



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of PHILOLOGY
at Vilnius University

Expert panel:

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	English Philology	English Philology	Spanish Philology	Italian Philology	Polish Philology
State code	6121NX014	6121NX056	6121NX019	6121NX018	6121NX024
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle				
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 4 years				
Credit volume	240	240	240	240	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor degree in humanities				
Language of instruction	English and Lithuanian	English and Lithuanian	Spanish and Lithuania	Italian and Lithuania	Polish and Lithuanian, English or Russian
Minimum education required	Secondary education				
Registration date of the study programme	1997-05-19	1999-04-23	2014-05-19	2015-03-05	1997-05-19

Title of the study programme	French Philology	Russian Philology	Scandinavian Studies	German Philology
State code	6121NX016	6121NX025	6121NX020	6121NX017
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 4 years	Full-time, 4 years	Full-time, 4 years	Full-time, 4 years
Credit volume	240	240	240	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities	Bachelor degree in humanities
Language of instruction	French and Lithuania	Russian and Lithuanian or English	Scandinavian (Danish/Norwegian/Swedish/Finnish) and Lithuanian	German and Lithuanian, English or Russian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education

Registration date of the study programme	1997-05-19	1997-05-19	2011-12-16	1997-05-19
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Title of the study programme	<i>English Studies</i>	<i>Russian Studies</i>	<i>Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe</i>
State code	6211NX017	6211NX023	6211NX066
Type of studies	University studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle	Second cycle	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 2 years	Full-time, 2 years	Full-time, 2 years
Credit volume	120	120	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master's degree in humanities	Master's degree in humanities	Master's degree in humanities
Language of instruction	English	Russian	Lithuanian, English and Latvian / Polish / Danish / Norwegian / Swedish / Finnish / German
Minimum education required	Higher education	Higher education	Higher education
Registration date of the study programme	2008-04-24	2010-04-08	2019-06-25

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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 16/17 - 05 - 2023.

Prof.Dr. Irina Moore (panel chairperson), *Linguistics, University of Wolverhampton (UK)*

Prof. Dr. Liviu Lutas, *French Literature Linnaeus University (Sweden)*

Prof. Dr. Karolina Prykowska-Michalak, *Polish Literature and Culture, University of Lodz (Poland)*

Ms. Erika Lastovskyte Frittoli, *Representative of Social Partners, Freelance translator*

MA Viktorija Lankauskaite, *Students' representative, PhD candidate in Art Studies*

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 STUDY FIELD OF PHILOLOGY AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

Note: this report considers twelve different programmes – nine undergraduate and three Master programmes. Comments or recommendations specific to an individual programme are clearly indicated; those comments or observations that are not thus specifically delimited, are, in the opinion of the Expert panel, applicable to all.

Vilnius University (referred to in this report as VU) is the oldest public university in Lithuania. It was founded in the 16th century, tracing its foundation to 1569. It is also considered to be one of the oldest universities in Central and Eastern Europe. It currently has over 23, 000 students taught by approximately 3,348 academic staff members (<http://www.vu.lt>) (accessed 29.05.2023). The University is managed by a University Council, the University Senate, and the University Rector (SER, p.7). VU has eleven faculties, one academy, one institute, one centre, and one business school, which are known as core academic units. These units cooperate to conduct teaching and research, as determined by the University's Strategic Plan. In its Mission, the University sets itself the goal "of international excellence in the interdisciplinary research" and is committed to opening its doors and providing universal education "for the most talented young people from all districts of Lithuania and educating active and responsible specialists, who demonstrate the need to expand their knowledge and improve professionally and who are able to learn throughout their lifetime" (<http://www.vu.lt>) (accessed 29.05.2023).

This report evaluates the Study Field of Philology by Language (1st and 2nd cycle). There are 14 study programmes (SPs) in the field of Philology by Language: 11 first cycle SP and 3 second cycle SPs. 2 of the 1st cycle SPs, namely, Lithuanian Philology and Lithuanian Philology and Advertising are not evaluated in this report. Therefore, the 9 1st cycle SPs under evaluation are: English Philology, Spanish Philology, Italian Philology, Scandinavian Studies, and German Philology. These are conducted at the Faculty of Philology in Vilnius, although English Philology 2 (undergraduate programme) is also offered at Siauliai Academy, which joined VU as its one of the core academic units in 2021. The 3 second cycle SPs are: English Studies, Russian Studies, and Language and Cultures of Northern Europe. All undergraduate (1st cycle) SPs are of four years of duration, 240 ECTS, leading to the degree Bachelor in Humanities (by language). All three 2nd cycle SPs are of two years of duration, 120 SCTS, leading to the degree Master in Humanities.

The goals of these SPs are to prepare philology specialists (by language) with a broad range of knowledge and competences in the chosen main language and another foreign language, as well as with interpersonal and systemic general competences. Graduates of these programmes should be able to apply acquired skills in a variety of professional spheres, particularly, taking into account the growing social and cultural cooperation between Lithuania and other EU countries. Therefore, the graduates of these programmes should be able to meet the needs of the labour market of the country where competent multilingual philologists with multiple cultural and social skills are required by international businesses, tourism industry, social, cultural and political organisations. In addition, students on all SPs (with an exception of Italian SP) can obtain a professional pedagogical qualification which allows them to work as a foreign language teacher.

All programmes in the 2nd cycle focus on students' ability to carry out independent scientific research, and two of the programmes (English and Russian studies) specialise in media discourse (since 2019). The general and specific outcomes of all 2nd cycle programmes enable graduates to develop and combine high level linguistic competences with research and interdisciplinary intercultural and personal competences, which could be utilised in modern interdisciplinary multicultural world. The programmes pay much attention to students ability to use modern information technologies, data resources and creatively apply media technologies to linguistic analysis.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the study field *Philology* at Vilnius University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
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	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	23

*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.

The *second cycle* of the study field *Philology* at Vilnius University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	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

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

(1) Factual situation

The general aims of the BA and MA SPs in the field of Philology by Language according to the SER (Appendix 1 for each cycle) to develop highest-level professional subject-specific skills, covering language skills, and fundamentals within linguistics, literary theory and area studies, for work connected to particular areas or for further education on MA and PhD level. All SPs also aim to develop students' generic competences, such as interpersonal and interdisciplinary skills which enable them to communicate and work in multicultural national and international environments.

The communicative competences in the aforementioned BA SPs are aimed at different levels consistent with the CEFR (depending on the programme). For example, communicative skills in English (C1-C2), Spanish (C1), Italian (C1), Polish (C1-C2), French (C1), Russian (C1-C2), Scandinavian languages (B2-C1), German (C1).

The aims for communicative competences on the MA SPs are specifically indicated only for the SP Language and Cultures of Northern Europe (C1-C2), presumably, because of the lower language entry level for the BA SP (Scandinavian languages).

The lists of subject-specific and general competences for BA SPs are presented in SER (Tables 1, 2, p.1, 1st cycle), and detailed lists of aims and corresponding outcomes are presented in Annex 1. The list of subject specific competences for MA SPs can be found in Table 1 (SER, p.11) and more detailed lists of aims and specific outcomes are in Annex 1 (for 2nd cycle).

The programmes aims and learning outcomes for both cycles, as presented in SER, are also accessible on the University webpages for each SP intended for students and entrants, e.g. German Philology <https://www.vu.lt/en/studies/bachelor-and-integrated-studies/german-philology>, Russian Philology <https://www.vu.lt/en/studies/bachelor-and-integrated-studies/russian-philology-en>

(accessed 16/06/2023). On the website, they are presented in a very general manner and do not correspond fully with the statements made in the SER. However, possible areas of professional application and future career paths are clearly indicated.

The main distinction between the BA and MA SPs are the depth and intensity, as well as the focus on the development of independent research skills and abilities. The panel believes that all SPs offer a good balance of theoretical and practical knowledge of appropriate level for BA and MA studies. While the emphasis of all BA SPs is on gradual accumulation of knowledge and complexity of study matter, the focus of all three MA SPs is on the refinement and depth of professional linguistics knowledge and on the development of independent critical thinking and extensive research analysis and expertise. In the panel's opinion, the SPs of both cycles are

comparable to similar programmes in European Universities. This impression was supported by the panel's discussion with students, social partners and alumni, as well as the information in Section 4 Studying Student Performance and graduate Employment of the SERs (SER, pp.69-74, 1st cycle; SER, pp.52-63, 2nd cycle). Discussions with the programme management, teaching staff and social partners also gave a strong indication that the aims and outcomes of all SPs are facilitated by the steadily increasing demand in linguistic expertise in foreign languages in Lithuania. The need for foreign languages teachers at school was particularly highlighted. However, teacher training does not seem to appear as a specific learning outcome of the BA SPs. Market analysis for specific areas of linguistic expertise and a more detailed analysis of current career paths of graduates would have been beneficial.

The programmes are thus intended to meet the linguistic needs of the country and its labour market, with a strong emphasis on multilingual language abilities.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All nine BA SPs and three MA SPs appear to be well designed to meet educational and vocational needs of students, who are interested in professions requiring multi-linguistic skills, intercultural communication competencies and business cooperation.

The minor suggestion of the panel is to emphasise teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes of BA SPs (where appropriate). Moreover, there is generally a need for a difference in aims for BA and MA programmes, where emphasis on practical skills is more suitable for BA programme, whereas deeper philological focus is more suitable for the MA programmes.

The panel concluded that the aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic requirements, public needs and the needs of society and the labour market. They are consistent with the type and level of studies and are closely linked with future employment opportunities.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

(1) Factual situation

Vilnius University mission states, among other goals and intentions, the University's commitment to providing "universal education for the most talented young people from all districts of Lithuania and educating active and responsible specialists, who demonstrate the need to expand their knowledge and improve professionally and who are able to learn throughout their lifetime" (<https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu>) (accessed 16.06.2023).

As indicated in the SERs, all nine BA SPs (SER, p.17. 1st cycle) and three MA SPs (SER, p.14, 2nd cycle) aim at providing universal education and educating specialists according to the mission of the University. The study of Philology, by its very nature is not exclusively a language study requiring strong linguistic skills, it is also the study requiring a wide knowledge of social,

cultural and historical backgrounds of chosen languages and their cultural differences. Thus, the SPs are designed to align with the University's Mission Statement.

The Mission, Vision and Values of Vilnius University document also declares that it strives "to strengthen the cognitive and creative powers of Lithuania and the world", "to educate active and responsible leaders of the society and the citizens of the Lithuanian state" (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Strateginis_planas_2020_1_dalis_EN.pdf) (accessed 16/06/2023).

In line with these statements, all BA SPs under evaluation contain learning outcomes related to the ability of graduates to "take responsibility for their work/study results", evaluate the quality of their actions and achievements and strive to acquire the competences necessary for future change" (SER, Appendix 1, p.1, BA SPs). Whereas, all MA SPs also contain outcomes related to the ability of their graduates "to understand and value the common public interest, work in a team to achieve a common goal, cooperate with people of various cultures" and to "take initiative ... and be aware of the impact of one's activities and their outcomes on society and the environment" (SER, Appendix 1, p.1, MA SPs). This was confirmed during the meetings with students, who praised the flexibility of the programmes and freedom of choice in individual study programmes, to participate in student exchange programmes, and benefit from internships in national and international companies. The teaching staff commended national and international partnerships with European universities and the opportunities to participate in national and international research projects and underpin their teaching by latest research.

In compliance with the University mission, the panel wishes to note with approval a wide variety of topics for final BA theses, exploring a vast number of socio-cultural and international linguistic themes. However, it is the opinion of the panel that it might be beneficial to encourage students on BA and MA programmes to choose more topics that serve to strengthen the social character of the programmes, such as Discourse of Linguistic and Sociocultural Adaptation of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Lithuania; Digital Language Learning and Student Motivation: Experience Analysis in Denmark and Lithuania (SER, Appendix 5, p.p 8-9, 1st cycle), and The Use of Figurative Language in Tourism Advertising; Spanish Language Learning in Older Adults: the Specific Case of Lithuania (SER, Appendix 5, pp.3-4, 2nd cycle), as many of the theses are strictly theoretical and not related to the present day agenda of Lithuanian society.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As discussed above, the demand for well qualified multilingual philology specialists with an array of valuable professional, personal, interpersonal and research skills is important for both the economic and cultural cooperation of Lithuania with the EU countries and the world. Therefore, the Team assesses the conformity of the field of Philology by Language and both cycles aims and outcomes with mission, objectives and strategy of the HEI as adequate.

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

Table No. 1 Study programmes in the field of Philology by Language (BA) and compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of University level (professional bachelor)*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	115 - English Philology 55 - English Philology 85 - Spanish Philology 95 - Italian Philology 100 - Polish Philology 100 - French Philology 110 - Russian Philology 85 - Scandinavian Studies 120 - German Philology
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	15
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	15
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	34-39%

** in case there is a national Descriptor of the Field Studies, please check if there are no stricter requirements*

Table No. 2. Study programmes in the field of Philology by Language (MA) and compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes (master)*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for the study field	No less than 60 ECTS	60
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30 (+5-10 additional ECTS for research methods seminar)

Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	20%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	80%

(1) Factual Situation

The SPs under evaluation are designed and implemented in accordance with the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (<https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.372306/asr>) (accessed 16/06/2023) and a number of other legal documents indicated in the SERs (SER, p.18, 1st cycle; SER, p.15, 2nd cycle). Detailed information on each Programme's compliance with legal requirements is also provided in the SERs (SER, Table 3, p.18, and Appendix 2, 1st cycle) and (Table 3, p.15, and Appendix 2, 2nd cycle).

