



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of Public Health
at Lithuanian Sports University

Expert panel:

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Physical Activity and Public Health</i>	<i>Physical Activity and Public Health</i>
State code	6121GX002	6211GX003
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	First	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)	Full-time (2 years)
Credit volume	180	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Health Sciences	Master of Health Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian & English
Minimum education required	Secondary education	University Bachelor's degree
Registration date of the study programme	6 March 2006	14 June 2002

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by HEI*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The expert panel conducted the site visit to the HEI on 24 October 2023.

1. Prof. Dr. Agneta Yngve (Sweden), panel chairperson - academic member, Professor Emeritus at the Department of Nutrition, dietetics and food studies, Uppsala University;
2. Prof. Dr. Róza Ádány (Hungary), panel member - academic member, Professor and founding Dean of the Faculty of Public Health of the University of Debrecen;
3. Dr. Eleanor J Hothersall (Scotland), panel member - academic member, Head of MBChB (Programme Director) at University of Dundee Medical School;
4. Ms Irena Taraškevičienė (Lithuania), panel member - representative of social partners, the Head of the Public Health Safety Department at the National Public Health Centre under the Ministry of Health;
5. Mr Ömer Faruk Sönmez (Turkey), panel member - student representative, first-year Master's student of Public Health at the University of Sheffield, School of Health and Related Research; member of ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool.

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Examples of final theses.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC HEALTH FIELD STUDIES AT LITHUANIAN SPORTS UNIVERSITY

The Lithuanian Sports University (LSU) was established in 1934 and was renamed as LSU in 2012. The University conducts research and offers studies across various fields of sports and health promotion. LSU offers 21 study programmes: 9 undergraduate, 10 postgraduate and 2 doctoral study programmes within 4 departments and 2 institutes and research centres. Specifically, the study field of Public Health is conducted through the Departments of Physical and Social Education, Health Promotion and Rehabilitation, and Sport and Tourism Management within the LSU's Institute of Sports Science and Innovation.

LSU offers the undergraduate study programme Physical Activity and Public Health (6121GX002) and the postgraduate study programme Physical Activity and Public Health (6211GX003). The field studies of Public Health at LSU are pivotal within the broader context of the institution's commitment to sports and physical activity-related studies. It aligns with the University's strategic objectives and partnerships in promoting sustainable physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. As a sports-oriented university, LSU places primary emphasis on sports, physical activity, and their role in fostering health promotion. Additionally, it strategically aligns the study of physical activity with the field of Public Health, aiming to create a cohesive relationship between the two disciplines.

The LSU has a long tradition in physical activity and athletics' research and has a solid scientific background and excellent international collaboration. LSU has a national reputation of being the go-to institution when it comes to physical activity and public health as well as in areas of athletics training and development.

The study field of Public Health underwent a previous external evaluation that was conducted in 2014 as part of the ongoing assessment and development of the study programmes. This evaluation ensured compliance with the legal requirements outlined by SKVC. In the scope of this latest external review, in the Bachelor's of Public Health programme certain evaluation areas received a rating of '2,' signifying 'satisfactory' (Programme aims and learning outcomes, Curriculum design), while the majority of the evaluation areas obtained a '3,' indicating 'good.' For the Master's of Public Health, the Curriculum design evaluation area was also rated as '2' or 'satisfactory,' while the remaining areas received a rating of '3.'

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the *Public Health* study field at Lithuanian Sports University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
Total:		27

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

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

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

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

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

The *second cycle of Public Health* study field at Lithuanian Sports University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
Total:		27

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND CURRICULUM

Aims, learning outcomes, and curriculum are evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market

(1) Factual situation

The evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of Public Health studies is linked to governmental reports, mainly Article 3 in the Law on Public Health related to the promotion, protection and prevention of disease. There is a register of Public Health professionals in Lithuania and a great need for trained professionals is foreseen due to an order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania highlighting training background needed for Public Health professionals in schools. The Lithuanian Health Strategy 2014-2023 is also mentioned as an important background document. One of the objectives of the Lithuanian Health Strategy is to promote a healthy lifestyle and its culture by encouraging optimal physical activity and developing healthy nutrition habits. The LSU undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of Physical Activity and Public Health are noted for the outstanding readiness of their graduates in the area of healthy lifestyle competencies. The first and second cycle study programmes of Physical Activity and Public Health are continuously updated considering the changing socio-economic situation of the country and the region, changes in legislation and national health priorities, as well as global threats. The undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes of Physical Activity and Public Health aim to provide Public Health professionals-to-be not only with up-to-date theoretical knowledge of the speciality but also to develop scientific and research skills and lay the foundations of a healthy lifestyle.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The aims and outcomes are regularly followed up in accordance with stakeholders' suggestions and also in regards to governmental changes as well as the structure and content of the register of Public Health professionals in Lithuania. Programmes' aims and outcomes are followed up every two years. The self-assessment report states that jobs are not only at municipal Public Health Bureaus but also at the National Centre for Public Health, and specialised Public Health institutions such as the Institute of Hygiene, the Centre for Emergency Situations of Health under the Ministry of Health, the National Laboratory for Public Health Surveillance, the Radiation Protection Centre under the Ministry of Health, that require not only healthy lifestyle and healthy nutrition knowledge but also specific knowledge in environmental health area. Institutions and companies other than municipal Public Health Bureaus should be more involved in defining the needs of the labour market unless the University concentrates on the needs of municipal Public Health Bureaus. Conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and

cycle study programmes to the needs of the society is assessed in relation to legal acts and strategies and the actual needs of society are evaluated.

