CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of SOCIOLOGY

at KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Expert panel:

1. Prof. dr. Dieter Bögenhold (panel chairperson), member of academic community;

2. Prof. Borut Rončević , member of academic community;

3. Prof. Sarah Joan Nettleton, member of academic community;

4. Associate Professor Eglė Rindzevičiūtė , member of academic community;

5. Dr. Vita Kontvainė, representative of social partners;

6. Ms Jurgita Novosiolova, students' representative.

Evaluation coordinator – *Dr. Ona Šakalienė*

Vilnius
2021

Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	***Social welfare and policy***
State code	6211JX045
Type of studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (1,5 year)
Credit volume	90
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Undergraduate education
Registration date of the study programme	21-12-2011

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

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 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 prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution; 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 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 was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149. The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on *4 May, 2021.*

> **Prof. Dr. Dieter Bögenhold,** *professor at the Faculty of Economics and Management, University of Klagenfurt (Austria);*
> **Prof. Dr. Borut Roncevič,** *professor at the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica, (Slovenia);*
> **Prof. Dr. Sarah Joan Nettleton,** *professor at the Department of Sociology, University of York, (United Kingdom);*
> *Associate Professor* **Eglė Rindzevičiūtė,** *at the School of Law, Social and Behavioural Sciences Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, Kingston University* (*United Kingdom*);
> **Dr. Vita Kontvainė,** *research fellow at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences (Lithuania);*
> **Ms. Jurgita Novosiolova,** *student of Mykolas Romeris University, Second Sycle Study Programme.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report 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.	

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

Kaunas University of Technology (hereinafter referred as KTU) was originally established as a university in 1922. The university consists of 9 faculties, the library, 8 research institutes and departments providing administrative support. The university has the mission to provide research-based studies on the international level and is focusing on creation and transfer of knowledge and innovative technologies for the sustainable development. It currently has 8.442 students on all levels of studies, with 655 of them being foreign students, and has 1.915 employees.

The present evaluation is for the study programme in the field of Sociology, the second cycle study programme "Social Welfare and Policy" (state code: 6211JX045). The programme is provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities.

The previous assessment of the programme was conducted in 2017 by Centre for Study Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The programme was accredited for the maximum period of 6 years. The current evaluation period covers the period of the last years starting on academic year 2017-2018 and ending in 2019-2020. During the evaluation period the programme previous title "Social Policy" was updated to "Social Welfare and Policy", to follow the national policy trend with the emphasis on social welfare. The programme teaching form was changed from cyclical to standard.

The self-evaluation report for the present evaluation was carried out by a self-evaluation group headed by the Head of the Study Programme Committee for Political Science, Sociology and Public Governance and consisted of 8 members.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Sociology study field and second cycle at KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	24

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;
2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;
3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;
4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;
5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation
The aims and outcomes of the study programme conform to the needs of the society and the labour market. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) outlines a relatively detailed picture of the needs of the Lithuanian society and labour market, and puts it in the context of the long-term national strategic vision 'Lithuania 2030'. This document outlines, in line with the UN document Agenda 2030, progress in the directions of a smart society, economy and governance. The programme has integrated aspects of smart society and smart governance, via individual relevant modules such as 'Comparative Social Policy', 'Public Governance and Civil Society' and 'Risk and Security Governance'. The programme also addresses European Union policies by focusing on sustainable growth through courses 'Environmental Policy' and 'Challenges for Social Welfare in XXI century'.

The relevance of the programme to labour market needs is evidence by the above average employability rate, with 75 % of graduates from 2019 being employed within 6 months after graduating.

The findings of a survey conducted by the Department with employers revealed the following skills were needed: effective communication, risk governance, statistical data analysis, project management, teamwork, and knowledge of empathy and ethics. The study programme is aiming to develop all of these skills. It is not clear, however, whether the results of this recent survey, conducted in 2020, guided the implementation of relevant changes in the programme, or just confirmed the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the study programme to the needs of society and the labour market.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the aims and outcomes of the study programme are consistent to the needs of Lithuanian society and labour markets. This is also due to the fact that the faculty dedicates attention to the national and the EU strategic documents and checks the needs of the employers, to which contents of individual modules is adjusted.

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
Self-evaluation report provides a short but systematic and detailed account of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the study programme with the university mission, general principles and strategy.

The university mission is to provide research-based studies of international level, to create and to transfer knowledge and innovative technologies for sustainable development and innovative growth of the country, and to provide an open creative environment that inspires leaders and talented individuals. These are underlined with the general principle that the university's objectives and activities are focused the wellbeing of individuals, both within and outside the university. In line with this, the study programme aims to develop highly qualified professionals, who are able to critically assess social policy, relevant theories, understand contemporary social welfare issues, can provide evidence-based arguments, and take ethical principles into account.

The conformity also meets the university's strategic activity to develop students' competencies or self-expression and research-based and activity-oriented interdisciplinary studies. The programme, while focusing on welfare and social policy issues, provides a solid theoretical foundation and analytical skills, to enable graduates to pursue successful careers in the areas of social and public policy. Planned learning outcomes are clearly in line with this.

The link is at a first glance somewhat less clear with respect to the other university's strategic activity, namely, to develop internationally acknowledged technology and knowledge development and transfer. However, the university also mentions social sciences and humanities as its strategic sciences, in addition to more pronounced role given to physical, biomedical, technology, and interdisciplinary research. Learning outcomes clearly support this strategic activity.

