



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
OF VETERINARY RESIDENCY STUDIES
AT LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Expert panel:

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6. **Mr Dominykas Budrys**, *students' representative.*

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Report language – English

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Data on Residency Programmes

General Information

Study field	Veterinary
Type of study	University, Professional residency
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 2 years
Credits in ECTS	132
Degree and (or) professional qualification	Qualification as a Specialist Veterinary Doctor
Level in the Lithuanian Qualification Framework	VII
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Access requirements	Master's degree of Veterinary Sciences, Qualification of Veterinary Doctor 6011HX001

Information on Individual Programmes

State Code	Title	Acquired Specialty	Registration Date
7330HX001	Veterinary Sanitary of Animal Products	Veterinary Sanitary Doctor	2017-03-31
7330HX002	Veterinary Obstetrics and Gynaecology	Veterinary Gynaecologist	2017-03-31
7330HX004	Veterinary Epidemiology	Veterinary Epidemiologist	2017-03-31
7330HX006	Veterinary Clinical Haematology and Toxicology	Veterinary Haematologist-Toxicologist	2017-03-31
7330HX007	Veterinary Microbiology	Veterinary Microbiologist	2017-03-31
7330HX009	Veterinary Parasitology	Veterinary Parasitologist	2017-03-31
7330HX010	Veterinary Pathology	Veterinary Pathologist	2017-03-31
7330HX011	Veterinary Virology	Veterinary Virologist	2017-03-31
7330HX012	Small Animal Surgery	Small Animal Surgeon	2017-08-02
7330HX013	Small Animal Therapy	Small Animal Therapist	2017-08-02
7330HX014	Diagnosis and Treatment of Cattle Diseases	Veterinary Doctor – a Specialist of Cattle Diseases	2017-08-02
7330HX015	Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging	Imaging Diagnostic Veterinary Specialist	2017-08-02

7330HX016	Equine Veterinary Medicine	Equine Veterinary Doctor	2017-08-02
7330HX017	Animal Welfare	Veterinarian – Animal Welfare Specialist (started in September 2022)	2021-07-27

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of residency studies in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Residency Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 24 August 2020, Order No. [V-1269](#) , and is carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Residency Studies approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 1 December 2020, Order No. [V-99](#) .

The evaluation is intended to help the HEIs to constantly improve the study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The process of evaluation consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by a HEI*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to a 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 SKVC takes a decision to accredit residency studies either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the evaluation is negative, the residency studies are not accredited.

Residency studies are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

Residency studies are **accredited for 3 years** if at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) and/or unsatisfactory (1 point).

Residency studies are **not accredited** if second time in a row at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) and/or 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 15 May, 2023.

Prof. Dr. Pierre Lekeux (panel chairperson), Professor at University of Liege (Belgium) and EAEVE Director of European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT), Vienna (Austria);
Prof. Dr. Pieter Brama, (member of the academic community), Full Professor of Veterinary Surgery at University College Dublin, School of Veterinary Medicine (Ireland);
Prof. Dr. Mario Baratta (member of the academic community), Full Professor in Veterinary Physiology at University of Parma (Italy);
Prof. Dr. Kaspars Kovaļenko (member of the academic community), Dean of Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at University of Life Sciences and Technologies (Latvia);
Mr Paulius Bušauskas (representative of social partners), Acting Deputy Director at State Food and Veterinary Service (Lithuania);
Mr Dominykas Budrys, (student's representative), Fifth year student of the Integrated Study Programme Medicine at Vilnius University Faculty of Medicine (Lithuania).

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the Document
1.	Animal welfare residency programme
2.	Equine veterinary medicine residency programme
3.	Diagnosis and treatment of diseases in ruminants
4.	Small animal surgery residency programme
5.	Small animal therapy residency programme
6.	Veterinary epidemiology residency programme
7.	Veterinary Clinical Haematology and Toxicology residency programme
8.	Veterinary imaging diagnostics residency programme
9.	Veterinary microbiology residency programme
10.	Veterinary obstetrics and gynaecology residency programme
11.	Veterinary parasitology residency programme
12.	Veterinary pathology residency programme
13.	Veterinary sanitation of animal products residency programme
14.	Veterinary virology residency programme

15.	SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE VETERINARY MEDICINE RESIDENCY (VMR)
16.	THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF VETERINARY MEDICINE RESIDIENCY (VMR)

1.4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESIDENCY STUDIES

Veterinary residency (VRM) studies are conducted by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (VF) of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU VA) Veterinary Academy. The VF is the second largest faculty of LSMU and the only one in Lithuania that has been training veterinarians for 85 years. VF is a member of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE). The last accreditation took place in 2022 - the programme was accredited.

Students studying in the Veterinary Medicine programme are qualified as veterinarians. However, there is a growing need for more specialised veterinarians in veterinary practice. Such specialisation is obtained by studying in the Veterinary residency at the LSMU VF Veterinary Medicine Faculty, which is a non-degree programme for a veterinarian who has completed a full degree in veterinary medicine and who wishes to qualify as a veterinarian in a type of veterinary medicine practice (specialty).

Residency studies are carried out in the Small Animal Clinic (3 programmes), Large Animal Clinic (4 programmes), Veterinary Pathobiology (5 programmes) and Food Safety and Quality (2 programmes) Departments of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Some of the programmes are carried out in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology, the LSMU Practical Training and Testing Centre, the Pathology Centre, the Veterinary Medicine Simulation Centre and in the scientific laboratories of the VF units, such as the Reproduction Laboratory of the Large Animal Clinic of LSMU, the Laboratories of Microbiology Research and Virology at the Institute of Microbiology and Virology, the Laboratory of Parasitology of the Veterinary Pathobiology Department.

Studies of veterinary medicine residency are conducted in accordance with the LSMU Regulation on Residency Studies, which it prepares in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Science and Higher Education and the Procedure for the Requirements and Supervision of Veterinary Medicine Residency Study Programme.

The content of the residency studies shall be defined in the residency programme for the relevant professional qualification of veterinary surgeon. Residency programmes shall be registered in accordance with the procedure established by the Ministry of Education and Science. There are 14 veterinary residency study programmes at the VF.

Veterinary residency studies are applied, practice-oriented, developing practical and research skills and leading to the professional qualification of veterinary doctor (specialty). Studies prepare the veterinary doctors specialists who are able to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities in practical work. The training of veterinary medicine residents in Lithuania started in 2006.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Veterinary residency studies at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) is given **positive** evaluation.

Assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Aims, learning outcomes and curriculum of residency programmes	3
2.	Study process and student assessment	4
3.	Teaching staff of residency studies	3
4.	Learning facilities and resources for residency studies	3
5.	Quality management and public information of the residency studies	4
	Total:	17

*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. RESIDENCY STUDIES ANALYSIS

3.1. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM OF RESIDENCY PROGRAMMES

Aims, outcomes and curriculum shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation to what extent the residency programmes offered by the higher education institution meet the needs of the society and the public.

The Veterinary residency (VMR) programmes offered by the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) Veterinary Faculty (VF) aims to produce highly qualified veterinarians who are ready to meet global challenges and respond to the needs of the profession and the public. The programmes are designed for veterinarians who wish to specialise in one of the fourteen offered fields of veterinary medicine. Applicants must have completed a master's degree programme in veterinary sciences or hold a qualification of a veterinary surgeon (or an equivalent higher education qualification) as well as hold a valid veterinary practice licence.

Through these programmes, the LSMU VF are able to produce more specialised veterinarians who can meet the growing demand for specialised veterinary care in the society in Lithuania. Meanwhile the VMR is lacking an ambitious internationalisation strategy that can interfere with development. The VMR programmes are practical and helps in developing the practical skills of the residents, which enables them to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities in practical work at the same time lacking emphasis on the research output of residents.

Furthermore, the VF collaborates with other units of the University in implementing the VMR study programmes and in research activities. This allows for a multidisciplinary approach to veterinary education, which is crucial for meeting the diverse needs of the society and the public.

The LSMU VA is also a member of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), which ensures that the VMR programme meets the highest European standards. In addition, the programme is accredited by the State Food and Veterinary Service, which confirms the need for specialists to study in the VMR. Meanwhile, during the onsite visit it became clear that the governmental residency programs are currently showing a pay gap between medical/dental residents and veterinary residents. This pay gap in future has to be eliminated in order to attract more perspective veterinary specialists.