Based on the information provided in the SERs and during discussions, the panel believes that all SPs (BA and MA) are consistent in their structure, delivery and outcomes with similar programmes in European universities. Programmes structure, student progression, amount of individual learning and contact hours appear to meet all relevant criteria regarding complexity, variability, and autonomy.

Curriculum design of all programmes meets the legal requirements set out for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Lithuania. The modules are consistent with the level appropriated for the cycle of study.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All nine BA and three MA programmes are pursuant to all the legal acts of the country and to the rules of the University.

The panel concludes that all SPs meet all the necessary legal requirements, as we understand them.

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

Overall, the information provided in both SER (SER, pp.18-28, 1st cycle and SER, pp. 15-21, 2nd cycle) and obtained during discussions with staff and students, indicates that the content of modules/subjects of all SPs mostly develops gradually at different stages of studies.

There is clear evidence of logical incremental progression of modules/subjects content from level to level. This corresponds well with planned learning outcomes and types of assessment. The teaching and learning methods seem to be mostly appropriate to the level of instruction,

depth and complexity of assignments and difficulty of the skills being tested. These are described in great detail in Appendix 3, (pp.1-180, 1st cycle and pp.1-29, 2nd cycle) where classroom activities and assessment methodologies are detailed for every SP.

The scope of this report and the extent of the programmes under evaluation does not allow the panel to address each one of them individually, but overall, the learning outcomes are well defined, teaching and assessment methods are coherently woven throughout the SPs levels with increasing complexity as students' progress through the curriculum. It was, however, noted by students (who completed the 1st cycle of studies and progressed to the 2nd) that while BA SPs were very clearly structured, MA SPs are confusing at times and require more clarity and cohesion in the modules on offer. For example, the students brought to the panel's attention that Research Methods (Contemporary Linguistics; Theories and Research Methods) module is a part of some BA SPs and students progressing to the 2nd cycle focused on linguistics do not have Research Methods module in their 2nd cycle programmes, whereas students studying literature – do. The panel notes that this might be an area of consideration and change, where a specially tailored Academic Writing module becomes a compulsory part of all BA and a specially designed Research Methods in Linguistics – a part of MA SPs.

Another point worthy of a mention came up during the panel's discussion with the teaching staff (particularly, delivering BA programmes modules). It was noted that modern students are very practice oriented and career focused and SPs design should reflect this. The panel suggests integration of career oriented knowledge and skills in a number of core and optional modules. For example, Introduction to Psycholinguistics module could partially focus on language disorders and highlight a career (or further study) in speech and language therapy; Accents and Dialects of Great Britain module could include topics on language policy and its impact on language rights, which in turn, can lead to an interest in a career related to language policy making nationally and internationally.

However, these are minor considerations, particularly in the light of the broad coherence of the SPs in terms of their structures, delivery, assessment methods, and intended learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the panel commends the coherence of teaching and assessment methods and their alignment with learning outcomes.

The panel assesses the compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes is adequate.

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

(1) Factual situation

The courses of all nine 1st cycle SPs in the field of Philology by Language (including theoretical courses, internships, and the final thesis) comprise a total of 240 ECTS and are distributed over four academic years. As all other 1st cycle SPs at the university, the programmes are organised in 2 blocks: 1) the general education university part and 2) the specialty part. Depending on the specific aims of each programme and the entry language level, the percentage of each block differs between English Philology and the other eight SPs, including English Philology in Siauliai. Overall, the percentage for the specialty courses is much higher on all programmes.

The courses of all three 2nd cycle SPs comprise a total of 120 ECTS and are distributed over two academic years and offer compulsory and optional modules on each programme.

This curriculum design of both cycles meets the legal requirements set out for higher education undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes in Lithuania. The subjects are spread evenly. Generally, the modules are consistent with the level of the studies, although the panel found some divisions of modules into compulsory and optional a little puzzling. For example, Semantics is a compulsory module in the English MA SP, whereas English Morphology and Syntax are optional. The rationale for such division is not clear, particularly, taking into account that Morphology and Syntax are usually offered as separate modules on BA studies in many European universities. Overall, it might be beneficial to consider offering modules such as Phonology, Morphology and Syntax for all SPs as compulsory 1st cycle modules.

The contents of the subjects offered are consistent with what one should expect in an BA and MA programmes in this field. Furthermore, the contents of the subjects mostly develop gradually at different stages of the studies. After closely analysing the curriculum design and after discussions with staff and students, the Team noted that there is clear evidence of a logical incremental progression of subject content from level to level. The core modules are thoughtfully chosen and, as was mentioned previously, are comparable with similar programmes in European universities. They are selected to develop theoretical skills and practical knowledge compatible with the country's labour market and social needs, which allows to produce employable philology graduates.

After reading relevant parts of the SERs (SER, pp.28-29, 1st cycle; SER, pp.18-23, 2nd cycle) and talking to staff and students, the panel also came to the conclusion that there is clear evidence of flexibility in all SPs, as they are shaped to meet the individual needs of students and encourages them to study and use new research methods, technology and participate in student conferences and other faculty and city events.

The subjects in all SPs of both cycles cover a wide range of topics within the study field. The broad and interdisciplinary character of the programmes is commendable. However, a somewhat puzzling fact in view of this is that courses (at BA level) on topics such as language policy, language and power, second language acquisition, materials design, etc. are not clearly featured in the SPs. We understand that there are some elements of these course units in other courses offered by the University and other Lithuanian higher education institutions, However,

it would be beneficial to have a more clear picture of where these elements could be found. Particularly, in the light of students' comments regarding difficulties in orienting them in the wide array of choices.

In terms of courses offered at MA level, the subjects included in the programmes cover a wide range of topics within the field, however, modules on topics such as the historical geopolitics and geolinguistics, language policy, language and power, language rights, multilingualism (as many of the students will work in multilingual settings), linguistic landscape, etc. could be considered. Particularly, within the Russian Studies curriculum, taking into account the constantly changing functions of the Russian Language in post-Soviet space and in the world.

These are fields that have gained prominence in recent years and that would be especially relevant in interdisciplinary SPs. Perhaps, establishing courses in some of the mentioned disciplines should be considered, possibly, in cooperation with other departments at the Faculty.

A recurring theme in the meetings was the fact that many 1st cycle students end up teaching foreign languages in different contexts, but SPs do not include courses in second language acquisition.

Introducing these topics to the programmes would answer the needs of the students and also increase the relevance of the programmes to the society.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the panel is satisfied that all nine 1st cycle SPs and three 2nd cycle programmes are solid and sustainable. They are well designed, outcome oriented, and well delivered.

They may simply benefit from minor changes in material selection and module choices to reflect new developments in language research and teaching. A more clear representation of topics such as language rights, language and power etc. would also benefit curriculum design, providing more straightforward orientation in available module choices for students.

The panel concluded that the totality of the field and cycle study programmes subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students is adequate.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The topic of personalisation of the structure of field study programmes is something that came up frequently during various meetings and is clearly stated in the SERs (SER, pp. 28-29, 1st cycle; SER, p.21, 2nd cycle).

Individual study schedule is offered university wide and in addition, the University has a special procedure for the recognition of informally acquired learning competences and course units, which allows students to meet their individual learning needs and expands their opportunities for independent learning (Vilnius University Procedure for Recognising Competences Acquired by Students through Non-Formal Education and for Approving Course Units (Modules) https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/Neformaliuoju_b%C5%ABdu_%C4%AFgyt%C5%B3_kompetencij%C5%B3_%C4%AFskaitymo_tvarkos_apra%C5%A1as.pdf (accessed 17/06/2023)

It was very clear in our meeting with students that opportunities to personalise their study programmes are widely available and are greatly appreciated by the students. Their positive feedback on these was unanimous. They stated that the wide choice of SPs is an opportunity in itself to personalise their study. Moreover, the choice of languages not studied at school and the opportunity to choose the second foreign language, wide range of general university study courses and multiple opportunities for course selection (elective courses) throughout their studies are very valuable and beneficial for their academic success and professional future. However, a technical problem regarding registration on elective modules during a tight two-week period was highlighted by the students. They informed the panel about regular crashes of the university website during this tight window of opportunity, that often resulted in some popular modules being full and not available for choice. Students even compared this process to “Hunger Games” and survival of the fittest and fittest. The panel’s general recommendation is to consider a University wide staggered timetable system for various faculties in order to avoid website crashes. Also, an audit of elective modules might be a solution, as it will allow to establish which modules are popular/unpopular; and reserving a certain number of spaces on modules most suitable for philology students.

In addition, the process of thesis topic selection also appears to fulfil the requirement for student personalisation. Although it is a guided process, students have freedom of choice of their supervisors and research area. This was clearly evident from the list of theses topics presented in Appendix 5 (for both cycles).

Another drawback of such a wide variety of personal choices which came up during the meeting with students is that many first-year students find the process of programme planning daunting. Moreover, 1st year undergraduate students noted a negative social aspect of such variety of choices, as “there is no social bonding between us, because we don’t study together a lot” (sic). It was voiced during the meeting that students would appreciate a formal form of support and advice from the SPs staff during the first few weeks of the academic year; also they suggested some kind of social gathering for all first year students from all SPs.

(2) *Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The main elements of personalisation in the four SPs, discussed above are appropriate and valuable. The suggestion to develop a formal academic and social support system for first year students is comparatively minor (but important) and does not detract from the overall quality of personalisation in the study field of Philology by Language.

The panel concluded that opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes is adequate.

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

(1) Factual situation

As stated in the SER, there are three documents ensuring procedures for the preparation, formation of the thesis defence commission and the defence of a final thesis. They are established in the Regulations for the Preparation, Defence and Storage of Research Papers of Students Studying at Vilnius University, the Procedure for Administering Research Papers in the Vilnius University Study Information System approved by the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University, and the general procedures (applicable to students of all cycles and all fields in the relevant CAU) (SER, pp.29, 1st cycle). for the preparation, defence and assessment of students' final theses in the CAU which runs the SP (SER, pp.29, 1st cycle). These documents are available on the FFill and SA websites. The same documents regulate the theses of the 2nd cycle (SER, pp.21, 2nd cycle).

The evaluation criteria of the MA theses are available in the descriptions of the module Final Thesis and are accessible via the University's information system VU IS (SER, p.22, 2nd cycle). From our discussions with staff and students it became apparent that the general system of theses coordination, its length, supervision, and defence is consistent with common practices in European universities. As was noted above (3.1.6), the process of theses topic selection appears to fulfil the requirement for student personalisation. Students have freedom of choice of their research area and supervisor.

The panel had an opportunity to see the list of topics in Appendix 5 (for both cycles). The panel's conclusion is that the themes and problems addressed in the final theses are consistent with the content of SPs in the field of philology. The fact that students write their theses in the language of their programme of study illustrates a high level of fluency, linguistic and academic competence, as well as the ability to conduct research and critical analysis in a foreign language. These skills are fully compliant with study aims and learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

As was noted above (3.1.2.), the panel expressed its approval of the fact that some of the theses aimed at analysis of topics which served to strengthen the social character of the programmes.

The panel has two minor concerns. Concern number 1 is that students do not have an opportunity to put their theses through an anti-plagiarism software during various stages of their work on the theses. This process is centralised and usually conducted at the stage of submission. The panel believes that student access to an internet-based plagiarism detection service (e.g. Turnitin) could be very beneficial for students at different stages of their work on their theses. A requirement to run a part of their thesis draft through Turnitin (or other similar service), for example, two months before the final submission deadline, could be used as a part of formative assessment to help students learn to avoid plagiarism. This also could be incorporated into various academic writing and research methodology courses as part of practical work and assessment procedures.

Concern number 2 is that there was no evidence regarding of ethical considerations for theses involving data collection from live participants. No requirement to highlight ethical considerations in the theses research proposals, It might be beneficial to consider increasing students' awareness of such matters by including a section on ethical considerations in the thesis proposal form.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The SPs (1st and 2nd cycles) are well designed, with a good balance of theoretical and practical knowledge of appropriate depth and intensity for BA and MA level, with an emphasis on gradual accumulation and complexity of study matter, and therefore, are comparable to similar programmes in European universities.
2. The analysis of the subject-specific competences and learning outcomes indicates that the programmes aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered.
3. All nine 1st cycle SPs have a strong element of professional skills development and, therefore, meet the academic and vocational needs of students.
4. All three 2nd cycle SPs have a very strong focus on the development of students' research abilities and, therefore, meet the academic needs of students and the level of qualification offered.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Increased emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all 1st cycle SPs would be beneficial.
2. It is a concern that students of both cycles do not have an opportunity to put their theses (and other pieces of assessment) through an anti-plagiarism software during various stages of their work on the thesis. Incorporation of such practice into formative assessment during all levels of study and during final theses writing would be beneficial.
3. Consider introducing ethics considerations as a part of the BA and MA theses research proposal form.

4. Consider a “stand alone” compulsory module on academic writing for BA level SPs and Research Methods in Linguistics for MA level SPs.
5. Consider a University wide staggered timetable system for various faculties in order to avoid website crashes during the period of elective modules selection.
6. Consider an audit and possible reduction of elective modules (as a possible solution for avoiding oversubscription of certain electives) and reserving a certain number of spaces on modules most suitable for philology students.

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

(1) Factual situation

The staff of the field under evaluation, Philology by Language, at the faculty of Philology of Vilnius University and Šiauliai Academy, are highly qualified in terms of research conducted in the study field. The Lithuanian government expert evaluation of research and development activities of the field of philology at Vilnius University, which was carried out in 2017, arrived at very positive conclusions both for the first-cycle studies (SER, p. 33, 1st cycle) and for the second-cycle studies (SER, p. 24, 2nd cycle). Since then, the faculty of Philology of Vilnius University has implemented a very clear and constructive research strategy for 2019-2023, highlighting three strategic goals: 1. strong research skills, 2. expansion and dissemination of international level research and 3. effective project management and publication of research (SER, p. 35, 1st cycle and SER, p. 26, 2nd cycle).