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

(1) Factual situation

The HEI mentions that the bachelor studies aim at training Public Health and physical activity specialists for work in communities in relation to monitoring and planning of local work. They refer to the Master's students as researchers, developers and experts in health-related physical activity programmes, strategists and policymakers in educational, public, and private sectors. The LSU particularly mentions their mission to promote sustainable development of physical, mental, emotional and social well-being of people of all ages. The mission also mentions providing prompt recommendations to politicians and all institutions interested in the development of Lithuanian social and economic wellbeing. The University strives to be research as well as study institution for both sports and in general healthy lifestyles as well as in providing advice to policy makers.

(2) Expert panel judgement

In relation to the study programmes' updates, every two years, the vision and mission of the HEI are taken into account as well as other needed updates. The intense collaboration with future employers as well as with policy makers when it comes to student internships, joint research studies and applied projects provide a solid basis for accomplishing the LSU mission to promote sustainable development of the health and wellbeing of the Lithuanian population.

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

(1) Factual situation

The legal requirements are described as a list of legal acts. They also mention that the plan and content of both cycle studies comply with the Descriptor of the study field of Public Health, approved by the minister of education and science in Lithuania. The information on the cycle content and aims are publicly available.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The legal requirements are followed closely and programmes are updated if it is necessary every two years. The current situation is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table No 1. Public Health Study programmes' compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes (Bachelor's).

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	160
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	165
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	15
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	15
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	23
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	>30

Table No 2. Public Health Study programmes' compliance to general requirements for second study programmes (Master's).

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for the study field	No less than 60 ECTS	60
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	100
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	>10%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	>50%

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER submitted by LSU outlined the general competencies for both first and second cycle degree programmes.

The first cycle degree programme of Physical Activity and Public Health is described as developing general competencies, and professional competencies of a Public Health professional. The second cycle programme of Physical Activity and Public Health is also described as developing general and professional competencies. The professional competencies described develop across the programmes of study, and detailed learning outcomes of the modules demonstrate this. Each module is equivalent to 26 student work hours, including contact hours and self-study, and is allocated 5 credits. Student contact hours include lectures, seminars, laboratory activities, and consultations organised in the presence of lecturers.

Generic skills developed include critical thinking, decision-making, participating in team activities; encourage creativity; focus on research methodology and reflection. The second cycle programme is intended to enable the graduate not only to perform the activities of a Public Health professional but also to conduct independent research, make decisions based on research findings, perform research, expert, and managerial work, and continue to the third cycle doctoral studies. Annexe 1 outlined the progression of competencies across the programmes.

(2) Expert panel judgement

This has been carefully mapped to the national and international requirements, and the detailed documents provided provide assurance that there is good alignment between these requirements, the learning outcomes, and the methods of learning and assessment, consistent with good pedagogical practice. The institution's expertise in physical activity and related research is also evident in the topics covered. The requirement for new specialists in lifestyle medicine has clearly had an influence on course development, and this has been introduced appropriately, although there are separate requirements for lifestyle medicine graduates that will need attention.

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

(1) Factual situation

The first cycle programme contains 20 modules specific to Public Health, plus modules on Academic communication and critical thinking, Psychological well-being and stress management, and 2 elective modules from General University studies. This totals 180 ECTS credits over 6 semesters. A range of Public Health topics are covered, including modules on Public Health and Health Ecology, and Epidemiology. Including Functional Anatomy I and II, there are 9 modules (45 credits) of specifically sport-related modules, of which one is elective. The internship and thesis are 15 credits each. The SER mentions that there is a part-time option of 180 credits over 4 years but there is no further information about this. It is noted that the programme has changed due to changes in the regulations of the University, and the minor award in Coaching is no longer included in the programme.

The second cycle consists of 9 10-credit modules over 2 semesters, plus thesis (30 credits), totalling 120 ECTS credits. This includes a 10-credit module for internship, 2 elective modules, and 10 credits for sport-specific topics. There is a range of topics, across Public Health (for example, Advanced methods in epidemiology and modern Public Health, and Health Promotion Program Planning).