3.1.2. Evaluation to what extent the study plan and curriculum of the residency programme comply with the legal requirements and enable the achievement of the intended aims and learning outcomes.

Based on the information provided, the study plan and curriculum of the residency programmes comply with the legal requirements and enable the achievement of the intended

aims and learning outcomes. The residency programmes are designed in accordance with various legislation, including the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Implementation of Non-Degree-Granting Study Programmes in Higher Education Institutions", the Statute of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, and the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework. These documents provide procedures for the organisation and conduct of the veterinary residency, the admission process, the suspension of studies, penalties, and evaluation of residents. Moreover, the documents specify the roles and responsibilities of the residency coordinator, resident supervisor, and resident. The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Science and Studies also refers to the procedure for granting support to residents. The curriculum of the residency programmes must clearly articulate the aims of the studies, which must be linked to the knowledge and skills expected to be acquired by the person completing the studies under that programme. The Veterinary Law of the Republic of Lithuania and the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Welfare and Protection of Animals establish the requirements for veterinary activities and the welfare and protection of animals. Furthermore, the Order of the Director of the State Food and Veterinary Service specifies requirements for veterinary service providers, veterinary equipment, and the management of animal by-products and waste.

3.1.3. Evaluation of the explicitness of competences required for learning, professional activity in the health protection system and the empowerment of residents for self-employment

The programmes integrate theoretical studies with practical work from the first year of residency. The University's lecturers, who are specialists in the residency base, assist in acquiring practical skills and mastering theoretical courses. Skills and competences required for professional qualification and competence are acquired at the main and accredited external residency centres, such as animal clinics, pathology centres, microbiology and virology institutes, and food safety and quality departments. Various methods of teaching, learning, and skill gaining are applied, including lectures, seminars, consultations, group discussions, laboratory work, clinical activities, surgical techniques, patient examinations, and presentations of clinical cases. The study programmes also include the development of research skills which are not implemented at its fullest.

The objectives of the veterinary medicine residency programmes are to train fully educated, honest, enterprising, independent, ethically responsible, creative, and analytical veterinary medicine specialists. The programmes aim to produce graduates who are interested in scientific innovations, use the latest research methods, apply acquired knowledge and skills to their practical work, solve problems, react and make decisions in a rapidly changing environment, work independently and in teams, and share their professional knowledge and experience with young colleagues. The residency programmes also aim to train specialist veterinarians with various professional qualifications, including veterinary imaging diagnostic specialists, veterinary parasitologists, veterinary microbiologists, small animal therapists, haematologists-toxicologists, veterinarians - animal welfare specialists, and veterinary sanitary doctors. These specialists will have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out their professional work effectively, apply modern diagnostic and therapeutic methods, act in

emergency situations, and contribute to the improvement of animal health, welfare, and productivity.

It is worth noting that 25% of the programme is dedicated to theory and independent study, while the remaining 75% is focused on developing and improving practical skills. This balance is essential for ensuring that students gain practical skills necessary to succeed in their field. By combining theory, practical work, and independent study, these programmes provide students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in their chosen residency field.

3.1.4. Evaluation of the alignment of programme aims, learning outcomes, learning and teaching methods, and student assessment.

Evaluation of the alignment of **programme aims** indicates that the VF has successfully produced highly qualified veterinarians who are well-prepared to tackle global challenges. The VF has effectively established a sustainable and appealing study and working environment for VMR, attracting valuable lecturers and professionals of particular fields who continuously enhance the educational experience. Furthermore, the VF has demonstrated its commitment to conducting both fundamental and practical research, contributing to the development of science-based technologies while the scientific output of the VMR can be increased. The VF has efficiently utilised the concentrated potential of its veterinary clinics to improve animal health, ensuring comprehensive care. The programme's aims have been effectively met, resulting in the production of veterinarians who are equipped with the additional necessary knowledge and skills to address the evolving needs of the veterinary field.

The evaluation of the **learning outcomes** indicates that the study programme objectives and learning outcomes have been effectively aligned with the cycle outcomes. The residency programmes have successfully incorporated the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and professional standards into their content, objectives, and learning outcomes.

The residency programmes have consistently achieved their intended outcomes, aligning with the objectives set forth in the programmes. The study outcomes of the programme cycles are congruent and have been clearly defined as criteria for assessing residents' achievements. This clarity facilitates the selection of appropriate assessment methods and techniques to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, abilities, and practical competences acquired by the residents throughout their studies.

The study and assessment methods employed in the programmes adhere to the concept of lifelong learning. They not only foster continuing professional development but also prove to be effective, diverse, and motivational for the residents. These methods encourage rational utilisation of time and resources for both residents and lecturers. The specificity of the study methods is tailored to the purpose of each programme, while the assessment methods align with the expected learning outcomes specified in the programmes, maintaining consistency with the content and methodologies of the studies.

Conclusion: The alignment of the objectives of the residency programmes, the learning outcomes of the programme cycles, and the employed learning and assessment methods have been successfully achieved and are in alignment with the aims. This demonstrates a comprehensive and well-structured approach to ensure that residents acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competences outlined in the programmes.

The evaluation of **learning and teaching methods** indicates that they are comprehensive and align effectively with the programme aims. A wide range of teaching and learning methods are employed throughout the residency training process to assess residents' understanding, learning needs, and academic progress towards the objectives of the cycle and the programme.

The residency programmes follow a sequential approach, utilising a diverse set of teaching and learning methods that directly relate to each programme's content. Both general and specific teaching methods are employed to facilitate the acquisition of general and specific competencies outlined in the residency programmes, in accordance with the Regulation of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Studies.

Theoretical knowledge is acquired through the use of general teaching methods, including participation in seminars and lectures, group or team work, discussions with colleagues and supervisors, presentation of presentations and projects, individual assignments, consultations, educational films, and analysis of scientific literature. These methods are often applied independently by residents or in consultation with their cycle supervisor or other experienced professionals.

Practical skills, on the other hand, are developed through specific teaching methods that involve various hands-on activities not just in veterinary clinics but also in various laboratories and research centres. These methods encompass initiating inspections/audits of companies, investigating the quality of foodstuffs, performing ante-mortem and post-mortem examinations, participating in inspections conducted by veterinary inspectors and discussing the results, assessing and controlling animal welfare, conducting clinical procedure simulations, performing diagnostic procedures for animal diseases, managing clinical/pathological situations, analysing radiological, ultrasound, and endoscopic images, developing disease treatment and control programs, and supervising patients. These methods are specifically tailored to the objectives and outcomes of each residency programme and are conducted under the supervision of a cycle supervisor or other experienced professionals.

Additionally, the programmes emphasise learning methods based on scientific activities, which involve acquiring state-of-the-art knowledge through the analysis of scientific literature and detailed analysis of clinical cases with scientific novelty. The publication of these findings, such as veterinary publications and scientific articles/treatises, might promote problem-solving and innovation in veterinary practice.

Conclusion: Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that the learning and teaching methods implemented within the residency programmes are comprehensive, diverse, and directly aligned with the programme aims. These methods effectively foster the acquisition of

theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and scientific research-based competences, ensuring that residents are well-prepared for the demands of veterinary practice in Lithuania.

Student assessment: Assessment of general competences is conducted using a 10-point system at the end of each cycle. This evaluation assesses professional qualities such as effective communication with patients' owners, adherence to ethical standards and veterinary practice requirements, as well as professional performance, including the ability to recognize the limits of one's competences, adapt to new conditions, overcome challenges, make decisions, and work effectively in teams. The assessment of general competences occurs through various means, including presentations, presentation analysis, tests, and management of clinical situations. Daily consultations, performance evaluations, feedback, observations, conversations, discussions, and assessment of students' reactions and feedback received contribute to the continuous assessment of general competences.

The assessment approach to residency training encompasses the collection of aggregate information on the success of residents' learning and studying, providing insights into their values, learning pace and style, motivation, and the effectiveness of the teaching process. Evaluating the expert activity of a veterinary specialist, which involves knowledge and skill transfer to junior colleagues, occurs during the reporting period for mandatory cycles. This assessment takes into account residents' participation in further training, dissemination seminars, publication of new data in veterinary or agricultural journals, publication of clinically novel cases in veterinary journals that can be improved, or involvement in the training of VMR students.