A bonus system for outstanding research outputs is applied at both BA and MA levels, and the awards have increased consistently during 2019 and 2022 (SER, p. 35, 1st cycle and SER, p. 26, 2nd cycle), which highlights the effectiveness of the measure. The interview with the teaching staff confirmed the positive aspects of this measure, especially the set criteria, by the academic and study boards.

The possibility to have a sabbatical research leave every five years is also offered by the faculty, and generally well used by the staff at both BA and MA level (table 35, SER, p. 101, 1st cycle, and table 27, SER, p. 74, 2nd cycle), but the staff mentioned the problematic fact that the teachers have to find a replacement themselves, so that extensive planning and preparation is needed in order to take a sabbatical. “The panel does not consider this as a major shortcoming, but addressing it would have beneficial effects. One possible solution, suggested by the experts panel, and that the teachers found interesting, was that sometimes a long 6 months sabbatical could be split into several shorter ones to enable more staff to take sabbaticals and complete smaller pieces of research. Many European universities have this practice, where the faculty

has a procedure of applications for short-term sabbaticals from a few weeks to a couple of months. Another aspect that the staff would like to improve is receiving editing help for articles, something which is lacking right now. They also noted that they are often approached by the University to do foreign language translations and editing for administration. They are not in a position to refuse, but this work is not counted towards their allocations. The panel does not consider this as a major shortcoming, but suggests two simple solutions which would have beneficial effects: either to count such work towards staff allocations or to use professional translation/editing services outside the University. The SERs (p. 35, 1st cycle and p. 27, 2nd cycle) and the interviews during the site visits highlight that the staff of the evaluated field at the faculty of Philology of Vilnius University conduct research in well-profiled research areas, which are highly successful both nationally and internationally. The teaching staff of Šiauliai Academy engage mainly in “Studies in Languages, Literatures and History: The Aspect of Foreign Languages“, but have natural collaborations with different research areas at Vilnius University (SER, p. 35, 1st cycle).

The teaching staff of the study programmes, thus, publish articles in prestigious international and national journals, and engage in various research activities at high international level. Their research results, provided in table 6 (SER, p. 36), are very impressive. The teaching staff of the SPs under evaluation take part in a number of research and educational projects, both at BA level (tables 7, SER, p. 36, 1st cycle: table 8, SER, p. 37, 1st cycle) and at MA level (table 7, SER, p. 27, 2nd cycle; table 8, SER, p. 28, 2nd cycle). While most of these are nationally funded, it appears clearly that even international projects are represented. The “Mothernet” international research project deserves a special mention in this context, since it was initiated by Vilnius University, and concerns research involved at both BA (SER, p. 36, 1st cycle) and MA levels (SER, p. 27, 2nd cycle).

However, despite the successful research activities conducted in the evaluated field, the staff expressed a feeling that their workload is generally very heavy, and as a consequence of this, research has to be conducted during weekends, evenings and holidays. The sabbatical leave is not sufficient to compensate for this problematic aspect, since research has to be conducted continuously. This is not a major shortcoming, especially since the aim of implementation of the sabbatical leave is appreciated by the panel, and the suggestion mentioned above to split the sabbatical leave in shorter periods could have a positive effect.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

Both the SERs, the publications lists and the interviews with management and staff show clearly that staff research in the SPs of the evaluated study field is of very high national and international level. The recently implemented strategies seem to have positive effects on both quantity and quality of the conducted research.

However, even if this is not a major shortcoming, some improvements could be made especially on the allocation of time for research. The sabbatical system is generally a positive factor (even though mini sabbaticals could be envisaged too), but should be supplemented with possibilities

for the staff to carry out research on a regular basis. A form of help for the editing of articles should be implemented.

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

(1) Factual situation

As stated in the SER (p. 40, 1st cycle), and as the interviews with the teaching staff confirmed, studies are very clearly based on staff research activities. This is primarily ensured by having the courses taught by specialists who conduct research in fields connected to the content of the course, and by including their publications in the curricula of both compulsory and optional course units. Detailed overview is provided in the SER (SER, pp. 40-42, 1st cycle).

As it appears in both the SERs and in the interviews with the staff members, it is not only the teachers' research outputs, but also the latest research outcomes in different fields that are used in the courses in different ways, such as lectures, seminars and workshops, but also by regularly updating the literature lists with the most recent publications. The Study Programme Committees regularly assess the integration of research into studies, thus, assuring its continuity and sustainability. Another positive aspect is the increasing use of team teaching on various courses, especially on the MA programme, as mentioned in the SER (p. 65, 2nd cycle), and also in the interviews, which is a good way of avoiding dependence on one member of staff when it comes to the content and teaching of a course.

Another positive feature is the preparation of the students for academic work, for instance, by evaluating their individual assignments even at early stages according to their treatment of previous research (SER, p. 32, 1st cycle). This confirms the very clear criteria for evaluating the validity of research problems, research aims and tasks; adequacy and validity of the theoretical framework; appropriateness and validity of the research methodology; presentation and discussion of the results of conducted research; formulation of conclusions; the general culture of creating a scientific text; structure and other formal aspects; presentation and defence of the thesis (SER, p. 30, 1st cycle and SER, p. 32, 2nd cycle).

One aspect that the panel does not consider as a major shortcoming but that has been suggested as a possible field of improvement by the students interviewed, especially by students of the second cycle, is the introduction of a course in academic writing from the early stages of their study. Academic writing is offered now, but inconsistently, and not across all SPs. The panel considers that such a measure would not only have a positive result for the students continuing their studies at the second cycle, but also for the individual assignments and the theses of the first cycle.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

Both the SERs and the interviews with the staff show that their very high standards of research activities are clearly reflected in the contents of the courses taught at both first and second

study cycles. Clear strategies, overseen by Research and Study Boards and by the Study Committees, ensure the connection between science and study content is upheld, and not dependent on a single teacher. Thus, it is not only the research activity of the teacher that defines this connection, the latest research outcomes in the relevant fields are used continuously in the courses. The only suggestion for improvement in this context would be the introduction of a course in academic writing at earlier stages.

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

(1) Factual situation

First cycle students of the evaluated study programmes at both Vilnius University and Šiauliai Academy have regular opportunities to present their own research, for instance at conferences of Polish, Scandinavian, German, French (since 2021) and English (until 2019) Studies. An additional positive aspect of these conferences is that students from foreign universities also participate. Short term visits to scientific events related to the study field held in foreign universities are encouraged (SER, p. 44, 1st cycle). Popular science activities are arranged regularly, and students delivering presentations and preparing articles in scholarly and cultural press receive additional points in the assessment of their final theses, something that can also be used for accessing second-cycle studies.

BA students' research is connected to non-academic environments in many ways, such as for example the contest *The Battle of the Minds* during "The Day of European Languages", the journal *Miteinander*, published by the Association of Lithuanian Teachers of German, etc (SER, p. 44, 1st cycle).

At MA level, several research activities organised by the academic staff at the faculty are open to the MA students, and several possibilities exist for them to publish their research, either individually or together with their supervisors (SER, p. 32-33, 2nd cycle). MA students are encouraged to publish their research in non-academic media (SER, p. 34, 2nd cycle), and to choose theses subjects that are relevant for the society (SER, p. 34, 2nd cycle). MA students' involvement in research activities is rewarded in different ways, such as through the MAGNA CUM LAUDE diplomas for the best research outcomes, or the opportunity to be admitted to doctoral studies.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel has come to the conclusion that students' involvement in scientific activities is consistent with their study cycle and is encouraged and achieved in excellent ways in the evaluated study programmes both at BA and at MA levels.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Staff of the faculty of Philology of Vilnius University and Šiauliai Academy conduct research at a very high national and international level. During the period 2019-2020, this has been subject to clear improvement, something that can be related to the strategies implemented in this context by the management of the Faculty.
2. Research is included in the working plans and in the assessment of the staff according to criteria that the staff members themselves are aware of and find clear and relevant.
3. The study programmes are clearly research-based, in ways that are reviewed and assessed by the management.
4. Students have many opportunities to engage in research adapted to their study cycle.
5. There is a possibility for sabbatical research leaves.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The time allocated for the staff research activities could be better structured by the management. The sabbatical leave is not sufficient from this point of view. This is not a major shortcoming, but addressing it would have beneficial effects.
2. External fund raising could be encouraged in organised ways in order to supplement the scarcity of university research funding.
3. Academic writing could be introduced at earlier stages for all students.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the descriptions provided in SER (p. 47) for the Bachelor study programmes, the admission to Vilnius University takes place during the general admission period through LAMA BPO (Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions). To apply, Secondary education, with passing State Maturity exams is a necessity for Lithuanian students. For the field study programmes, the competitive score comprises of: 1) the results of the Lithuanian Language and Literature exam (0,4 of the score); 2) the exam results or annual mark of History, Geography, Mathematics, IT, or Foreign Language (0,2 of the score); 3) the exam results or annual mark of any other subject apart from the ones already mentioned (0,2 of the score); and the results of foreign language exam or annual mark (0,2 of the score). The minimum score from 2019 is 5,4 for all subjects in all higher education institutions. Three passed State Maturity Exams of Lithuanian Language and Literature, Mathematics, and Foreign Language are the basic requirements for state-funded places, and for non-state funded places, at least one passed State Maturity exam is a must. Additionally, the applicants need to have the average score from school subjects of best annual marks not lower than 7.

Additional points can be awarded to winners of national and international Olympiads and contests, and completed military service. The information about these requirements is available on the university's website, LAMA BPO website, social media accounts, and is provided in study fairs and school visits.

According to the provided data, the number of students is decreasing across all SPs. While some of the numbers fluctuate during the evaluated period, the general trend indicates a decline. From 2018 to 2021 the applicants with first priority has decreased from 105 to 73 in English Philology (from 13 to 12 in Šiauliai Academy); from 62 to 31 in Spanish Philology; from 40 to 18 in French Philology; from 33 to 15 in Russian Philology; from 245 to 62 in Scandinavian Studies; from 22 to 12 in German Philology; Italian Philology had one applicant more in 2021 (32) than in 2018 (31). The numbers for other priorities show a similar decline. In total, the number of first priority applicants for philology SPs has reduced from 567 in 2018 to 265 in 2021; and the number of other priorities has reduced from 2056 to 1475 in total (SER 1st cycle, table 11, p. 49).

SER (p. 49) provides an analysis of the indicated numbers, and states that across all nine programmes, the number of first priorities has decreased by more than a half (53%), and the number of other priorities decreased by almost a third (28%).

The trend among the signed agreements is similar, with the numbers slightly fluctuating when it comes to the differences in state-funded and non-state-funded places. The total number of agreements signed to state-funded places in the field programmes has changed from 208 in 2018 to 162 in 2021; and to non-state funded places from 86 in 2018 to 58. There was a slight increase regarding state-funded places in 2019 (237 agreements), and non-state-funded places in 2020 (94 agreements after 54 the previous year), but the general trend shows a decline. The university provides reasons for this: demographic situation, the raised minimum score, the increased study fee. The lack of interest in humanities was also expressed during the site visit (SER 1st cycle, table 12, p. 49)

The final indicator of the admission situation is the competitive score, which has been increasing during the evaluated period. According to SER (1st cycle, Table 13, p. 50–51), the highest scores were as follows: in 2021 – 10.97 in Scandinavian Studies, and 10 in German philology; in 2020 – 9.86 in Russian philology, and 10.57 in English philology; in 2019 – 11.39 in French philology, and 9.89 in Russian philology; in 2018 – 11.94 and 8.83 in Scandinavian studies. These are differently distributed to state funded and non-state-funded places, but in general, there are fluctuations. The lowest scores: in 2021 – 5.67 in English philology, and 5.42 in Spanish philology; in 2020 – 5.43 in French and Russian philology, and 5.51 in German philology; in 2019 – 5.43 in Italian philology, and 5.44 in Polish philology; in 2018 – 3.60 and 3.62 in Polish philology. From 2019 the minimum admission score was set to 5.4, so this has influenced the lowest admission scores in general.

In terms of the second cycle, the SER (2nd cycle, 36–37) describes, and the documents confirm that the admission procedures are handled by the university itself, and outlined in the *Vilnius*

University Admissions Procedure for Second-Cycle Study Programmes. Graduates of first-cycle studies can apply for the second cycle studies. The competitive score comprises: 1) the average grade of the diploma supplement (all of the subjects in bachelor studies); 2) the grade of the final bachelor thesis or graduation exam; 3) additional points. Additional points can be given for scientific activities, such as participation in a scientific conference, or a scientific publication, as well as a publication in mass media, when the article is related to the relevant SP.

For the second cycle admissions, as stated in SER (p. 36), language proficiency is also a requirement for the applicants. The graduates of VU Bachelor Philology SPs are admitted to the second cycle without this requirement, as their language level is known and documented, while the graduates of other fields and higher education institutions have to provide a document proving their language skills. C1 is the required level of English for the English studies. Additionally, at least 15 ECTS of philology, linguistics, literary or culture studies are required as a proof of preparation for philology studies. For Russian studies, the level required used to be C1, but since there were no admissions in 2020, the required level was lowered to B2. For the study programme of Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Polish, or Latvian at B2 level are a must.