Detailed information about learning outcomes and assessment was provided for each module, in addition to overall documents outlining the programme.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The curriculum has been designed with a clear purpose and a real understanding of how competencies develop over time. There is constant evaluation of the appropriateness of content, and competencies.

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

(1) Factual situation

The first study cycle course has a total of 25 credits which can be selected by students (10 credits for the modules of elective general university studies, 5 credits for physical activity modules, and 10 credits for freely elective modules from the General University programme), while the second cycle course has 20 credits. Students also select their own thesis topic. Some additional options such as ERASMUS are available.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The number of credits available to students to direct their own studies is relatively small, particularly in the first study cycle, which has only 25 optional credits across three years, 5 credits of which must relate to sport. However, the range of options for students is appropriate and extensive.

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

(1) Factual situation

Final theses were provided for review. These are consistent with University regulations in both first and second cycle programmes.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Topics and approaches are appropriate and consistent with Public Health learning outcomes. As all theses reviewed were written in Lithuanian, only the abstracts could be reviewed. These seemed to be written to a good standard.

The panel noted that there was student interest in theses related to infectious diseases but this cannot normally be supervised due to staff expertise etc. This is understandable given the expertise of the University, but the panel also noted that there was work underway to increase the range of tutors available to supervise projects.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Clear curriculum with a strong emphasis on Public Health competencies.
2. Regular review of content allows adaptation to workforce needs.
3. Strong scientific and cultural background in physical activity research.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Some limitations on student choice, particularly in the first cycle programme.
2. Some wished thesis projects by students are not within the expertise of the current teaching team.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

The LSU has a longstanding position in Lithuania as a highly valued scientific centre for research on athletics and physical activity in relation to personal as well as public health. It has national and international recognition when it comes to competencies in these areas and several of the staff are also included in national boards and committees involved in policy making. International scientific networking is excellent and this is shown in the number of collaboration projects over the years. As it is explained in the SER, in line with the mission and vision of the LSU Strategy, research is carried out in 5 strategic areas: (1) Physical Education and Well-being; (2) Advanced Technologies for Training Basketballers; (3) Muscle, Mobility Management, Health Promotion; (4) Sport and Leisure Management and Economics; and (5) Technologies for Training Athletes. The academic staff of the study programme Physical Activity and Public Health are involved in 4 of the 5 strategic areas. Researchers in the strategic area of “Physical Education and Well-being” investigate health-related behaviour and its change in a

physiological, mental and social context. During the period under assessment, the University carried out 2 national and 3 international research and experimental development (R&D) projects in Public Health or related fields. Two international Eureka Programme projects, one international cooperation project and one national project were implemented with the participation of LSU staff members. One project funded by the State Public Health Foundation was also carried out.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Teachers are motivated to conduct research. Every five years, the publication activity of individual teachers is assessed and evaluated. Publication activity is also a factor in determining salaries. A separate budget is available to cover publication costs (including open access fees). A high number of papers were published in the period under evaluation, most of them in peer-reviewed journals, 11 publications in Q1, and 22 in Q2 journals. Several of the papers have teachers listed as the first or last author, indicating ownership as well as seniority of the teachers. The effect of physical activity on health and other performance indicators is in the focus of studies.

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

(1) Factual situation

As stated in the SER, “the latest scientific and technological developments, social changes and new legislation are continuously incorporated into the materials of the study modules”.

At LSU, the link between the study content and the latest scientific achievements is ensured during the certification of study modules, when the originality, scientific validity and novelty of their content are assessed. Module certification evaluates the use of the latest textbooks and tools, peer-reviewed scientific articles indexed in the Web of Science database, as well as the research carried out by academic staff to update module content and provide teaching materials for students. Students analyse scientific articles as part of their studies. It is recommended that 1/3 of the undergraduate and 2/3 of the postgraduate module materials should be scientific articles.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The research carried out by most academic staff is closely linked to the content of the modules taught, and the latest research findings and other relevant scientific developments are presented to students in lectures.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students in the first cycle of the Physical Activity and Public Health programme should develop a 15-credit Bachelor's thesis based on their own applied research activities. Graduates with a record of research activity will be awarded additional points in the competition for admission to postgraduate study. These additional points are based on their publication record. High scores are obtained if they have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. Students' participation in research groups and R&D projects is encouraged through the completion and assessment of the student reflection and learning development portfolio. The University has a Students' Scientific Society which organises annual conferences and helps students to get involved in R&D activities.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The SER indicates that during the evaluation period, Public Health students were involved in the majority of research projects. Master's students have the opportunity to design their own study by choosing a suitable Master's thesis project. Teachers say that students are regularly invited to participate in ongoing or planned research projects, but in the meeting with students only one student indicated that he was involved in a research project. However, a list of publications in peer-reviewed journals involving students as co-authors was presented together with a list of abstracts presented at scientific conferences. During the meeting with alumni, employers, and social partners, it was mentioned that during the internship they involve students in various surveys aimed at identifying preventive needs and measures in the community.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Publication activity is intense, and faculty are motivated to conduct research and publish in highly regarded international journals.
2. The publications shown by the teachers for the last five years are often involving them as first or last authors.
3. Graduates with a record of research activity are awarded additional points in the competition for admission to postgraduate studies.
4. The link between the study content and the latest scientific achievements is ensured by the certification of study modules when the originality, scientific validity and novelty of their content are assessed.
5. Faculty are given enough time to conduct research and are rewarded for publications.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Student participation in scientific projects does not seem to be sufficient.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

