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STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**LIETUVOS EDUKOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETO
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the outcomes of the institutional evaluation of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (the University) that has been performed by the review team (team) according to the SKVC methodology (methodology).
2. The visit took place between 3rd and 5th of October 2017. The team had a training one day earlier when SKVC, representatives from Ministry of Science and Education and MOSTA presented evaluation methodology, specifics of national context and evaluation findings regarding the learning resources. The team held an internal meeting also a day after the visit with the aim to discuss evaluation findings according to the methodology and to decide upon the judgment of each evaluated area. The team consisted of six members: Prof. Bastian Baumann as a chair of the team, Prof. Eve Eisenschmidt, Prof. Daire Keogh, Saulius Jurkevičius and Uršulė Sadauskaitė as members of the team and Katja Žibert Kamšek as a review secretary. The team was accompanied by the SKVC coordinator, Kornelija Bukantaitė, throughout the site visit.
3. The University provided to the team the Self-assessment report (SAR) including all the annexes prior to the visit. It also provided all additional documents¹ the team asked for before and during the site visit. The SAR had addressed all the areas that were expected according to the methodology. The team reviewed SAR also from the perspective of its analytical and reflective character. It identified that SAR was largely narrative, but that it contained short analytical elements (e.g. SWOT analysis, reflective summary) at the end of each reviewed areas. The panel also noted that the statements in the text should have been more meaningfully supported by the presented data.

¹Additional documentation asked to be provided by the University prior to the review: Information regarding research outputs shown separately for researchers and teachers, Strategy for Academic Quality Assurance for 2013-2020, University Standard on Management of the Study and Learning Process, The Descriptions of Procedure for study programme renewal and quality assurance at LEU, Regulations of SPC at LEU, the standard “Study and Learning Activities”. Additional documents asked to be provided by the University during the review: Current Annual Action Plan, numbers of students that entered University 2017 (state financed and non-financed), Risk Management Plan, Strategic Plan Implementation, Documents of Audit (2015).

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

4. Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences was established in 1935 in Klaipėda as the National Pedagogical Institute. Later it was moved to Panevėžys due to occupation during WW2 and after that to Vilnius, where it was renamed into Vilnius Pedagogical Institute. The State's Supreme Council granted it the status of the University in 1992. It obtained the status of a public University and the name, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, by the state's Seimas that approved its Statute in 2011.
5. The University mission, as outlined in SAR, is "to prepare education professionals, scholars and specialist of applied research activities of highest qualifications and to educate members of the society in accordance with contemporary philosophy of education, the most recent scientific knowledge and principles of sustainable development". However, team noted that the mission is defined differently at the University's website "Society's education, which is based on modern education philosophy and the newest scientific knowledge. The University is striving to solidify its exceptional place in Lithuanian and European Union higher education field as a University of Educational nature in the areas of studies, research and practice."
6. Currently, the University consists of five faculties. Namely, the Faculty of Education in Humanities, Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social Education, Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Sports and Health Education and so it covered in 2016 the following study areas: social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, biomedical sciences and arts. On October the 1st, 2016, 2,925 students enrolled into the first cycle, 532 in the second, 39 in the third cycle and 54 into non-degree studies. During the same study year the University employed 297 teachers in full time positions (271,49 FTE), out of which 211 hold scientific degree and out of which 137 represent associate and full professors. Regarding the research staff, the University employed in 2016 56 scientific researchers in full time positions (29,85 FTE), out of which 52 hold a scientific degree and out of which 38 are either associate or full professors (Table 1.15, SAR).
7. The Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences is the largest provider of teacher training in the state and has in this field also the longest tradition. It is respected due to its focus on practical training that is organized within the study process. Also, the University is respected for the commitment of its teaching staff and the sense of community which they maintain with their students. Moreover, it has successfully driven national educational policies and greatly advanced inclusive education through various approaches and initiatives on different levels. The University has a strong tradition for cooperating with external partners.
8. In the course of the institutional evaluation the team acknowledged that the University has been adversely affected by the developments on the national level. In particular, in recent years, it has experienced a high degree of uncertainty due to government policy regarding institutional mergers. For instance, the University has been faced with chronic uncertainty, on account of the decision that teacher training will be concentrated within 3 higher education providers, a reduction from the current provision in 17 institutions. There was a perception that the University had received insufficient time to evaluate the menu of amalgamation options and to make the necessary preparations for such radical change. The

University's financial outlook has suffered greatly, too, by the government's decision to reduce funded student numbers. This situation was further compounded by the challenges of attracting students to prepare for the teaching profession which currently suffers from low morale. Moreover, the limited earning potential of the profession makes it an increasingly unattractive career option.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

9. The review team evaluated the strategic management of the University with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the strategic plan's fitness for purpose, publicity, guarantees for its implementation and management effectiveness.

10. First it took into account the **compliance of the strategic plan with the University mission, as well as national and European strategic documents.**

The University's mission, as defined in the SAR, is "to prepare education professionals, scholars and specialist of applied research activities with highest qualifications and to educate members of the society in accordance with contemporary philosophy of education, the most recent scientific knowledge and principles of sustainable development". The team also noted in the SAR two versions of the University vision. First one aims for the university to become "a modern, dynamic, competitive and innovative university fostering Lithuanian teacher training traditions and ensuring that the changing needs of the state and the society are met in the area of education and training." The second one states that „The vision of LEU is to become the most important university of educational profile in Lithuania“. The current Strategic plan 2012-2020 of the University was prepared in 2012. At that time, it was developed basing on the analysis of the internal and external situations prior to 2012 and aligned with the University mission, as well as with national strategic and European policies and priorities in the field of education and research (SAR in Annex 1 Table 1.2).

11. However, the **external situation has drastically changed** in the last few years and especially in the last year. The University experienced a dramatic demographic decline of students, for almost 25% (SAR). As another example, in 2016 University students enrolled into 38 study programmes of first cycle, while in 2017 only to 8 programmes. The latter happened primarily as State's financing for subject teacher training in 2017 has been withdrawn. Moreover, the University faced a decline of the State funded places for teacher training during the last several years, which otherwise represents an important part of University funding. The state projections are that student enrolment rate will continue to decline. Due to declining enrolment trends in the last few years, the University also had to decrease the number of teaching staff. As State funding and tuition fees represent the major source of income (SAR), the decline of both puts the University at financial risk, what the University mentioned also in SAR.

12. Such circumstances put the University survival at risk. Moreover, in 2017, the government took the decision within the Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan to concentrate research in educational sciences and therefore to radically reduce the number of teacher training providers from 17 higher education institutions to 3. The team read in SAR that the University proposed to the parliament a merger with Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) and heard during the interviews that it was still waiting for the final decision. The University stressed that the latest developments on the national level create a substantial degree of uncertainty for the University to plan its activities.

13. Nevertheless, the team observed in the SAR and during interviews that the radically changed external situation was not adequately addressed in strategic planning documents of the University. Put bluntly, the Strategic plan 2012 – 2020 has not been appropriately amended to address the current crisis. Although the strategic plan is still aligned with national and European strategic documents (EHEA, ERA principles), it does not address critical external and internal circumstances of University that put its survivor at risk. For that reason, the team find that the strategic plan is not valid, as it cannot adequately support the University to pursue its mission.
14. **In such critical circumstances the team would have expected that a risk management exercise would have been conducted by the University management.** Although the team heard the discussion about various merger scenarios that took place, according to the SAR and interviews, **the team has not identified any systematic or formal approach to assess a merger, developing comparative scenarios or any other kind of risk** in order to act proactively. This, in view of the team, represents a major shortcoming.
15. The team evaluated also the application of **the existing, unrevised, strategic plan.** It identified that the University attempted and made some reforms in the governance system by aiming to improve a system of strategic planning, by trying to improve the management of financial, material and human resources. **Despite all these efforts and changes implemented, the team was not able to identify a sufficiently robust strategic approach in planning, and managing financial, human, and material resources.** Also, improved strategic planning and improved management of financial, human and material resources, represent a major part of the first area out of four areas outlined in strategic plan. Again, the University has changed and introduced regulations and implement some actions in this area. Nevertheless, as the team has not identified sufficiently robust strategic approach in planning and management of resources, the team does not have a confidence that this could be achieved by the 2020. **For this reason, the team concluded that the targets identified in the Strategic plan 2012-2020 were too ambitious** and the Management had made little effort to revise them in the context of the current crisis.
16. In regards to the **reasonableness and comprehensiveness** of quantitative and qualitative **indicators**, the team analysed that qualitative indicators to a large extent lacked the clarity, not being precise enough. For example, indicators: *Qualification of teaching staff*, *Internationality of scientific research*, *Impact of international mobility on studies* do not adequately enable the community to understand how exactly it is expected to achieve certain strategic goals nor how to monitor its implementation efficiently. The lack of clarity for monitoring purposes could be identified also among the indicators of the following strategic measures (SAR, Annex 5): A.1.1.2, A.1.3.4, A.2.1.1, B.2.1.5, B.2.4.1, B.2.4.4, C.1.1.4, D.3.1.5.
17. With the aim to assist **monitoring of the implementation of Strategic plan 2012-2020**, the University made an annual programme of implementation, according to the SAR. It has also established the Strategic Planning Committee, where representatives of the leadership, heads of subdivisions, students and external stakeholders are continuously managing and monitoring its implementation. In addition, the University formed four working groups under Strategic Planning Committee, each covering four areas of strategic plan (A, B, C and D). These groups are responsible for the preparation of tasks for specific area and for their

monitoring. However, the team was surprised to learn, during the visit, that the Strategic development office, mentioned in the SAR, has been abolished. The task of this office, according to the SAR, was to design the annual programme of implementation, involving internal and external stakeholders, evaluating their recommendations and to report on its implementation. These activities are currently managed by one official that is employed at the University on a part-time basis. Given that strategic planning and its monitoring represent pivotal strategic processes at the University and that these processes are still facing challenges, it would be expected that the University provided sound support to planning and monitoring. However, this was not the case. Furthermore, although the monitoring process is elaborated within the strategic plan, the team found, based on the interviews, that these processes and respective responsibilities were in practice rather unclear.

18. The team also observed that the management structure of the University would function more efficiently if the number of these committees decreased. The developed structures that exist at the moment are, according to the team opinion, unnecessarily bureaucratic.
19. Stakeholders are involved in the process of managing and monitoring the implementation of University's strategy. For that reason they have regular **access to relevant information**. Furthermore, the University elaborated in the SAR, that it provides this information also on the website² and the intranet in order to reach a wider public. The website indeed provided information about strategic documents. Nevertheless, only the summary of self-assessment report for 2012 is publicly available. The Website also mentioned that there exists monitoring report 2012 and 2013 available though only via the intranet. However, it did not mention any reference to other assessment or monitoring reports.
20. In the course of evaluation, the team has also reviewed **the effectiveness of the University management**. It has noted that University made efforts and developed its quality management system further by taking into account ESG, ISO 9001:2008 and EFQM. All three approaches are incorporated into the Quality manual that represents the main quality document for the University. The team assumes that the academic community (staff and students) and external stakeholders might face difficulties understanding the quality management system by reading Quality Manual, as it is complex document written in a detailed approach. SAR mentioned it is vital for stakeholders to clearly understand their roles in quality management. Hence, it would be expected that the document would be simplified or accompanied by other documents for specific stakeholders.
21. As a response to the previous evaluation recommendation the University adopted the Strategy for Academic Quality Assurance for 2013-2020. The team noticed that, according to the University's strategic plan (SAR, p. 211), the institutionalisation of academic quality assurance was planned to be in place by 2013. However, the team read in The Executive Summary of Rector's Report for 2016 (SAR, p. 321) that the internal quality system has been implemented only in the first half of 2016. The latter has been confirmed also during the interviews.