The numbers of applicants to second cycle SPs, unlike to the first cycle, have been increasing. The information provided in SER (2nd cycle, Table 10, p. 36–37) shows The number of applicants with first priority in English Studies has increased from 8 to 27 through the years 2018–2022; in Russian studies from 9 to 11. In the Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe SP, the numbers have decreased from 18 to 6 (first priority). The remaining priorities in the SPs also show an increase from 16 to 50; Russian studies from 3 to 17 (with the gap in 2020 and 2021); and from 3 to 12 in the Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe SP. Based on this, the numbers of signed agreements are similar: from 6 to 19 in state-funded places of English studies (with fluctuation in between) and from 2 to 5 in non-state funded places; from 3 to 6 in Russian studies (state-funded places) and fluctuations from 6 to 3 to 6 in non-state-funded places (with a gap in 2020 and 2021). A decrease is seen in the number of signed agreements for state-funded places to the Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe SP, with 16 agreements signed in 2019, and 6 in 2022; no non-state-funded places were taken in this SP during the evaluated period.

The admission scores of second cycle students are also fluctuating. According to SER (Table 12, p. 37), the highest and lowest admission scores in 2022 belong to the English Studies programme (19,68 and 12,43); in 2021 and 2020– the highest and lowest scores also belong to one programme – Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe (21,37 and 30,93; and 19,90 and 30,56 respectively); in 2019 – the highest admission score was in the Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe programme (29,79), and the lowest – in Russian Studies (16,14). In 2018 – the highest score was in Russian studies (37,11), and the lowest – in English studies (17,64). Some of the differences in the same programmes could indicate different preparation levels of students, but neither the SER, nor site visit have raised this issue.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel concluded that the university follows clear procedures regarding the admission processes, both for first cycle and second cycle study programmes. The requirements for the applicants are clear and reasonable, and helps to bring in well prepared students, it seems. While the numbers are decreasing, the reasons for that are also clear, and understandable.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to both SERs (1st cycle, p. 54–55; 2nd cycle, p. 39–40) and relevant to both cycles, the university recognises education and qualifications obtained in other higher education institutions in Lithuania and abroad. For recognition of Learning outcomes, the university follows the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations, the Methodology of Evaluating Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States And International Organisations, and other documents, as stated in the SER.

Foreign qualifications are recognised individually, based on the information available and on the practices of previous qualification recognitions, especially if no fundamental differences exist among the requirements necessary for that qualification in Lithuania and abroad.

Formal learning outcomes are recognised based on the agreed study plan. If there is no previous agreement, the learning outcomes are evaluated in terms of the formal requirements, and the necessary competences for the study programme.

If there is a request to recognise formal learning in other higher education institutions in Lithuania and abroad, the learning outcomes are assessed for their compliance to the study field, study programme, study form, and subject specific, such as course aims, skills, content, and other criteria. According to SER, no more than 75% of the study programme can be recognised. During the evaluated period, 351 students in the study field had their learning outcomes recognised.

Informal learning can also be recognised, allowing students to carry over their work, practice, internship competences to the study programmes. No more than 50 % of the study programme can be recognised. The recognition of the competences lies within the Study Programme Committee. During the evaluated period, one student submitted a request to recognize language skills, and the request was granted.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel concluded that the university follows clear, well documented procedures. The process is well outlined, and its description can be easily found on the University's website.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

The university provides a variety of opportunities for students to participate in international mobility. Students of the field study programmes can go on study exchanges with the programmes of Erasmus+, ISEP, Nordplus, Nordliks, ARQUS and COIMBRA Group, DAAD, and others, as well as bilateral agreements. The programmes in total allow for about half of the study time to be spent abroad, if the students choose so. International mobility is coordinated by the International Relations Department of the University; on the faculty level, the International Studies Coordinator and Administrator are responsible for the task. Internships are taken care of by the University's Student Services and Career Department. Students also have access to international mobility through the ARQUS and COIMBRA networks. Information about mobility opportunities is available on the University's website, newsletters, disseminated during informational meetings (SER, 1st cycle, p. 55–63).

During the evaluated period, 408 students went on study exchanges abroad: 339 for partial studies, and 69 for Erasmus+ internship. The most popular countries for mobility were Spain (76), France (60), Italy (43), Sweden (39), Norway (31), Germany (30), Denmark (21), and Finland (14). In terms of incoming students, the numbers are lower, with 18 in the Russian philology study programme being the highest number of incoming students to one study programme. Students come from Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, USA, the Republic of South Africa, China, Poland, Great Britain, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. For partial studies, the number is higher, and the students from a variety of fields come to study at the Faculty of Philology (SER, 1st cycle, p. 60–61).

During the academic year 2017-2018 there were 879 international students studying one or the other course at the Faculty of Philology; 880 in 2018-2019; 654 in 2019-2020; and 525 in 2020-2021. The decrease of students is attributed to the pandemic mainly (SER, 1st cycle, p. 62).

For the second cycle studies, the same opportunities apply. The number of outgoing MA students was 13, and the students went to Germany, Belgium, Poland, Russia, Spain, and Slovenia. During the evaluated period, there were also 22 students coming to English philology programme, and 8 students to Russian studies (SER, 2nd cycle, p. 45).

The site visit revealed that the students and staff are content with 1st cycle students' mobility, but would be happy to see more 2nd cycle students using the opportunities, although most of the MA students are already working and building their careers, so fewer students going abroad is reasonable.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel concluded that the students have good opportunities for international mobility. The numbers of students participating in exchanges are also rather impressive, and speaks about the good international focus of the university.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

(1) Factual situation

According to both SERs (1st cycle, p. 64–68; 2nd cycle, p. 46–49), the university provides different types of support to students, available to both 1st and 2nd cycles. Academic support includes consultations on all study related issues, provided by the academic unit, as well as Student Services and Career Department. The consultations can also be provided by the study coordinators and academic consultants.

Another type of support is available through a mentoring programme that aims to enhance students' general competences, work on their motivation, and academic achievements. The mentors are volunteer university teachers or alumni, and students can choose mentors from fields different than their own.

Additional academic and professional support is provided through training and career guidance. The students can educate themselves on topics such as stress management, learning techniques, and job application skills. Career guidance is also available individually.

Financial support covers a variety of scholarships available to students. The students can apply for a state funded loan to cover the tuition fee or living expenses. Vilnius university has also a special scholarship established for the 450th anniversary, awarded to prospective students in financial difficulties. Tuition fee waivers are also available to students in non-state funded places of Polish Philology, provided by the Government of the Polish Republic. Active students, engaging in research can apply for individual scholarships.

The President of the Republic of Lithuania Antanas Smetona Scholarship is also available to the students of the philology field. According to SER (1st cycle, p. 66; 2nd cycle, p. 48), the Humanities students, who are actively engaged in research, art, various contests, and other activities, are eligible for the scholarship.

Additional scholarships are also available, such as Algimanta Railaitė-Pranckevičienė scholarship, for translation contest (for English Philology students); Cognizant Technology Solutions *Lithuania* scholarship, for active participation in scientific or social activities (Scandinavian Studies students). Šiauliai Academy offers Vanda and Vytautas Šliūpai scholarship, for significant works of research related to Dr. Jonas Šliūpas's archive; Kazimieras Butkus scholarship for non-academic and social activities; and Šiauliai women's LIONS club scholarship for the academic achievements of students with disabilities. During the evaluated period, 46 scholarships were awarded to field students. This information is only

available in 1st cycle SER (p. 66), so it is assumed that these additional scholarships are available only to 1st cycle students.

Students are also provided with accommodation, if necessary. According to SER (1st cycle, p. 65; 2nd cycle, p. 48), the need is met up to 95%. Socially vulnerable students, or students with disabilities have a priority when applying for a dormitory, and can get a fee discount as well.

The university provides students with psychological support, available at the Counselling and Training Centre, as well as spiritual guidance through the pastoral office. Yet, the site visit revealed that the students experience long queues and are unable to get psychological help in time. Additionally, staff also do not feel well equipped to deal with psychological issues of students.

According to both SERs, the Student Representative Office is also actively involved in ensuring the students' academic and social well-being, organises cultural activities, and engages students in different community building activities. Additionally, students can use the University Health and Sports Centre, and take care of their fitness, as well as join The University' Culture Centre and engage in various cultural activities in choir, theatre, and other ensembles (SER, 1st cycle, p. 66–67; 2nd cycle, p. 48–49).

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel concluded that the students have sufficient support in a variety of forms. The only issues that arose during evaluation meetings were concerned with psychological support, as there appears to be long queues before the counselling is actually available, so the panel suggests to provide students not only with information about the psychological and personal support available at the university, but also about the alternatives in case the university's help is not as timely.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

According to both SERs, the students, at the beginning of their study programme, are introduced to their study programme during the student's camp, before the 1st of September, and later during the Integration week, where students meet the study programme committee, attend lectures on the study processes, and learn about various types of support, and leisure activities available to students.

The information about studies is available to students through different channels. Information about studies is provided through various channels. General information is provided by Student Services and Career Centre, and specific study related information is provided by the study units. Students can also meet academic consultants, individual teachers, and consult with the student representative body. The students are often consulted via email, direct website inquiries, social media, meetings, and discussions. Vilnius University Information System

provides students with information about their study plans, schedules for lectures and exams, and study results.

Students get consultations about the goals of the programme, courses, and course work, as well as career opportunities. Most of the consultations are provided by the members of the Study programme committee, as well as teachers of the programme. The teachers have allocated hours for consultations, and consult students live, by email, or virtually on MS Teams. The study programme committee also organises meetings for the students to meet prospective thesis supervisors, or to learn about internship opportunities (SER, 1st cycle, p. 68–69; 2nd cycle, p. 49–50).

The site visit revealed that while students receive enough consultations and feel well guided in the overall study process, the final stages of their studies are more hectic, when students have to choose their thesis topics and supervisors. The need for a better organised process was especially expressed among the second cycle students.

(2) Expert judgement/Indicator analysis

The panel concludes that the students seem to have sufficient counselling in most areas. However, as the evaluation visit revealed that the process of choosing thesis topics and supervisors is complicated and students lack guidance, the Team suggests rethinking some of the practices, and evaluating whether they work well in practice, as well as how certain processes could be better streamlined.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Students have good international mobility opportunities and they are well implemented.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Thesis topic choice and supervisors allocation process could be re-examined and simplified.
2. Psychological support is difficult to receive in practice because of high demand.

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

(1) Factual situation

Based on both SER (SER for 1st cycle SP p.70-71; SER for 2nd cycle SP p.52-53) and during the visit to the University, it was confirmed that the Faculty of Philology constantly monitors the learning process and cares about the needs of students.

The HEI teaching process is guided by the principles that studies in the field are conducted in accordance with descriptions of study programs, divided into modules (SER for 1st cycle SP p.70; SER for 2st cycle SP- Appendix nr 2). Modules are designed to ensure consistency of learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and methods of teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, which allow to achieve the learning outcomes specified in the field study program and prepare students for independent professional activities. The teaching process takes into account students; needs such as the use of IT tools (VLE and MS Teams, Moodle) SER for 1st cycle SP (p.71), various forms of activities (Lectures, discussion and debates, individual and group presentations SER for 1st cycle SP (p.71). However, the panel did not note the differentiated forms of assessment of learning outcomes. Annex 2 of the SER for 1st cycle SP – showing the curriculum – indicates that both compulsory and elective courses are valued at 5 ECTS and the predominant form of assessment is examination and cumulative assessment.

Also, the SER for 2st cycle SP is built with 5 and 10 ECTS coursework and assessment methods of examination and cumulative assessment. The MA degree program assumes 19-22% contact hours. The panel believes that this number could be adjusted because students with different language skills (e.g., English or Russian) are admitted to the master's program in the first semester. An increased number of contact hours could make up for these differences.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Both SER (for 1st cycle SP and for 2st cycle SP) and the site visit provide evidence of VU's strong commitment to appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and adjusting to student needs to improve achievement of learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are clear and relevant to the field of study and future employment opportunities, as evidenced by statements from students and employers and community partners. Evidence of the constant analysis of labour market needs and student expectations is the introduction of a new field of study.

It is recommended that differentiated learning outcomes also have differentiated ECTS and grading system. The allocation of 5 ECTS per course allows for simple interchangeability of courses and flexibility in choice. However, it should be adjusted according to the students; actual workload. The expert panel verified this data in a meeting with BA students (statements from French, English Philology students), who indicated that some courses require more work and others less (examples of such courses were not given). However, it is requested that ECTS scores be more differentiated according to the learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The university declares that it provides procedures (a five-year strategy for promoting diversity and equality, a procedure for adapting studies to individual needs based on disability) – it is impossible to check the information because the link does not work.

HEI also provides a disability coordinator SER for first degree SP (p. 73 and 74 with links to the strategy and procedure) and SER for second degree SP (p. 56). It is worth noting that only disabilities are considered here and data on assistance for people with special needs is missing.

The needs of students were described clearly in both SERs (SER for 1st degree SP, p. 112 and SER for 2nd degree p. 83), drawing attention to the Vilnius University strategy 'Open University for People with Disabilities' introduced in 2017.

The coordinator for people with disabilities and special needs is in charge of defining their special needs, then refers the dispute to those responsible for the fields of study. The student's special needs are taken into account and individual study plans are built. During a visit to the faculty, the panel found out that lessons for groups in which there are people with mobility disabilities are planned in the part of the building where there are stair elevators.

SER for 1st cycle SP (p. 74.) HEI taking into account the needs of students developed 10 individual plans. When assessing performance of students with special needs (vision, hearing, mobility and other impairments), the following are used flexible forms of assessing student performance. The form of exams and examinations is adapted (e.g., increasing the font in exam tasks, extending the time allotted for task completion, as well as adjusting the physical environment accessibility of the exam room, etc.).