LSU has adapted its student admission processes to include stricter entry criteria for first-cycle studies, reflecting increasing competition scores. Despite initial challenges in attracting applicants to Public Health programmes, LSU has improved recruitment efforts, participating in higher education fairs and promotional events, actively promoting its study programmes on social media, and engaging with high schools. LSU's responsive approach includes introducing bridging studies for graduates of Professional Bachelor programmes and responding to the growing demand for Public Health professionals. These efforts have led to a notable rise in the number of entrants for state-funded placements and second-cycle studies, ensuring a more qualified student body in alignment with the evolving field of Public Health.

(2) Expert panel judgement

LSU has adopted the recommendations from previous evaluations such as giving extra scores in admission for research and sports activity which was appreciated by the panel. Although there is a slight decrease in applications compared to admission year 2020, LSU still attracts many students to apply for the study programmes. LSU offers bridging studies for applicants not coming from Public Health backgrounds which is positively evaluated. Since the physical activity element of the study programmes is unique to LSU, it is recommended to include more marketing for foreign students.

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

(1) Factual situation

LSU implements a systematic approach for the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies, and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning during the evaluation period. Applicants with foreign education qualifications are required to undergo an assessment by the SKVC to verify equivalence with Lithuanian standards, and LSU mandates a certificate of recognition for second-cycle programme applicants as of 2022.

(2) Expert panel judgement

A structured procedure for crediting partial learning outcomes exists for smooth credit transfers for exchange students, as long as individual study plans and agreement terms are followed. LSU regulates recognition processes for competencies acquired through non-formal

and informal learning, including clear criteria and structured assessments by an Assessment Board. More information should be given to students in terms of recognition procedures at the beginning of their studies.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

LSU shows effort in providing academic mobility for its students, primarily through the Erasmus+ programme. Students receive information and guidance on academic mobility opportunities through seminars, fairs, emails, and the LSU website, and selection procedures are defined. The number of students participating in academic mobility has been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Number of mobilities shows an increasing trend over the past 3 years. Other kinds of academic mobility can be adopted, not limited to Erasmus+. Students express various reasons for not being able to go on mobility, including work commitments, family and language barriers. LSU can address language barriers via the help of an internationalisation strategy that can be prepared. Students need to be encouraged to apply for academic mobility.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University provides various academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support for its students, including access to sports and leisure facilities, psychological counselling services, and organised information systems to facilitate their academic journey. A Psychological Well-being Committee was established in response to increased demand for psychological support, ensuring the well-being of the student community. The number of counselling sessions offered has increased over the years, reflecting the efforts to enhance students' mental health and overall well-being. Personal tutors are assigned to each student and the University grants scholarships to students on a competitive basis.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The panel has acknowledged high student satisfaction with support services, however, the University is still encouraged to assess the effectiveness of these services and identify possible improvements. Indicators such as (not limited to) the number of psychological consultations, number of students getting scholarships, number of participants in social activities, student success over the years should be constantly monitored in order to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the support services. The response rates of surveys are very low and cannot

provide precise judgement. Interpretation of survey results and action plans should be handled in cooperation with students.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

To acquaint students with the University and its study programmes, LSU's Studies Division organises an orientation event at the beginning of each academic year, providing essential information about study procedures, contacts, and resources. During this event, students are introduced to various aspects of the University, including its information systems and library services. Students also meet their programme director, who outlines the Study Program Committee's role, programme objectives, competencies, study modules, and teaching/assessment methods. Study module coordinators further explain module requirements during the semester, allowing for individual or group consultations with academic staff for any clarifications. Moreover, LSU maintains up-to-date study-related information on their distance learning system, Moodle, ensuring students have continuous access to the resources they need for their studies.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The LSU has disseminated study programme information across students using various channels, offering constant support with the help of tutors and student representatives. There should be more support in terms of Public Health careers after graduation which seems to be a hazy area among students.