We have found no deviations from this during the interviews. The internal stakeholders were aware of the university's objectives and their role in pursuing these objectives.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that cycle study programme aims and outcomes conformity with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI. The university has a very clear and distinctive technological orientation. Sociology is following this strategic orientation and so is consistent with the university's orientation, yet at the same time staying in the framework of sociology as a discipline, with a specific focus on welfare and social policy.

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

(1) Factual situation
The duration of study programme Social Welfare and Policy is 1.5 years, with 90 ECTS credits required to successfully complete the programme. The programme is in compliance with the relevant Lithuanian legislation, university-level regulations, as well as with relevant international documents on education policy.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the evaluated study programme is in compliance with legal requirements.

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 study programme aims to develop classical learning outcomes in the field of social welfare and policy. These include both theoretical and practical knowledge, ability to engage with critical perspectives, analytical skills, and skills to conduct research and analyse data. In this respect, the programme is a rather traditional social policy programme. The learning methods are also described in a rather traditional way, by including a substantial list of all relevant classical and innovative teaching methods. Also, the assessment methods include all relevant assessment methods that are used in almost all comparable study programmes. A substantial part of the report is dedicated to listing these learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment methods.

The available information allows us to confirm compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods. This compatibility is enabled by the university academic information system, to which all teachers need to upload information on the relation between programme learning outcomes and module objectives. This also allows verification on compatibility between the aims of a particular subject and programme as a whole, as well as its coherence and continuity. The university also approved the matrix showing that relevant learning outcomes are covered by study modules. The matrix shows that each outcome is developed by between 2 and 5 study modules, while the final degree project aims to achieve all learning outcomes. The review of Annex 3 (study module programme) further confirms compatibility.

Since only one programme is evaluated, there is no need to describe the process of coordination and compatibility between different programmes and especially between first and second study cycle. However, in case there is such a situation in the future, the university has a system in place to ensure it.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
On the basis of the available information, the expert panel members are convinced that there is sufficient evidence on compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods.

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

(1) Factual situation
The evaluated study programme has a coherent structure, typical of many welfare state and social policy programmes. In the first semester students are introduced to the general welfare state theories and are familiarised with the current challenges for the social welfare state. They are also familiarised with the principles of social research methodology. In the second semester students develop analytical skills in relation to social policy issues and qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. In addition, students can elect courses introducing them to specific topics related to the welfare states and social policy. In the third semester they conclude the studies with a final thesis.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the evaluated programme enables its graduates to achieve the planned learning outcomes. The have a good grasp of the theory and concepts of the subject field, relevant social research competencies and knowledge of more specific issues.

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 Self-evaluation report outlines three options for the students personalisation of their own study experience. The first are the elective courses, to which 18 ECTS (out of 90 ECTS) have been dedicated. The second option is the topic of the final degree project with 30 ECTS (out of 90 ECTS). Therefore, in principle, 53 % of ECTS are collected through individual choice. However, the expert panel has observed that the list of elective courses realistically offered is relatively low.
The third possibility is the Erasmus+ exchange.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that in principle the possibilities for personalisation of the study experiences are rather substantial, through 53 % of ECTS being determined by students' choices and Erasmus+ exchange. However, personalisation is limited as a result of the small number of electives offered and obstacles to Erasmus+ exchange.

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

(1) Factual situation
The expert panel received the list of 26 titles of final degree projects for the period 2018-2020. The titles are in line with the requirements of the study programme.

The university has in place the system for ensuring compliance of final theses with study programme requirements. These are regulated on the university level. Additionally, the Faculty has a specific set of methodological requirements in place. The topics can be presented by the lecturer or by the social partners, including students and employers, in coordination with the possible supervisor. Topics are approved by the Study programme committee.

Students additionally undergo training related with the selection of databases, choice of sources, correct citations etc. All final degree theses are checked for the quality of language and undergo anti-plagiarism checks. The project is then defended publicly before the qualification commission of the study field.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that final theses are in compliance with the field and cycle requirements.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. The study program has a clear and precise focus, and there is evidence that teaching staff students meet with the philosophy of the program.
2. Graduates seem to gain sound knowledge and expertise, and employers appreciate KTU sociology graduates as having a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects. They promise to have excellent knowledge in cross-section fields and especially in data knowledge and data applicability.

(2) Weaknesses:

N/A

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation

KTU's mission is "to provide research-based studies of international level" (Self-evaluation report, p. 4), which is also the goal of the MA programme Social Welfare and Policy. The Faculty has a clear strategy to attract new research active staff by recruiting early career scholars who obtained their PhDs abroad (Study visit). Two young scholars joined the faculty after graduating from West European universities and several members of the team who teach this programme benefited from extensive research visits to Western European universities as part of their study or research project activities. The staff initiate and conduct research projects of applied character, exploring attitudes to risk, social enterprise, youth, attitudes to climate change, etc. There is a clear faculty strategy to promote publishing in high quality international outlets; however, as this is a new and developing department, the focus is on publishing books and book chapters. There is a track record of success in this respect, a couple of articles were published in international peer reviewed journals of good standing. Most of other publications are in in-house or national journals. Engagement in international research projects is commendable: in all, funding for four research projects was obtained from Horizon 2020, which bodes well with the university's capacity to support international research collaboration and the staff competency to develop a competitive research agenda (p. 17). The staff who participate in these projects feed the research directly into the modules that they teach (p. 19-20, visit) and seek to engage students to contribute to the research activities (visit). The content of research and taught modules aligns particularly well. Students have possibilities to co-publish, participate in conferences and receive mentorship; these opportunities appear to be well used (p. 22 and visit). Methods training is strong; students can benefit from high level workshops learning alongside with the staff (visit).