Both SER (for 1st cycle SP p. 74 BA and for 2nd cycle SP p. 56) describe an association of people with disabilities and special needs established in 2017. This association brings together people with many different disabilities (vision, hearing, mobility) also includes other VU faculties (Faculty of History, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Physics) SER for 1st cycle SP p. and for 2nd cycle SP p.56. Vilnius University has an association of LGBT+ students, staff and alumni and their supporters.

The university has a system of student financial support, it grants one-off social benefits to students of all degrees in the event of natural disaster, illness and the like, as well as numerous incentive scholarships for students who have achieved high academic results in college and other activities.

HEI supports particularly talented students in difficult financial situations – in the evaluated period 100 students were granted scholarships, and HEI also seeks scholarships for students from Belarus SER for 1st cycle SP p.74.

SER p. 75 emphasises that the University strives to create and ensure an organisational culture in which everyone feels safe, accepted, can nurture their individuality and realise their potential. During a meeting at HEI, one teacher pointed out that the university is conservative. Therefore, it is worthwhile to continuously train teachers and other staff to implement policies of tolerance and equal opportunity.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Both the SER and the visit to VU confirmed the use of a number of procedures to enable various socially vulnerable groups to study, as well as students with disabilities and special needs. The procedures and policy documents recommend distinguishing between support for those with long-term disabilities and those with special educational needs are typically those with mental disorders such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD), OCD, ADHD, etc.

The university has introduced distance learning methods and used various tools. The strategy 'Open University for Persons with Disabilities'; has been in operation since 2017 and has been shown to have improved conditions related to the adaptation of the building, lecture halls and library. The expert panel recommends monitoring this procedure and responding to its results and providing prompt feedback. The panel recommends addressing non-discrimination issues – including the introduction of gender-neutral language. During a meeting with the Teaching Staff Team – SER learned that the university is still very conservative, which is not a bad thing and does not preclude following European standards.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER and during a visit to the University, the team learned that HEI monitors Students'; academic progress on an ongoing basis. This process takes place on several levels: the first level (level 1), which is the most important for the student, is the evaluation by the teacher. Level 2 is an assessment of progress at the level of all students in a given year by the Student Administration Department. Once a year, there is an evaluation by the Study Committee (SPC) (Level 3). Both the SER and the visit to VU confirmed the use of a number of procedures to enable the study process for various socially vulnerable groups, as well as students with special needs – the University of Inclusive Opportunities SER (for 1st cycle p. 75-76) procedure. Adaptation of the University's infrastructure to the needs of students/lecturers with limited mobility is very good.

Monitoring of progress promotes the improvement of the quality of education in courses. HEI uses the digital environment tool VLE / Moodle (emokymai.vu.lt) SER for 1st cycle SP p. 75 to support the progress monitoring process. The digital tools allow to provide feedback on completed assignments, and written work indicates areas of improvement. Students are

familiar with the VLE and Moodle system and, using these tools, track their own progress, plan their own learning, and give feedback.

Regarding Level 1 Feedback on the selected course within the module is provided to students:

- a) during contact activities (in class or remotely, e.g. via MS Teams);
- b) through group and individual consultations (in class or remotely, e.g., via MS Teams).
- c) in writing through the VU virtual learning environment (VLE or via VU email).

Regarding Level 2 the Student Administration Department is concerned with determining the best results and analysing whether the average grades of students in a given year in the program deviate from the academic performance observed in earlier semesters or for comparison in other philology courses.

The Student and Career Services Department monitors the level of ESL and implements an action plan to prevent it. This anti-ESL plan provides for ongoing monitoring of student performance.

HEI conducted study satisfaction surveys centrally after the introduction of electronic VU IS questionnaires. Results and statistical summaries, as well as detailed reports showing differences between departments, are available to the academic community online. Lecturers receive feedback on the course they teach through end-of-course surveys. SPC chairs can view all feedback from all students in the program through VU IS. The SPCs meet to discuss the survey results, draw conclusions and decide on necessary improvements. Students are informed of decisions, revised modules, courses and other SPC decisions based on survey results through the student representative on the SPC. (SER for 1st cycle SP p.76).

The expert panel learned during a visit to the university that students' satisfaction surveys are organised only at the end of the course. The students expressed readiness to evaluate the course also during the course. It was also reported that there is a need to introduce "academic writing" classes (for some 1st cycle SP) to enhance skills and prepare undergraduate papers more effectively.

The university operates a student-centred model of study, and therefore introduces cumulative assessment. This assessment is particularly promoted and widely used in the majority of classes in modules on the master's degree program (SER for 1st cycle SP Appendix 2). Subjects in the compulsory module are graded 75% in the form of E - exam; C - cumulative grade and one subject in the form described as K (no information on what this abbreviation means). HEI states in SER for 2st cycle SP p 53 that: The studies in the course are full-time studies. The main forms of study and methods of teaching and learning are full-time classes (lectures, seminars, consultations) and independent work (independent study of theoretical and research materials, reading literary and scientific texts, working on written works, specific tasks assigned by lecturers, etc.). These data are at variance with Appendix 2 PLANS OF SECONDARY STUDY PROGRAMS, where courses are valued at 10 or 5 ECTS. Thus, there is no distinction between lecture and conversation.

HEI indicates in SER for 2nd cycle SP (p.54) results of survey conducted among students on the quality of studies in the semester for 2018-2019, all three charts indicate maximum ratings (100) for the Russian Philology program and varying but also very high ratings (between 80-95) for English Philology and Languages and Cultures of Northern Europe.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel reviewed the SER for cycles 1 and 2 as well as the opinions of students, teachers and others attending the meetings during the visit to the University. The panel assesses that HEI strives to systematically monitor students'; academic progress. The University of Inclusive Opportunities procedure that has been put in place allows it to collect data and respond quickly to students'; needs. The expert panel recommends monitoring this procedure and responding to its results and prompt feedback. The panel noted that are described in the SER for 2nd degree SP p. 53 that: Studies in the field of study are full-time studies. The main forms of study and methods of teaching and learning are full-time classes (lectures, seminars, consultations) and independent work (independent study of theoretical and research materials, reading literary and scientific texts, working on written works, specific tasks assigned by lecturers, etc.). This data is discrepant with Appendix 2 PLANS OF PROGRAMS OF SECOND-DEGREE STUDIES, where subjects are valued at 10 or 5 ECTS. Thus, there is no distinction between lecture and conversation. The above-mentioned forms of teaching require a different commitment from the student in contact hours and own work. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a system of different forms of teaching (lecture, conversation exercises, workshops, seminars) that realistically assesses the student's work by differentiating ECTS. The Team finds that there is an example of good grading practice at VU – mid-term monitoring (SER for 2nd cycle SP Appendix 3). It also states that students receive evaluation and recommendations, but it is not explained how.

It is recommended to introduce a broader system (not only using digital tools) of student self-assessment when the SP indicates a large amount of independent student work. Student self-assessment is a method of skill acquisition and encourages students to take the path of self-development. Self-assessment methods should be determined by the SP board together with students. Students should seek the best self-assessment method from their point of view. The feedback system on evaluations should be formalised in all SPs. It should be adapted to the students'; working conditions and take place both on-line and on-site in SP council and student meetings, during courses and in individual meetings.

The panel's impression from the meetings was that feedback is primarily provided informally, through personal communication between teachers and students. This is made possible by small groups of students, and close contact between teachers and students is generally a positive feature, but it should be emphasised that this does not eliminate the need for formalised evaluation channels. The technical systems that are available at the University for data collection are not routinely used for student surveys (e.g., mid-module assessments, end-of-module assessments). There should be a department-wide system for students requesting

extensions (for legitimate reasons) with a set time limit for such requests. The faculty could formally process these, and teachers informed of the decision as to whether an extension was granted or not. Assessment – there does not seem to be a formal system which ensures the objectivity of assessment across all SPs at both levels (BA and M), for example, formal system of second marking of a selective sample of students' work. A unified system of comparable assessment feedback (e.g. feedback sheets for each assignment) should be discussed and implemented. Assessment criteria should be clearly stated on the feedback sheets for all assignments.

This should apply to formal examinations and relevant course evaluations (not group work, practical coursework, etc., as these can be handled by faculty).

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

(1) Factual situation

HEI uses an internal and external system to evaluate the graduates. The internal system is the online Career Tracking Information System (CTIS), the external system for assessing graduate employment is the Government Center for Strategic Analysis (STRATA).

HEI compares these data and draws conclusions from this comparison (SER for 1st cycle SP, p. 76-77).

HEI on SER for 1st cycle SP p. 77 presents accurate statistics from 2018 -2019 according to STRATA (the data is tabulated in Table 25). In the year indicated, 68% of graduates found employment under contract in Lithuania. The data provided also shows that this employment was related to the high qualifications of the graduates, as interpreted from the salary data indicated per STRATA. However, HEI recognizes the limitations of the statistical system, which does not break down graduates by philology and indicates only those employed in Lithuania, with no data on those employed outside the country.

HEI compiled Table 25 where it showed a breakdown of the different philologies and indicated high employability, e.g. 100% for Russian philology, where there were 3 graduates.

It should be noted that HEI also shows high salaries of graduates mainly in Scandinavian philology but such in 2020 Polish philology.

Graduates'; BA and MA study program careers are monitored using the tools of the Career Tracking Information System (CTIS). Two types of indicators are used in the assessment:

1. objective indicators from state information systems and government and departmental registers: Currently, the system is linked to the student registry, citizen registry and SoDra (State Social Security Fund.)
2. subjective data from sociological surveys show the subjective opinions of graduates on various career-related issues. Subjective data are collected in three stages after graduation.

The first stage is a survey conducted one year after graduation, the second survey three years, and another five years after graduation.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel assesses that the information provided on the employability of graduates and the tracking of graduates'; careers in individual philological fields corresponds to European standards. The nationwide system for analysing graduates; careers is supplemented by an internal system in which career data is analysed one year after graduation. There is no data on long-term indicators. During a meeting with employers and graduates, the panel gathered positive information and feedback on the qualifications of graduates and the systematic contact between graduates and the university.

The panel noted that the SER authors on pages 78-80 (SER for 1 st cycle SP) compiled the data for 2018-2020, comparing the data presented in Table 25 and Figure 2, some differences in data reporting are evident. For example, according to the data presented in Figure 2, 93% of SCAND graduates and 92% of 2018 ESPhil graduates were working and/or continuing their education one year after graduation, while the CTIS data, which does not reflect the number of self-employed, reports only 75.9% and 63.3% employed.

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

(1) Factual situation

HEI has procedures and policies in place as described in the bylaws to ensure academic integrity SER for 1st cycle SP p.84, SER for 2nd cycle SP p.62.

HEI has policies and procedures in place to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination in the Vilnius University Statute, the Vilnius University Code of Academic Ethics, the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Strategy, and the Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. SPN-6 of February 18, 2020 approving the 'Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Strategy for 2020-2025'.

Teaching staff and administration staff use procedurally compliant measures to ensure compliance with academic ethics in examinations and submission of written work – this mainly concerns the anti-plagiarism system. An important aspect is that the procedure for academic ethics also includes student representation. Teachers and student representatives monitor the exam for the common good. The university has an electronic thesis and research identification system (EOIS). This system makes it possible to verify similar passages that repeat other works from databases. The code defines, among other things, cases of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, bribery and aiding others in academic dishonesty, and the procedure described in SER p. 85. This procedure ensures the independence of the participants in the dispute and gives both the student, teacher and government representatives an opportunity to speak out.

The University noted that in 2018-2019 - 2020-2021(SER for 1st cycle SP p.85) there were a total of 21 violations of academic ethics committed by students. 14 of these cases involve the Philology students described in this SER for 1st cycle SP.

Of the 6 students in VU's Philology Department who were expelled from the university for plagiarism detected in a written or thesis, 4 were undergraduate students (2 English majors, 2 Scandinavian majors).

The university also has a special anonymous hotline ('Trust Line') that any member of the academic community can use. Advice is provided by a team of psychologists and lawyers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

'Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Strategy for 2020-2025'; needs to be updated and provisions added for people with special needs.

As a result of the SER analysis and the meeting at VU, the panel gathered positive information regarding academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination procedures. It was noted that the university emphasises making students aware of and combating plagiarism by knowing how to properly write academic papers. The panel appreciates the indicated statistics on violations of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as the procedures that contributed to indicating these disputes. However, 1st cycle students don't have academic writing or similar research matters courses. Also, both cycles don't have tools for self-checking against plagiarism, that's what students confirmed.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

(1) Factual situation

HEI reports in SER for 1st cycle SP (p. 84) that it does not place a high value on formal penalties once a violation is registered, but instead focuses on raising awareness of academic integrity and other academic values. However, penalties have been recorded in the procedures, and the data say that students who have committed plagiarism have been removed from their studies. HEI has procedures for filing and handling appeals and complaints at various levels of university operations, starting with the Vilnius University Statute, the Academic Ethics Code of Vilnius University, the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy¹³⁰ and other documents (SER for 2nd cycle SP p.84) provides links to documents describing these procedures.

A visit to the university confirmed the use and functionality of these procedures and the familiarisation of both students and academics with them.