Foreign and other students with various disadvantages should be more supported to ensure adaptation, getting information, and finding an internship place.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Competitive admission over the past 3 years.
2. High student satisfaction with support services.
3. Constant response action to student needs and requests.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low survey response numbers.
2. Lack of information on Public Health careers amongst students.
3. Lack of special counselling services for foreign and other students with various disadvantages including social and financial challenges.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

Details of all modules covered were provided in Annexe 1 of the SER. For each module in the first and second study cycle, there is a detailed document outlining prerequisites, learning outcomes (with teaching/learning methods and assessment methods), a detailed syllabus of each teaching session, with the details of the responsible lecturer, key references, distribution of work tasks and influence on the final grade. All modules in the first study cycle, and all but one in the second study cycle are listed as being taught in Lithuanian, some courses in the first study cycle are also taught in English, while the majority of second study cycle modules are also available in English. One second study module is only taught in English. The range of topics covered is mentioned in section 3.1.5, and assessment is discussed in 3.4.3.

(2) Expert panel judgement

There is a clear and detailed understanding of the requirements of the course and the teaching and learning needed. This is regularly scrutinised and clearly described in the SER. While not outlined in detail in the SER (“The choice of teaching methods depends on the specific aims of the study module”) it is clear from discussion with staff in person that this reflects appropriate variation. The details of teaching and learning outcomes in Annex 1 similarly indicate a range of approaches.

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

(1) Factual situation

Details provided of adaptations for students, including arranging study hours for students who are also working while completing second study cycle programmes. A tutor provides support for students who have problems with their studies. Students can also turn to the Studies Division, the Director of the Study programme or the Students’ Representative Council, depending on the problem at hand. Scholarships are handed out to students, depending on academic achievement. A psychologist is also available at LSU for psychological support to students. The students have access to gyms, swimming pools, etc and there is a dormitory on the campus. Access is provided to audiovisual aids as well as elevators for mobility impaired students.

(2) Expert panel judgement

There is mention of adapting for students with disabilities but no mention of what this might mean from an academic perspective, other than the physical adaptation of the facilities and audiovisual equipment. No systematic process for checking academic outcomes for students with disabilities. Students report that those with disabilities feel supported. The HEI provides academic support through the tutor system and also through the Studies division and the student's council. Financially, there is a possibility of getting a scholarship, when having academic success. There is funding available if students' have special needs such as for exchange students.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER states that there is "an effective and transparent system for assessing students' achievements and monitoring their progress" in the study process. The process of evaluation of student progress is outlined in the SER, for both first and second cycle programmes. A wide variety of assessment methods are listed, including examination, colloquium, group work, control work, seminar, presentation, paper. No sample examination or marking scheme was provided. The theses presented for review did not include a marking scheme, only final marks.

(2) Expert panel judgement

There is a clear understanding from tutors and course leaders of the assessment and feedback process across the programmes. Work is currently underway to standardise feedback that students receive across the programmes, which is good educational practice and should be encouraged.

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

(1) Factual situation

Since 2017, the LSU Studies Division has been conducting annual monitoring to assess graduates' employability. Graduates are surveyed 6-9 months after graduation online, by email, or by telephone. Six months after graduation, most of the graduates surveyed already had a job. Around half of the employed undergraduates were employed in their specialisation. Between 60 and 100% of the employed postgraduates worked according to their specialisation. Approx. 59% of those surveyed who graduated Physical Activity and Public Health First cycle were employed by speciality, and 86% for the second cycle in 2018-2022. The most common reasons for unemployment of first-cycle graduates within 6-9 months after graduation were postgraduate studies and parental leave.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking is carried out at the University. At the moment there are no concerns over the employability of graduates as the demand for Public Health specialists continues to be high. The employability by specialisation of first cycle graduates from the Public Health study programme shall be assessed in detail.

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

(1) Factual situation

As stated in the SER, LSU is an open University and provides equal access and opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities (mobility, hearing, visual or functional impairments), special needs, and socially disadvantaged groups (orphans, single parents, low-income families). The University premises are partially or fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The University's academic and administrative staff declares commitment to the principle of equal opportunities. Students with disabilities and (or) special needs may apply for assistance or to request an individual study plan. Seminars, training and counselling are provided to the University community on the specifics and possible challenges that persons with multiple disabilities and special needs encounter. Sports and leisure activities are proposed also for persons with disabilities. At the beginning of their studies, students are familiarised with the LSU Code of Academic Ethics and sign the Declaration of Academic Integrity and Code of Academic Ethics is made familiar to students in the first semester of the first year. Later while studying, students are familiarised with the Description of preventing and handling cases of bullying, sexual harassment, or persecution and sign in the LSU information system to acknowledge that they have read the document. Students may contact the LSU Academic Ethics Committee regarding gender equality rights or possible discrimination.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Procedures for the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are in place at the LSU.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students may appeal against the evaluation of examinations, final papers or procedural violations of organising examinations and defence of the final thesis. Students may appeal in writing to the Examination Appeals Board within the terms indicated in the procedure of appeals. Examination and final thesis appeal boards are composed of 3 members, one of whom

is a students' representative, by the Rectors order. The functions of the Examination and Final Thesis Appeal Boards are regulated by LSU Regulations on Study Appeals. Students who disagree with decisions taken on their appeals have the right to appeal to the LSU Dispute Resolution Committee which consists of six members, three of whom are students' representatives and three are University employees. The decision of the LSU Dispute Resolution Board may be appealed to the LSU Senate. During the period under assessment, one appeal was submitted against the evaluation score of the first cycle thesis (2018), which was satisfied. Another appeal was against the assessment of a first cycle module (2019) which was not satisfied.