For the assessment of subject-specific competences, residency programmes employ various methods, including tests with open- or closed-ended questions or tasks, assessment of simulated clinical field situations, clinical case studies, or projects related to the cycle's topic. Interim evaluations and the final evaluation cover the assessment of subject-specific competences. During interim evaluations, subject-specific competences are directly aligned with the cycle's topic and content. Specific assessment tasks are provided to residents within a designated time and place, and they are evaluated based on criteria outlined in each programme. Subject-specific competencies are assessed on a 10-point scale, allowing for the documentation of residents' learning outcomes and progress throughout the cycle.

The final assessment takes the form of a final examination, conducted in accordance with the established procedure for conducting and grading the Veterinary Medicine Residency's final examination. The final examination evaluates subject-specific competences as outlined in the programmes and consists of theoretical and practical components. The theoretical part assesses theoretical knowledge and its practical application, while the practical part evaluates the ability to perform clinical or practical activities.

Conclusion: The evaluation indicates that the student assessment methods are sufficient and aligned with the programme aims. The assessment approaches employed enable a comprehensive evaluation of both general and subject-specific competences, ensuring that residents' progress and achievements are accurately measured throughout the residency programmes.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area

Strengths:

- VMR meet the needs of the society and the public.
- VMR programmes are in demand and competitive in the market especially in the field of small animal veterinary medicine.

Weaknesses:

- No in-depth strategic plan of VMR that include internationalisation strategy, infrastructure development plan and strategy of research.
- VMR programmes are short and probably have to be extended to three or four years in some areas especially in small animal and farm animal clinical disciplines.
- No articulation with formal European veterinary specialisations (EBVS).
- Insufficient research output of VMR.
- Governmental residency programs are currently showing a pay gap between medical/dental residents and veterinary residents.

3.2. STUDY PROCESS AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The progress of residency studies and evaluation of achievements shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the suitability of the student selection process

The Veterinary Academy (VA) of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) offers postgraduate Veterinary Medicine Residency (VMR) training in 14 veterinary disciplines. The VMR are of applied nature and focus on specific practical skills. Information on the VMR study programme is communicated to the internal and external stakeholders and published on the LSMU website. VMR students are admitted by open competition, described in the LSMU Admission Rules applied to each year's newly ongoing admission. Applicants must hold a master's degree, a qualification of a veterinary doctor, and a valid licence of a veterinary practitioner.

The selection process of students into the residency programme follows a numerical ranking based on a competition score. This competition score is composed of:

- (1) the average of the grades in the subjects listed in the diploma supplement of the veterinary degree (excluding the assessment of the practical qualifying examination or the final thesis) (weighting factor 0.7; based on pass degree for veterinary studies of 5 and a theoretical score of 0-10 the range theoretically ranges from 3.5 to 7 points.
- (2) the average of the grades in the practical qualifying examination or the final thesis (for those who graduated before 2017) (the weighting factor is 0.3; theoretical range 1.5 to 3 points
- (3) research performance assessment (up to two points)
- (4) motivational interview assessment (up to five points).

Maximum points that theoretically can be obtained are calculated to 17 meaning that approximately theoretical/academic grade determines 41%, practical exam 18% of the score, research performance 12% of the score and motivational interview 29% of the score. This indicates that theoretical/academic performance and motivation are weighed stronger than practical and research skills. The expert panel is of the opinion that a weighted score on different skill attributes is highly suitable for the selection of residents but makes a note for consideration that in an ideal situation different residencies might require different weighing of the different components, for instance a surgical residency might require weighing practical skills higher while an epidemiology residency might require a stronger research weighing.

Subsequently veterinary residency positions are offered based on the ranking of the student competition score and its order of preference of the different residency programmes that have been selected (up to 6 allowed). Based on the importance of motivation for the residency programme the expert panel questions how a high motivational level can be obtained by a student for several completely different residency programmes, i.e. for instance an equine residency, small animal surgery, veterinary epidemiology, animal welfare, diagnosis and treatment of cattle diseases etc.

The total number of residency places is in first instance determined by the available amount of state funding (14 in recent years) and subsequently this total number of residencies is distributed over the different residencies by the State Food and Veterinary Services (SFVS) based on the need for different veterinary professionals in Lithuania. This approach seems a sensible approach and during the site visit meeting additional clarity was provided regarding the involvement of stakeholders in this process.

The application process itself is highly automated and centralised and seems to benefit from scale and experience through an extensive residency programme in place for medical studies.

It is unclear from the Self Evaluation Report (SER) how the research performance assessment is performed (parameters, scoring, objectivity etc.) and therefore suitability is difficult to assess by the expert panel.

The motivation interview is performed by the motivation interview committees whose appointment and process seems highly regulated and transparent.

All residency programmes, albeit with some variation and different trends, seem to be highly competitive and seem to attract high quality and motivated veterinarians although no attrition rates, if any, are provided.

Conclusion: The selection process for the VMRs is suitable, transparent and clearly communicated.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the participation involvement of residents in the study process and research activities (not applicable to ex ante evaluations).

Participation in the study process:

VMR studies are based on a VMR programme accredited by the Centre for Quality Evaluation of Studies and registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications. The participation of a resident of the veterinary medicine residency programme in the study process is regulated by the [Regulation of Residency Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#).

In accordance with the provisions of this Regulation, the coordinator of the VMR programme prepares an individual learning schedule of the resident's studies for the entire period of study (2 years, 132 ECTS), which specifies the dates, location, and supervisor of each cycle. The individual study schedule of the VMR is submitted to the Centre for Postgraduate Studies of LSMU by the 20th of August each year.

Once the individual learning schedule of a resident has been approved, a continuous monitoring process is initiated that provides an early signalling of problems in student's progression and allows timely decisions to improve the learning process and outcomes when needed. The monitoring system consists of monitoring objects, monitoring subjects and monitoring evaluation criteria.

Monitoring objects: 1) Individual learning schedule of the resident; 2) Daily activity diary; 3) Programme cycle report sheet; 4) Questionnaire for evaluating the practical work of the cycle; 5) Logbook of patients' data collected during the cycle.

Monitoring subjects: 1) The supervisor of a VMR resident; 2) Lecturers teaching in the programme cycle; 3) The VMR programme coordinator: University employee appointed by the Rector's order who coordinates and is responsible for the implementation of a specific residency programme.

Evaluation criteria: 1) The relevance of the resident's activities to the resident's individual learning schedule; 2) The relevance of the achievement of the learning outcomes (assessed by a grade) to the duration of the module; 3) Qualitative compliance of the module outcomes with the University's student and resident assessment regulations.

The coordinator of the VMR programme, having analysed the resident's daily activity diary, the programme cycle report sheet, the records of the practical work evaluation questionnaire for the programme cycle, and the data of the chart of the patients examined and treated during the programme cycle, if necessary, submits proposals to the commission of the department/unit on the adjustment of the individual resident's study schedule and on the issues related to the improvement of the programme cycle description.

Conclusion: The VMR programme consists of highly regulated and detailed individual cycles as described in the residency programmes for which student participation is continuously and extensively monitored. At the end of each cycle of the programme, the theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired by the resident are evaluated in accordance with the procedures set out in the cycle description of the different residency programmes. Student involvement seems to be highly regulated and organised and seems suitable for the VMR program.

Participation in research activities: VMR residents (to the extent that their participation does not interfere with the direct studies of the residency programme) are involved in research (commissioned research, etc.) within the unit. The clinics hold weekly “Journal Club” meetings, for which residents prepare by studying the scientific literature and present the most interesting clinical cases, with discussions and debates in the presence of cycle supervisors.

In preparation for classes, residents analyse scientific literature and increase their personal competences.

Residents have the opportunity to participate in the Students’ Scientific Society (SSS) of LSMU. Within the framework of SSS activities, residents have the opportunity to participate in international, national, and local scientific conferences, seminars, meetings etc., to develop scientific activities and the formation and development of scientific skills, to participate in the development of new technologies, methods, and tools.

After starting their research during the study year by working in research teams in their units, residents usually continue their research activities and 10.4% of those who completed their residency enrolled in the research doctoral programme.

However, research activity in the VMR seems mainly locally organised and seems to lack any specific requirements or expectations/outcomes.

In itself local organisation seems sensible based on the time spent in the different cycles, local expertise and ongoing projects locally, especially since time for research will be rather limited during the VMR. However requirements regarding time commitment and expected outcomes should be available for the students to prevent misunderstandings.