During the visit it was clarified that research activities are included in the staff workload module and vary depending on the contract; staff have an option to work overtime to meet their research obligations where funding is available (up to 1.5 FTE). Sabbatical is available, but in practice it is rarely used and the staff do not benefit from it as much as they could because it is difficult to get replacement for teaching.

In the main the leadership team are very enthusiastic about the prospects of research and teaching, this enthusiasm is shared by the teaching team, who nonetheless face a challenge of combining what is a considerable load of contact hour teaching and research requirements. In the visit, the students expressed positive experience of the possibility to establish and maintain link with their lecturers' research. However, as second cycle students tend to work full time, the benefit is limited by time constraints.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is evidence of some internationally relevant research conducted by some members of the staff; the topics are relevant to social policy and there is an established record of development of research methods, mainly quantitative. It is less certain just how empirically rich and impactful the research is (major projects started just a few years ago). It is not entirely clear to what extent all students can benefit from advanced research training at the postgraduate level, given that not all of them have a strong background in research methods/sociology.

The present model of sabbatical does not appear to work in practice as the staff do not feel that they can take a lengthy leave for research.

There are ample opportunities for the staff to network internally and share their research expertise through internal seminar activities, methods training and conferences.

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

(1) Factual situation

The overall structure of the curriculum's content, as presented in the module descriptor, is in line with traditional courses in social policy. There is a clear emphasis on global challenges and sustainable development; a separate module is dedicated to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is commendable. However, a more critical approach to the SDG agenda would be desired at the postgraduate level (the reading list contains mainly policy documents). The technology strand is less visible at the curriculum level; it is not entirely clear what social theories and approaches to the social consequences of technological change are addressed in the modules.

There has been an indication that research methods modules are not always aligned and some content can be repetitive. A greater emphasis on digital research methods and online research would enhance what is a strong training programme in using secondary data to teach students to work with traditional software packages.

In the visit, we were told that students are familiarised with the international context in comparative social policy module. In the meeting with stakeholders, it was suggested that a greater knowledge of the political decision-making process is desirable.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The reading lists across all modules and programmes could include more critical scholarship on sustainable development and technosocial change. For instance, the topics of modules could explicitly address the problem of measurement of wellbeing, as well as the authoritarian inclinations of political steering of climate crisis. Critical theories of technology could be introduced, especially as they relate to health technology and urban planning, e.g. the political and cultural perspectives, particularly the development of new models of public participation and ethics.

When probed, not all of the staff knew in detail what is taught on other modules. Neither students nor stakeholders could name a particularly distinctive research output associated with the department: this could be addressed through better communication across the teaching team, research leaders and the student and social partners body.

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 get engaged in the ongoing research through their modules (evidence from study visit) and some are given the opportunity to engage with the lecturers' applied research projects. The study visit revealed that students highly valued the methods skills that they obtained, particularly the methods training. Even after graduation some of them are in touch with their former lecturers and consult on research related issues. An excellent opportunity to receive advanced training through open workshops is available, as well as a research mentor programme. Some students participate in research conferences.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The students benefit from consistent and solid training in research methods, particularly as they learn in small groups. However, it is not clear if their critical and analytical skills are equally strong (in the visit it was suggested that students are rather trained to navigate databases). These skills are in high demand, as suggested by stakeholders during the meeting. They could be strengthened by training in theory and critical case study analysis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Novel applied social research that is conducted as part of collaborative research projects feeds into a number of modules.
2. Strong emphasis on quantitative methods research skills and the use of databases.
3. Student engagement with applied research through internships and projects.
4. Guest professors from well-established research-intensive universities.
5. Institutional dedication to develop internationalisation through publication and networking.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Research of all staff is not sufficiently critical and international. Number of high-level international publications is relatively limited.
2. Emphasis on research methods training at the expense of critical analysis and evaluation.
3. The lecturers' feeling of the ownership of the programme as a whole.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The admission procedure is described in university's website in both Lithuanian and English. It is easy to find all the information and steps (https://stojantiesiems.ktu.edu/programme/m-socialine-gerove-ir-politika/). The second-cycle study programme is conducted in accordance with university's admissions procedure for second-cycle study programmes. Graduates with a different background can apply for the second-cycle studies as well. The admission of the second-cycle studies grade consists of two stages: during the first all the applications are considered and the best of them are invited to study, during the second stage an additional admission is organized for the remaining places in the study programme to fill in. All the applications are submitted and tracked via online inside university system (Information Academic System), students are rated according to:

a) Average grade of a University's Bachelor degree (0.7)
b) Research activities (0.2)
c) Interview of motivation (0.1)

During the last three years the number of the students in the second-cycle programme (Social welfare and policy) seems to remain stable: 9-11 students per year had signed the contract.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is convinced that student selection and admission criteria are suitable. The publicity of the information is ensured. The website is very informative and easily accessible. The admission procedures are transparent and well-founded.

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

The subjects and learning outcomes achieved through formally or informally (self-education) ways can be recognised and included in the study programmes following KTU procedures listed in the SER. A maximum of 75% of the programme can be credited, for the student from his previous formal education. The included modules can be from lower study cycle according to the KTU procedures. University also applies procedures for evaluation of learning achievements acquired via non-formal and informal education can be recognized (voluntary, projects, traineeships and etc.) A maximum of 50% of the programme can be credited. There was one case then the student used such a possibility in the last year, and there were no cases of refusing to acknowledge the qualification in the last 3 years.