(2) Expert panel judgement

Procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies are in place at the University. Terms of submission of appeals could be extended if applicable.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Development of process to ensure that the feedback students receive is consistent and appropriate.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Consider more detailed information about adjustments for students with learning disabilities.
1. No systematic process for checking for differences in attainment by disability (or other characteristics such as language, ethnicity, country of origin, social vulnerability, gender, etc).

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff are evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

In accordance with the legal requirements, 21 lecturers taught Public Health modules in the first cycle of the Physical Activity and Public Health programme; 19 of them held a Doctor of Science or Habilitated Doctor of Science degree, and the volume of modules taught by them accounted for 94% of the volume of modules in the field. 19 of the 21 lecturers in first cycle

programmes had worked at LSU for more than 0.5 FTE and for more than 3 years and had conducted research related to the modules taught. 10% of the modules were taught by two visiting academics who had more than 3 years of practical experience in the field of the course in the last 7 years.

In the second cycle of the Physical Activity and Public Health programme, 12 academics were PhDs or Habilitated Doctors of Science. Three of these were professors who taught the field modules, accounting for 24% of the volume of field modules. Most of the academic staff had more than three years of service with more than 0.5 FTE. Their field of academic interest was related to the courses they taught. Two visiting lecturers with doctorates teach about 11% of the modules in the second cycle. Both visiting academics have more than three years of practical experience in the course taught.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The number and qualifications of teachers are adequate to achieve the learning outcomes. The lack of doctoral training in Public Health at LSU could be a barrier to ensuring a supply of new teachers. It has been recognised that there is a need for additional teaching/project supervision in infectious diseases particularly for students from countries where there is a high infectious disease burden. This could be addressed by recruiting appropriate staff or providing targeted training for current staff.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff academic mobility

(1) Factual situation

As described in detail in the SER, LSU participates in the Erasmus+ programme and provides opportunities for academic staff to teach in foreign higher education institutions in partner countries. The selection of academic staff is carried out according to the regulations approved by the Rector's decree. The selection criteria for teaching mobility are based on the content of the applicant's teaching programme and its relevance to the study programme at the foreign university, knowledge of a foreign language and relevance from the point of view of the bilateral agreements between the teaching institutions. Candidates should meet the requirements set out in the call for applications.

During the evaluation period, 19 academic staff in the field of Public Health participated in ERASMUS academic exchanges. During the same period, 10 visits by international academics took place. In the academic year 2019/2020, some of the planned outgoing and incoming visits were cancelled due to the pandemic restrictions, so a virtual mobility programme was launched. The academic staff of the Physical Activity and Public Health programmes also collaborate with foreign universities involved in international R&D projects. During the evaluation period, 5 international R&D projects were implemented or are ongoing, with 8 lecturers from the programmes of Physical Activity and Public Health participating in project partner meetings or joint project activities.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The expert panel appreciates that LSU facilitates the participation of teachers in mobility programmes. However, the number of incoming academics is lower than the number of outgoing academics, so its aim to increase the number of incoming academics and researchers is relevant.

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

(1) Factual situation

The in-service training of academic staff at LSU is planned on a regular basis (annually) and funds are allocated in the annual University budget. Each year, the Programme Director collects the preferences of the teaching staff and submits the needs for funding to the Head of Department. Academic staff have the opportunity to participate in seminars, lectures and courses organised by the Knowledge and Innovation Relay Department. English language courses, IT training and seminars/courses on various relevant topics are organised and initiated. LSU is a member of the Lithuanian Association of Distance and e-Learning (LieDM), which organises training on distance learning. In-service training has also taken place during participation in Erasmus+ mobility programmes and other mobility visits.

(2) Expert panel judgement

As it is stated in the SER and during the meeting with teachers, according to the qualification requirements for determining the remuneration coefficient for academic staff, “the main criterion considered is scientific output, rather than other criteria such as quality of teaching, knowledge of the international context and practical knowledge and skills.” Some of the teachers expressed the opinion that this system of criteria does not provide an incentive to improve the quality of education. The expert panel considers it appropriate to examine this issue.

At the end of the academic year, teachers’ requests for courses are collected; computer and language courses are popular. It appears that the teaching team is not proactive enough - they are waiting for regulations/official changes in requirements instead of introducing innovations as soon as possible.