Conclusion: It would be good if research activities and expectations would be clearly described at the start of the VMR programme and added to the subject monitoring list to allow continuous evaluation of student progression for research activity.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring the academic mobility of residents (not applicable to ex ante evaluation)

The SER states that the [LSMU website provides](#) institutions to which veterinary residents can go for part-time studies/internships. This website mainly refers to academic mobility within the Erasmus+ exchange programme at LSMU.

The Erasmus programme at LSMU is very well organised and centrally administered by the Academic Mobility Division (AMD) of the International Relations and Study Centre, which regularly (2-3 times a year) organises public and transparent selections of Erasmus+ programme participants in accordance with the selection regulations approved by the Rector of LSMU and the selection criteria applicable to programme participants.

Information about Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, foreign partner institutions, and selections of Erasmus+ participants in Lithuanian and English is published on the official [LSMU website](#), Erasmus LSMU Facebook account and through the LSMU Communications

Department, the University's it is sent to faculty departments, the Centre for Postgraduate Studies, and to the residents.

Residents have access to electronic Erasmus practice guides, information leaflets, training videos for registering for an Erasmus exchange and video presentations of the experiences of former Erasmus exchange residents.

Every year (in February), AMD organises a week-long information event "[Erasmus Days](#)" in a mixed format (physical and virtual meetings) with presentations on mobility opportunities, presentations of the ESN and mentor programme, an international university fair, and presentations of the experiences of former exchange residents. AMD coordinators organise Erasmus+ information sessions at the faculties, individual consultations for those interested in exchange opportunities are organised throughout the year, both in person and remotely (by email, phone, in social networks, etc.).

LSMU has established in addition to Erasmus funding a [Resident Mobility Fund](#) to provide financial support to the University's residents going on internships, scientific-practical conferences, courses and other events to improve their professional qualifications and/or to acquire or enhance additional competences. Resident applications are submitted to the LSMU Centre for Postgraduate Studies. The applications submitted by the University's residents are evaluated at the meeting of the Resident Mobility Fund Board. The maximum amount of support from the Mobility Fund for a single University resident to attend professional development events is EUR 1500.

Conclusion: There is an extensive and well organised Erasmus programme available to students of the VA in general with excellent support services and accessibility. Almost a third of the residency students seem to have used "mobility" programmes.

It is excellent that a mobility fund is available up to a maximum of 1500 euro, it would be good to provide details on how many of the VMR students utilised the mobility fund that is available.

3.2.4. Evaluation of the implementation of the policy on academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

LSMU emphasizes a strong culture of academic integrity, tolerance and non discrimination to foster positive habits and principles in young professionals for their future careers.

LSMU strives to create a study and work environment that fosters social and cultural diversity, ensures equal opportunities for members of the University community, and aims to provide dignified, needs-oriented, high-quality conditions for people of different nationalities and faiths as well as people with disabilities to study and work at the University.

The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Equal Treatment, which establishes a list of grounds for discrimination, and the provisions of LSMU, where discriminatory actions of any kind are considered a serious violation and the resident may be expelled from the residency studies. VMR students have the opportunity to submit anonymously their opinions about the work of the lecturers or ethical violations, bullying, and incidents of harassment or discrimination.

However information on this process and the measures in place to ensure confidentiality are not provided.

The University adheres to the principles of academic ethics and integrity, which are regulated by the [Regulation of Residency Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) and the [Regulation of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Studies](#). VA residents participating in any form of evaluation prepare, perform and present the evaluated work in accordance with the principles of academic integrity (independence, originality, non-plagiarism, novelty, correct citation of authors, etc.), which are described in detail in the [Regulation of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Studies](#)

Conclusion: Clear central guidelines and regulations seem to be in place to secure/enhance academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. It might however be considered to implement a compulsory online training and test on scientific integrity, as currently is standard for PhD students in many institutions, to be taken by each VMR student at the start of their program.

In addition a "behaviour" statement and contract to be signed by each resident at the start of the residency could enhance awareness of the Universities policies and beliefs, as is common practice in many institutions and schools, and could contribute to the prevention of intolerance and discrimination.

Finally, additional information regarding confidentiality of the complaint procedures should have been provided in the SER. Especially since the number of residents per discipline/subject are very limited and therefore anonymous complaints are relatively easily tracked to the origin.

3.2.5 Evaluation of the feedback provided to the residents during the studies, promoting the self-assessment of the achieved outcomes and further planning of the study progress (not applicable to ex ante evaluations).

The procedure and principles of evaluation of residents are defined in the [Regulation of Residency Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#).

The coordinator of the VMR programme, having analysed the resident's daily activity diary, the programme cycle report sheet, the records of the practical work evaluation questionnaire for the programme cycle, and the data of the chart of the patients examined and treated during the programme cycle, if necessary, submits proposals to the commission of the department on the adjustment of the individual resident's study schedule and on the issues related to the improvement of the programme cycle description.

The internal quality assurance system is based on measuring the opinions of residents, lecturers, graduates, employers and other participants in the study process and using the data obtained to improve the quality of the organisation of the study process, study programmes, academic staff, infrastructure, and administration of the University's activities. Information is collected in various ways: questionnaire surveys, discussions, interviews, round table discussions, forums, in accordance with the LSMU's procedure for the organisation of feedback for the improvement of study quality.

The residency study quality survey is organised annually, from January to March, by the Centre for Postgraduate Studies, which also carries out the data analysis and dissemination of the results to the target group. The feedback data is analysed, summarised, stored and made public by the Centre for Postgraduate Studies and the University units organising the collection of specific feedback from social stakeholders. Within two weeks after the closing of the survey, the Centre for Postgraduate Studies provides the results of the surveys to the coordinators of the residency studies, the heads of the units of the Veterinary Faculty conducting residency studies, and the heads of clinics. Within two months of receiving the results, the recipients submit suggestions for changes to the Centre for Postgraduate Studies to address the problems observed. The summarised results of the surveys are also made available to all social stakeholders, on LSMU information systems, by email or other publicity channels. Other surveys related to the improvement of the quality of studies may be organised if necessary, the instruments of which are approved by the Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance. Based on the results of the analysis of the feedback data, quality improvement activities are planned and implemented.

Each year, residents are asked to give answers to questions included in the questionnaire designed for this purpose. The questionnaire data are reviewed and analysed by the residency commission of the programme.

Conclusion: An extensive and excellent system of monitoring, feedback and quality assurance is in place for the VMR programme promoting the self-assessment of the achieved outcomes and further planning of the study progress. The expert panel would like to commend the VMR for that but would like to suggest adding a self reflection component of the resident to this system.

3.2.6. Evaluation of the appropriateness, adequacy and effectiveness of academic, financial, social, psychological and other support provided to residents.

Academic support

Academic support is provided by the administration of the unit organising the VMR residency, the VMR coordinator, programme coordinators, and the Centre for Postgraduate Studies. A virtual learning environment in the Moodle system is available and provides digital communication, efficient and fast dissemination of information, and hosting of lecture/seminar materials. All residents have access to subscription databases, books, and scientific publications. The VMR students use the LSMU Library and Information Centre (BIC) and the VA Library for self-study. The study Units make the schedules for students' additional self-study in the laboratories.

Financial support

From January 2019 veterinary residents are state employees and therefore receive pay and other employment benefits such as state social insurance, sickness benefits, maternity and paternity benefits, pension accumulation, insurance etc.

Social support

Residents can make use of a state-of-the-art Sports Centre available for students.

Residents can live in the university dormitories located next to the VA, which have Internet access, free Wi-Fi, and a dormitory adapted for disabled persons.

The LSMU careers centre provides employment guidance and counselling. They promote internships and job adverts; they also advise on CV-writing (amongst other documentation), and monitor careers of alumni.

The LSMU hosts several arts groups - choir, dance, bands etc. Engagement with student activities is encouraged.

There is a café in Building No. 5 and dining rooms are available in the clinics and the research laboratories for the students.

In VTHs there are fully equipped rooms for students on duty.

Psychological support

Residents, if needed, receive free professional psychological support from experienced psychologists working at LSMU.

Other support

LSMU has a Residents' Council of the Students' Representative Office, which represents the interests of all residents of the University, deals with issues and problems relevant to the residents, and participates in the activities of all the University's collegial bodies. Through its own efforts and the efforts of the resident leaders, the Residents' Council disseminates relevant information, organises meetings and discussions on topical issues as well as surveys of residents' opinions.