² https://leu.lt/lt/apie_universiteta/strateginis-planavimas-ir-valdymas.html

22. Within the development of internal quality assurance, the University has given responsibility for monitoring the study programme quality to Study programme committees (SPC) and the responsibility for monitoring the study programme quality assurance to heads of departments. It has also established internal quality audits that operate across the whole University, which the University considers to be of utmost importance.
23. The team acknowledged as a good practice the contribution of internal quality audits of SPC and research committee activities in improving the quality of study programmes and research activities. This is especially the case, as their members regularly analyse students' feedback and as the SPCs rely on a strong cooperation of students and stakeholders. The team heard during the visit that teachers "get more precise and immediate feedback" regarding study programme quality. The major role of these audits as seen by the University is to ensure the compliance of SPC's activities with the quality policy for the SPC. The team also identified that these audits are taking place across the entire University. As an evidence of its functioning, the University has strengthened the responsibilities of programme supervisors (SAR). The team found that mentioned internal audits substantially contributed to the **evaluation of University's study programmes**.
24. Furthermore, the review team recognised as a **good practice the pivotal role of Academic Quality Office – AQO** (established after 2012) in supporting quality development at the University. According to the SAR, the Office represents a central point for data collection and analysis. It conducts internal quality audits, assures opportunities to discuss results of monitoring activities and suggests improvements. It organises trainings for enhancing various skills for people responsible for quality and, among other activities, provides consultations for self-assessment groups. Similarly, AQO conducts annual analysis of recommendations from all external evaluations of education and research. As evidence, the table 1.29 in Annex 1 of the SAR provides reflective, concise and therefore very useful insight into the major recommendations obtained each year together with actions taken to address them.
25. However, overall the team perceived that quality management system could be significantly optimised and developed further. In particular, the team noticed the absence of systematic follow up activities as part of a quality cycle. For example, interviewees were not clear whose responsibility it is to decide what action to take after analysing results of student questionnaires, neither whose responsibility it is to monitor whether the planned improvements took place. The team also noticed that actions taken are most of the time decided upon the outcomes of the satisfaction questionnaires of various stakeholders and little upon the indicators and the analysis. It would be expected that the University created concrete indicators, collected respective data and analysed them in order to obtain insight into the trends that are then followed up and meaningfully used to support strategic management of University. However, this was not the case. Likewise, the team believed that reducing the number of structures (each study programme corresponds with separate SPC) and consequently stages within quality processes would have contributed to management effectiveness.
26. The team also observed that some elements described in the quality management system of the University have not been implemented in practice. Specifically, the University has not conducted annual evaluations of its quality management system. In addition, as the recommendation of the previous review suggested developing coherent tools for

implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan it would be anticipated that the University would develop concrete indicators which would help steer pivotal steps in strategy's implementation and monitoring. However, such indicators have not been identified. Whilst the existence of a comprehensive, albeit overly complex, Quality Manual is positive, the effects of not implementing it cause confusion and the lack of a systematic approach. Therefore, the team noted that not a full quality assurance system is in place, but rather only elements of it.

27. The team also noted that the practices of the University focussed upon compliance, rather than the development of a proactive quality culture. The SAR claimed that the University has shifted the paradigm of the quality system from the point where it uses it as a control mechanism into a culture that aims to prevent the problems. The latter paradigm was observed also during the site visit, as the University's quality culture has been primarily focused on monitoring the compliance with quality regulations. Hence, the team believes that there exists substantial room for embedding a quality culture that facilitates quality enhancement and further stimulates the use of reflective and analytical skills. Substantial room for improvement exists also in the area of identifying interesting, useful practice within departments of the University. Disseminating these across University would greatly contribute to strengthening of the University's quality culture.
28. Last, but not least, in the area of quality assurance mechanisms, the University has since the last institutional review introduced surveys for assessing teachers' satisfaction with their work, surveys for evaluating feedback from students and external stakeholders, as well as adopted common University policy for assessment of student achievements.
29. The team took into account also the compliance of qualifications of the study programmes conducted by the University. As elaborated in paragraph 54, these **qualifications** correspond **to the Framework for Qualifications** of the European Higher Education Area and European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
30. Furthermore, according to the methodology, the team evaluated also the **assurance of effective support for students**. The SAR mentioned that the University is providing academic as well as social support to students. Namely, students are regularly informed about various support opportunities and information regarding the studies during the introductory week at the beginning of each study year. Throughout the studies, teachers are providing students with consultations and are offering them additional teaching support if needed. Moreover, the University assures various types of support for disabled students (e.g. ramps, software for transforming text into speech, Braille printer). It also provides dormitories and for particular groups of students also various financial support – scholarships, fee waivers. The team found support for students effective. Moreover, students expressed satisfaction with it.
31. In regards to **organisational structures**, the University made vast **changes** at the central and department levels in the last several years, primarily due to decreased external funding. Particularly, with the aim to optimise administrative support for academic divisions, it developed the Research and Innovation Directorate and the Development and Communications Directorate (SAR, p. 14). However, the latter structure could not be found

in the SAR (Annex 7), where the latest structure of the University is presented. The University elaborated that it also established two new administrative divisions - Academic Quality Office and the Strategic Development Office. Again, the team learned during the interviews that the latter has been afterwards abolished. Otherwise, in the view of University, the optimisation improved the balance of the accountability according to the hierarchical position of working places, reduced costs and enabled staff to use the same methodological approach in services across University. During the evaluated period the University managed to merge several faculties, as well as established the Centre for Pre-University education and the kindergarten.

32. In general, from the team point of view, the **management structure** of University would function better if the number of committees was lower. For instance, currently there are several committees for monitoring the implementation of strategic plan and each study programme has appointed a separate study programme committee. Hence, there is a need to internally audit a greater number of SPC's activities. Therefore the team noted that current structures are rather increasing bureaucracy, as it is time consuming to e.g. organise, attend various meetings and prepare reports. The team found that for the same reason the **decision - making process** is spread across several bodies. The team, however, identified also a good practice: the high proportion of student and social partner inclusion in the SPC – each being represented by one third of committee members.
33. In regards to the **process management – decision taking effectiveness**, in 2013 the University formed again The University Council as a response to the recommendation from the previous evaluation and following legal requirements. According to the SAR, the University prepared “The Conception of Improvement of Management” which was aimed at improving efficiency of management processes and effectiveness of decision-making by increasing the responsibilities of heads of academic and administrative divisions for annual monitoring of the strategy implementation. Likewise, it was pointed out in the SAR that the connection between the management processes and internal quality assurance is well functioning, which from the University's perspective prevents unnecessary overlaps of responsibilities and thus ensures effectiveness in decision making. In that regard, it is important to mention also stakeholders' involvement, which is ensured through numerous quality policies. For example, students are represented at all levels – department, faculty and University. Overall, the team would expect in regard to the process management – decision taking effectiveness to observe a stronger culture where strategic day to day functioning of University would be present and supported by analyses and reflection. Based on the interview discussions the team has not noticed that there are systematic analyses and reflections periodically made in regards to strategic planning, human or financial resource management.
34. According to the SAR, the University manages **Human Resources** in line with the Strategic plan 2012-2020 and in line with the Functional Strategy for Human Resource Management 2012-2020. The review team welcomed that the University has conducted analyses, which evaluated whether there are overlaps of responsibilities of working places within administrative positions, as these facilitate management efficiency. During the reviewed period the University managed to increase the number of researches, which is in line with its strategic goal. However, the number of academic and administrative staff decreased intensively from 2012 due to decreased student enrolment rates. Otherwise, professional

development of academic staff is included in the system of attestation and the University has organised numerous trainings for academic as well as administrative staff to improve their professional skills.

35. The team observed, according to the SAR and discussions during the visit, that the University has made some progress in regards to human resource management. However, the team did not identify strategic approaches to managing future needs. For example, the team would have expected that the University assessed the risk of decreased number of teachers. It would also anticipate that the University would identify research and teaching staff competence profiles for future recruitments and establish a clear definition of what represents a research active teacher. But neither was present. Based on the interviews, it seemed that recruiting criteria at the University have not been changed in the course of the last ten years. Similarly, the team could not identify that strategic succession planning is undertaken.
36. Regarding **management of change**, the University has made some efforts within the evaluated period, primarily in the area of management and quality assurance. However, taking into account unfavourable external circumstances that have been present already for few years (elaborated in the paragraph 11), the University would be expected to establish a systematic **risk analysis** and hence a formal **risk management**. But, apart from discussing various scenarios regarding a merger process, as it was heard during the site visit, neither systematic analysis, nor formal risk management were made. In particular, risk management has not been found in the area of financial, human resources, study programme management. Nor was it identified in addressing the high students' dropout rate or tackling the public reputation of the University, which has been, supposedly due to governments' merger plans, severely affected, despite improving the public reputation was also one of the strategic actions of the University.
37. The University **uses its funds** according to the national legislation requirements. The SAR declares that the institution allocates its funds according to the **strategic priorities** and that it also monitors financial and performance indicators. The team was not convinced however, that the allocation of scarce funds was sufficiently directed towards the University's strategic aims. The team would have expected that, given the financial challenges facing the institution, funding allocated to faculties would have been linked to the achievement of Key Performance Indicators. But these were not apparent. Also, in similar situations it would be beneficial, if the University would conduct analyses in order to identify possible areas for optimisation of its costs (e.g. identification of possible outsourcing services). The team have not heard of any concrete cost optimisation plan based on an analysis.
38. The University **learning resources** have been evaluated in 2017 by MOSTA. According to the evaluation results, two indicators out of twenty-two did not reach the minimum requirement for a longer period of time. Both mentioned indicators were connected with the number of PhD students in relation to either enrolled students at the second cycle or the enrolled students, who completed a PhD degree in the state-funded study places. As the student number dropped significantly at the University in the last several years, it would be expected that the University would have made some analyses with the aim to optimise the use of premises and costs of their maintenance. The team did not find any indication that such analysis was conducted.

39. As far as it concerns the **publication of evaluation finding and decision**, the University has been publishing all the reports of external quality accreditations of study programmes³ and accreditation of University⁴ on its website from 2013 onwards. The team found these reports available accordingly. From 2012 on, the University has also been publishing information about study programmes using the same methodology across the whole University. In addition, the team acknowledged that students were satisfied with the availability of the general information.
40. In 2012 the University developed The **Code of Academic Ethics** of LEU. According to SAR, University's Ethics and Appeals Commission of LEU examined in 2016 two disputes between student and academic staff at two different faculties. One of them was investigated also by the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The SAR mentioned that this body issued a solution, but did not mention its result. Otherwise, the team was acquainted during the site visit that students had trust in academic appeal procedures.