During the evaluation period, some staff were concerned about the lack of incentives to participate in in-service training. The workload for the next academic year is taken into account in planning competencies improving courses, thus, encouraging academic staff to participate in training.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The staff has considerable teaching experience.
2. Facilitation of participation in mobility programmes.
3. Transparent method to select teachers for mobility exchange.
4. Time allocated to research is adequate and it is well reflected in publication activity.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Relatively low number of incoming academics and researchers in the mobility programmes.
2. The incentives to participate in training to improve competencies are not sufficient.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

The learning facilities build on a historically important development in athletics' performance and research on physical activity in relation to personal and public health. There are three main buildings and these are housing three scientific teaching laboratories and a large Athletics arena which can be used for different studies. A library is well-equipped with scientific literature online as well as books and journals. There are 42 computers available with statistics software and eduroam is installed for easy use of students, staff and visitors. The three scientific-teaching laboratories in LSU have state-of-the-art equipment and the equipment and laboratories of the Institute of Sports Science and Innovation can also be used in teaching. Interactive screens are used for teaching and in the library, there is a workstation with magnifying equipment, a Braille printer and equipment for reading texts out loud from a computer screen.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The learning facilities were well planned and updated and some restoration was underway. Lifts for disabled students were available in most facilities and resources for enlarging literature as well as for computerised reading out loud of book material were available. Equipment for online teaching with touch screens was available as well as access to computers and statistical software for students.

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

(1) Factual situation

A process following “The Procedure for drawing up the estimates” was approved by the Rector in 2010. Estimates are listed for the upcoming year and drafted by the Office of Economics and Finance. Expenditure on goods and services needed is planned based on the previous year’s expenditure. By 1 December each year, the University division submits its planned needs including study aids, staff in-service training and trips to scientific conferences. Needs for software and IT development are submitted to the IT Unit and access to scientific literature is submitted to the library division. All needs are gone through by the Rector’s office and approved by the LSU council.

(2) Expert panel judgement

There seems to be no lack of support or resources to support the field studies currently. Since the last evaluation, the library has upgraded and included textbooks, monographs and different types of methodological aids when it comes to promoting physical activity, in personal as well as Public Health.

The results of the application procedure for updating or replacing equipment, including study aids and staff in-service training and possibilities to go to scientific conferences each year are made publicly available.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Excellent and updated equipment for scientific research.
2. Good library access to books and online journals.
3. Good access for all to computers, statistical software and eduroam.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a need to improve access for physically impaired students to some of the facilities.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

The LSU has developed a Strategy for development of integrated activities of the LSU 2018-2022: the Code of academic and professional ethics etc. They particularly mention continuously monitoring students’ learning experience, promoting academic integrity and ensuring the

quality of studies. The content of the programmes is continuously updated. They are also using Quality assurance for the European Higher Education Area. The quality is monitored by the Study Programme Committee within LSU. The composition of the Study Programme Committee is revised at the beginning of each academic year.

(2) Expert panel judgement

The effectiveness of the study quality assurance system is based on multi-level monitoring and analysis of the study quality. At the institutional level, the University Senate is the most important study quality assurance body, approving the internal study quality assurance system and monitoring its implementation. Only the documents endorsed by the Senate Study Commission are submitted to the Senate. For the effective management and improvement of the study programme, the composition of the Study Programme Committee is revised at the beginning of each academic year. If necessary, the improvement of the study programmes also involves the academic staff teaching and representatives from different offices and divisions.

A solid quality assurance system appears to be in place and the monitoring of quality is a continuous process, building on module evaluation and regular meetings with stakeholders. The Study Programme Committee is responsible for quality assurance, which is working successfully, in relation to the monitoring of modules and the updating from stakeholders regarding the need for changes in content and/or process in the programmes.

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

(1) Factual situation

Both student representatives and other stakeholders are represented in the Study Programme Committee, thereby taking into account the views of all parties. The University cooperates with the National Public Health Centre and is a member of the Association of Public Health Offices. Study and postgraduate internships are organised and carried out on the basis of Lithuanian and foreign social partners and other institutions functioning in the field of Public Health. In accordance with the cooperation agreements, the employers take the responsibility of practical studies in the course of the internship and thus input into the quality assurance of studies.

The stakeholders – students' representatives and representatives of social partners - are involved in study quality assurance as equal members of the Study Programme Committee. Stakeholders and students are always invited to attend the meetings of the Committee and express their views on improving the quality of study programmes. The University states that stakeholders' participation in the Committee meetings is valuable for getting feedback on the studies, the needs for graduates' competencies in the labour market or the changes considered. The academic staff of the studies in the field of Public Health maintain regular contact with stakeholders' managers and (or) specialists, thus receiving direct information about the

changing needs of the market of Public Health services that cause the inclusion of new competencies while training such specialists.

(2) Expert panel judgement

There are student representatives as well as stakeholders/social partner representatives in the Study Programme Committee and regular meetings and surveys are held. Procedures of quality improvement involving students and stakeholders are in place. It could be advised to receive such input from stakeholders and students that would enable them to identify skills necessary for a job and how those skills could be ensured in the course of studies so that graduates are ready to complete their job tasks right after graduation. Internships at employers' places could be organised from the beginning of studies.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University regularly announces quantitative and qualitative information on study programmes, including research activities and self-assessment results and more. Regular surveys of the participants in the study process are performed, including students, staff and graduates and the results are used to update and improve the programmes.