There is a students' union advocating for the needs of students and it is supported by the LSMU.

Conclusion: There is an extensive network of support services available for VMR students. It might be useful to consider implementing a mentor structure and/or a general student counselling service.

During the site visit meeting it became clear that there is no veterinary representation on the LSMU Residents Council, it is advised to make membership of veterinary resident(s) obligatory i.e. embed this requirement in the statutes of the Residents Council.

3.2.7. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and hearing of appeals and complaints regarding the study process.

The procedure for appeals and complaints is defined in the [Regulation of Residency Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) and the [Regulation of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Studies](#). However these are only available in Lithuanian and therefore can not fully assessed by the expert panel.

The resident may disagree with the evaluation of the examination and submit a reasoned appeal to the Rector. The procedures and deadlines for appeals regarding the results and procedures of the examination assessment are subject to the procedures and deadlines for appeals regarding the assessment of students' achievements set out in the University's Studies Regulations, unless otherwise provided for in the description. If a resident disagrees with the evaluation of the study achievements, the resident has the right to file an appeal, for the examination of which an Appeal Commission is established, which works according to the Law on Science and Studies, these Regulations, and other internal legal acts of the University. Decisions of the Appeal Commission on irregularities in procedural decision-making may be appealed to the Disputes Commission, whose decisions may also be appealed to the Senate or to the LT Court.

Mechanisms for exclusion and appealing are transparent and publicly available.

Conclusion: The appeal system seems to be appropriate but effectiveness can not be assessed since no appeals have been made so far.

3.2.8. Evaluation of the effectiveness of student assessment system.

The procedure and principles of evaluation of residents are defined in the [Regulation of Residency Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#).

An extensive monitoring process allows continuous assessment and progress throughout the programme (see earlier).

At the end of each cycle, the resident's theoretical knowledge and practical skills, their mastery of therapeutic or other methodologies (depending on the objectives of the programme and the intended learning outcomes), proactivity, communication skills and other soft skills are assessed. The assessment is carried out by the lecturer who supervises the resident and works at the base during the cycle or another person who works at the base and has the right to assess.

After completing all cycle exams successfully and obtaining a positive evaluation the resident takes a final exam. It is conducted in accordance with the Final Examination Description, approved by the meeting of the VF Council on 7 April 2020, No VF10-09. The final residency examination consists of theoretical and practical parts. During the examination, the resident demonstrates the level of professional readiness, the degree of independence, the ability to apply the knowledge of the specialty, and the practical abilities and skills required to obtain the professional qualification of a veterinary surgeon of the relevant specialisation. The resident passes the final examination with a grade of at least five (on a ten-point scale).

For each residency programme, a Qualification Commission (the Commission) of at least five members is set up for administering the residents' examinations. At least three-quarters of the members of the Commission, excluding members delegated by the social partners, must hold a degree. The University may invite the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, the State Food and Veterinary Service, professional organisations (associations) of veterinarians and the Residents' Council to delegate members to the Commission. The composition of the

Commission, in agreement with the VA Chancellor, is approved by the Rector's order on the proposal of the Dean of the Centre for Postgraduate Studies, at least 30 calendar days before the start of the Examination. The results of the Examination are evaluated in accordance with the Examination evaluation requirements set out in the description of the relevant residency programme. If a person fails the Examination, the residency is terminated and the right to retake the Examination is not granted until one year later. If, for objective and justifiable reasons, a resident fails to take the Examination in the prescribed manner and on time, the resident may be given the opportunity to retake the Examination one month later upon a reasoned request to the Rector.

Conclusion: The expert panel advises to investigate the inclusion of an external examiner/observer to the examination process although it realises that the availability of external examiner proficient in the Lithuanian language will be very limited.

The pass mark of 50% would be considered out of line in comparison with for instance European professional residencies such as the ECVS and a bell curve with cut off would be a more appropriate assessment but not feasible due to the small number of residents sitting the exam.

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

The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences is open and committed to creating the right conditions for all students. Each VMR programme is open to everyone with the necessary education, regardless of their health status or background.

A VMR student from a socially vulnerable group enrolled in the LSMU VF VMR study programmes, or a student who has become a member of this group due to various circumstances at different stages of their studies, is provided with assistance at LSMU that covers various aspects.

For the resident veterinarian enrolled in each VMR programme at the VF, the residency programme coordinator prepares an individual study schedule. When a resident veterinarian with a disability enrolls in the programme, they are interviewed to find out about their needs. Any questions or problems that arise are dealt with at the level of the residency commission of the VA unit or the university. The university has a Commission for Coordination of Disabled Students' Affairs – a commission approved by the Rector's order, which coordinates the study process of students with special educational needs, and a Commission for the Allocation/Cancellation of Financial Aid to Disabled Students Studying at LSMU.

VMR students have the option of alternative assessment arrangements if they have a disability that prevents them from being assessed in the prescribed manner and the alternative assessment arrangement ensures that the learning outcomes are achieved, (see [Regulation of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Studies](#), chapter III, paragraph 25.8.).

According to “[The Order for Alternative Methods of Assessment and Document Submission for LSMU Students with Special Academic Needs](#)”, various alternative methods of study environment, practical and theoretical classes, and assessment may be used, such as extending the time (deadlines) available for reporting, using appropriate (enlarged) fonts, presenting the material in an accessible format, adapting the physical environment or adjusting the timetables, providing a separate classroom for the reporting, etc.

LSMU aims to ensure the accessibility of the physical environment and the availability of various means of compensatory technology for students with mobility, visual or hearing impairments at different levels of infrastructure. VMR students with special needs enrolled and studying in any of the residency programmes at the LSMU VF enjoy the same facilities and conditions as full-time students or University lecturers at the Academy. The accessibility of the University’s physical environment and the availability of various means of compensatory technology for students with mobility, visual or hearing impairments are improving every year. The acquisition of equipment for persons with special needs is carried out annually. Elevators have been installed in newly constructed/renovated buildings, and s-max D135 stair climbers with universal wheelchair lock, wide folding ramps, specialised height-adjustable tables (HA800 - Sit to Stand) have been purchased for old buildings (with cultural heritage status), proper entrances, toilets, car parks are being installed, classrooms and utility rooms are being adjusted for studies, special signage for the blind is put up, etc.

The LSMU Library and Information Centre are adapted for people with special needs: people with hearing impairments, mobility impairments, visual impairments, etc.

Conclusion: In order to ensure equal opportunities and appropriate study conditions for VMR students with special needs or from a socially vulnerable group the University takes into account the individual and special educational needs in the context of their studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area

Strengths:

- Extensive monitoring and continuous assessment system in place during VMR programmes.
- Combined weighted admission system that evaluates academic, practical, research and motivation of prospective VMR students.
- Possibility for some residents to acquire experience in another university or private institution through Erasmus+ and University Mobility Fund projects.

Weaknesses:

- Research activity/involvement lacks specifics such as expected outcomes, time commitment, research plan etc.
- No external examiners who are experts in the relevant field are used in final (postgraduate) resident exam.

3.3. TEACHING STAFF OF RESIDENCY STUDIES

Staff of residency studies shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the links between research conducted by the teaching staff teaching in residency study programmes with the residency studies

The information provided highlights the active involvement of lecturers at LSMU VF in research activities related to the topics taught in the residency programmes. This is a positive sign as it indicates that the teaching staff is up-to-date with the latest developments in their fields and can incorporate this knowledge into their teaching. The fact that the lecturers have been involved in international and national research projects also demonstrates their high qualifications and expertise.

The number of research projects being carried out at the residency bases, 65 in total over five years, is a good indication of the level of research activity taking place. All the sectors listed present a significant number of scientific publications in the period 2016-2021. However, the evaluation would be easier if the bibliometric parameters of the articles indexed in SCOPUS or WOS were better identified in the list of publications. Additionally, it is not specified whether these research projects are ongoing or have already been completed, which could impact the significance of the results. It is sometimes difficult to evaluate whether the publications are related to the sector or of the teachers incardinated in the residency training course refer.

While the number of research projects being carried out at the residency bases is a good indication of the level of research activity taking place, more information is needed to evaluate the significance of these research activities and their impact on the quality of education provided. It would be useful to know whether these research projects are ongoing or have already been completed, and whether they are related to the specific sector or the teachers involved in the residency training course.