In summary, the main improvements of the University's strategic management have been identified within the development of the quality assurance system, though it is not fully implemented. In particular, internal quality audits of SPC and research activities are functioning across the whole University and are primarily supporting the quality of the study programmes. In addition, the team identified a major role of the Academic Quality Office for data gathering and analysing, facilitating discussions of results and creating improvements, conducting audits, providing numerous trainings. The major shortcomings regarding strategic management are referring to the finding that University strategic plan does not reflect the challenging external environment and is therefore not valid, as it cannot support the University to pursue its mission. Also, the strategic plan is found to be too ambitious and lacking clarity and meaningfulness for monitoring the implementation, particularly in the area of qualitative indicators. Moreover, there exist no formal risk analysis nor risk management, even though it is inevitably necessary. Identified shortcomings represent major threat to the leading and managing of the University and therefore also to the quality of the education and research.

41. Judgment on the area: Strategic Management is given negative evaluation, because it does not meet the criteria of the methodology in respect of compliance of the validity and interoperability of the strategic plan components (8.1.2.), reasonableness and comprehensiveness of the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the strategic plan implementation (8.1.3) and management of change (8.2.5). The team does not have confidence that the current leadership and management have the capacity or resources to overcome identified shortcomings. Therefore, the team considers that the University requires enhanced leadership and management systems in order to navigate both the current crisis and the imminent merger.

³ http://leu.lt/lt/studijos/leu_stud_kokybe/leu_spvert_rezultatai.html

⁴ http://leu.lt/lt/apie_universiteta/apie_dokumentai/isorinis_institucinis_vertinimas.html

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

42. The review team evaluated academic studies and life-long learning in the University with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered compliance with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education and harmonisation with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.
43. The University, with its tradition of training the education specialists, managed to strengthen its **study profile** as the University of Educational Sciences within the evaluated period. In other words, the percentage of study programmes at the first cycle in the study field of social sciences out of all study programmes increased from 83,87% (2012) to 89,47% (2016). At the second cycle the percentage of study programmes that belong to social science increased from 54,55% (2012) to 61,53% (2016). Also, fig. 2.1 in the SAR shows that the study programmes at the first, second and third cycle of social sciences gradually increased (68,18% in 2012 to 77,27% in 2016) at the expense mainly of the study programmes from the field of humanities and technological sciences.
44. This is an evidence that the University's study programmes reflect the **University mission** mentioned in the SAR ("to train education specialist of highest qualification" and "specialists in applied research activities") and that the University is to a certain degree implementing its strategic objective ("to optimize the structure of studies and study programmes"). Likewise, the study programmes in educational sciences are in line with the Description of Group of Study Fields in Education prepared by the ministry.
45. In the reviewed period the University faced a significant decrease in student numbers. In addition, the decreasing enrolment rates of students affected the number of teachers, which reduced for almost 30% from 2012 until 2016.
46. Taking into account the context, as elaborated in paragraph 11, it is evident that the external circumstances push the University in an unpredictable situations. In such circumstances it would be foreseen that the University would found ways to embed a strategic approach in managing the study programmes in order to survive, assure sustainability. However, the team did not identify adequate strategic approach in managing the study programmes.
47. In the process of **alignment of the University's study programmes to the national strategies**, the University elaborated that it followed several documents: The State Long-term Development Strategy (until 2015), The National Education Strategy 2013-2022, The National Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"; The National Progress Programme for Lithuania for 2014 -2020, The National Sustainable Development Strategy (2009, amended). This suggests that study programmes address the national economic, social and cultural needs.
48. Furthermore, in order to **respond to the changing needs of society**, within the reviewed period the University has developed and has been offering for a while a study programme where students were studying two study subjects, as due to the decreasing numbers of pupils in schools in Lithuania, this profile of teachers has been greatly needed. This need is still relevant today. Although University is currently not conducting such a programme, the team

heard that it was trying to offer it in future. At the same time, there is a national shortage for teachers in certain areas (mainly mathematics, physics and chemistry). The University is currently not adequately responding to these needs, in parts also because of the government's decision not to fund study places in these disciplines.

49. According to the SAR (table 4.5), lifelong learning programmes are primarily focused on teacher's and social worker's and professional development. This indicates that studies, as well as life-long learning programmes are compliant with strategic documents and University's mission.
50. The University is offering a variety of **opportunities for lifelong learners**. For instance, formal education is available as full and as part-time study. The University offers distance studies (also via Moodle platform), as well as individual study paths and partial studies in form of separate study modules or study subjects. It also provides non-degree courses that enable students to obtain professional development. The University is participating in informal activities that involve school students, senior citizens, and other interested public within the wider community. Besides, it offers elective study subjects in the form of distance study, which has been designed and implemented together with several universities from abroad. The team welcomed that the University analysis showed an increased use of Moodle by students (from 34,7% to 67,3% in the period from 2012 – 2016).
51. In regards to the recognition of learning outcomes, the team heard that students found the system operating in a fair manner. They elaborated that all of the ECTS that students obtained within their mobility programmes have been recognised upon return. The team also acknowledged it as a good practice that the University developed The Methodology for Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences. In sum, the University is assuring sound conditions for life-long learning.
52. According to the SAR, **monitoring of employment and career of graduates** operates at three levels: University, faculty/department level and the level of Study Programme Committees. The University is supported in this process also by the State's virtual system CMIS – Career Management and Information System. The team identified that members of the Study Programme Committees have strong and regular contacts with professional bodies, as well as employers in order to identify their needs and make necessary adjustment to the study programmes. Based on the SAR, the overall employment indicator of University's graduates has increased within the period 2012-2016. The University elaborated that graduates of the 2nd cycle achieve best employment results among University's graduates. It also stated that graduates of the 1st and 2nd cycle after 6 and 12 months of graduation achieve better results on the labour market compared to the average results of graduates of higher education institutions in Lithuania. Compared to the average results of University's graduates in Vilnius County, 24% of them are employed at the working places that did not require higher education qualification, which is, according to the Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan, the lowest percentage among the mentioned universities.
53. As far as it concerns the **cooperation with institution's academic, social and business partners**, the University managed to organise cooperation agreements with 408 organisations during the assessed period. **The impact of cooperation on the University** has been acknowledged in strong cooperation of external partners in developing new, as well as

in renewing of existing study programmes. In particular, the University has designed 21 study programmes of the first cycle, 8 at the second and 1 non-degree study. Likewise, external stakeholders have been involved in the assessment of the final thesis, in the organisation of the teaching practice in Lithuania and in teaching practice and placements abroad. Furthermore, the University established its own kindergarten with the aim to provide innovative learning opportunities for its students. Cooperation with different domestic and foreign stakeholders stretches also to the membership of educational bodies, to the participation in public discussions, etc. External stakeholders have come primarily from general education institutions and NGOs, but also cultural, business organisations and Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions. The team perceived in-depth and continuous inclusion of external stakeholders in developing and renewing study programmes and in teaching training as a good practice.

54. Based on the evidence from the SAR, the University **integrated principles of European Higher Education Area and EU documents in its strategic documents**. According to the University, a major change occurred in the documents regarding internal quality assurance system, but also in others. The University showed in the table 2.2 that learning outcomes of the first and the second cycle are in line with descriptions of the First and Second Cycle Studies, but also with Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
55. Regarding **international mobility**, the University took efforts to provide opportunities for students for study mobility within those higher education institutions that have a similar study profiles. Otherwise, the biggest share of student mobility represents Erasmus+ programmes, followed by bilateral agreement between universities. Concretely, by the end of 2016 the University has established 127 bilateral Erasmus+ and 63 bilateral cooperation agreements. The number of outgoing students slightly vary and represents on average 6,45% of enrolled students, according to the SAR. Most often students choose to go abroad in order to conduct studies, practice or participate in cultural exchange.
56. The University has developed a valuable support for international students by providing a variety of study subjects in English language, by organising good conditions for teaching practice, organising summer camps of Lithuanian language and culture and by providing supportive environment for incoming students. These have been supported by the positive feedback of the international students collected by the University and even more by the increased number of incoming students, that is for 2.6 times higher compared to the year 2012. The University noted in the SAR that student mobility reinforced students' career skills as well as fostered the use of student centred learning at the institutional level. The team stressed that in order to assure proper study conditions, it is important to provide study programmes either in English language or to assure that students are well prepared to study in Lithuanian language. Also, while there is a tendency to attract international students in order to counterbalance the decreasing enrolment rates, it is necessary to pay attention to maintaining the academic standards.
57. Academic staff of the University, based on the SAR, more often attended research than study visits. Nevertheless, the University elaborated that international mobility greatly influenced outgoing teachers professionally and personally. Namely, the results of a University survey showed that 93% of them stated they incorporated in the education process new teaching methods. Also, 77% of respondents stated that they improved their social, linguistic and

cultural competences. Otherwise, there is a higher share of incoming teachers/researchers than outgoing ones. According to the view of the University, this increased domestic internationalisation. The impact on the education process, observed by the University, has been achieved through the provision of lectures by foreign teachers.

58. The team recognised the comprehensive support provided for students participating in mobility as a good practice. Otherwise, with the aim to strengthen the impact of international mobility of the teaching staff on the institution, it would be expected that the University assessed its impact more thoroughly.
59. The following paragraph refers to the **implementation of the studies** at the University. In 2016 the University employed 297 full time teachers, out of which 211 hold scientific degrees and out of which 137 represented associate and full professors. The University provides various forms of studies for its students (paragraph 50), and therefore creates opportunities that address different needs of life-long learners. It also assures individual learning plans for students at risk. The team identified that the study process at the University is substantially **student centred** and thus represents a good practice. Students, as well as alumni pointed out satisfaction with their studies to a great extent. In particular, they appreciated the practical training that has represented a significant part of their education process. Moreover, graduates valued that education at the University enabled them to develop sound communication and management competences that help them successfully operate in their classrooms. When entering the classroom after graduation, they felt to be competent teachers. Further on, the team heard that students valued their teachers as the most qualified experts in their field in the state, very committed to their teaching and greatly supportive and accessible.
60. The team also heard that the majority of the text books that students use have been written by their teachers. This represents an important contribution to the society at large and would therefore be beneficial if staff was rewarded for that. In this situation it would be supportive if the University established metrics, which would help them acknowledge their contribution.
61. The University facilitates their teaching staff to be research active through its policies. It also mentioned that they were aware teachers should be more active in that regard. The team noted that this as a consequence limits the transfer of research results into education process. In order to assure that teaching is well research based it would be expected that teachers are more research active. During the visit the team also heard that there were plans to separate research institutes from teaching. As this influences the way in which teaching is supported by research, it would be useful to pay special attention regarding maintaining a meaningful connection between the two processes.
62. The team acknowledged as a good practice also the sound conditions for use of technologies. University staff and student are more frequently using Moodle and they began to move into blended learning. It would be valuable if the University extended the use of technology with the aim to improve communication, e.g. to inform students regarding course requirements.
63. Supportive learning conditions are assured also by well-equipped laboratories for practical learning, availability of relevant databases and good facilities in the libraries. The team

visited these during the tour of the University. Last but not least, students also mentioned that the University offers them plenty of extracurricular activities that they greatly appreciate.