Only one student used the possibility to enquiry on the recognition of units taken at Erasmus + programme. It is demonstrated to be practised, but there seem to be obstacles to using this possibility.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is convinced that the procedure for recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is fair and well formulated. However, its take-up rate is very low, so it is yet not practiced at the level it is intended.

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

(1) Factual situation
The university offers possibilities for the students under the Erasmus+ programme to go for the partial studies (3 to 6 months) or to go for an international internship. Students can also use a other funds such as: "Vulcanus in Japan", "Baltech" etc. As the department does not offer any modules in English language there are no international students coming to KTU Sociology studies, with a minor exception of a few foreign students who participated in the separate modules which were offered in the English language. All the information about mobility opportunities is available on the university website. Students going abroad can apply for the scholarships. However, only one Lithuanian student used the mobility possibility.

During the interview with the students, the awareness of the underutilisation of Erasmus+ programme was clearly recognised. Students are aware of the possibilities, but listed professional and family obligations as the main reason for not taking up these opportunities. The issue is also due to the relatively low number of students.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the department creates good conditions for international exchange studies and internship. But the take up of these opportunities is very low. The programme is not conducted in English, with exception of a few modules, so the number of incoming international students is also relatively low. Obstacles were detected in the low number of students and in personal and professional responsibilities of the students.

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 offers favourable support for students. All students are eligible to apply for academic, financial, personal, social, and psychological support. University also provides career consultations, as well as cultural and leisure activities for students. The information about the support is listed in the university's webpage in very informative way.

The University also provides a strong mentorship programme - "Gifted" talent academy, with individual consultations with teachers. During the interview of the expert panel with the students, it was suggested that the mentorship programme is very comprehensive and some of the students had used it. Lectures are organised in the afternoons, creating more favourable conditions for the working students, to balance between the work and studies. None of the interviewed students took part in the carrier consultations as it was cleared that they concentrated more for first cycle students. The university also provides a very well-

established learning environment for the students in the form of laboratories and online learning platform.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the university ensures very good level of academic, financial, personal, psychological and social support. This was clearly confirmed by the interviewed students. Additionally, teachers are very supportive as well. At the second cycle, there is an almost collegial relationship between students and teachers that is very beneficial.

The mentorship programme is including possibilities to choose a mentor in each stage of the education, including peer mentor, academic mentor, career mentor and research mentor, is an admirable and ambitious initiative that creates very good conditions for well-being and engagement in the studies.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation
The university provided clear information for the students on different levels. The necessary information can be found in the university website. Students are introduced to their study programmes one week before their studies during the "Welcome week". Study-related information can be received on two levels. First, the general information is provided centrally by the Student Services and Studies Department. Secondly, students can receive an individual consultation. Details on the study process is provided in inside online system Moodle and university's intranet Office365 and AIS, with information on study plan, results, performance review etc.

During the expert panel interviews with the students it was confirmed that the university provides strong online learning platform and all the needed information can be accessed easily. This was especially emphasised during pandemic, when students were provided remote access to workstations.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the university provides a sufficient level of study information and student counselling. Teachers and advisory staff are easily accessible and there is clear information about where students should be able to get answers to various questions and concerns, etc. The web pages are informative and easily accessible.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:
(1) Strengths:
1. Community feeling and good relationships between students and teacher.
2. Strong infrastructure and support programmes for the students.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. The take up of the internationalization opportunities is very limited for both outgoing and incoming students.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The teaching and learning process enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes in a number of ways. The learning outcomes (see section 3.1 above) for the MA Social Welfare and Policy are set out in the SER as to be able to critically assess and apply theoretical knowledge, analyse organisations, roles, institutions and actors relating to social policies on local, national, international levels, work independently to apply social science research skills, and communicate to diverse audiences.

Accordingly, the curriculum comprises compulsory modules on theories of the welfare state, comparative policy analysis, and research methods. Students can take optional modules related to welfare issues to further specialise. A diversity of learning methods are employed to match the outcomes of the substantive areas, practical and technical skills. These are thoroughly outlined in the SER and have been considered carefully by the staff. For instance, during the evaluation period the study programme objectives were reviewed, and as a result more time is devoted to analysis of evidence-based policy approaches and evaluation methods – most especially in relation to sustainable development.

Learning outcomes in policy analysis are achieved through classroom debates, assignments such as drafting project reports, competency portfolios and exams. Outcomes relating to analytical evidence-based thinking are achieved through requiring students to undertake assignments on 'real data' from a variety of data sets – ensuring their studies are up to date and relevant to real world social issues. Practical and technical skills are achieved through lab-based teaching, and student's independent assignments where they must demonstrate use of packages such as SPSS and MaxQDA.

Learning outcomes relating to the ability to work as independent researchers are achieved through the execution of a degree project. Students are required to complete the library research skills, e.g. training related to databases, the choice of proper sources, the correct citation and so on. The final thesis is presented by students verbally in a public defence enhancing the skills of verbal communication to a variety of audiences.

Substantively, the MA programme has a focus on environmental and sustainability issues and technological debates. The former is well covered, but it is less clear to see the specific learning outcomes and teaching processes relating to the latter. It would be helpful to have a

fuller articulation of technological policy aspects and research methods relating to digital and social media and global innovations in information and communication technologies.