(2) Expert panel judgement

All evaluation results are publicly available, including research activities and master theses titles and content.

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

(1) Factual situation

LSU employs a comprehensive feedback system, gathering input from students through surveys, interviews, and discussions. Specialised staff analyse this data, facilitating discussions with academic personnel, Study Program Committees, and Department Heads. Notably, feedback has led to improvements in teaching quality, with unsatisfactory outcomes prompting potential actions like faculty certification. To increase student participation, a working group, predominantly comprising students, has revised the feedback system, with revised procedures set to be implemented in 2022/2023.

(2) Expert panel judgement

LSU has a goal for enhancing education quality through structured feedback and proactive measures, which altogether seem very adequate. However, students expressed a couple of needs such as more help to find jobs, and that competencies could be enhanced by more practice. Revised student feedback systems are supposed to be implemented shortly, which is an advantage.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Connection to stakeholders takes place through newsletters and other activities, apart from their participation in the Study Programme Committee
2. Connection with policy makers is upheld through teachers' participation in National boards and committees
3. Teachers as well as students present their research at yearly national scientific conferences as a part of public appearances and updating
4. There is a joint effort in updating and quality assuring the study programmes performed through the Study Programme Committee which has students, staff, teachers and social partners as members and has regular meetings
5. There is an ongoing revision of students' evaluation systems.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Need for actions to motivate students to provide survey feedback as there are low response rates on evaluation surveys.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

- Outstanding research in the area of physical activity and fitness, a solid background for the importance of physical activity in Public Health as well as for identifying indicators for fitness level and low/high physical activity levels, intensity and duration in monitoring programmes.
- Rewarding climate towards teachers' research interests including support for publications.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand personalisation opportunities for the first cycle programme. 2. Ensure that competencies for lifestyle medicine expertise are not prioritised over other core Public Health competencies in future developments, particularly in regard to physical activity in Public Health.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students should be more informed about their possible involvement in research projects. 2. It is recommended to develop and implement a doctoral training programme in the field of Public Health.
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment of the effectiveness of student support services should be improved. 2. Foreign and other students with various disadvantages should be more supported to ensure adaptation, getting information, and finding an internship placement. 3. There should be more information in terms of Public Health careers after graduation. 4. Feedback should be collected systematically.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider more detailed information about adjustments for students with learning disabilities. 2. There is a need for a review of assessment outcomes to identify differential attainment due to background, disabilities, social disadvantage etc.
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the number of incoming academics and researchers in the mobility programs would be beneficial. 2. Enhanced participation of teachers in courses improving competencies should be facilitated.
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possibly there is some need to restore the buildings but nothing out of the ordinary.
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey response numbers and other systematic feedback collection mechanisms should be improved.

VI. SUMMARY

Thank you to all involved in this evaluation process. The expert panel was met with enthusiasm and friendliness and we are very thankful for all your efforts to make our day with you, as well as the pre- and post-visit work interesting and useful.

LSU is a well-known university with a strong background in athletics and physical activity. The scientific production is solid and includes several papers on Public Health related fields, both in background knowledge such as physiology and in regards to assessment of physical activity and health promotion activities in several age groups. The publications also show a large proportion of papers with teachers as first or last authors, a sign of scientific ownership as well as seniority of the teachers involved in the programmes. The number of papers published by students in international journals, as well as the number of abstracts to scientific conferences for the last few years was impressive. However, enhancing awareness of research opportunities for all students could lead to further advancement. There might be a need to further increase the number of teachers/researchers with a defined Public Health/health promotion background. An advantage would be a doctoral programme in Public Health.

The teachers as a group gave the impression of having a really good work situation with support for doing research and having a good balance between teaching and administrative tasks. Students seemed happy with the situation and there was a fair bit of mobility taking place among students as well as staff/teachers. However, there is also a need to better balance incoming/outgoing teachers. A number of efforts are made to integrate international students with Lithuanian students, such as blended mobilities, International days, and mentors assigned. However, there still seems to exist a need to better integrate the international students with the Lithuanian students. An internationalisation strategy involving joint authorship with international colleagues and ways of increasing the incoming mobilities and involvement of international students with Lithuanian students might be useful.

Lastly, the University could further explore expanding personalisation options for the first cycle programme, ensuring a balanced focus on lifestyle medicine and other core Public Health competencies, implementing systematic feedback collection, addressing adjustments for students with learning disabilities, conducting a review of assessment outcomes for differential attainment, facilitating teacher engagement in competency-improving courses, and improving survey response numbers and feedback mechanisms.

Expert panel chairperson signature:
Prof. Dr. Agneta Yngve