64. The **quality of the study process is assured** primarily by the Study Programme Committees, where students and external stakeholders are well represented (paragraph 23). The activities of the Study Programme Committees are audited regularly across the whole University by conducting internal quality audits. The majority of the feedback collected in regards to the quality of the study programmes is collected with the use of the student questionnaires and then analysed by the members of respective committees. The team heard that there are different practices in regards to how students of different study programmes were informed regarding the results of student questionnaires or matters regarding the organisation of the study process. It would be expected that the University assured in these circumstances the use of consistent approaches.
65. The University conducts **admission** of students based on two criteria: firstly, according to the results of national student assessment at the end of their secondary schools and secondly, according to institutional motivation tests. Students perceived the admission process as fair.
66. As far as student **progression** is concerned, the dropout rates of students are high, according to the SAR. It is higher among full time students of the first and the second cycle than part time students of the first cycle. Although the dropout rate has on average decreased between 2012 and 2016, it still remains high at the first cycle: 33,58% (in 2016). The dropout rates at some programmes have been as high as 50%, 60% or even more than 70%. According to the interviews, staff and students perceived that reasons for these are not connected with the study process or support provided by University, but rather with personal motivation of students. The team identified that the University has not taken any measures to address it. In these circumstances it would be anticipated that University assessed the risks and adequately managed them.
67. The team acknowledged that the University has provided for teaching staff various trainings with the aim to improve their **teaching competences**. According to the SAR, Academic Quality Office organised trainings, e.g. regarding methods of studies and assessment, promotion of internationalisation within studies, the use of the virtual learning environment, improving language skills, research competences, as well as for example improving the skills for enhancing inclusive education.
68. The team has identified that within the education area the University made efforts and managed to address to large extent recommendations **from external and internal evaluations**. The previous institutional evaluation recommended using the learning outcome concept more actively and consistently throughout the University. As a response, the University has provided numerous trainings to teachers and Study Programme Committee's members in regards to compatibility of the study programme objectives, learning outcomes and subject aims. It also established the procedure for the assessment of study achievements and amended the description of study programme's subjects with descriptions of aims, learning outcomes, study and assessment methods. Likewise, when the University obtained information that study programme profiles have not been sufficiently linked with the faculty strategy, the University policy for developing new study programmes was adopted accordingly.

69. In summary, the team identified sound satisfaction of students and graduates with the quality of education provided and skills obtained. It has been clearly identified by the team, that students greatly appreciate their practical trainings within their study process. The team also noted a strong cooperation of students and external partners in the process of development and renewal of the study programmes. The main weaknesses in the area of education refer to limited opportunities for transferring research results into education and the weak strategic management of the study programmes, in particular regarding the number of study programmes and none in regards to high dropout rates.
70. Judgement on the area: Academic studies and life-long learning is given positive evaluation because it meets the criteria of the methodology.

V. RESEARCH AND ART

71. The review team explored research and art activities in the University with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the relevance, international links and harmonisation of research/art activities in the University with the provisions of the European Research Area.
72. In regards to the **relevance**, the University has made efforts and a progress to some degree. First, the team found that the University's research/art programmes are in line with national priorities, according to the SAR (annex 3, table 3.1).
73. Second, in relation to the **research agenda**, the team identified that the University has made some efforts in focusing it on social sciences, with the emphasis on educational research and managed to some degree to concentrate the number of research areas. (University was recommended to focus its research agenda by previous institutional evaluation in 2012 and by MOSTA⁵ evaluation in 2015.) For example, the University adopted the Regulations of Research and Art Activities, which, among other aims, defines the focus of future developments, and approves research areas and programmes. The University has in 2015 developed the priority long-term research and art programmes, where seven crucial programmes were assigned to educational research. Some progress in focusing the research agenda could also be seen in table 3.17 of SAR: sections in monographs and other books published by acknowledged international publishers within educational sciences compared to other research areas. This reveals that the University managed to increase the number of publications in educational areas. However, its share remains around 50%. The University has for example, increased the number of PhD dissertations in the field of educational sciences: in the period between 2012 and 2016 PhD students defended 38 dissertations and 32 of them were from educational sciences.
74. In spite of that, the team identified that the University's research activities are not well compliant with University mission and its strategic documents. In other words, it would be anticipated, that focus of research agenda would be strengthened further on educational sciences, not exclusively, but to better align with the profile of the University. In particular, the share of publications of educational sciences compared to other research areas of University remains almost the same: it increased from 49,7% in 2012 to 50,2% in 2016 (SAR, table 3.3.). In between this period the percentage even dropped to 43% in favour of research outputs from non-educational areas. Also tables 3.2 and 3.15 in SAR support the finding that research outputs from educational sciences reach only around 50% of the share. The team understood also from the interviewees that staff is aware they are supposed to publish in the strategic research areas to a greater extent.
75. Third, also in the area of **research outputs**, the University has made efforts and some progress. As an example, it has developed a Functional Strategy for Development of Internationalisation of research and art activities for 2014-2018 in order to facilitate research production in the area of educational sciences, to stimulate interdisciplinary research and to encourage publishing them in acknowledged international journals. For that reason the

⁵ <http://www.mosta.lt/en/research-assessment-exercise>

University restarted its Research fund and increased its budget. Research students are also eligible to apply to that fund. As a good practice, the team acknowledged that University staff is conscious about the priority role that research plays in the further development of the University and that it is necessary for that reason to publish in acknowledged international journals.

76. As a consequence of measures taken, the University observed an increase in *applications* for international publications in the field of social science, more precisely, educational research. Nevertheless, the number of international research publications remains rather low and that only a smaller percentage of researchers have been primarily dedicated to research activity.
77. In response to the recommendation from the previous evaluation, the University has been measuring publications separately for teaching and research staff, as shown by the additional documentation provided prior to the visit. However, during the site visit it seemed to the team that this information has not been used much in research management for strategically navigating research outputs.
78. As a good practice the team also noted that the University managed to increase funding for research developments at the level of academic divisions since 2015, which reflected the successful research results in the years before. Moreover, the University anticipates that funds for these activities for 2017 will be 2.5 times higher.
79. Although the University has attempted to improve research outputs, the destination of research publications remains unambitious. This is evident in the table 3.5 in SAR, where data showed a low number of research articles published in distinguished international research journals compared to overall research outputs. The team recognised that the level of research conducted at the University is comparable to the level of research usually performed at a traditional Educational College as opposed to a comprehensive university. Indeed, the team identified evidence of deep expertise in certain areas. However, in order to promote internationally comparable research, the University would be expected to focus on publishing in internationally recognised journals. This, however, was not the case.
80. Fourth, the **number of research students** at the University has been rather low until 2016, but the University managed to increase it in 2017. For example, table 3.13. (SAR) shows that in 2016 only 7 students were enrolled. Similarly, table 3.14 shows for 2016 that only 5 PhD thesis were defended. Last year, the University has not engaged any postdoc. In addition, according to the MOSTA⁶ evaluation of learning resources, the number of PhD students has been low for a longer period. However, according to the enrolment data for 2017, the University managed to increase it and thus enrolled 40 students (ŠVIZ). Besides, the team heard during the site visit that the time for graduation of PhD students is longer than expected. Although, the University explained within the response to the preliminary evaluation report that primarily reasons for delay were not connected to the studies, but rather to reasons connected with health or personal issues of students.
81. Fifth, in regards to **human resource management**, the University adopted in 2015 a regulation for staff promotion system (attestation), which aims at stimulating publishing in international journals, participation in international research programmes and projects. It also introduced tenders for working places. The University explains in the SAR that the

⁶ <http://www.mosta.lt/en/research-assessment-exercise>

Functional strategy for human resource management helps them to facilitate the development of research staff. Within the reviewed period the University managed to double the FTE for researchers and this happened primarily at the Faculty for education. According to the SAR, the University thinks it should assure more stable opportunities for doctoral students regarding their participation at international conferences. The Team acknowledged as a good practice that the University is using tools, such as Web of Science, to measure the impact of its research outputs.

82. Although the University made efforts and some progress within the area of human resource management, the team identified there is little evidence that the University is strategically managing it. With the aim to strategically manage human resources it would be anticipated that the University would have established targeted recruitment of new staff. Also, it would be expected that University would improve mentoring support for researchers and develop a clear articulation of expectations for each member of staff in order to reinforce its research potential. In that way teachers would be guided to conduct research in his/her field with the aim to provide research based teaching. Likewise, it would be impactful if the University would develop departmental and individual research plans. Instead, none of the mentioned elements were found present at University. The team could not find in the SAR, nor heard during the interviews that the second cycle students would be included in research activities. However, the University as a response to the preliminary evaluation report elaborated that students of Master, but also of Bachelor studies, are supported in the developing research competences by in house publishing of research results that were developed either by students themselves or in cooperation with teachers.
83. Sixth, the University managed to renew its **research infrastructure**. In particular, it improved work places with the latest equipment and improved access to information resources. During the site visit the team observed well-equipped libraries and well-equipped workplaces for researchers. As a good practice the team noticed that the University is using relevant scientific databases.
84. According to the SAR, the research and art programmes that the University conducts are in line with at least one of the **national strategies**. For example, they are aligned with Lithuanian's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030", "Inclusive and Creative Society" of Smart specialization Programme, National Education Strategy for 2012-2022, National Youth Policy Programme. In addition, the SAR shows that also the research events that the University organises are aligned with implementation measures of national strategies. Similarly, the review team noticed in SAR (table 3.19) that the topics of the doctoral thesis in the period 2014-2016 complies with University's priority long-term research/art programmes. Although, if the priority long-term research/art programmes would have had a sharper focus on educational sciences it would have been adequately aligned with its **mission**.
85. In relation to the **impact of external partners on the research and/or art activities**, the University explains in the SAR that the impact of academic and social partners got stronger primarily due to the increased internationalisation and dissemination of research results. The University organised the majority of the research conferences within the field of social sciences and humanities. Thus, the University found it valuable to cooperate on those conferences with domestic and international academics, as in their perspective this reinforces research cooperation, sharing of knowledge and experience, as well as improving opportunities for mobility.