(2) Expert evaluation/analysis of indicators

HEI has standard procedures for submitting and handling appeals and complaints regarding the assessment process or Evaluation of Learning Outcomes. It is recommended to indicate the number of appeals or situations requiring reassessment of the student's work. The introduction of a double assessment system not only for bachelor's theses but also for larger theses / final essays increases the sense of reliability and neutrality of the student's work.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Study programs are completed and methods of student activity was well appreciated by students.
2. Procedure for evaluating students by various instances has been implemented (evaluation by the teacher, evaluation of progress at the level of all students in a given year by the Student Administration Department, evaluation by the Study Committee (SPC).
3. The employability of graduates and positive feedback from employers regarding the skills of the alumni.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Mid-term assessments and feedback on assessment, intermediate module assessments and the anti-plagiarism platform for students before the final submission of their grades can be a permanent part of the learning outcomes assessment process at VU.
2. No differentiation in ECTS scores. Different teaching methods (lectures, exercises, workshops) are not reflected in the different assessment and allocation of student work time (the ECTS system is the same).
3. The university has not made a clear distinction between people with disabilities and people with special educational needs (ASD, etc.), It has not fully integrated ASD into its policies, although there are efforts and research in this area at the university.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SPs of both cycles are delivered by the staff who meet national legal requirements (the Law on Higher Education and Research) ([XI-242 Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research \(lrs.lt\)](#)) (accessed 17/06/2023).

In accordance with the Regulations for Organising Open Competitions for Teachers and Research (Artistic) Staff of Vilnius University and Their Certification, teaching and research staff (other than visiting) are recruited by public tender on a competitive basis, whereby qualifications, subjects expertise and research activities are considered (SER, p.87, 1st cycle: SER p.64, 2nd cycle)). In addition, teachers are recertified every five years, and since 2019 the University introduced the procedure of annual staff interviews similar to the annual appraisal interviews in many European universities.

According to the SER (pp.88-90, 1st cycle) and Appendix 4 (List of the Teaching Staff in the Study Programmes), the 1st cycle SPs in the field of Philology by Language are implemented by 124 teachers, of whom 17 are professors, 49 associate professors, 27 assistants, 6 junior assistants (doctoral students) and 25 lecturers. The 2nd cycle SPs are taught by 57 teachers, of whom 12 are professors, 28 associate professors, 13 assistants and 4 lecturers (SER, pp.65-66, 2nd cycle) and Appendix 4 (List of the Teaching Staff in the Study Programmes). A significant fact is that 93% of the teaching staff of the study field (2nd cycle) are active researchers, which allows them to underpin their teaching with the latest research. Regarding the 1st cycle SPs, 75% of the teaching staff are researchers (SER, p.88, 1st cycle).

Considering the nature of language studies, it should be noted that 100% of the teaching staff (both cycles) speak at least one foreign language at B2, and most teaching staff speak more than one foreign language (SER, p.65, 2nd cycle). Moreover, 11 lecturers are native speakers teaching modules related to their mother tongue (SER, p.66, 2nd cycle).

Regarding the 1st cycle SPs, 30 out of 123 permanent teaching staff are native speakers teaching modules related to their mother tongue (SER, p.90, 1st cycle).

During the period under evaluation, there were no significant changes in the teaching staff delivering key courses in the SPs of both cycles.

During the period 2020-2021, student - teaching staff ratio was 1:7.2 (A:C ratio) and 1:8.4 (B:C ratio) in the 1st cycle SPs (SER, p.89, 1st cycle), and 1:0.8 (A:C ratio) and 1:1 (B:C ratio) in the 2nd cycle (SER, p.65, 2nd cycle), which is very favourable for students' studies.

The members of the academic staff implementing all SPs (on both cycles) are highly qualified specialists in relevant fields and many are active researchers with a wealth of research experience, members of national and international professional associations with research output published in Lithuanian and foreign academic journals.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The academic staff implementing the programmes are highly competent and well qualified, and the number of suitably qualified staff is sufficient to ensure a smooth implementation of both the BA and MA programmes, and the achievement of their learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The international contacts of the teachers are an important addition to the staff contributing to the quality of teaching, supervision, assessment, and research. The SER states that the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the mobility during 2019-2020, but it is gradually returning to normal, for example 17 members of teaching staff participated in exchange visits in 2019-2020, whereas 28 took part in such visits during 2020-21 (SER, p.95, 2nd cycle). This was confirmed during our meeting with staff. They are well informed about existing exchange opportunities, and many improve their professional and pedagogical competences, as well as enrich their research activities by participating in academic exchanges via ERASMUS+ (*Learning Mobility of Individuals* exchange programme), NORDPLUS, ISEP (participating in professional development courses, monitoring visits, teaching visits, etc).

The staff of the study field also benefit from the ARQUS alliance of European Universities which the University joined in 2020. In addition, in 2021 a new ARQUS Twinning exchange programme piloted short-term mobility scheme for teaching staff and their students. One lecturer and her students took part in this scheme so far.

Another aspect of academic mobility is the 'inward' mobility, i.e. the consistent efforts of the SPs management and teachers to create opportunities for inviting foreign lecturers and researchers to teach on SPs courses. During the period from 2017-2018 until 2020-2021, 129 foreign lecturers from various European countries participated in the study process of all SPs. Such 'inward' mobility helps to establish contacts with other institutions and colleagues, fostering professional relationships, building international research environment, and enabling collaborations.

Other forms of mobility are internships and research conferences, partly funded by the University under the research promotion scheme. Personal research contacts developed during various exchange visits also contribute to the improvement of staff competences and experience.

'Outward' and 'inward' exchange visits within the academic and project-based activities create favourable conditions for the teaching staff to enhance and expand their competences, which in turn, inform their teaching and development of SPs. The SER (pp.94-97, 1st cycle) and the SER (pp.69-72, 2nd cycle) and the information gleaned during the meeting with teaching staff provided concrete examples of how such activities translate into development of courses with the SPs and, therefore, benefit the students and programmes development.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel concluded that there is very clear evidence of a variety of mobility opportunities for staff, who use them actively.

There is a strong sense of the connection between academic mobility and effective teaching, learning and research, and evidence of a vibrant academic community. As a result, the quality of both teaching and research is high by international comparison, giving students a very beneficial intellectual and social environment in which to develop.

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

As it is described in the SERs (pp.94-102, 1st cycle; pp.68-75, 2nd cycle) and confirmed during the meeting with teaching staff, the University provides ample opportunities for professional development of teaching staff. These were also discussed in Section 3.5.2. in relation with staff academic mobility.

Since 2017, the central administration of the University has provided regular professional development training sessions for the teaching staff of the University. In addition to these, a special training programme for new staff has also been introduced. The SERs provide detailed data on numbers of UV staff who participated in on-campus and virtual training sessions. It is a positive new development and the numbers are growing steadily, however, the SERs do not indicate how many members of the SPs teaching staff of both cycles participated in these training sessions. During the meetings with staff and administration, the panel did not get a clear picture of how staff participation record is monitored or how it is taken into account during annual interviews.

The range of topics and areas of training activities indicate that teaching staff of the SPs have sufficient conditions to improve their competencies. For example, during the period under evaluation, there were 16 training sessions on a wide range of topics, including Active Learning Methods, Supervision of Research Papers, Application of Blended Learning in University Studies, etc. (SER, p.100, 1st cycle; SER, p73, 2nd cycle). There is clear evidence that most staff took advantage of training sessions on using the Virtual Learning Environment Moodle and MS Teams provided by the University during the COvid-19 pandemic and continue using it actively post-pandemic. The scope and variety of professional development programmes and training events is vast, and staff have opportunities to develop appropriate skills and subject knowledge to enable them to support, encourage and monitor students effectively. However, the courses and activities offered by the University are not mandatory and there is no system to keep track record of staff training. Moreover, it became apparent during the meeting with staff, that often they feel overwhelmed by various responsibilities and the lack of time to fulfil their training obligations effectively.

However, it deserves a special note, that most members of staff were very complimentary regarding professional skills development during ERASMUS+ training visits (Staff mobility for training). Participation in research projects, in national and international conferences, internships and cooperation with different organisations and associations were commended as well. It was also noted during the meeting, that the practical professional competence of the teaching staff is improved by gaining in giving public lectures, presentations and engaging in cultural and educational projects.

Staff research competences are mainly improved by presenting at national and international conferences and conducting their field related research projects, writing and reviewing articles, publishing and editing books, serving as members of editorial boards, etc.

Every 5 years the competences of the teaching staff are assessed as part of the recruitment process, but the main assessment criteria are research based.

The academic staff of the University have an opportunity to go on sabbatical every 5 years to improve their research or pedagogical competencies. Both SER (1st and 2nd cycle) provide detailed data on numbers of staff who took this opportunity during the periods 2017-2-18 and 2021-2-22 (SER, p.101, 1st cycle; SER, p74, 2nd cycle). According to the SERs (SER, p.100, 1st cycle; SER, p....), the Council of FPhill approved new regulations ensuring the consistency of sabbaticals practice. However, during the meeting with the teaching staff, the Team formed a view that the new regulations do not work very well yet and staff have to organise their own replacement during their absence during sabbaticals, which, at times, presents considerable problems. The Team appreciates that this development is very new and hopes that the Faculty continues to improve it.

It is a concern of the panel that the system of academic research sabbaticals is fairly inflexible and as such, does not enable larger numbers of staff to fulfil their research development and obligations and training, particularly, taking into account heavy workload of the teaching staff.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Overall, the University provides good conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff, who partake in many training events and activities, despite heavy teaching and administrative load.

However, the Team notes the following two points for improvement:

1. To reduce additional load, a streamlined points system of events might be considered in order to keep track record of staff training. Some training courses could be obligatory, some optional and available via online staff training platform, which staff can access according to their availability.
2. A system of mini sabbaticals for research active staff might be also considered to provide much needed research time to a larger number of academic staff, and, therefore, further develop their research competencies and output. A mini sabbaticals system is used in many European universities to ensure that staff can fulfil immediate research obligations (e.g. meet an article publication deadline, or write a research project bid). The duration of such mini sabbaticals ranges from 2-3 weeks to up 3-4 months. The sabbaticals are offered annually and staff are encouraged to submit a personal or group (in case of joint projects) sabbatical application form. These are considered by Research Committees and decisions are made on the basis of proposed research outcomes (i.e.

publication in a major journal with high impact factor, publication of a book, completion of a project or participation in writing a funding bid for a research project. etc).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The academic staff implementing the programmes are highly competent and well qualified, and the number of suitably qualified staff is sufficient to ensure a smooth implementation of the BA and MA programmes and the achievement of their learning outcomes.
2. There is a strong sense of the connection between academic mobility and effective teaching, learning and research, and evidence of a vibrant academic community. As a result, the quality of both teaching and research is high by international comparison, giving students a very beneficial intellectual and social environment in which to develop.
3. The University provides good conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of all SPs under evaluation.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is no mini sabbatical system for research active staff.
2. There is no system for keeping track record of staff training.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

As both SERs describe, there is a variety of material resources available to students. First of all, the faculty itself is located in the historical premises of Vilnius University, where most of the infrastructure and resources for philology students are available. The faculty of philology is distributed among five buildings, and contains 79 lecture rooms. Most of them are equipped with multimedia equipment for presentations. Among them, 8 are computer classrooms (with 8–24 workplaces). According to SER (1st cycle, p. 103), most of the faculty's rooms were updated during the period of 2014–2021, with computers, internet, speakers, projectors, and screens added and upgraded where necessary. IT Service Centre is also available to students, with 118 computerised workplaces. The conditions at VU Šiauliai Academy for English philology studies are similarly favourable. The improvements have been made to the facilities in Šiauliai regarding accessibility for people with special needs.

In terms of software available to students, the computerised workplaces in the library have *SPSS*, *AutoCAD*, *Adobe Design* program package, *Sony Vegas Movie Studio*, *Matlab*, *SolidWorks*, *Rstudio*, and other programmes installed (SER 1st cycle, p. 109), although their use in the field of philology is limited. The master's students of Media Linguistics have expressed the need for more tools, such as *wordpress*.

Most of the premises are adapted to students with disabilities and special needs. The central library of the university has 4 adjustable height tables, and 3 ergonomic chairs in different reading rooms. Accessibility to certain places is provided by stair climbers, and lifts. Reading and text recognition device SARA CE is available, as well as braille printer *Braille Eboosser Everest-D V4* with an acoustic cabinet, and *High Contrast Keyboard*. Electronic magnifier or a portable electronic magnifier *Aumed AUKEY Ultra-Portable Video Magnifier* is also available. The Scientific Communication and Information centre is well adapted for the individuals with mobility difficulties. The spaces between shelves, desks, doors, and other open spaces are more than 80 centimetres wide. There are also no thresholds, steps, or other obstacles. Elevator is also available. A Braille room with SARA CE and a computer with a 40 square electronic Braille device (together with keyboard and software), Braille printer, acoustic booth, and scanner are also available (SER, 1st cycle, p. 112).

The faculty itself has designated lifts for moving between floors, helping to reach certain rooms. Sanitary facilities are available on the ground floor in the Centre of Lithuanian Studies. Stair Climber and special tables are also available at the faculty. The names of lecture rooms are written in Braille on the door of the room. Šiauliai academy also has put effort into adapting their spaces for people with mobility and visual impairments. Reading rooms have special equipment.

The library of Vilnius University is well equipped in terms of resources available. Firstly, the library is close to the faculty of Philology. There is a variety of working spaces available for students. 12 reading rooms, and study rooms for individual or group work. Students can work in computerised places or work on their own personal computers. According to SER, in total, the library has 1,900 workplaces (514 workplaces are located in the Central Library, 834 in SCIC, and 550 in the reading rooms of the faculties). There are 381 computerised workplaces (72 in the Central Library, 199 in SCIC, about 110 in the faculties) (SER, 1st cycle, p. 109).

The library in Šiauliai academy has 202 workplaces, 67 of them are computerised. The Information Centre at the library has 8 rooms for individual and group work, with special desks available for people with disabilities.