(2)   Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The evaluation panel were impressed by the diversity of teaching methods and forms of assessments which they judged to be highly appropriate to ensure the learning outcomes for the MA programme could be achieved. In particular the students excel in their knowledge of comparative social policy and understanding of issues relating to environmental policies and the challenges of sustainability. Educational outcomes relating to methods are also achieved through practical assignments and students being able to access research data. More space could be given to technological innovations relating to digital social media especially as novel sources of data and for training in methods to gather and analyse such sources.

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

(1)   Factual situation
Since 2018, the University has implemented the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy that guarantees a right for every employee and student to work and study in an environment that promotes the respect for personal dignity (SER p. 30). Students with special needs are consulted by the University Student Information and Service Centre and by the Social Welfare Coordinator who is based in the Department of Student Affairs. The Coordinator acts as a mediator in issues related to studies and social support. If needed, flexible forms of studying and achievement evaluation are applied to the students with special needs.

Since 2017, six students with special needs studied in the faculty, one of them – in the Social Welfare and Policy program (successfully defended her MA). There is a regular survey aimed to identify students in need or those that experience learning difficulties as well as events aimed to raise the awareness of diversity and tolerance among the University community.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The conditions ensuring access to study for students with special needs are in good standing. There are opportunities to individualize the study process and equipment for all students to undertake their studies is provided in the libraries and classrooms. It is commendable that the University takes efforts to increase the visibility of students with special needs and educate the community about various disabilities.

The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy protects against discrimination on a broader range than the national laws – additionally, it prohibits discrimination on family status and intentions to have children.

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

Students receive regular feedback from the teaching staff throughout the semester. Feedback is provided on each assignment and during tutorials (consultancy-based discussion between students and a teacher).

On a University level, progress of students is monitored by the Department of Academic Affairs that performs regular monitoring of students' learning outcomes. The report is presented to the Rector and to the study programme committees (SPC). Particular attention is given to absentee students and students in risk of dropout.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The feedback provided to students by lecturers is in good standing – the numbers of students are not high in the study program and the students report on close relationships with teachers. There are good processes in place for monitoring the students' progress in their learning, in particular in regard to the dropout prevention.

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

(1) Factual situation
Data for monitoring the career of the graduates are collected in a number of ways. Official statistical data on graduates employed in Lithuania are provided by the Government Strategic Analysis Centre. Data is also collected through alumni and employers surveys. About 75% of the study programme graduates were employed within 6 months of graduations (SER, p. 31).

Students and university staff indicated that majority of the students in the program are active in the labour market during their study (they work and study at the same time). Some join the program with an intention to increase their qualification for the job position they already have.
In SER, the data of the survey with alumni is presented, it indicates that majority of recent graduates evaluated the study program well and very well.

Alumni and social partners in the discussion with the evaluation panel were content with the competencies of graduates and students. Knowledge of how to work with data, good understanding of social policy, and ability to find and implement decisions were mentioned as the strengths of the students and graduates of the sociology programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The employability of the graduates is evidenced to be high. The Faculty does not have a very wide, but apparently sufficient network of social partners (given that the number of students in the programme is not very high). The competence, skills and work attitudes of graduates corresponds fairly well to the expectations of the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has extensive and comprehensive policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. The Board of Academic Ethics ensures the adherence to the Code of Ethics. Any member of the University's community has a right to submit a report on the fact of academic violation. The university has an electronic system to access the Board of Academic Ethics.

Students are informed about the meaning of academic integrity on several levels and occasions throughout their study – (1) when signing the learning agreement they also sign the declaration of academic integrity; (2) the assessments performed in the University are regulated by the Guidelines for the Organisation and Performance of the Assessment of Study Modules; and (3) the Guidelines for the Detection of Plagiarism in the Students' Written Works regulate the procedures for the co-occurrence inspection and plagiarism detection.

The University assures tolerance and non-discrimination by implementing the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. All employees and students can submit complaints regarding harassments, discrimination, and violation of equal opportunities. The complaints are investigated, analysed and the decisions are taken by the University's Equality committee. In the last three years, no students of the sociology study field have been penalized with reprimands for academic dishonesty.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are in place, but rarely used as there were no reported cases of violations in 2017–2019. The document aimed to prevent plagiarism provides a clear definition and examples of plagiarism, as well as lists recommendations for students and lecturers in order to prevent cases of such violations of academic integrity.

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
There are a number of channels for students and employees to submit appeals and complaints regarding the study process. Student Information and Service Centre deals with complaints regarding the violation of students' rights. Complaints or appeals regarding the study process can be submitted to the Faculty's Study Centre, voiced in student surveys or discussed during the student focus groups that are organised regularly. The alleged cases of violations of equal opportunities can be submitted anonymously in the electronic system and are considered by the Document Management and Administration Office. Cases related to alleged corruption actions can be reported to the Legal Services Corruption Risk Management Specialist or directly to the law enforcement entity. Complaints regarding the violations of academic integrity can be submitted to the Board of Academic Ethics.

During the evaluation period there were no cases of grievances related to the evaluated programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has an electronic system for students and employees to report cases of violation of equal opportunities. Cases can also be submitted by email. Complaints are considered confidential and cannot be disclosed to the persons who are not related to the alleged violation or its examination.

The number of channels to submit appeals and complaints is somewhat daunting, a one-window approach to submitting a complaint or appeal could be considered.