86. In 2015 the MOSTA⁷ evaluators recommended to the University to identify strong national research partners in order to strengthen research potential and also to evaluate how long-term research partners influence research and education of the University. Based on the SAR and conducted interviews, the team was not able to obtain information regarding who are the primary research partners in educational sciences. Likewise, the team could not obtain insight into how long-term research partnerships influence the University. In the situations where the University aims to strengthen its research potential it would be expected that it would identify strong national research partners and also analyse the impact of the long term research partners on research of the University.
87. Otherwise, the team reviewed also the **compliance of the strategic plan** in the area of the research and/or art programmes with the **priorities of the European Research Area**. The team noted that the strategic plan as such complies with these priorities. For example, the strategic plan aims to enhance internationalisation of research and improve its interdisciplinary character. It also aims to stimulate mobility of researchers and cross-border cooperation, knowledge transfer and accessibility of research outputs. In addition, the strategic objectives are, according to the SAR, referring also to Communications from the European Commission: “Innovation Union”, “Supporting growth and jobs - an agenda for modernisation of Europe’s HE systems”.
88. Within the period under the review, the University carried out 34 national and 23 **international research and art projects**. The number of projects has throughout these years significantly dropped (SAR, Figure 3.2.). In addition, table 3.25 (SAR) indicates the number of international project *applications* to FP7 (11 applications) and Horizon 2020 (11 applications); however no data in the table is provided in regards to the number of approved ones. The SAR made one reference to submitted and granted projects under FP7 programme in 2013. Otherwise, the University mentioned that 14 out of 23 completed international projects have been carried out in the field of social sciences. Moreover, 11 out of 14 projects were from educational studies. Otherwise, most of the time the University had a partner role in these projects. When it comes to national projects, most of them are in the field of Humanities. Project partners come from various countries and comprise various types of institutions (universities, institutes, research centres, schools, etc.).
89. It would have been expected that the University aligns its participation in international research activities with its research agenda in order to achieve planned research outputs. The University agreed with this assessment, as it mentioned in the SAR that it should paid more attention to the matter of how the University could take greater advantage from international partners for its international research activities. Hence, it would be expected that the University would better measure the benefits of international cooperation and therefore improve the impact that international collaborations have on research activities of University. The team has not identified sufficient alignment of international research activities to the University’s research agenda, nor an adequate analysis of cooperation activities in order to improve its research outputs.
90. Researchers and artists most frequently **participate in international mobility** in the form of research visits, namely, scientific conferences, symposia, congresses and forums, according to the SAR. Frequent are also EU project mobility and study visits based on the Erasmus+ programme mobility. Otherwise, the number of incoming researchers and teachers that conducted research activities has been increasing between 2012 and 2015. However, in 2016 it was rather low. In contrast, the number of incoming researchers and teachers has been high

⁷ <http://www.mosta.lt/en/research-assessment-exercise>

and has even exceeded the number of outgoing ones. The University observed in the SAR that this has been most influential for enhancing domestic internationalisation. For example, it has been beneficial for strengthening research cooperation through organising joint research events, publications, collaborating in editorial boards of research journals and for providing lectures at the University. Doctoral students are involved in international mobility through internships, exchange programmes, summer schools and professional development courses. However, the University observed, that opportunities for international mobility for young researchers and PhD students should be enhanced.

91. In regards to the implementation of recommendations that came from external evaluations the team noticed the following: Although the University has been trying to address them, it has nevertheless not adequately focused its research agenda, improved the quality of research outputs, nor identified strong research partners.

To summarize, the team acknowledged that the main strengths of the University are that it assures access to relevant scientific databases and is using tools, such as Web of Science, to measure its impact. Also, the University staff is conscious that they need to intensify attempts to publish their research results in acknowledged international journals in order to meet their strategic goals. The main weaknesses the team identified refer to the research agenda that should be strengthened further on educational sciences, not exclusively, but to better align with the profile of the University and weak research outputs that have lately even declined. It would be expected that more research publications from educational sciences would be published in recognised international journals. Alarming is also very weak strategic management of research in particular within managing human resources, but also in organising international research cooperation. Lastly, in the situations where the University aims to strengthen its research potential it would be expected that it would also analyse the impact of the long term research partners on the research of the University.

92. Judgment on the area: Research and art is given negative evaluation because it does not meet the criteria of the methodology in respect of compliance of the research and/or art activities with the institution's mission and strategic documents (10.1.1.), impact of academic, social and business partners on the research and/or art activities of the institution (10.1.3.), participation in international research and/or art projects (10.2.2.) and usage of external evaluation results in improving scientific and/or artistic activity (10.2.4.). Due to the fact that the University is not meeting these criteria the team does not have confidence that the University is able to conduct and assure relevant, internationally comparable research on its own. Therefore, the team considers that for the University to continue operating it will need a renewed and improved approach to research.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

93. The review team evaluated the impact on regional and national development of the University with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the effectiveness and relevance of University's contribution and the impact on the economic, cultural, social and environmental development.
94. Aims and **implementation measures** of the third mission are defined and elaborated in the University's **Strategic plan**. The University explained that it follows up the **effectiveness of these implementation measures** within regular monitoring of the implementation of its strategic plan. The University got recommended by the previous institutional review to find ways to measure more adequately its impact on the society. The team acknowledged that by monitoring the implementation of its strategy the University monitors whether planned actions have been taken. However, with the aim to obtain better insight into the impact it made through its activities, the University would be expected to perform a different analysis.
95. There are four strategic aims under the third mission of the strategic plan. Namely: enhancement of interaction in education, engagement in scientific research and experimental development and services, increase of contribution to sustainable national development and promotion of research, art and healthy way of living.
96. First, according to the SAR and interviews, the team acknowledged that the contribution of the University's involvement in the development and implementation of education activities is immense and represents good practice. For example, the University's staff is involved in activities of designing national curricula from pre-primary up to the secondary education. They participate in forming examination programmes, preparing textbooks, as well as in developing the methodology for self-assessment of quality. Staff is participating also in numerous external reviews of schools and various educational councils, academic and research institutes. Furthermore, the team noted as a good practice the University's provision of the in-service training that represents professional development opportunities primarily used by teachers and social workers. However, as the University contribution to the educational activities within society is strong and widespread, it would be expected that University would better identify its formal role and thus better plan also its formal impact on the educational policies at the national level.
97. Second, in the area of engagement in scientific research, experimental development and services, the University conducted applied research in 51 national and international projects from 2012. Service provision has been primarily carried out with education and training institutions, which meant that it was aligned with the mission of the University. The team also identified that the University responded to the needs signalled by authorities and thus established a kindergarten within the University. That assured additional places for kids as well as innovative learning environment that is well connected with research activities. Within the University's service provision, the University noticed the increase of service agreements done with business partners, which are connected with financial support obtained for regional development that aims to connect the business sector with higher education institutions.
98. The third strategic goal of the University's third mission refers to the increase of contribution to sustainable national development that entails activities for an increase of social inclusion, development of a green University and promotion of social entrepreneurship. The team acknowledged that the University's influence on social inclusion in society is outstanding. The strong impact is seen within the involvement in the national regulatory bodies, in sound

cooperation with various partners addressing social exclusion, as well as in the development of distance training focusing on inclusive education. Likewise, the University provides professional training courses targeted to different needs of life-long learners and facilitates social inclusion also with participating in mass media.

99. Fourth, regarding the promotion of research, art and healthy way of living, the University pointed out in the SAR that it increased the presence in media and has therefore better disseminated research results. Likewise, it mentioned that it spread profoundly its influence to social and cultural development in society through its diverse art and sport activities.
100. The team noted the activities of the third mission are substantially widespread in terms of the number and type of the activities the University conducts, as well as in terms of the number and type of stakeholders it includes. Thus the team noted these activities could have greater, more targeted impact if the University would better strategically focus them. The University also acknowledged this, as it mentioned in SAR the same finding.
101. Otherwise, the University's third mission activities are in line with the **priorities for national development**. This is evident in the SAR (table 4.5): activities are compliant with The National Strategy for Education for 2013-2022, The State progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030", as well as with the State Long-Term Development Strategy.
102. In regards to the **inclusion of the themes related to national and regional development in student graduation projects and training practices**, the SAR first mentioned that more than half (55%) of the projects connected with third mission activities have been associated with education and training. As the University's traditional role is in educating teachers, the University organises in-service teacher training, which represents an important part of its third mission. In line with that, also the topics of final thesis were mostly prepared in this area. Beside teaching practice, students conducted also other types of practice and projects that have been associated with various needs of regional and national developments. For example, students from the Faculty of Social Education undertook practice in various companies and public institutions, such as municipal administrations, organisations that caters for elderly, children's daycare centres, societies of disabled. As another example, students from the Faculty of Science and Technology conducted field work with the Public Geography and Demography Institute of the Lithuanian Social Research Centre. The team identified that topics of students' projects have been relevant for the society's developmental needs. The team identified as a good practice also numerous public events the University organised for community. The **involvement of teaching and administrative staff** of the University has been **acknowledged** also at national and international level, for example by honorary doctorate, prizes, numerous achievements in competitions and performances. The team found the University contribution to society to be immense.
103. In sum, the main strengths of the University refer to the strong cooperation with social partners at various level, strong involvement in professional bodies, firm influence of the University's activities regarding special education and important contribution in contributing to curricula at the national level. The main weaknesses are identified in the area of measuring and targeting the impact of its activities to the society.
104. Judgement on the area: Impact on regional and national development is given positive evaluation because it meets the criteria of the methodology.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS

Sum of a *major* good practice:

- Substantial students' and external stakeholders' participation in SPC.
- Academic Quality Office has been recognised as the pivotal unit for gathering data and analysing, facilitating discussions of results and creating improvements, conducting audits, providing numerous trainings.
- Sound satisfaction of students and graduates with the quality of education provided (student centred) and skills obtained.
- Great appreciation of students for practical trainings within their study process.
- Strong cooperation of students and external partners in the process of developing and renewing study programmes.
- Sound support activities of the international office.
- Developed Methodology for Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences
- Sound provision of in-service training – professional development courses.
- Strong cooperation of University with social partners at various level, sound involvement in professional bodies, firm influence of University's activities regarding special education and important contribution in writing curricula resources at the national level.

Sum of *major* shortcomings:

- University strategic plan does not reflect the challenging external environment and is therefore not valid, as it cannot support the University to pursue its mission.
- Strategic plan is found to be too ambitious and lacking clarity and meaningfulness for monitoring the implementation, particularly in the area of qualitative indicators.
- There is no formal risk analysis nor risk management, even though it is inevitably necessary, e.g. in regards to merging, financing, human resource management.
- There are limited opportunities for transferring research results into education.
- The University shows weak strategic management of study programmes, in particular regarding the number of study programmes and none in regards to high dropout rates.
- Lack of thorough assessment of the impact of international mobility of the teaching staff on the institution.

- Research agenda should be strengthened further on educational sciences, not exclusively, but to better align with the profile of the University. University research outputs are weak and have lately even declined.
- Research publications from educational sciences have not been sufficiently published in recognised international journals.
- Little evidence for strategic management of research, in particular within managing human resources, but also in organising international research cooperation.
- Analysis of the impact of the long term research partners on the research of the University has not been conducted.
- Lack of measuring and targeting the impact of University's activities to the society.

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences is given negative evaluation.