In terms of study and research material, there are around 5 million printed documents, and more than 260,000 electronic books in the library available to students. As for specific resources for Philology students, the SER states that the students can also use the resources available at the Department of English Philology, the Department of German Philology and German Seminar Room, Centre for Italian Studies, Centre for Polish Studies, Department of French Philology and in the Centre of Scandinavian Studies. The publications available there are often loaned to students. The resources include books, studies, monographs, and other sources.

The Central Library is also a key provider of study materials to students. The Philology reading room has subscription to at least 7 periodicals in English, Polish, Russian, and German languages relevant for the field studies (SER, 1st cycle, p. 111). Students can also use the 58 databases subscribed by the library. The resources can also be accessed from home, with a VPN.

Students are encouraged to read and use the open access journals published by the University, such as *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia*, *Baltistica*, *Lietuvių kalba*, *Kalbotyra*, *Taikomoji kalbotyra*, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, *Literatūra / Literature*, *Problemos*, *Religija ir kultūra*, *Respectus Philologicus Vilnensis*, *Semiotika*, *Slavistica*, *Sociologija*, all relevant to literature, linguistics, and philology studies.

As stated in SER (1st cycle, p. 111), the University also subscribes to the printing houses of other Lithuanian higher education institutions, such as Kaunas Technology University, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vytautas Magnus University, and Klaipėda University, where students can find literature related to aesthetics, philosophy, media, and fields that students find relevant for their studies and research. The university also subscribes to 58 databases, among them are: EBSCO, Springer LINK, Taylor & Francis and Wiley Online Library consortia, JSTOR, SAGE Journals Online, Oxford Journals Collection, Cambridge Core, ProQuest full-text and bibliographic databases. The full list is available here: <https://duomenu-bazes.biblioteka.vu.lt/lt/>. The library also provides access to Lithuanian research journals, and journals published by Vilnius University.

The site visit revealed that the faculty, with its lecture halls, library spaces, and available resources, is well equipped for the field studies.

(2) *Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel concluded that students and staff seem to be content with what is available and happily use the facilities and resources. The library is well equipped, as are lecture halls. The premises are well adapted to students with disabilities, given the historical architecture, and other interior limitations. The library is able to provide students with extensive materials for studies and research.

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

(1) *Factual situation*

The purchasing and updating of publications are generally initiated by the faculty staff. The lecturers express their need for compulsory and recommended literature, latest publications, and relevant databases based on their courses and research. The teaching staff of the field study programmes follows the latest national and international publications, and expresses the need to the subject librarians. Most of the updates happen when course units are designed and updated, but the resources can be purchased at any time. There is also a “Suggest a Book” section in the library’s website, where teachers can suggest a useful book. The need for resources is monitored through surveys for lecturers. The usage of subscribed databases is also monitored, to ensure their use and necessity in the future.

In terms of budget, a strategic project was implemented in 2018–2020 for improving study and working conditions of the community. The Faculty of Philosophy, because of that, was able to allocate around 10 000 euros for computer hardware in 2018, almost 14 000 in 2019; and around 5000 in 2020, but the number in 2020 was lower because of the pandemic. In 2021, around 12 000 euros was allocated for buying computers, cameras, and other relevant devices (SER, 1st cycle, p. 114).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel concluded that the planning process appears to be well working and sufficient. The site visit revealed no issues in the resource planning stage, and the faculty seems to be allocating the available budget to best support their staff needs.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Extensive and wide range library resources available to students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of more field related software.

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

(1) Factual situation

As it is explained in the SER, the internal QA system at Vilnius University was developed following the standards and guidelines of European Higher Education Area regulations. The HEI has a variety of mechanisms and tools to be able to monitor and improve the quality of studies including specific measures for study programmes, study process, student achievement, distance learning, examination and plagiarism, and teaching staff competences. In addition, the HEI implements an induction programme for newly hired academic staff and drop-out prevention programme for students. The HEI has a special regulation for SPs which also regulates the preparation and registration of new SPs and the accreditation, assessment and improvement of current SPs. All the regulation documents are available on the HEI's website.¹

¹ <https://www.vu.lt/studijos/studiju-kokybe> and <https://www.vu.lt/apiemus/dokumentai#isorinio-veiklos-vertinimo-rezultatai> (accessed 14 06 2023)

According to the documents provided in the SER (p. 115 1st cycle, p. 86 2nd cycle), the Study Programme Committees (SPCs) have the major responsibilities in ensuring the quality and improvement of the SPs at the HEI. The formation and responsibilities of SPCs are clearly described in the HEI's documentation. The SPCs are normally composed of the teaching staff, student representatives and social partners. Additional work in relation to SPC member responsibilities is also considered and rewarded accordingly e.g. the hours are included in the workload allocation and salary supplements are allocated for the chairs of the SPCs. The members of SPCs by the department, including student representatives and social partners, and their contacts are published on the faculty's website, as it was verified by the Team during the meetings.

As it is specified in the SER (p. 115-116 1st cycle, p. 86-87 2nd cycle), dedicated university level SPCs meet twice a year (once every semester) and SP specific SPCs meet 2–7 times per year. SPs, their study modules and course unit descriptions are reviewed and updated before each semester. Teaching staff contribute to this process with the updates based on their research work. SPCs review the curriculum design of SPs and update it once a year. They are responsible for teaching staff allocation and involvement of new lecturers based on the SP reviews.

There is a good structure for collaboration between SPCs and other university structures in terms of QA procedures. For example, substantial changes to the SPs have to be considered by the Board of Studies (FPhil) and approved by the Core Academic Unit Councils (CAU Councils). Other more structural changes, such as change of name or study field for a SP, would have to be approved by the Senate as well. The SP-specific QA process is supervised by the HEI's Study Quality and Development Division and administrative support is also provided by CAU Study Units. SPCs and CAU Study Units collaborate on an ongoing basis. They facilitate the discussion between key stakeholders (teaching staff, student representatives, social partners) in order to ensure their contributions to the QA process (SER p. 116 1st cycle, p. 87 2nd cycle).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The QA process at the HEI is very well structured. The structure of the field study management and decision making is clearly described. SPCs are the key formation responsible for the oversight of QA. SPC formation, functions and work is regulated by the dedicated HEI's policy. It specifies the aims and objectives, the criteria for the selection of members and chairpersons, the responsibilities and periodicity in the work of SPCs. The names and contacts of current SPC members and chairpersons are also provided. Therefore, the panel thinks that there is a high level of transparency and integrity in QA management.

The human resources, facilities and learning resources are allocated to effective management and development of the study field. The HEI's policies and commitments to high QA standards are clear, efficiently managed and implemented. The panel established that the stakeholders (teaching staff, students and social partners) were satisfied with the internal QA system.

Since the SPCs are responsible for the QA in various areas, including study quality, teaching and learning quality, teaching staff and their allocation to SPs, the SPCs should focus not only on study quality and student satisfaction, but also on teaching staff satisfaction and their wellbeing. Based on the site visit meetings (teaching staff expressed concerns regarding work-life balance, requirements for research output, but little time for research), the panel thinks that SPCs should increase their focus and consider additional measures in order to monitor the teaching staff satisfaction. Evidently, there is a strong focus on the requirements, performance and achievements, but teaching staff satisfaction seems to be rather neglected and could be integrated in the QA process better. This could be done through anonymous teaching staff surveys, for example, or closer collaboration between SPCs and HEI's Human Resources Division (there are just three people in the HR Division for the entire university though, according to the HEI's website, which is concerning as the physical capacity of three people doesn't seem to be reasonable in supporting an institution with over 5000 employees).

Overall, the panel finds that the quality assurance and quality maintenance mechanisms are appropriate and meet the requirements of the programmes, but some aspects have room for improvement.

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

(1) Factual situation

As it is described in the SER (p. 115 1st cycle, p. 86 2nd cycle), the key stakeholders in the process of QA are teaching staff, students and social partners.

Teaching staff participate in the QA process through their representation and work in SPCs. Their performance is accurately monitored and the amount of bureaucracy in order to keep track of their achievements and qualifications. However, during the panel's discussion with teaching staff, it became apparent that there is no mechanism e.g. anonymous teaching staff surveys or similar measures for analysing and improving staff satisfaction indicators. The HEI's QA process is largely student oriented and focuses on student needs, study quality and other student-centred aspects. The SER doesn't explain the mechanism for teaching staff involvement, besides SPCs, in the QA process either.

Students participate in the QA process directly through their representatives. There are many student surveys and they are strongly encouraged to participate in those. They also have a possibility to express their needs and concerns through organised discussions and individual conversations with teaching staff and student bodies. Students have their representatives in the Colleges of Studies and get involved in deciding on SP content and study methods. Depending on the student needs in particular areas or SP-wide issues, the SPCs or HEI's administration can also initiate an additional focused student survey and collect student feedback on the relevant matters. The HEI has very motivated and active student bodies, which is beneficial for the QA process. As it is specified in the SER (p. 117 1st cycle, p. 87-88 2nd cycle), there are student representatives in the university level decision-making bodies, such as CAU

Council, Board of Studies of FPhil, CAU Academic Ethics Commission, CAU Dispute Resolution Commission, etc. It was confirmed to the panel during the site visit meetings, that the Students also get involved in publicity activities through participation in study fairs, visits to high schools and events organised by social partners.

External stakeholders are involved in the QA process through their work in SPCs – there are representatives of social partners in each SPC. They can contribute to the discussion about SP goals, achievement of competencies, and content updates. They also participate in thesis defences as part of the committee and as reviewers. In addition, the social partners are active in organising and conducting student practices and internships, and in some cases participate in the teaching process directly, which allows them to share expertise from the perspective of the labour market.

During the site visits, the panel had a chance to meet some social partners and discuss their involvement in the QA process and in the teaching-learning process in general. All of them were very pleased by the collaboration with the HEI and gave positive feedback about the students and graduates – their professional skills and motivation. Some social partners expressly stated that both the students and the level of collaboration with the HEI are top quality in Lithuania. They confirmed their involvement in the QA process as listed in the previous paragraph. HEI also provides an extended list of external stakeholders in their SER (p. 117 1st cycle, p. 88 2nd cycle).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel thinks that overall, all the stakeholders are engaged in the QA process quite well and were able to confirm this during the site visits. There is a strong emphasis on student needs and very good student involvement in the QA process. During the site visits, the students confirmed that they feel listened to and that they get feedback about study quality improvements they suggested. The social partners contribute to the QA process actively as well and the panel finds the cooperation between the HEI and social partners very well organised. However, the panel thinks that the improvement of the involvement of teaching staff in the QA process is absolutely necessary – not in terms of their contribution to the QA process, but in terms of monitoring and improving staff satisfaction and benefits. Teaching staff and their expertise is the core component in the HEI's educational offer. Evidently, staff satisfaction seems to be a forgotten criteria in the QA process. During the site visits, the panel was made aware that the only method to express their concerns is through individual discussions and their performance review conversations. Staff satisfaction and related criteria is not mentioned in the SER either. The panel finds that staff satisfaction is important in the harmonious QA process. It helps to attract, recruit and retain the highest calibre of staff. It is also crucial for maintaining high quality of studies and securing a healthy work environment. Therefore, monitoring staff satisfaction, integrating related improvements into the QA process, introducing structural and collegial measures to make sure staff satisfaction is covered in the QA process, and developing a staff benefits programme (e.g. work-life balance, financial benefits, health and wellbeing, travel, personal and professional development, discounts, etc.) is a necessary measure in order to

maintain high QA standards at the university. This could be done at both the study field level and the university level potentially expanding the HR Division and their responsibilities.

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

(1) Factual situation

As it is described in the SER, there are numerous methods for collection, use and publication of information on studies, QA and improvement processes and their outcomes.

From the analysis on public resources, SER (p. 120 1st cycle, p. 90 2nd cycle) and information received during the site visits, the panel were able to confirm that data collection is organised on three levels – university level, department level and SP level. The **information is collected** on the basis of the university’s organisational procedure. This is normally done through various surveys organised and managed by appointed academic and non-academic units. As it is explained in the HEI’s SER and also confirmed during the meetings, there are surveys related to various questions and targeting relevant audiences. For example, surveys targeting study quality and process (course unit and end-of-semester surveys), student expectations and satisfaction (first year, final year, dropout and graduate surveys), student exchange and practice (incoming and outgoing exchange student surveys, student practice abroad feedback, internship survey). Detailed information is provided in the SER (p. 120–121 1st cycle, p. 90-91 2nd cycle).

As it is specified in the SER (p. 120–121 1st cycle, p. 90-91 2nd cycle), **survey results** are made available to the interested parties through the University Study Information System (VUSIS) and are used by authorised members (e.g. Vice-Dean for Studies, SPC chairperson, study administrator, etc.). The system also contains student-related information and decrees of a Dean or Rector (e.g., on final theses, on business trips during partial studies to foreign universities, etc.), data on admissions, student and study statistics. VUSIS is the major tool for information management and SP delivery. SAIKU (KVIS) tool serves for analysing and managing the information about university graduates. Some data is also available in the study quality section and career section of the HEI’s website.

Teaching staff, heads of research, study units, SPCs, and Core Academic Units (CAUs) **use the data** to improve SPs and course units, continuous QA and quality improvement purposes, for providing advice and informing about research and professional development opportunities. The data is integrated into preparation of SERs for external assessments and the analysis of prospective SPs. Certification commission also uses the data for certification of teaching staff.

Information about studies is presented on the HEI’s website. During the meetings, the panel was able to confirm that the teaching staff and students engage in external publicity activities and promote studies at the HEI and SPs at high schools, study fairs and career days. The HEI also runs a very popular “student for one day” programme. High school students can come and participate in lectures and university student life for one day as if they were university students.