Additionally, while it is positive that the teaching staff is up-to-date with the latest developments in their fields and can incorporate this knowledge into their teaching, but it is not clear how this is being done in practice. The statement does not provide information on whether the research findings are integrated into the curriculum or used to enhance the residency programme.

Overall, the information provided suggests that the teaching staff at LSMU VF are enough qualified and engaged in research activities that are relevant to the residency programmes.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the suitability of the practical (clinical) experience of the staff working in the residency study programmes to achieve the expected competencies of the residents

The residency programmes are taught by a total of 90 lecturers, 76 of whom have a veterinary surgeon qualification. 35% do not have a doctoral degree. Only 4,4% have European or American Diplomates (veterinary parasitology, neurology, and dermatology) with a

perspective to reach almost 8% with other three residency programme lecturers that are currently studying at the European Veterinary Residency.

The teaching staff is equally distributed among the 4 classes of professor, associate professor, lecturer and assistant. Approximately 84% of the teachers involved are qualified veterinary surgeons. A homogenous distribution of young and experienced teachers is also reported. The ration between the total number of teachers and the resident students is 2:1. The teaching workload is ranged from 200-500h/year of direct contact hours but it depends on the department and position of the teacher.

The practical experience of staff working in the residency programmes is presented as the result of their research and of daily activities of the different sectors and departments. This should reflect the ability to impart the expected competencies to the residents.

It would be useful to design a measurable and assessable didactic qualification path by the teachers involved in the residency courses: the information provided does not address the teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, or the quality of the residency programmes themselves.

3.3.3. Evaluation of the support of the staff (academic and non-academic/administrative) involved in delivery of residency programmes and effective learning of residents and the conditions for them to continuously improve their professional competencies (scientific, didactic, professional)

LSMU ensures the educational competence of staff by requiring participation in development courses, seminars, conferences, and other activities related to educational competence. The University organises annual training cycles and offers free seminars to improve educational and scientific competences within a period of five years. It is stated that LSMU Science Fund provides funding for research and scientific events, while the Erasmus+ programme offers opportunities for lecturers to teach abroad but more information would be necessary to evaluate the planned strategy to improve the teaching ability of the lectures involved in the programme. It is notably that for practising veterinarians, at least 32 hours of further training every two years is mandatory.

The procedure described could be better structured with better defined educational objectives and a clear path how to achieve them also in terms of ensuring the educational competence of staff at LSMU. Teachers, as well as all veterinarians in Lithuania, have to collect at least 32 h of professional education (mostly related to their work area) every 2 years to maintain their qualification; residency programmes are constantly maintained and changed based on the resident reports. If the changes are minor then they are implemented easily, but if the changes are major and affect the aims, goals, duration etc. then the additional steps have to be taken: programme coordinator, head of department, council, senate. There is no specific system for evaluating the teaching ability and didactic innovation of each individual teacher.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area

Strengths:

- The group of teachers who make up the board of the training programme is enough qualified. The significant number of scientific publications presented by the group of teachers involved in the programme testify to an active presence in the field of veterinary medical research. The fields of specialisation presented by the report constitute a significant choice in student education options.

Weaknesses:

- The described procedure for ensuring the educational competence of staff at LSMU appears to be present and active even if a more detailed description may be useful for a proper evaluation for the aim of continuous improvement of knowledge, abilities, and practical skills. There are no major flaws or weaknesses apparent in the procedure described. However, one potential criticism could be that 14 Residency programme may contribute to a possible overloading in teaching duties, together research activity and services.
- There is still a small number of Diplomate teachers who guarantee higher educational standards, in particular in clinical specialities.
- Furthermore, even if the University offers a range of opportunities for staff to improve their educational and scientific competences, it may be important to evaluate the impact of these activities on the quality of teaching and research at the University. Additionally, the description of the procedure does not provide much detail on how the University assesses the educational competence of staff, beyond the requirement for lecturers to participate in educational conferences, development courses, seminars, and write scientific articles. It may be useful to provide a reward system on the educational competence of staff, in order to ensure that the development activities are effective in improving the quality of teaching and research at the University.

3.4. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES FOR RESIDENCY STUDIES

Learning facilities and resources for residency studies shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the accessibility, suitability and sufficiency of information and methodological resources to ensure an effective learning process

In LSMU, Library and Information Centre (LIC) is responsible for the availability, novelty, and maintenance of all methodological resources. Residents of VM, as well as all students of LSMU, can use the facilities of the main library (LIC). Veterinary Academy also possesses a newly renovated library in its building (the VA Library), which is very spacious and convenient. This library possesses circa 76000 printed copies and 25000 titles. LSMU LIC also provides access to all subscribed resources (full text e-books, articles and other objects in various databases). All physical and electronic resources are open to all LSMU students, residents, and lecturers. Digital resources can be accessed from library computers as well as from personal computers using VPN or EZproxy services. VA Library subscribes to VetStream, a specialised veterinary database which is very useful to the residents of VM in their studies and, most importantly, their clinical practice. VA Library also has 70 licenses for 3D software for the learning of animal

anatomy. For the convenience of students and residents, a part of these licenses is installed on the computers in VF Animal Clinics. As reported by the residents, they find those resources important, useful and sufficient, especially when they can implement their use in clinical practice (e.g., clinical database or 3D anatomy software). LSMU provides VM residents with rich informational and methodological resources. They are accessible and suited to help the residents to learn and apply their knowledge in clinical conditions.

3.4.2. Evaluation of the accessibility, suitability and adequacy of the infrastructure (premises, equipment, etc.) for residency studies and clinical practice

LSMU VA is located on enclosed land and forms a very spacious campus. Inside, there are several dedicated facilities for veterinary studies: an anatomical theatre, clinics for large and small animals, VA Library, pathology centre, lecture rooms, scientific and teaching laboratories, and other teaching/learning facilities with appropriate equipment. Overall, there are:

- 49 seminar/group work rooms (1063 workplaces);
- 82 practical/laboratory rooms (1038 workplaces);
- 19 diagnostic/scientific laboratories (104 workplaces).

VM residents use a simulation centre which is located on another campus of LSMU. Study rooms and workplaces comply with basic occupational safety and hygiene requirements. Laboratories have necessary safety and sanitary equipment. There are some premises dedicated to VM residents and PhD students, which is convenient. All clinics and centres in the VA have infrastructure and devices needed for the work and learning process of VM residents (clinical equipment and tools, laboratory devices, safety equipment). Nevertheless, a substantial amount of infrastructure requires major renovations as some facilities are hard to maintain hygiene- and biosafety-wise due to their age, size, etc. It is worth mentioning that LSMU is already planning a new small animal clinic outside the VA campus, but there is still a lack of discrete information about it. Already completed renewals and purchases of equipment provide residents with deeper knowledge (e.g., MRI machine) and ability to handle new, modern technologies and gain useful skills (e.g., modern animal reproduction laboratory, renovated intensive care unit, rehabilitation rooms, updated package of emergency equipment). As mentioned by the residents, they can express their needs regarding the material basis to their superiors. Residents can also practice in five mobile ambulatory clinics (5 vehicles). University provides students with transportation to practice sites when needed. All VA clinics have electronic patient registration software. As residents are employees in different VA clinics, the expert panel was concerned about the fact that residents have to buy their own scrubs for work. This is especially important when epidemiological and sanitary issues are considered. VA campus also encloses a leisure area, cafeteria, canteen, sports facilities, residents can use outdoor fitness equipment of the LSMU Sports Centre. Infrastructure is accessible, suitable and adequate for residency studies and clinical practice, although it has some non-fundamental shortcomings that could be addressed by the VA and LSMU in the future.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the adaptation of the residency study infrastructure for persons with special needs

As mentioned in the SER, planning of new buildings and renovations are done with regard to disabled people's needs, even though there are currently very few students who need such infrastructure. As seen during the site visit, infrastructural adaptations mostly include fixed and folding ramps and elevators. As mentioned in the SER, dormitories are also accessible to people with physical and/or moving disabilities. Nevertheless, as witnessed during the visit, some premises (especially in older buildings of the campus) are not convenient enough for the disabled (narrow corridors, steep staircases with no elevators, high borders etc.). On the other hand, it was nice to see that VA Library is equipped with software solutions which help VM students and residents with hearing, speaking or visual disabilities in their study process. As reported in the SER, LSMU organises staff training to improve the skills of working with students or residents who have special needs. Also, a part of project funds of LSMU EU Structural Funds Investment Operational Programme (2014-2020) have been allocated to ensure that the education environment and education itself is accessible and more convenient for students or residents with special needs. Expert panel sees that, although some very positive solutions are already implemented, there is still a lot of room for adapting the facilities to the needs of disabled people.