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ANNEX. LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

PASTABOS DĖL LIETUVOS EDUKOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETO VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ PROJEKTE ESANČIŲ FAKTINIŲ KLaidŲ LIETUVIŲ KALBA

STRATEGINIS VALDYMAS

Pastabos nr.	Ekspertų pastabos	Komentarai
10	Pirmiausia buvo atsižvelgta į strateginio plano atitikimą Universiteto misijai, taip pat šalies ir Europos strateginiams dokumentams. Universiteto misija, kaip nurodyta savianalizės suvestinėje, yra „rengti švietimo specialistus, mokslininkus ir aukščiausios kvalifikacijos taikomųjų mokslinių tyrimų specialistus, taip pat švieti visuomenę pagal šiuolaikinę švietimo filosofiją, naujausias mokslo žinias ir darnaus vystymosi principus“. Grupė taip pat pastebėjo, kad savianalizės suvestinėje nurodyta, jog Universiteto siekis yra tapti svarbiausiu šalies specializuotu edukologijos mokslų srities Universitetu. Dabartinis Universiteto 2012–2020 m. strateginis planas buvo parengtas 2012 m. Tuo metu jis buvo grindžiamas iki 2012 m. įvykusių vidaus ir išorės situacijų analize bei buvo suderintas su Universiteto misija, šalies strategine ir Europos politika bei švietimo ir mokslinių tyrimų prioritetais (savianalizės suvestinės 1 priedo 1.2 lentelė).	<p>- Teiginys, kad, citata: <i>Universiteto siekis yra tapti svarbiausiu šalies specializuotu edukologijos mokslų srities Universitetu yra neteisingas</i>, kadangi visi suvestinėje nurodyti duomenys (tik kiekybiniai, tiek kokybiniai), atspindintys studijų, mokslo ir poveikio sritis, byloja apie tai, kad LEU yra svarbiausia edukologijos srities aukštojo mokslo įstaiga Lietuvoje, nes šioje srityje jos veiklos apimtis yra didesnė nei bet kurio kito universiteto.</p> <p>- Teiginys, kad, citata: <i>Dabartinis Universiteto 2012–2020 m. strateginis planas... tuo metu buvo suderintas su Universiteto misija, šalies strategine ir Europos politika bei švietimo ir mokslinių tyrimų prioritetais</i>, yra neteisingas. Dabartinis Universiteto 2012–2020 m. strateginis planas buvo ir šandien (jo nepakeitus) yra suderintas su Universiteto misija, šalies strategine ir Europos politika bei švietimo ir mokslinių tyrimų prioritetais. Kadangi per paskutinius 5 metus tiek Europos, tiek šalies mastu įvykė pokyčiai neapėmė svarbiausių švietimo ir mokslo prioritetų ir tikslų, todėl Universiteto strateginis planas ir jo nuostatos išlieka aktualios šandien ir išliks aktualios tol, kol bus įgyvendintos, kas suformuos galimybę tolimesniame vystymuisi.</p> <p>- Aukštojo mokslo įstaigos išorės vertinimo metodika nenurodo, kad Strateginis planas turi atitikti kuriuos nors išorės veiksmus, išskyrus aukštosios mokyklos misiją, šalies mokslo ir studijų politikos strateginius dokumentus, Europos aukštojo mokslo ir Europos mokslinių tyrimų erdvės nuostatas.</p>
11	Tačiau pastaraisiais metais, ypač praėjusiais metais, išorės situacija labai pasikeitė. Universitete įvyko dramatiškas studentų demografinis	Pateikti faktai neatitinka tikrovės ir teiginys, kad, citata: <i>2012–2016 m. laikotarpiu... stojimas į LEU sumažėjo 50 proc.</i> yra klaidingas bei

experienced a dramatic demographic decline of students, which greatly exceeds national trends. While, according to the government Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan, the number of University students between 2012 and 2016 dropped in the Vilnius County on average by almost 25 %, the enrolment for this University decreased by 50 %. As another example, in 2016 University students enrolled into 38 study programmes of first cycle, while in 2017 only to 8 programmes. The state projections are that student enrolment rate will continue to decline. Due to declining enrolment trends in the last few years, the University also had to decrease the number of teaching staff. The University faced also a decrease in State funded places for teacher training, which represents an important part of University funding. **Hence, the University is not able to cover all its costs by its own funding, what the University mentioned also in SAR.**

comply with the official statistical information. Therefore, the conclusion of the experts stating that “*The University experienced a dramatic demographic decline of students, which greatly exceeds national trends*” is incorrect.

According to the data submitted to the experts (Annex 2), the number of the students enrolled in LEU over the indicated period went down by 24.3 %, i.e. a 0.1 % bigger drop compared to the national trends. Therefore, the conclusions presented in this point are not grounded on objective data.

	Academic year of 2012/13	Academic year of 2013/14	Academic year of 2014/15	Academic year of 2015/16	Academic year of 2016/17	Δ y., %	E { Δ }, %
The data on entrants							
The numbers of students enrolled in universities	32524	30371	29713	27059	24669	-24.2	-6.6
The numbers of students enrolled in LEU	1218	956	930	890	922	-24.3	-6.2
The relative number of students enrolled in LEU (%)	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.7		

The statement that “*the University is not able to cover all its costs by its own funding*” is non-contextual and cannot be used evaluating the performance of the University and its results because none of the universities in the country (and the absolute majority of the world universities) is able to cover costs by its own funding. Therefore, this aspect should not be analysed and referred to as an indicator significant assessing an institution.

12 Such circumstances put the University survival at risk. Moreover, in 2017, the government took the decision within the Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan to concentrate research in educational sciences and therefore to radically reduce the number of teacher training providers from 17 higher education institutions to 3. The team read in SAR

The presented facts are correct. There are no objections or contradictions. The decisions about the merger of the universities are made by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, i.e. the founder of universities. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the decision regarding the merger of LEU and VMU and the approved proposal will be put forward for consideration in the Seimas in December.

	that the University proposed to the parliament a merger with Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) and heard during the interviews that it was still waiting for the final decision. The University stressed that the latest developments on the national level create a substantial degree of uncertainty for the University to plan its activities.	
13	<p>Nevertheless, the team observed in the SAR and during interviews that the radically changed external situation was not adequately addressed in strategic planning documents of the University. Put bluntly, the Strategic plan 2012–2020 has not been appropriately amended to address the current crisis. Although the strategic plan is still aligned with national and European strategic documents (EHEA, ERA principles), it is not adequately aligned with the critical external and internal circumstances of University. Hence, it cannot adequately support the University to pursue its mission. Moreover, the University did not manage to implement the set strategic goals until 2016 in such a way that would bring the University closer to its mission and aspirations.</p>	<p>Since 2012 the external situation has not changed to the extent for the strategic goals of the University to be changed. The European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, the national strategic documents of education, teacher education or research as well as R&D, indicated in the Methodology for External Assessment of Higher Education Institution, have not undergone any changes that can have impact on the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To efficiently manage available resources; - To ensure high quality studies and research; - To introduce indirect classical study and research) contribution to the development of the state and society (“the third mission”). <p>The abovementioned ones are the objectives of the University, which regardless of the position of the Government or any other actors on the aspects of functioning of the network of institutions, administration of higher education and its institutions (e.g. an organisation becoming a subsidiary) or any other factors, are considered to be a constant and a compulsory standard.</p> <p>The statement “it [the Strategic Plan] is not adequately aligned with the critical external and internal circumstances of University. Hence, it cannot adequately support the University to pursue its mission” is incorrect because the priority of the University is related to its social role and influence on the development of state rather than its administrative form. None of the normative derivatives of the Strategic Plan contradicts any meanings of external critical factors and has to be eliminated from the Strategic Plan due to those factors.</p> <p>Moreover, it should be mentioned that the content of the University’s strategy is fully aligned with the requirements outlined in the Methodology for External Assessment of Higher Education Institution.</p> <p>The statement that “the University did not manage to implement the set strategic</p>

		<p><i>goals until 2016 in such a way that would bring the University closer to its mission and aspirations</i>“ is factually inaccurate because it is not grounded on any data. For example, the formation of the Quality Management System and Strategic Management System compared to 2012 is a considerable advancement towards implementation of the mission. Meanwhile, the conclusions do not provide any information on which methods of assessment and analysis were applied and on the basis of what data such a radical conclusion of the experts were drawn and presented.</p>
14	<p>In such critical circumstances the team would have expected that a risk management exercise would have been conducted by the University management. Although the team heard the discussion about various merger scenarios that took place, according to the SAR and interviews, the team has not identified any systematic or formal approach to assess a merger, developing comparative scenarios or any other kind of risk in order to act proactively. This, in view of the team, represents a major shortcoming.</p>	<p>The risk caused by external factors was considered in the documents of lower level than the Strategy. There were two related documents: the first was adopted in 2015 and concentrated on 3 possible scenarios: a merger with Vilnius University, a merger with VMU and an autonomy. The document was prepared in a broad work group and the results of its work were later presented in management bodies. The second document – the Guidelines for University Functioning and Development – was presented to the Council in June 2017. It also evaluated the further scenarios of the University development (from the autonomous classical University to a subdivision completely integrated into the latter) and contained recommendations.</p>
15	<p>The team evaluated also the application of the existing, unrevised, strategic plan. It identified that the University attempted some reforms in the governance system by aiming to improve a system of strategic planning, by trying to improve the management of financial, material and human resources. Despite these efforts, the team was not able to identify a sufficiently robust strategic approach in planning, and managing financial, human, and material resources. This has prevented the institution from meeting the set strategic goals until 2016. For this reason, the team concluded that the targets identified in the Strategic plan 2012–2020 were too ambitious and the Management had made little effort to revise them in the context of the current crisis.</p>	<p>The statement that “<i>the University attempted some reforms in the governance system by aiming to improve a system of strategic planning, by trying to improve the management of financial, material and human resources</i>” is incorrect because, in the case of LEU, the improvement of the System of Strategic Planning is one of the objectives of the Strategic Plan and it is fully implemented.</p> <p>The statement that “<i>the team was not able to identify a sufficiently robust strategic approach in planning, and managing financial, human, and material resources</i>” is misleading because the reference to the source of conclusion is not provided and the notions “sufficient” and “robust” are not determined in a quantitative or qualitative way.</p> <p>The statement that “<i>This has prevented the institution from meeting the set strategic goals until 2016. For this reason, the team concluded that the targets identified in the Strategic plan 2012–2020 were too ambitious and the Management had made little effort to revise them in the context of the current crisis</i>” is incorrect because the strategic goals of the University are to be attained by 2020 rather than by 2016</p>