There is a clear procedure for receiving a feedback from students – every semester a focus group with students is organized to discuss the study quality and issues that might have come up. In the meeting with the expert panel, students confirmed this practice and maintained that the feedback is being heard.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Teaching methods and learning processes ensure the educational outcomes are achieved, there is a good range of approaches across the various compulsory modules which ensures will achieve complementary skills and knowledge.
2. Wide and comprehensive provisions in the area of non-discrimination and equality policies. Extensive and wide-ranging policies to ensure academic integrity.
3. Good sensibility to the needs of students from socially vulnerable groups. Initiative by the University to increase the visibility of students with special needs and educate the community about various disabilities from is praiseworthy.
4. The employability of the graduates is evidenced to be high. The competence, skills and work attitudes of graduates corresponds fairly well to the expectations of the labour market.
5. Close students-teachers relationships allow students to receive continuous feedback and support in their study process. There is a regular procedure for students to voice their feedback on the study progress, which is being heard and acknowledged.

(2) Weaknesses:
N/A

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

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

(1) Factual situation
The Self-evaluation report lists all the research interests, teaching commitments and number of years of teaching experience (ranging from 12 to 42 years) of all the core staff who contribute to the MA programme. The staff group are especially strong in the areas of

comparative social policy, research methods, demography and environmental policy. The SER also provides indicative publications as evidence that staff are accomplished as researchers and active in disseminating their work in publications and at conferences. As might be expected some staff are stronger in this than others (see section on "Link between science and teaching" above). Nevertheless, all staff engage in research led teaching as would be appropriate for master's level programmes.

The research focus of the pedagogy is facilitated by the very low SSR - a teacher student ratio of is 1-2. Modules are team taught and this ensures that staff have the potential to take advantage of sabbaticals or exchange programmes, although this is rarely used. This also means that staff are able to share ideas, innovations and junior colleagues can learn from those with more experience, but also introduce fresh approaches. Such exchanges seemed to be more within modules than across the programmes.

Language skills are variable – KTU provides training, but currently the SER indicates that 70% of teaching staff have English proficiency to B1 level. Other languages are also spoken which enables international exchanges.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The panel concurred that there is an experienced and long-established teaching staff who are able to deliver research led teaching. There is a high level of expertise, knowledge and competency in the areas of social welfare and environmental policy and politics. Meetings with students demonstrated how they benefited from this expertise. The learning outcomes to produce graduates with strong research methods skills and knowledge of welfare and environmental policies are readily achieved by this experienced staff group. There could be scope for greater staff engagement with innovation and injection of contemporary concerns around gender, sexuality, race, difference, diversity. If there was more communication between module leaders these issues could transcend the programme. Teaching staff seemed to focus on their own modules.

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

(1) Factual situation
There is a workload model that requires all full-time teaching staff work 1520 hours per annum (excluding vacations). The aim is to ensure that all staff are able to dedicate one third of their time to research. During the evaluation period 50% or teachers who are module coordinators teachers participated in teaching and/or training visits. Visits were to a wide variety of countries such as Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Poland. In addition, the teaching group benefited from scholars who visited from the USA, India, Spain, Finland, Poland and others. The SER reports that between 7-10 teachers contribute to the programme each year giving the students and staff a rich variety of international contributors.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The evaluation panel found that the scope for mobility and exchange had great potential and while some colleagues had taken advantage of travel – this could be expanded to be more inclusive of the wider staff group. The active involvement of visiting scholars who contribute to the MA programme is to be commended.

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

(1) Factual situation

KTU has a centre dedicated to professional development and training for teachers. Namely the EDU-Lab Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching which supports staff through training and development of innovative teaching methods. A small number of staff are reported to have enrolled on these training programmes. However, between 2017 and 2020 some teachers also participated a variety of national and international courses and workshops in inter alia Denmark, Sweden, Italy. They also attend and present their work at international conferences. These are funding from a variety of sources, e.g. the Research Council for Lithuania, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and KTU.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The evaluation panel found evidence that teaching staff are embedded in international networks which is facilitated by both the nature of the research areas of social policies and especially comparative analysis, and the inherently global topic of environmental policy which is a major substantive focus of the teaching staff's research and pedagogic focus. Visitors to KTU had also increased in number and their involvement in programmes is to be credited. Improving English language could help on this trajectory and the signs are that the younger staff cohorts may see this happen.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A staff group who have a depth of knowledge of social welfare enriched with the expertise in environmental risk and sustainability.
2. Teaching staff are strong in a diversity of traditional and contemporary research methods and comparative analysis.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Procedures to support the implementation of staff research sabbaticals are not implemented and could be strengthened to enable take-up of these opportunities.
2. There is not enough training on issues of diversity, difference, contemporary and post-colonial social theories as well as digital/social media to ensure all the staff group have levels of understanding and awareness of these issues.
3. Limited collaboration between staff group as evidenced by the teachers apparent lack of knowledge of the full range of modules and limited articulation of the programme's cross cutting themes.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURSES

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

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

(1) Factual situation
The programme is using the resources of the university and the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The programme has at its disposal a total of 114 classrooms and lecture halls, ranging from 13 to 60 seats, 4 computer classrooms with working capacity for a total of 81 students. On the basis of the Self-evaluation report it seems that only one room gives the possibility to record the lectures and perform virtual lectures.

The library resources are substantial. The central library is located very close to the teaching premises and provides a significant number of spaces for students and academics. It also provides spaces for people with disabilities.

Students and staff are provided with significant IT infrastructure. Importantly, the faculty hosts Lithuanian Data Archive for Humanities and Social Sciences, which is major virtual digital infrastructure for social research with more than 300 data sets. In addition to this, the faculty provides sufficient software licences such as Office 365, but also SPSS and MaxQDA.