3.4.4. Ongoing evaluation of the renewal of the residency study infrastructure, taking into account the innovations and needs of veterinary science and internship

As declared by HEI representatives in SER and during the site visit, a brand new hospital for small animals is being planned. This will be a major update to the material base of VM residencies but experts lacked more details about actual progress and stage in which the project is now. As seen during the visit, hospital for large animals would also require renovation. Current building may become unable to match global standards of large animals' veterinary care because of old infrastructure and age. However, as global veterinary tendencies, private practice perspectives and needs of the market show great interest in small animal care, it is understandable for LSMU to begin renovation of VMR material base with construction of small animals' hospital. LSMU is about to make a step into the right direction with the update of VMR material base, but, as seen by the experts, a thorough and detailed planning regarding renewal of the residency study infrastructure is necessary for a sustainable and strategic development of these studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area

Strengths:

- VM residents are provided with rich informational and methodological resources which enhance their study process.
- VM residents benefit from a very large campus which is convenient and encloses infrastructure for their direct work as well as for leisure and sport.

Weaknesses:

- Facilities require to be updated. New clinical infrastructure should be well-planned and defined in a strategic plan. With it, the development of VM residency study infrastructure would be more effective and the results – more lasting.

Infrastructure for disabled persons is not sufficient in older buildings.

3.5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION OF THE RESIDENCY STUDIES

Quality management and public information of the residency studies shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the organisational structure and distribution of responsibilities in the residency study management

It was reported that the management and decision-making structure of the residency programme and the periodicity of internal evaluation are defined in the Description of the requirements and procedures for the supervision of veterinary medicine residency study programmes, the LSMU Statute and the LSMU Residency Studies Regulation.

The right to conduct residency studies in veterinary medicine is granted to the Veterinary Faculty of the Veterinary Academy of the Lithuanian Academy of Health Sciences. The Academy is represented and coordinated by the Chancellor of the Academy.

During the evaluation how it is aimed to properly ensure the implementation of residency studies, it was found that the LSMU residency committee is responsible for the management principles and general decision-making of the LSMU residency study programmes. The residency commission and the residency coordinator, approved by order of the Rector of LSMU, are directly responsible for the implementation of each study programme of the Veterinary Medicine Residency Study Programme and for the continuous supervision of the quality of its implementation. In accordance with the provisions of the LSMU Residency Studies Regulations, internal evaluation of the study programme is carried out annually.

The composition, functions and organisation of work of the residency committee and the residency commission, as well as the functions, rights and duties of the residency coordinator, are defined in the LSMU Residency Studies Regulations.

The experts would like to underline, that regular reviews of residency programmes are carried out annually. Partial updating of the study programme is carried out after the annual review or at another frequency determined by the Residency Commission.

The expert panel found the clear procedures are foreseen in the organisational structure and controlled by responsible persons. It ensures good distribution on responsibilities in the residency study management.

3.5.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance

LSMU makes great efforts effectively involve stakeholders. Cooperation takes place with many institutions. Social stakeholders (The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, the SFVS,

private veterinary clinics, animal welfare societies and associations, veterinarians' associations, the veterinary pharmaceutical association and veterinary pharmaceutical companies, livestock farms, etc.) are actively involved in the evaluation and development processes of the VM residency studies at different levels and are involved in the contracting of practical training of residents at the bases; in the provision of comprehensive, practice-based knowledge; in the participation in the residency final examinations, and therefore have a direct opportunity to assess the knowledge and skills of the residents and to give feedback to the faculty. The social stakeholders are involved in the allocation and planning of residency study places, mediating the recruitment/employment process, promoting professional development, contributing to the organisation of conferences, seminars, and courses, etc. The involvement of social stakeholders (graduates, and social partners (employers) in the evaluation and improvement processes of residency studies and in the internal quality assurance of studies is very important. They are involved in the activities of the University Council (five representatives), the VF Council (one representative) and have voting rights. In this way, employers learn about the achievements and challenges of the VF and can make recommendations for the improvement of the VM residency programmes.

During the meeting with social partners it was presented that the social partners have opportunity to express their needs for a residents. It is allowed to initiate a new programs according to the social partners needs.

During the meeting with alumni, social partners, employers close cooperation was observed. Representatives from National Food and Veterinary Service presented collaboration in research activities with VM residents, share some of their databases, provide places for practice.

In order to ensure the quality of the residency studies, evaluation and improvement processes of the programme, the University invites the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, the SFVS, the Lithuanian Association of Veterinary Surgeons, and the Residents' Council to delegate members to the qualification commission of the residency final examination. A commission for the selection of veterinary medicine residency bases is set up by order of the Rector and includes representatives of the SFVS. Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania and professional associations are also invited to the commission. The representatives from social partners and employers are involved in qualification commission and can evaluate the quality of the residents. The feedback is received after the final qualification exams.

The VF cooperates particularly closely with the SFVS (cooperation agreement). The SFVS plans the need for veterinary medicine residency places based on the needs of the VF, society, and the State and submits a request to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania for the planned places. At meetings organised by the VF with VM residents and students, the SFVS presents career opportunities at the SFVS, appoints representatives to various working groups and student evaluation commissions, carries out an external audit of biosafety compliance at the VF, participates in the career planning of residents, provides information to the faculty on the need for veterinarians, and receives information from the VF on the number of VM residents and students. In this way, the SFVS learns about the organisation of VM residency studies. Following the proposal of the SFVS to organise residency programmes according to the type of animal, the programmes in Veterinary Therapy for Non-communicable Diseases and Veterinary Surgery had been adjusted and new programmes in Small Animal Therapy, Small Animal Surgery,

Equine Veterinary Medicine, Diagnosis and Treatment of Cattle Diseases, and Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging were developed in 2017. A new residency programme in Animal Welfare was developed in 2021 in response to the need for specialised animal welfare veterinarians at the SFVS; focus on courses on antimicrobial and antiparasitic resistance of pathogens has been strengthened in the Veterinary Microbiology, Parasitology, and other clinical residency programmes in alignment with the SFVS's national and international commitments. These topics have been developed or newly included in the relevant cycles of all residency programmes. The final voice came from the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the residency places, however it is approved after discussions with SFVS.

VF representatives are invited by the SFVS to participate in national veterinary activities, commissions, and working groups. The VF develops compulsory training programmes for veterinarians on behalf of the SFVS and the LVGA and the Veterinary Pharmacy Association (VFA), and jointly decides on issues of relevance to VM studies, residency, and practice. The VF participates in the LVGA board meetings on issues of relevance to veterinary medicine (a cooperation agreement was signed). The VF also communicates with representatives of veterinary and agricultural business, livestock farms, and pharmaceutical companies. About 50 cooperation agreements have been signed.

Meetings with representatives of the VF administration and residents are organised to present jobs, graduation ceremonies are attended, etc. This gives residents an insight into companies' activities, they gain experience, and employers offer jobs to graduates.

Social partners also provide feedback by participating in surveys conducted by the LSMU Career Centre, in meetings organised by the VF with students or administration representatives, and at LSMU Career Planning events. The LSMU Career Centre, in cooperation with external veterinary clinics, provides information to resident veterinarians on employment opportunities, organises seminars, courses, lectures and career days for graduating residents. The Career Centre also monitors the employment of residents after graduation and conducts surveys of potential employers and social partners in order to assess the need for and preparation of professionals.

Transparent procedures of appeals are integrated in University life. Evaluating of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance the experts panel found that high level is warranted. Social partners can participate in the processes thus ensuring good quality of internal quality.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the feedback of residents on the quality of residency studies and the use for the improvement of studies.

Evaluating the feedback of residents on the quality of residency studies it was experts identify that the University regularly (annually, from January to March) conducts residency feedback surveys. The aim of the surveys is to collect opinions of the residents on the quality of studies by assessing different indicators of the quality of studies. The survey system is established and according to the VM resident surveys, 85% of respondents rated their residency studies as excellent, very good, and good. During the survey, students are asked questions about: whether there is a sufficient number of clinical cases, convenience on daily completion and use of the residency diary, sufficiency about theoretical classes. According to the survey results 86% of respondents say that clinical work schedules were designed according to their preferences it shows that the residents can received clinical practice. It creates.