16	<p>In regards to the reasonableness and comprehensiveness of quantitative and qualitative indicators, the team analysed that qualitative indicators to a large extent lacked the clarity, not being precise enough. For example, indicators: Qualification of teaching staff, Internationality of scientific research, Impact of international mobility on studies do not adequately enable the community to understand how exactly it is expected to achieve certain strategic goals nor how to monitor its implementation efficiently. The lack of clarity for monitoring purposes could be identified also among the indicators of the following strategic measures (SAR, Annex 5): A.1.1.2, A.1.3.4, A.2.1.1, B.2.1.5, B.2.4.1, B.2.4.4, C.1.1.4, D.3.1.5.</p>	<p>and the experts do not appeal to the source of the conclusion and the notions “little” and “effort” are not determined in a quantitative or qualitative way.</p> <p>The statement that “<i>the team analysed that qualitative indicators to a large extent lacked the clarity, not being precise enough. For example, indicators: “qualification of teaching staff”, “internationality of scientific research”, “impact of international mobility on studies” do not adequately enable the community to understand how exactly it is expected to achieve certain strategic goals nor how to monitor its implementation efficiently</i>” is incorrect because all the indicators are assigned specific monitored values, which are reflected in planning documents and reports that are accessible to all the community members, whereas some of them (e.g., three-year strategic activity plans, where the indicator “internationality of scientific research” is analysed) are publicly available to any stakeholders.</p> <p>The statement that “<i>The lack of clarity for monitoring purposes could be identified also among the indicators of the following strategic measures (SAR, Annex 5): A.1.1.2, A.1.3.4, A.2.1.1, B.2.1.5, B.2.4.1, B.2.4.4, C.1.1.4, D.3.1.5.</i>” is incorrect because the experts were provided with the process of monitoring in the SAR (p. 10.):</p> <p>“<i>...The programme consists of 2 parts: the first part indicates the development results that LEU expects to achieve and the second part provides for specific measures to be implemented seeking the set outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>The programme is implemented in a given calendar year and results of its implementation are presented in the report on monitoring of strategic plan implementation, which reflects planned results (qualitative and quantitative (product) indicators); achieved results (implemented measures, partially implemented measures, unimplemented measures)....”</i></p> <p>and under the request of the experts, the Implementation Programme for 2015 was presented to them, which shows the values of the indicators of measures and how the latter are monitored. Such programmes are annually announced and presented to the University’s staff, who also annually fill in reports of their implementation clearly indicating the achieved values of the indicators.</p>
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ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Remark No.	Experts' remarks	Comments
11	<p>However, the external situation has drastically changed in the last few years and especially in the last year. The University experienced a dramatic demographic decline of students, which greatly exceeds national trends. While, according to the government Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan, the number of University students between 2012 and 2016 dropped in the Vilnius County on average by almost 25%, the enrolment for this University decreased by 50%. As another example, in 2016 University students enrolled into 38 study programmes of first cycle, while in 2017 only to 8 programmes. The state projections are that student enrolment rate will continue to decline. Due to declining enrolment trends in the last few years, the University also had to decrease the number of teaching staff. The University faced also a decrease in State funded places for teacher training, which represents an important part of University funding. Hence, the University is not able to cover all its costs by its own funding, what the University mentioned also in SAR.</p>	<p>In 2016 the admission was organised to 38 Bachelor study programmes and 29 of them were in the study field of education. As it is the case every year, after admission the reports are compiled, which aim to overview the admission results and to identify the study programmes that will take part in the following year's admission. Thus, admission to 29 study programmes (19 study programmes of them were in the study field of education, i.e. a 10 study programme fall compared to 2016) was organised in 2017. It should be mentioned that the decrease in the number of students is closely related to financing allocated from the budget of RL, which tends to decrease annually. Starting with 2010, when the study programmes were re-registered and ascribed to the study field of education, the financing in 2016 decreased by 75%. In 2017 financing to subject teacher training programmes was not allocated at all and only the study programmes of Early Childhood, Primary and Learning Support Teacher Education (i.e. 4 study programmes in al) received funding. But it should be mentioned that the year of 2017 is not included into the period of assessment.</p>
46	<p>Taking into account the context, as elaborated in paragraph 11, it would be foreseen that the University would have embedded a strategic approach in managing the study programmes. In other words, in order to assure sustainability, it would be expected to focus on strengths within the study programme offer and enable enrolment primarily into those ones. However, the team did not identify any strategic approach in managing the study programmes.</p>	
52	<p>According to the SAR, monitoring of employment and career of graduates operates at three levels: University,</p>	<p>The data of Career Management and Information System (CMIS) are received in a centralised way using objective indicators of state information systems, state</p>

	<p>faculty/department level and the level of Study Programme Committees. Although data from these levels are supposed to be inserted in the virtual system CMIS – Career Management and Information System, according to the SAR, the team heard during the site visit, that in practice, collected information at the level of Study Programme Committees are not fed into this system. In spite of that, the team identified that members of the Study Programme Committees have strong and regular contacts with professional bodies, as well as employers in order to identify their needs and make necessary adjustment to the study programmes. Based on the SAR, the overall employment indicator of University's graduates has increased within the period 2012–2016. The University elaborated that graduates of the 2nd cycle achieve best employment results among University's graduates. It also stated that graduates of the 1st and 2nd cycle after 6 and 12 months of graduation achieve better results on the labour market compared to the average results of graduates of higher education institutions in Lithuania. Compared to the average results of University's graduates in Vilnius County, 24 % of them are employed at the working places that did not require higher education qualification, which is, according to the Public Universities Network Optimisation Plan, the lowest percentage among the mentioned universities.</p>	<p>and departmental registers. CMIS includes 25 Lithuanian higher education schools and its aim is to provide information, tools and services necessary for personal career management, which would improve young people's employment prospects and career satisfaction. Using CMIS, the University collects and systemises data on graduates' employability. This allows to obtain particularly objective data on graduates' employment compared to the data collected by the Study Programme Committee surveying graduates. The responsible people in the faculties of the University regularly analyse the data on graduates' employability available via CMIS and provide them to the faculty administration and SPC, who implement initiated changes in study programmes.</p>
69	<p>In summary, the team identified sound satisfaction of students and graduates with the quality of education provided and skills obtained. It has been clearly identified by the team, that students greatly appreciate their practical trainings within their study process. The team also noted a strong cooperation of students and external partners in the process of development and renewal of the study programmes. The main weaknesses in the area of education refer to few opportunities for transferring research results into education and the lack of strategic</p>	<p>The university teachers write and publish not only research papers but also works of applied character (textbooks for higher education and general education schools, methodological aids, etc.), which also reflect their scientific research adapted to studies and students' independent work. The list of such works was presented to the experts during the site visit.</p>

	management of the study programmes, in particular regarding the number of study programmes and high dropout rates.
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RESEARCH AND ART

Remark No.	Experts' remarks	Comments
6	Currently, the University consists of five faculties. Namely, the Faculty of Education in Humanities, Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social Education, Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Sports and Health Education and so it covered in 2016 the following study areas: social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, biomedical sciences and arts. On October the 1st, 2016, 2.925 students enrolled into the first cycle, 532 in the second, 39 in the third cycle and 54 into non-degree studies. During the same study year the University employed 297 full time teachers out of which 211 hold scientific degree and out of which 137 represent associate and full professors. Regarding the research staff, the University had 56 full time researchers in 2016, out of which 52 hold a scientific degree and out of which 38 are either associate or full professors.	In 2016 there were 29.85 FTE allotted to research fellows in the University, which is emphasised and presented comprehensively in “Strategic Management” and “Research and Art”.
80	Fourth, the number of research students at the University has been rather low. For example, table 3.13. (SAR) shows that in 2016 only 7 students were enrolled. Likewise, table 3.12 (SAR) provides information that in 2016 only 3 PhD students obtained a scholarship for academic achievements. Similarly, table 3.14 shows for 2016 that only 5 PhD thesis were defended. Last year, the University has not engaged any postdoc. In addition, according to the MOSTA evaluation of learning	In 2016 over 20 doctoral students in state-funded places were entitled to scholarships. In 2016 the Research Council of Lithuania awarded the scholarship to doctoral students for academic achievements to three doctoral students (J. Monkevičius, D. Žitkevičienė, M. Brėdikytė). This scholarship was paid next to their ordinary scholarships just like other students. Taking into account the procedure of granting scholarships according to different branches of science, LEU results are considered to be average / good in the general context of competitive financing of doctoral students in social sciences by the Research

<p>resources, the number of PhD students has been low for a longer period. Besides, the team heard during the site visit that the time for graduation of PhD students is longer than expected. In these circumstances the team would have expected that the University found ways to increase the number of its PhD students. However, this was not the case. The University agreed that the small number of research students compared to the number of researchers at the University represents a significant obstacle to develop research potential in the future and that a possible merger could have the potential to adequately address the challenge.</p>	<p>Council of Lithuania.</p> <p>A number of doctoral students complete their studies not over 4 (5) years but over a longer period of time, which is extended as students go on academic leave (e.g. because of health problems under recommendation of doctors) or on maternity leave (in accordance to the provisions of Doctoral Studies of Government of RL (12 May 2010, Resolution of the Government No. 561)) or personal reasons (pursuant to Point 11 of Part 1 of Article 62 of the Law on the Research and Studies).</p> <p>We cannot agree with this statement because the University is in constant search for the ways to attract students to doctoral study places that are non-funded by the state. In 2015 4 doctoral students (3 out of them – foreign students), and in 2013 two such students were admitted to doctoral studies.</p>
<p>82</p> <p>Although the University made efforts and some progress within the area of human resource management, the team identified there is little evidence that the University is strategically managing it. With the aim to strategically manage human resources it would be anticipated that the University would have established targeted recruitment of new staff. Also, it would be expected that University would improve mentoring support as well as financial support for researchers and develop a clear articulation of expectations for each member of staff in order to reinforce its research potential. In that way teachers would be guided to conduct research in his/her field with the aim to provide research based teaching. Likewise, it would be impactful if the University would develop departmental and individual research plans. Last but not least, it would be beneficial if second cycle students would be included in research activities. Instead, none of the mentioned elements were found present at University.</p>	<p>The academic staff of the University does not consist only of the teachers of LEU. A considerable number of highly qualified researchers from other universities and scientific research institutes are recruited and work as part-time employees.</p> <p>According to the priority research directions and programmes approved by the Senate, additional competitive financing is allocated to high quality educational research (Point 2.1, Regulations of the Research Foundation, 2014); pursuant to the Regulations of Research and Arts Activities in LEU approved by the Senate financing is provided to heads of priority research programmes in education and other areas (Point 2.6, Regulations of the Research Foundation approved by the Senate Following the Regulations of the Research Foundation productive research fellows, (Resolution No.327, 11 June 2014), the most productive research (art) output, are teachers and doctoral students, who create high quality research (art) output, are given incentives. They are evaluated according to the Methodology for Evaluating Research (Art) Works in Research and Study Institutions, approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (the Order No. V-79, 5 February 2015) and 3 winners from each branch of science are announced.</p> <p>Since 2014 tenders for receiving additional financing for scientific research from the Research Foundation of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences have been announced. The largest share of the Research Foundation's resources is foreseen to finance high quality educational research, interdisciplinary research</p>

and innovative educational research. In the period of 2014–2016 62 applications were received (22 in Educational Science (Social Sciences); 40 from other areas). After the expert evaluation 45 applications were approved (14 in Educational Science (Social Sciences); 31 from other areas).

The Research Foundation has been regularly inviting to apply for additional competitive financing for publishing research articles in international reviewed publications and) publishing monographs and (or) studies by internationally acknowledged publishers.

Moreover, the Committees of Research Programmes organise scientific seminars, discussions regularly and their venue and dates are announced on the website of the University.

Therefore, researchers from other programmes are also able to take part in such events and to accumulate the good practice.

Correcting this factual mistake, it is necessary to mention that all the groups of research programmes and themes have prepared long-term scientific research plans until 2019. The plans were approved by the Order of the Rector No. 1-347 of 18 June 2015 “On Approval of Priority Long-term Research Programmes at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences”. Each year the heads of Research programmes submit annual reports and revise the annual plans of Research Programmes.

Contrary to what the experts note, second cycle students are involved into scientific research in different ways. In 2014 a unified Student Society was established in the University, which joined all the University students, who are actively engaged in research or art activities. The common goal of the Student Scientific (Art) Society of the University is to organise student research (art) activities, to publicise achievements in the University community and outside it, to provide students with opportunities to deepen research skills and to improve academic level. The Society holds joint scientific conferences of all the faculties and the best selected works of students are published in the new publication “Mažoji mokslinė serija” (Minor Scientific Series), which is funded by the Research Foundation. In the period of 2015–2017 five works were published in this series: Rima Kasperionytė “Mitinis pasaulis Donaldo Kajoko romane “Ežeras

ir kiti jį lydintys asmenys” (The Mythical World in Donaldas Kajokas’s Novel “Ežeras ir kiti jį lydintys asmenys”); Vilija Zeleniūtė “Šakių rajono mažųjų gaubtagalvių fauna” (The Fauna of Nepticulidae (Insecta: Lepidoptera) of Sakiai District); Vida Petulionienė “Nežymų intelekto sutrikimą turinčių mokinių kūrybinė raida” (The Creative Expression of Slightly Intellectually Disabled Students); Romas Vilčinskas “Prienų alaus bravoras 1868–1944 m.” (Prienai Brewery in 1868–1944); Vilius Šadauskas “Vyriškumo raida?” (The Expression of Masculinity?).