It was verified by the panel that the members of **SPCs** by the department, including student representatives and social partners, and their contacts are published on the faculty's website. Other detailed information on the QA process and regulation documents are available on the HEI's website (study quality section) as well.² In addition, the HEI organises QA related events and conferences and the VU academic community is informed about the QA related matters via VU Intranet and the University Study Information System (VUSIS).

Student body raises awareness of the QA process and explains why it is important to participate in the surveys. The panel was able to find articles and information about events focusing on the QA process and methods on the website of the HEI's student organisation.

The HEI identified and explained key areas they have been working to improve during the accreditation period (SER p. 118-119 1st cycle, p. 88-90 2nd cycle). Some of the areas include: QA regulation and documentation updates, SP structure and concept improvements, coordination and provision of studies via distance learning channels during Covid-19 pandemic period, and addressing study process issues raised by the students.

Students were able to confirm that the feedback on the improvement process is available to them during staff and student meetings, through their representatives in the SPCs, in the newsletters from the faculty and on an individual basis. They are informed what changes were considered and which ones will be introduced.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The data gathering, information flow and management seem to be well organised. The QA related information is very clearly presented on the HEI's website including QA policies, documentation, procedures and regulations, information about the external QA process, and student engagement methods. Students mentioned that they are satisfied with the QA process and resulting improvement implementation process.

2nd cycle students and alumni explained that they found it difficult to choose their thesis supervisors. Therefore, the panel thinks that additional effort in presenting the teaching staff and their research areas and interests to the first-year 2nd cycle students would improve the situation. There is some information about teaching staff on the HEI's website. However, creating more detailed website profiles for teaching staff and possibly additional introduction / presentation of teaching staff during the induction of 2nd year students would be beneficial and helpful for improving this aspect.

Overall, there were no major concerns and the panel therefore finds that the collection, use, and publication of information on studies meets expected standards.

² <https://www.vu.lt/studijos/studiju-kokybe> (accessed 14 06 2023)

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

(1) Factual situation

The HEI's feedback data from 2018-2021 shows that students are generally satisfied with their chosen studies and most of the students have a positive opinion about the quality of the content and quality of the teaching (SER p. 122 1st cycle, p. 92-93 2nd cycle).

All of the **students in both 1st and 2nd cycle** studies appreciate and are very thankful for the possibility to study with excellent, highly qualified and supportive teaching staff. This came through very clearly during the meetings with both current students and alumni. Students were also really satisfied with increasing flexibility in choice of subjects, which allows them to focus on individual interests and needs. All students were pleased about a good choice for international exchange programmes and internship opportunities, which also allowed them to work closely with social partners. The HEI has an increasing number of **international students**, which is a very positive fact. During the meeting with students the panel received very positive feedback about integration of international students into the local academic community and very supportive teaching staff. All of the students the panel spoke to were aware of QA procedures. They mentioned that they feel listened to and that their suggestions are taken into account.

As for **concerns** and reservations, the panel has heard from both 1st and 2nd cycle students, they all found it hard to maintain the **study-work balance**. This issue also poses a challenge for teaching staff as they find it hard to monitor how the students can manage their time and though there is an attempt to resolve this issue by adjusting the timetables, it doesn't seem to be a sustainable solution, because late working hours are challenging for the teaching staff. The HEI, however, doesn't offer part time SPs so that the students would be able to combine the necessity to earn for living with their academic development. Therefore, the panel would like to suggest discussing and improving the HEI's part time educational offer.

The panel was also made aware that the students don't have the tools for **self-checking** their work for plagiarism. There is little to no student **self-evaluation** integrated in the QA process. The panel, therefore, thinks that integrated self-evaluation and self-checking tools for plagiarism would be a good way of giving the students more responsibility, which would eventually decrease the workload for administrative and teaching staff.

1st cycle

The 1st cycle students mentioned that the library is "absolutely astonishing" (sic), but their introduction to its resources has room for improvement – they would like more training on how to use databases and other library resources. They mentioned that there are library tours during the induction, but they would like it to be more efficient and more practical. This may be a concern that flows out from the fact that not every SP has an **academic writing or introduction to research** module.

The 1st cycle first year students mentioned that, naturally, there is quite a lot of anxiety when starting university studies. They mentioned that a better mentorship programme would help them to find reassurance and advice from later year students or alumni. This could also make a favourable impact on the dropout rates. During the meeting with 1st cycle students, the panel also discussed that a system of personal tutoring might be helpful. Many European universities operate such systems, when each member of academic staff is allocated a certain number of first year students, for whom they act as academic and non-academic first port of call for support. Personal tutors have hours included in their annual workload (usually 10–15 hours per semester, depending on the number of students). Each week there are dedicated office hours determined by the tutor and advertised on their office doors and Department webpage. Students can just drop in during these hours or make an appointment. It provides a safety net for students and reduces staff workload, because student expectations are set correctly – they know when they can contact them and don't expect 24/7 availability from teaching staff.

Although the students were very happy about the flexibility and large choice of the electives, they confirmed having an important technical issue: when the selection process opens, the dedicated site crashes often and they often fail to book desired courses, because too many students are trying to make their choices on the system at the same time. All the students of all faculties are having to make the choices at the same time, and naturally there are some courses that are more popular than others so they get filled up quicker. This seemed to cause frustration among students. They also mentioned that the prioritisation doesn't work e.g. a philology student can lose a place in the elective course that is closely related to their field to someone from a completely unrelated field of studies, just because of systematic issues. The panel thinks that this needs to be addressed by introducing a more sophisticated choice making system with different stages, better prioritisation and categorisation of electives e.g. SPs should have their priority electives and the availability to other SPs could be opened if there are still places available. This, however, is a general suggestion and needs a better analysis and discussion in SPCs and on the university level. This issue was also discussed above in 3.5 Teaching Staff section.

Some students had comments about the credit system. They thought that some courses that are worth the same amount of credits could not be comparable as the workloads and demands from students may vary quite strongly. Of course, they admitted that it is easy to administer the courses and credit systems, but they thought it was not really fair.

Some students from SPs in different languages (other than English) pointed out that naturally some students get enrolled with no prior language skills (e.g. Italian, French or Scandinavian languages). This creates a disbalance within the group and the way they acquire knowledge. As one of the suggestions students had to address the issue was introducing an intensive language course first, to make sure all of the students are able to move at a similar pace later on. As a result of this issue, the students who enrol with some language skills pointed out that from their perspective, there is too much focus on language skills. Again, there seems to be a need for

addressing the discrepancy in language skills for some SPs and this could be taken to SPCs for discussions.

2nd cycle

The 2nd cycle students alumni mentioned they had difficulties in choosing their thesis supervisor and settling on their thesis topic. This issue was flagged in this report under communication 3.7.3 (2). They thought introductory meetings with all professors in the department, Q&A sessions and more detailed information about the thesis supervisors and their specialisations on the website could make this process better for them. Other than that, they thought the SPs are very well suited for research and academic growth. They shared positive feedback on the integration of foreign students as well.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel finds that there is vast evidence of student participation in the QA process through a number of various mechanisms, most notably the student surveys. They can also engage in providing their feedback on quality of studies and other aspects through less formal processes such as group or individual discussions with teaching staff and others.

Although there are improvements the students suggested during the site visits, the panel thinks this is a natural part of the QA process. Overall, the panel finds that the opinion of the field students about the quality of studies meets expected standards.

The panel believes that efforts are made to incorporate students into the processes in the QA process, listen to their feedback and suggestions, and work out the solutions for occurring issues in order to maintain high quality standards.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is a strong focus on student needs and a high level of student involvement in the QA process and implementation of improvements.
2. The QA process and regulations are developed very professionally with a high level of transparency and with some additional improvements can reach exemplary levels.
3. Very good integration of social partners into the QA process and other aspects of SP management and delivery.
4. Active student organisations and highly motivated students.
5. Excellent, highly qualified, experienced and supportive teaching staff.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Teaching staff satisfaction doesn't seem to be monitored and integrated in the QA process adequately. This needs to be addressed in a structural and collegial way by

introducing staff satisfaction surveys. It would help in attracting, recruiting and retaining the highest calibre of staff. An attractive range of competitive benefits should be made available to all staff for both work and personal life.

2. Although both students and teaching staff mentioned study-work balance as an issue, there seems to be no part-time study offer. This should be discussed further in SPCs and other QA structures.
3. Although the HEI has a student integration mechanism in place, it doesn't seem to get through to the students. Existing support and student integration system for 1st cycle students seems to be fragmented and needs to be reevaluated, optimised according to findings and communicated clearer to students. The tutoring system as described above (p. 56 of this report) should be considered as an optimising mechanism to tackle the difficulties and concerns new first year students have and optimise the workload for the teaching staff.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all 1st cycle SPs. ● Consider a specially tailored Research Methods module as a compulsory part of all BA and MA SPs. ● Incorporate the practice of student anti-plagiarism self-check into formative assessment during all levels of study and during mid-stage of final thesis writing ● Consider introducing ethics considerations as a part of the BA and, particularly, MA thesis research proposal and establishing the Department Level Ethics Committee to cover all research projects with ethical implications. ● Consider a University wide staggered timetable system for various faculties in order to avoid website crashes during the period of elective modules selection. ● Consider an audit and possible reduction of elective modules (as a possible solution for avoiding oversubscription of certain electives) and reserving a certain number of spaces on modules most suitable for philology students.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve the infrastructure for allocating time for the staff research activities. The current system of research sabbaticals is a positive feature, but can be improved, for instance, by allowing that sometimes a long 6 months sabbatical could be split into several shorter ones to enable more staff to take sabbaticals and complete smaller pieces of research. ● Encourage fundraising as a way to supplement scarcity of university research funding, for instance by implementing a Project Support Office to help staff with applications for external funding. ● Introduce a course in academic writing at earlier stages for all students.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview the existing practices in study counselling when it comes to choosing thesis topics and supervisors. ● Provide alternatives for psychological support if the University services are not available.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Strategy for 2020-2025'; needs to be updated and provisions added for people with special needs. Make a clear distinction between people with disabilities and people with special educational needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended to introduce differentiated ECTS scoring for different types of classes such as: lectures, exercises, workshops and seminars. • It is also recommended to rethink mid-term evaluation and feedback systems during the semester.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the introduction of a mini sabbatical system for research active staff. • Consider the introduction of a system for keeping track record of staff training. • Consider staff training record as one of the criteria during the process of staff attestation every five years.
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce more field related software into the courses.
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve teaching staff satisfaction monitoring and integration in the QA process: introduce staff satisfaction surveys, an attractive range of competitive benefits should be made available to all staff for both work and personal life. • Since there were concerns expressed by both students and teaching staff, the HEI should consider improving their part-time study offer. • Analyse the efficiency and communication of the student integration system and the tutoring system for the first year 1st cycle students. Optimise it according to the finding of analysis.

V. SUMMARY

The evaluation visit to Vilnius University, during which the Expert panel met with the administrative staff of the Faculty of Philology, the senior management and faculty administration staff, the self-assessment team, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and social partners, took place over the period of two days between 16.05.2023 - 17.05.2023. The first day of the visit was dedicated to the evaluation of 1st cycle study programmes, and the second day to the evaluation of the 2nd cycle study programmes. Overall, the visit was very well organised and presented ample opportunity for the Expert panel to become acquainted with the day-to-day management of the Study Field of Philology by Language, its curriculum design, staff and students. The Expert panel would like to express its gratitude to everyone involved in the preparation of the Self-evaluation Report, which was very detailed and clear; to everyone who gave us their valuable time during the meetings, answering our questions and showing us around the University; and to the students who actively participated in a meeting with the Expert panel and impressed us with their eloquence, openness, self-reflection and honesty.

The Expert panel's consensual view is that the study programmes in the field of Philology by Language are solid and well delivered. They are extremely flexible with clear evidence of strong interdisciplinarity. The staff, teaching on the programmes, should be commended for ensuring continuity and a high quality of tuition in such a wide variety of languages and related subjects, adaptability to the fast changing modern life and at the same time conducting high quality research. The SPs main strength and unique selling point in the Lithuanian education market is the provision of a sound philological education in combination with teaching qualifications and solid intercultural communication skills. Other strengths of the Study Programmes (of both cycles) are an enthusiastic, well-qualified and motivated staff, students and social partners, all of whom are fluent in foreign languages, and the high quality of general facilities. Overall, the Programmes ensure a good integration of theory and practice through the strong involvement of a large number of programme-related social partners in curriculum design, assessments, and quality assurance. However, it was felt that a unified system of assessment feedback, tighter co-operation between various departments involved in the delivery of the programmes would strengthen the Programmes even further.

The Programmes' main shortcomings stem from a lack of strong emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all 1st cycle SPs; inconsistent provision of Research Methods modules across the programmes; a very wide choice of optional modules and the lack of an adequate support system to monitor students' choices and self-study work; absence of Research Ethics Committee at Department level; absence of mini sabbaticals to support staff research activities more effectively; absence of a system to track staff training record. Therefore, it was recommended that emphasis on teaching skills as an important part of the learning outcomes in all 1st cycle SPs be strengthened; a specially tailored Research Methods module as a compulsory part of all BA and MA SPs is introduced; better structured practices for guiding students in their elective selection process be implemented; a Research Ethics Committee is established (particularly for 2nd cycle SPs); a system for staff research mini sabbaticals be considered; and a system for keeping a record of staff training discussed.

Other minor suggestions and recommendations could be found on pp.40-41. and within the relevant sections of this report.

Expert panel chairperson signature:
Irina Moore