The survey results are collecting and clear scheme is foreseen. The Centre for Postgraduate Studies provides the results of the survey to the coordinators of residency studies and heads of profile clinics/units within two weeks after the survey closes. Within two months of receiving the results, the recipients provide the Centre for Postgraduate Studies with suggestions for possible/necessary changes to address the problems observed. Depending on the results of the survey, changes can be made that improve the quality of residency studies.

3.5.4. Evaluation of the collection, use and publicity of information on residency studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and results.

The descriptions of the veterinary medicine residency programmes are published on the University's website. The principles of general admission to the LSMU and VU residency programmes, approved annually by a resolution of the LSMU Senate, as well as the procedure for the organisation of motivation interviews, approved by a resolution of the LSMU Senate, are published on the LSMU website. Every year, the Dean of the Centre for Postgraduate Studies prepares a Report on the activities of residency studies and professional qualification improvement activities, which is submitted to the Rector of LSMU. Reports by the Rector are made publicly available on the LSMU website. Information about residency studies is provided clearly and through public sources

The list of qualifications for veterinary surgeons is published on the website of the Open Information, Counselling, and Guidance System. It provides information on the national codes of the qualifications awarded, the level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, the level of the European Qualifications Framework, the programme awarding the qualification, its national code and the awarding body.

Information about the residency study programme is available in various ways: at the LSMU, VF clinics and departments, LSMU Career Centre by phone or email. Social partners (SFVS, LVGA, etc.) are also involved in the publicity of residency programmes. Such wide dissemination of information ensures the availability of information

In order to monitor graduates' careers The LSMU Career Centre is established and responsible for those issues. Career monitoring surveys are designed to provide feedback and to find out how VM graduates are doing in the labour market, how satisfied they are with their studies and work. A detailed analysis is carried out regarding the employment rate. According to the information provided the employment is 100%. It demonstrates very high employment rate for all graduates of the veterinary medicine residency.

The feedback for improving study quality is carried out. As an additional source Information on VM residency is published in the EAEVE Self Evaluation Report. During the meeting with a students of the 6th year of Veterinary Medicine, where they are informed about the residency programmes, the rules of admission to the residency, and the opportunities for professional qualification development. It is a way to attract students to start resident studies and stay in LSMU.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area

Strengths:

- High quality of social partners communication. Social partners are able to share their needs and feedback regarding residencies, this exchange is bringing benefits to both sides.
- Clear procedures are foreseen in the organisational structure and controlled by responsible persons. It ensures good distribution on responsibilities in the residency study management.
- Conducts residency feedback surveys, assessing different study quality indicators. The results of the survey are evaluated and improvements are made based on them.

Weaknesses:

None.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

- Dedicated staff to assist residents despite their heavy workload.
- Efficient involvement of stakeholders in the completion of the VMR programmes and in the Quality Assurance loop.
- Possibility for some residents to acquire experience in another University or Private Institution through Erasmus+ and University Mobility Fund projects.
- High employability of VMR graduates and strong requirement from both the LSMU and external stakeholders for specialists in several veterinary clinical disciplines.
- Excellent monitoring system in place to follow progression of individual residents.
- Use of a weighted competitions score (academic, practical, motivation and research) for admission/selection of residents.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area
<p>Aims, learning outcomes and curriculum of residency studies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An in-depth strategic plan needs to be developed for VMR programs, encompassing an internationalisation strategy, infrastructure development plan, and research strategy to fulfil the objectives of the LSMU VF and VMR programs. 2. Consider extending the duration of VMR programs to three or four years in certain areas, particularly in small animal and farm animal clinical disciplines. 3. Evaluate the possibility of reducing the number of VMR programs by combining certain programs to benefit students and meet society's needs, while also enhancing collaboration between different departments of LSMU VF. 4. Strive to establish articulation with formal European veterinary specialisations (EBVS) in the future. 5. Enhance the research output of VMR programs by requiring residents to publish at least one scientific paper, such as case reports. 6. Address the pay gap between medical/dental residents and veterinary residents to ensure equality.
<p>The progress of residency studies and evaluation of achievements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research activity/involvement of residents in the VMR program need to be specified for proper evaluation/progress of the research component of VMR students (expected outcomes, time commitment, research plan etc.) 2. The use of external examiners who are experts in the relevant field for the final residency exam, as is the golden standard for postgraduate education internationally, should be investigated.
<p>Staff of residency studies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To monitor the time dedicated to teaching, research and services especially by junior teachers 2. The number of Diplomates teachers needs to be increased. 3. Formal recognition for excellence and innovation in teaching has to be proposed.

<p>Learning facilities and resources for residency studies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilities require to be updated. New clinical facilities should be planned and well-defined in the strategic plan. 2. Older buildings should be better adapted to accommodate persons with disabilities.
<p>Quality management and public information of the residency studies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooperation with Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions is of great value in the process of ensuring the quality of studies, as it helps to share best practices in the development, execution, and administration of study programmes, and to promote academic exchanges of residents and lecturer, nevertheless cooperation with foreign higher education should be promoted and strengthened. 2. Efficient involvement of stakeholders in the completion of the VMR programmes and in the Quality Assurance loop for enhancing its quality. High cooperation with social partners is reached and should be maintained.

VI. SUMMARY

An overview of the most important positive and negative aspects for each evaluation area of the Veterinary residency education studies at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU):

The veterinary Faculty (VF) of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) is the only VF in Lithuania, is member of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and has been fully accredited by the European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT) in 2022.

The training of veterinary medicine residents in Lithuania started in 2006. Since 2019 VM residents are employed as residents veterinarians in the VF unit implementing the VMR study programme and are paid a salary.

The SER was provided on time to the expert panel, which received the requested additional information before the start of the evaluation.

The onsite visit was well organised and the LSMU representatives provided replies to the questions raised by the expert panel.

The support from the Evaluation Coordinator was well appreciated.

The expert panel has identified several positive aspects (commendations/strengths):

- Dedicated staff to assist residents despite their heavy workload.
- Efficient involvement of stakeholders in the completion of the VMR programmes and in the Quality Assurance loop for enhancing its quality.
- Possibility for some residents to acquire international experience through Erasmus + and University Mobility Fund projects
- High employability of VMR graduates and strong requirement from both the LSMU and social partners for specialists in several veterinary clinical disciplines.
- Excellent monitoring system in place to follow progression of individual residents.
- Use of a weighted competitions score (academic, practical, motivation and research) for admission/selection of residents.

Additional commendations are provided in the report.

The expert panel has made some recommendations to correct the weaknesses:

- Develop an in-depth Strategic Plan for post-graduate veterinary studies (where to go, how, when, with what monitoring of achievement ...) to implement the objectives of the LSMU VF.
- Include formally in each VMR programme some scientific research to be completed and published by residents (e.g. case reports).
- Include external examiners who are experts in the relevant field for the final residency exam.

- Increase the number of EBVS Diplomates in the teaching staff, in particular in clinical specialities.
- Provide a reward system of the staff educational competence/performance.
- Reduce the number of VMR programmes by evaluating if combining certain programmes may benefit the students and society needs.
- Enhance collaborations between departments to propose multi-disciplinary VMR programmes.
- Focus not only on the national context but also on the international one for the benefit of the residents (as highlighted by residents, alumni, social partners and staff).
- Increase the duration of the VMR programmes (like in Human Medicine Residencies) and initiate alternate residency programmes with the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS) in order to reply to the requests from current Residents and to allow international recognition of the programmes/titles.
- Harmonise the wording of the VMR programmes and titles with European standards (e.g. Internship, Middle-tier Programme/Advanced Practitioner, Residency Programme/Specialist).

Addition recommendations are listed in the report.

The expert panel would also like to address some suggestions of improvement to SKVC and/or Lithuanian Government:

- Define evaluation Standards for the VMR studies as recommended by ENQA and harmonise the Standard Operation Procedure with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- Limit the number of pages of the SER (with additional information provided in appendices) and avoid redundancies.
- Harmonise the salary between medical/dental residents and veterinary residents.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Pierre Lekeux