At the end of 2016 the first edition of the publication of young researchers’ works “Lietuvos edukologijos universiteto studentų moksliniai darbai” (The Research Works of Students of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences) was published. This publication contains the articles written by students Bachelor and Master study programmes of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, which present scientific research of those students. The publication aims not only to record the research results of young researchers but also to stimulate their dissemination. The first volume of the publication contains twenty articles of young researchers from the Bachelor and Master study cycles. The biggest number of them represent research in social sciences (educational science).

Several publications of the University contain research papers written by students together with teachers. For example, the Faculty of Social Education publishes a continuous collection of articles “Socialinio darbo tyrimai ir aktualijos” (Social Work: Research and Relevant Issues), “Verslumo ugdymo ir konkurencingumo studijos” (Studies in Entrepreneurship Education and Competitiveness), “Socialinės edukacijos ir vadybos tobulinimas: taikomieji tyrimai magistrų ir bakalauro baigiamuosiuose darbuose” (Improvement of Social Education and Management: Applied Research in Final Bachelor and Master Papers) and others.

The examples provided above demonstrate the scientific potential of the students of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and their abilities to carry out research activities, create conditions for young researchers, who are frequently not able to independently compete with experienced researchers on equal basis submitting articles for publishing in reviewed scientific journals, to publish their first research publications, i.e. to make first steps in the researcher’s career.

89	<p>It would have been expected that the University aligns its participation in international research activities with its research agenda in order to achieve planned research outputs. The University agreed with this assessment, as it mentioned in the SAR that it should paid more attention to the matter of how the University could take greater advantage from international partners for its international research activities. Similarly, it would be expected that the University would measure the benefits of international cooperation and therefore improve the impact that international collaborations have on research activities of University. The team has not identified sufficient alignment of international research activities to the University's research agenda, nor an adequate analysis of cooperation activities in order to improve its research outputs.</p>	<p>The University carried out the analysis of the impact of incoming and outgoing researchers on the University and on the basis of it and earlier recommendations of the experts, the Functional Strategy for Development of Internationalisation (2014–2018) was prepared in 2014, which provides for measures to promote internationalisation in four main areas: Internationalisation of supply of studies and teaching/learning; Attraction and accessibility of studies to foreigners; International cooperation in scientific research; International dissemination of scientific knowledge and research results.</p>
90	<p>Researchers and artists most frequently participate in international mobility in the form of research visits, namely, scientific conferences, symposia, congresses and forums, according to the SAR. Frequent are also EU project mobility and study visits based on the Erasmus+ programme mobility. Otherwise, the number of incoming researchers and teachers that conducted research activities has been increasing between 2012 and 2015. However, in 2016 it was rather low. In contrast, the number of incoming researchers and teachers has been high and has even exceeded the number of outgoing ones. The University observed in the SAR that this has been most influential for enhancing domestic internationalisation. For example, it has been beneficial for strengthening research cooperation through organising joint research events, publications, collaborating in editorial boards of research journals and for providing lectures at the University. Doctoral students are involved in international mobility through</p>	<p>This statement is incorrect. The section on achievements on p. 43 of the SAR contains statement that the impact of incoming scientific researchers and artists on the activities of the University has been analysed and the functional strategy for promotion of internationalisation has been prepared and implemented. The analysis was conducted in 2014, where the essential role is foreseen for incoming researchers.</p>

	<p>internships, exchange programmes, summer schools and professional development courses. However, the University observed, that opportunities for international mobility for young researchers and PhD students should be enhanced. With the aim to increase research and art potential, it would be expected that the University would have conducted an impact analysis of the visiting researchers and artists on the University. This has been a recommendation from the previous institutional evaluation that was not addressed by the University. The University has explained in the SAR, that it is difficult to analyse it, as the impact comes from both directions.</p>
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GOOD PRACTICE AND MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS

Experts' remarks	Comments
There are little opportunities for transferring research results into education. (Point 4)	This statement is incorrect. It is denied by the experts themselves, who gave a very positive evaluation of the University's impact on society. This impact is firstly grounded on scientific research.
Research agenda is not sufficiently focussed. University research outputs are weak and have lately even declined. (Point 7)	<p>This remark is incorrect. The scientific research agenda is highly focussed. The research is carried out following the approved long-term research programmes. In financial or study terms the University, contrary to the recommendations of the experts, is not allowed to limit the scope of its research only to research on educational science. Would this be the case, the University would not be authorised to implement studies or conduct research at all. The University is obliged to carry out scientific research in other areas that are necessary for training specialists. Maximum resources (financial, human and material resources) are allocated to the implementation of the study programmes in education.</p> <p>The statement that the University research outputs are weak is incorrect. For example, the analysis of the results of evaluation of research (art) activities of all the Lithuanian research institutions in the period of 2015–2016 showed that the results of the University</p>

	<p>in the Humanities in 2015, both on the basis of expert evaluation and formal evaluation, are high among all the Lithuanian research institutions. In 2016 the quantitative evaluation results in the Humanities, according to the points assigned to a full time equivalent are the highest among all the research institutions.</p> <p>Taking into account the abovementioned criteria, the conclusions about the research output of the University cannot be made only on the basis of certain qualitative and quantitative parameters on educational research and make them comparable to the each output of the whole University.</p>
Low number of PhD students. (Point 9)	<p>Such statement is non-contextual and inaccurate because in the academic year of 2016–2017 44 doctoral students (8 out of them were on academic leave) were studying in Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. In this particular place the experts forgot the specialisation of the University, which they frequently refer to and emphasise and the fact that LEU has the biggest number of doctoral students in educational science in Lithuania. The number of admitted doctoral students is in line with the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-504 of 1 June 2016 “On Approval of the Lists of the Distribution of the Number of State-financed Study Places in Second Cycle and Non-degree (Pedagogical) Studies for Admission of Students in 2016 and the Number of Scholarships According to Research and Study Institutions and Specific Study Fields and the Number of State-financed Study Places in Doctoral Studies for Admission of Students in 2016 and the Number of Scholarships According to Research and Study Institution and Specific Study Areas or Branches of Science”. Following this order, the following numbers of doctoral students were admitted to state-funded places: LEU – 7 doctoral students (2 – Philology, 5 – Educational Science), Kaunas University of Technology – 1 doctoral student (Educational Science), Klaipėda University – 2 doctoral students (1 – Philology, 1 – Educational Science), Lithuanian Sports University – 3 (Educational Science), Mykolas Romeris University – 5 (2 – Philology, 3 – Educational Science), Šiauliai University – 2 (Educational Science), Vytautas Magnus University – 3 (2 – Philology, 1 – Educational Science), Vilnius University – 7 (6 – Philology, 1 – Educational Science), Lithuanian Language Institute – 4 (Philology), Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore – 3 (Philology).</p> <p>The presented facts show that the biggest number of doctoral students in educational</p>

<p>science are enrolled namely in Lithuanian University of Educational Science.</p> <p>We disagree with the statement. The evidence in support of the conclusion has not been provided. In the period of 2012–2016 all the necessary prerequisites were created for increase in the quality of scientific (art) activity, promotion of internationalisation, strengthening of research activities giving high priority to educational research:</p> <p>1. The Functional Strategy for Promotion of Research and Arts Activities for 2014–2018 was developed.</p> <p>2. In 2014 the Regulation of Research and Science Activities of the University was adopted, which establishes organisation of research and professional art activities in the University, regulates determination of developmental directions and programmes of scientific research, developmental directions and programmes of artistic activities, accountability and internal quality assurance, dissemination of results of research and arts activities, financing, protection of intellectual property and other issues related to research and arts activities.</p> <p>3. In 2014 the Research Foundation was re-established in the University (approved by the Resolution of the Senate of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences No. 327, 11 June 2014). Its regulations were adapted following recommendations of external experts presented in 2012, where considering the priority of development of research in educational science in the University, specific measures for implementation of this priority were outlined: to provide additional competitive financing to high quality research in education and training according to priority research directions and programmes approved by the Senate (Point 2.1, Regulations of the Research Foundation, 2014); to provide financing to heads of priority research programmes in education and other areas approved by the Senate pursuant to the Regulations of Research and Arts Activities in LEU approved by the Senate (Point 2.6, Regulations of the Research Foundation, 2014) as well as to provide financial prerequisites for all the members of the academic community of the University (from students of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd study cycles to well-acknowledged researchers) for development of interdisciplinary research, promotion of internationalisation of research (art) activities, for publishing of periodical (continuous) publications of the University, to give incentives to research fellows, teachers and doctoral students for most productive and high quality research (art) activities and to provide additional competitive financing to other priority research (art)</p>	<p>The lack of strategic management of research, in particular within managing human resources, but also in organising international research cooperation. (Point 10)</p>
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<p>programmes.</p> <p>4. In 2015 the Description of Procedure of Organising Tenders for Taking Positions, Attestation and Minimal Requirements Determination for Teachers, Research Staff and Other Researchers of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences of LEU was adopted, which provides for procedures for organising competitions for filling positions of the University teachers, research fellows and other researchers, the procedure for attestation and minimal qualification requirements.</p> <p>5. In 2015 the long-term priority research (art) programmes of the University were formulated.</p> <p>6. The procedure for allocation of research funds was prepared. In 2015, pursuant to the Resolution of the University Council No. 1 of 2 February 2015 and the Order of the Rector Nr. 1-77 of 2 February, considering funds received for “research and arts activity results”, it was decided that at least 30 % of funds allocated to academic divisions has to be used (on competitive basis) for development on research (art) activities in faculties with focus on priorities of internationalisation and educational research.</p> <p>7. In 2017 creating preconditions for strengthening of international reputation and impact factor of research journals published in the University (3 of which “Pedagogika”, “Ugdymo psichologija”, “Socialinis ugdymas” are of obvious educational orientation and to big extent publish papers written on the basis of research conducted by the University researchers), the Strategic Plan for renewal of journals’ publishing infrastructure was prepared and specific financial support was allocated to promotion of publishing activities related to internationalisation and improvement of quality criteria (The Order of the Rector No. 1-121 of 13 March 2017; the Order of the Rector No. 1-234 of 21 April 2017).</p> <p>8. Seeking to ensure a systemic renewal of the academic community of the University and the related full preparation of the young researchers – doctoral students in educational science for research work, to encourage doctoral students of the University to improve their research qualification, to promote scientific research or creative ideas of doctoral students, to increase international mobility, to support international dissemination of the research results of doctoral students, the Procedure for Development of Internationalisation of Doctoral Students at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences was developed and approved (The Order of the Rector No. 1-332</p>	
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<p>Analysis of the impact of the research on the University has not been conducted. (Point 11)</p>	<p>of 21 June 2017).</p> <p>We think that both formulating this statement and translating it into the Lithuanian language factual and translation mistakes were made. Such statement does not make sense in English and in Lithuanian. The impact of the research conducted in the University is revealed in the part of the SAR “Impact on ...” which received a highly positive evaluation.</p> <p>If the situation of scientific research in the University was meant, the analysis of production was conducted by external experts (MOSTA) and in the University itself (The analysis of research production of the period of 2012–2014; 2015; 2016). The comparative analysis of educational research was also carried out (“The Educational Science in Lithuania in the Period of 2010-2014. The Data and Insights”).</p>
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Rector of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences

Alg. Gaizutis

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