 1 to 5 scoring system, scores ranged from 3 to 4 across the areas (see Table on pages 7-8 of the present EER).

Vilnius University enjoys a good reputation and is ideally located in the capital city of Lithuania. The rehabilitation field under evaluation by this expert team has registered improvement from the last evaluation. Indeed, the first cycle programmes have invested more in the psychosocial aspect in addition to the previously more biomedically-oriented programmes. The first cycle Bachelors degrees in Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy have the potential for close links with the medical profession, yet the integration with the Faculty of Medicine and other Faculties within Vilnius University is limited. Should there be better integration, this would enable students, teachers and graduates to be immersed in better interdisciplinary practice, which is indeed how they should work in the field.

There has been attention to the study programmes' alignment with recommendations by international and European bodies. However, occupational therapy (OT) is not given the same level of importance as physiotherapy (PT) and a better balance in PT-OT should be achieved in terms of numbers of students. The University has projected the second cycle Arts Therapy course as a unique and innovative programme in rehabilitation, ensuring that adequate energy and resources are put into this programme run jointly with *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT)*. Nevertheless, there needs to be clarity as regards to the conceptualisation of the Arts Therapy Profession for better understanding by all concerned as regards to rehabilitation employment positions in various disciplines. Indeed, the employability of graduates for music and arts therapy is not as clear as in rehabilitation programmes. This

challenge is also potentially compounded by the fact that Art Therapy students have limited professional practice options due to the lack of internship places. The University tracks graduate employment. Employment statistics for graduates of physiotherapy, occupational therapy and rehabilitation are very satisfactory.

In all the courses within the rehabilitation study field, students are engaged, motivated and guided by their teachers in research projects. This is resulting in initial publications in top Rehabilitation Journals. Nevertheless, the number of publications is still low, specifically with a low publication/teachers ratio. There is an evident strong professional relationship between students and staff. There is also an excellent student support base in all relevant areas. Teaching and learning process practice is in line with international practice, with a clear distinction between 1st cycle and 2nd cycle in the use of teaching methods. Details on practical and clinical training are not found in the SER.

There are very clear principles and procedures to ensure adherence to academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination in VU and the study field programmes. There is a well-defined appeal mechanism by students on their grades and marks to the university.

There is also an electron system to avoid plagiarism among students writing theses.

VU has a procedure to tailor-make studies according to individual needs. In particular, measures to accommodate socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are in place and clearly reported. In addition, description on hardware to help people with disabilities is also well presented. What however is not clear, is the manner in which VU helps students with special needs get adapted to the study programme.

Vilnius University reported contingencies in teaching and learning during the pandemic that ensured minimisation of the impact on learning of students. However, the responses of the students during the pandemic period using online mode have not been clearly reported. The pandemic has also affected mobility. Yet, despite existing efforts, student mobility remains low, partially due to lack of communication of benefits from mobility, as well as due to lack of encouragement.

The admission process is clear, straightforward and transparent. The student cohort for the second-cycle programmes is fairly heterogeneous in terms of their initial knowledge and competencies due to a wide spectrum of eligible programmes available. This may be

challenging for establishing a common knowledge base for the cohort on which to build competencies and skills.

Teaching staff are recruited following regulations stipulated by VU on a competitive basis. There is a regular certification of teachers to make sure their performances are up to standard. However, the monitoring of teachers at five-year intervals is not frequent enough. The English language proficiency of the teaching staff is also not entirely satisfactory. Yet staff development activities for improving teaching competencies are adequate. The teaching staff is experienced and multi-disciplinary covering most of the specialties needed by the study programmes. Yet, the number of teachers having a background in physiotherapy and occupational therapy is limited, and in particular for physiotherapy. There is a good staff to student ratio allowing small group teaching to take place.

Vilnius University is well equipped with a wide network of libraries throughout the city of Vilnius. All study rooms of Vilnius University are equipped with all necessary equipment for learning. The University also has high-quality, comfortable, creativity-stimulating rooms intended for the study of art therapists. The processes for planning and upgrading the resources, in view of changing student and teaching staffs' needs, are in place. However, the equipment presented by SER and seen during the experts' visit needs to be improved for the second-cycle rehabilitation students and teachers to carry out scientific research. The schedule should be arranged properly so that the students do not have to travel a lot across the city, because the premises are located in several places in Vilnius.

The principles and procedures of the quality assurance (QA) system at VU and of the study programmes are well defined and reported. Nevertheless, the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is still not fully developed and integrated into the QA system of VU.

The internal QA system has adequate coverage of stakeholders with good collection and use of the information on studies. This is implemented via the University Study Information System (VUSIS). VU also takes a serious approach in collecting and analysing the opinions of the students to ensure continuous improvement of the programmes. The communication between teachers and senior management of VU should be more clear and direct.

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