The university also provides significant leisure facilities for students and staff. Importantly, the premises and services have been adapted for use by the people with reduced mobility, visual impairment, hearing disability and mental disability. However, so far this equipment has only been used for one student with hearing disability, so the usefulness of these adaptations is yet to be tested.

The interviews with internal stakeholders confirmed the situation as presented in the self-evaluation report. With respect to diverse resources it looks as if there is not really one specific shortage which needed to be tackled urgently. Some teaching staff said that they miss International Social Survey Data and specific professional software. Office space is seemingly very well given. Especially, existing service by the IT department in the course of the COVID-19 pandemics was positively emphasised.

The equipment of the library and library access, including access to electronic sources, is seemingly working very well.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is convinced that the physical, informational and financial resources are at a sufficient level to ensure an effective learning process.

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

(1) Factual situation

The faculty has in place a protocol for both annual and emergency upgrading of the equipment. The first is conducted through annual submission by the Study programme committee of the need for the renewal of resources for the study process. Submission is made to the Dean. In case of urgent need during the academic year, the teaching staff informs the head of the study programme committee and the Dean's office. Last such example was software for online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemics. Additionally, there is annual questionnaires with staff and students, as well as the informal round tables, to map out the needs for infrastructural upgrade.

This system mainly pertains deals with teaching and not with research, the field studies. However, the equipment to an important extent overlaps.

Furthermore, we can add that the faculty demonstrated the ability to respond to relevant trends in HEI also in terms of infrastructure, as evidenced by the current considerations on installing recording facilities in all classrooms. Currently, this equipment is available only in one classroom.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is convinced that the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out field research is of sufficient quality.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The faculty has a system in place to respond to both longer-term needs for infrastructural development, as well as emergency situations.

(2) Weaknesses:

N/A

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The self-evaluation report provides a very clear description of the internal quality assurance system of the study programme. The process and the responsibilities are clearly outlined. Furthermore, the internal quality assurance system is designed with a view to the key EU documents on higher education, and takes into account the university's vision, mission, values, strategic objectives and the strategic plan.

The mechanisms that are included in the university's internal quality assurance system provide both regular and episodic monitoring and assessment, and provide quality loop so that the contents can feed into improvement of the study programme. This allows both continuous improvements of the study programme, as well as responses to specific unforeseen events such as the recent Covid-19 epidemics or other relevant changes in the environment. The mechanisms are developed on different levels: university, faculty and programme, with clearly described responsibilities. The main body in charge of ensuring quality assurance and implementation of the study programme is the Study Programme Committee. It includes members of teaching staff, employers and students, ensuring voices of stakeholders in the process of quality assurance.

Formally, the internal quality assurance system is described in the Quality Assurance Manual. The quality system is in line with Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Feedback is systematically collected from students, teachers, alumni and stakeholders through surveys, round table discussions and meetings.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is of the opinion that the internal quality assurance system is well developed and in line with European standards in higher education. On the whole the systems are implemented effectively. However, the engagement of external stakeholders (employers) seems relatively weak and is limited to a relatively small number of organisations.

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

(1) Factual situation
The Self-evaluation report outlines the ways of engagement with the stakeholders. The description is primarily focused on the students and stakeholders. It is not completely clear what stakeholders the report is referring to, which the expert panel sees as an indication of insufficient engagement with all relevant stakeholders, which are very different in nature.

The university and faculty claim in the interview with the expert panel that stakeholders are always considered on several levels and they communicate with them on several levels and through different bodies. They also contribute with suggestions of research topics. As per description in the self-evaluation report, the opinion of the stakeholders is monitored by regular quantitative and qualitative surveys. According to this description, students, alumni, teachers and employers are periodically asked to evaluate study subjects, study programmes and other aspects of academic life. The description of the survey itself is quite detailed in self-evaluation report. However, the report does not provide us with the description of the results of these surveys. Also, it does not provide us with results of the qualitative data collection. Hence, it is not clear on what empirical evidence the changes of study programme, which were quite substantial in 2018 and 2019, were based.

Feedback from stakeholders is systematically collected and analysed through several channels including surveys, round table discussions and regular meetings. However, the expert panel did not come across evidence on how regular and representative these events are, or how substantial is their contribution to changes in study programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The Expert panel is of the opinion that the system of the university is well established and operationalised. The interviews revealed relatively strong formal involvement of employers in this process, but we did not find evidence of their strong commitment.

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 website provides information on programmes, admission requirements, the tuition fee, learning outcomes, contents of the study programmes etc. The information is informative and easily accessible. All necessary information for prospective national and international students is easily accessible in Lithuanian. The English version of the programme site does not provide all relevant information.

The university has a well-developed and clear system of channels of internal information about the programme. These channels include e-mail communication, academic information system, document management system, Office 365 environment, Moodle, website, Newsletter and Share-point. External communication is, however, relatively underdeveloped.

The Self-evaluation report does not include data on the basis of which the expert panel could get conclusions on the feedback by any of the stakeholder groups. This is a major obstacle for the panel to make an informed opinion on how feedback is fed into improvement of the study programme. The interviews of the expert panel revealed some cases when the study programme was improved upon recommendations of the students.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
The expert panel is of the opinion that the system for the evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes meet the basic criteria. However, there is scope for significant improvement. The most important would come from a broader spectrum and greater involvement of external stakeholders, especially employers, both passively (surveys and focus groups) as well as participation in the process of internal quality assurance. The faculty should systematically and significantly build engagement of external stakeholders. Furthermore, we also suggest substantially improving the English version of the website.

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

(1) Factual situation

The information in the Self-evaluation report on the students' feedback is very scarce. The average evaluation is relatively high (Likert scale 1-5), however, there is no more detailed information with regards of the categories of the student survey.

There is, however, the information on students' comments on the strengths of the programme: the combination of practice and theory; possibility to have systematic consultations with teachers; the effective feedback about the assignments (what were the mistakes, what were the correct answers, etc.); interesting tasks and assignments. The weaknesses of the programme were: too low variety in assignments, the underperformance of the information system, and problems with administrators.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis
Procedures to collect and analyse student feedback is in place. However, the self-evaluation report does not allow us to make any significant conclusion on their satisfaction.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. The University has a well-developed and systematic approach to quality assurance is defined by the University. This allows comparisons and exchange of experience between different disciplines.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. The pool of external stakeholders and employers presented in the Self evaluation report is small.
2. The faculty does not employ focus groups, which is a more suitable technique for quality assurance data collection when dealing with small numbers of students.

.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

If, according to the expert panel, there are no such exceptional characteristics demonstrated by the HEI in this particular study field, this section should be skipped / left empty.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	
Links between science (art) and studies	The expert panel recommends that faculty takes appropriate steps for more critical approach to research and aim at increasing the high-level international publications is relatively limited.
Student admission and support	The expert panel recommends that the faculty analyses the reasons for relatively low take up of the internationalization opportunities, which seems rather limited for both outgoing and incoming students, and takes appropriate steps to increase internationalisation. To seek that the number of state funded places for the sociology field at the Kaunas University of Technology is increased to enable more students to benefit from the excellent second cycle programme on offer.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	The expert panel recommends that the procedures for submitting appeals and complaints are simplified using one-window approach.
Teaching staff	The expert panel recommends that the faculty takes appropriate steps to improve the possibility for staff research sabbaticals. The expert panel recommends that the faculty increases training on issues of diversity, difference, contemporary and post-colonial social theories as well as digital/social media to ensure all the staff group have levels of understanding and awareness of these issues.
Learning facilities and resources	
Study quality management and public information	The expert panel recommends that the faculty attempts to engage a more diverse group of external stakeholders (employers) and develop mechanisms to motivate them for active participation. The expert panel recommends that the faculty employs focus groups, which is a much better technique for the purpose of quality

	assurance data collection in case of very small groups of students, than student surveys.

*If the study field is going to be given negative evaluation (non-accreditation) instead of RECOMMENDATIONS main **arguments for negative evaluation** (non-accreditation) must be provided together with a **list of "must do" actions** in order to assure that students admitted before study field's non-accreditation will gain knowledge and skills at least on minimum level.

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *of Sociology* **at KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY:**

The expert panel evaluated the study programme in the field of Sociology, the second cycle study programme "Social Welfare and Policy". The programme is provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The overall impression is good. The evaluation panel were impressed by the diversity of teaching methods and forms of assessments, which they judged to be highly appropriate to ensure the learning outcomes for the MA programme could be achieved. In particular the students excel in their knowledge of comparative social policy and understanding of issues relating to environmental policies and the challenges of sustainability. Importantly, the aims and outcomes of the study programme conform to the needs of the society and the labour market and the long-term strategic development of the Lithuanian society and even beyond its borders. The study program has a clear and precise focus, and there is evidence that graduates gain sound knowledge and expertise, which is appreciated by employers. There is a strong emphasis on quantitative methods research skills and the use of databases. Students engage with applied research through internships and projects. The programme has guest professors from well-established research-intensive universities. Relationships between students and teacher seems to be good and there is a feeling of community. The department enjoys strong infrastructure and provides support programmes for the students. The faculty has a system in place to respond to both longer-term needs for infrastructural development, as well as emergency situations. Importantly, the university has a well-developed and systematic approach to quality assurance. This allows comparisons and exchange of experience between different disciplines.

There are also few areas where improvements can be made. The faculty could take appropriate steps for more critical approach to research and aim at increasing the number of high-level international publications , which is at this point somewhat limited. In relation to this, the faculty could take appropriate steps to improve the possibility for staff research sabbaticals. With respect to student admission and support, one can observe very low number of students enrolling in the programme. The faculty could make appropriate steps to increasing their numbers. Furthermore, the faculty should employ focus groups among students, which is a much better technique for the purpose of quality assurance data collection in case of very small groups of students, than student surveys. The faculty could also analyse the reasons for relatively low take up of the internationalization opportunities, which seems rather limited for both outgoing and incoming students, and takes appropriate steps to increase internationalisation. Also beneficial to the students and staff would be to provide training on issues of diversity, difference, contemporary and post-colonial social theories as well as digital/social media to ensure all the staff group have levels of understanding and awareness of these issues. It would be very important to attempt to engage a more diverse group of external stakeholders (employers) and develop mechanisms to motivate them for active participation.

Expert panel signatures:

1. **Prof. dr. Dieter Bögenhold (panel chairperson), member of academic community;**

2. **Prof. Borut Roncevič , member of academic community;**

3. **Prof. Sarah Joan Nettleton, member of academic community;**

4. **Associate Professor Eglė Rindzevičiūtė , member of academic community;**

5. **Dr. Vita Kontvainė, representative of social partners;**

6. **Ms Jurgita Novosiolova, students' representative.**