



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

LIETUVOS KŪNO KULTŪROS AKADEMIJOS VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION	4
III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	5
IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING	12
V. RESEARCH AND ART	17
VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	21
VII. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
VIII. JUDGEMENT	27
ANNEX. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT	

I. INTRODUCTION

In October 2011, The Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education, hereafter referred to as ‘LAPE’ or ‘the Academy’, underwent an institutional review organised by The Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). In June 2011 the Team of national and international experts selected and appointed by the SKVC (hereafter ‘the Team’, were provided with the *Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education*, alongside a copy of the LAPE Self Evaluation Report. The Team attended an Introductory Meeting at the SKVC Offices in Vilnius on 24th October 2011 and undertook a site visit to LAPE between 25 and 27 October 2011. During the site visit, the Team collected oral evidence to supplement the written evidence provided in the Self Evaluation and its appendices. Over the three-day visit, the Team held eighteen meetings and met with over 80 internal and external stakeholders, including a wide range of staff, students, social partners and alumni.

The Team consisted of:

Leader **Geoffrey Robinson**, Education Consultant, Honorary Professor, School of Geography and Geosciences, University of St. Andrews, UK

Secretary: **Karen Jones** Quality Reviews Manager, Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), Ireland

Members: **Sigmund Loland**, Rector/professor, The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway
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The *Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education* defined the criteria to be followed in an external institutional review of higher education institutions organised by the Agency authorised by the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. The Methodology was produced in line with the Law on Research and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 54-2140) as part of the implementation process of Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September 2010 and other legal acts governing the activities and evaluation of higher education institutions and the provisions of the European guidelines for quality assurance in higher education.

The Team was directed to draw upon the self-evaluation report, the learning resources evaluation initiated by the Ministry for Education and Science, data obtained during the on-site visit, the judgements and recommendations of the previous evaluation, the follow-up data and other information on the performance of the higher education institution.

The experts have also been presented with the results of the evaluation of learning resources and associated infrastructure conducted by MOSTA and with the evaluation decision of 22 June 2012.

The purpose of external review is to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of higher education institutions and the promotion of their culture of quality, also to offer recommendations for the development of the activities of higher education institutions.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

LAPE has recently celebrated its 77th anniversary, having been established in 1934. The Self Evaluation confirms that since its foundation, it has trained over 13,000 physical education and sports specialists and is particularly proud of its associations with sports professionals who have competed at European, World and Olympic levels. LAPE's Study Programmes are currently organised around two faculties (until 2008 there were three) and two departments (until 2008 there were 17). At present it offers eight Bachelors, nine Masters and two Doctoral level study programmes with 2417 students and 133 lecturers and researchers.

Over the last decade LAPE has undergone significant changes. It has established a research base focused upon international competitiveness and in 2010/11 succeeded in achieving an ambitious goal of tripling its research productivity. At its own initiative, an external evaluation was undertaken by International Experts in 2007-08 with an aim to restructure and improve the competitiveness of research and study programmes within LAPE. For the evidence available to the Team, LAPE responded positively to that exercise and has made strong progress. A second phase of restructuring has been recently associated with a change to LAPE's legal status. In 2011, supplemented by EUSF funding, LAPE embarked upon a project to improve managerial competence with a view to creating an optimum organisational structure and preparing a new strategic management process. The LAPE Council approved the new structure in June 2011. LAPE's new vision is to be *"One of the leading European universities in sports, wellness, recreation and rehabilitation."* Its strategic goal is *"To become one of the best European universities (academies) in sport, physical education, health, recreation and rehabilitation sciences keeping pace with the best traditions of research, studies and ...serving Lithuanian population."*

LAPE's ambition and commitment to benchmark itself against best European and international practices, particularly in terms research, was clearly evident throughout the oral and written evidence received and considered by the Team. The Rector and indeed the Rectorate as a whole, is commended for the ambitiousness of the institution and the achievements delivered over the last three years in particular resulting in significant structural and cultural changes. The Team felt confident that although this concerted approach towards international competitiveness has been extremely ambitious, the staff and students appeared supportive of the new direction and proud of the successes achieved.

In addition to striving towards European and international competitiveness in its research and study programmes, a wealth of evidence was presented on LAPE's work regionally and nationally. The Team saw LAPE as offering several programmes of national benefit, particularly the new study programme for Adapted Physical Activity that was unique in Lithuania and supported via European funding. However despite the acknowledged uniqueness and national value of the Adapted Physical Activity programme, the Team were advised that the programme, indeed several programmes within LAPE, received little or no state funding through the student voucher 'basket' system. This was noted by the Team as a cause of considerable difficulty within LAPE, particularly in terms of financial, infrastructure and strategic planning.

LAPE's Engagement with the Institutional Review Process

LAPE is the second HEI in Lithuania to be evaluated at an institutional level by SKVC, and the first public HEI to do so. The Team understands that this represented for the University and its management a special challenge. The Team therefore wishes to commend the University for engaging so positively at what is undoubtedly an inopportune time to undergo such an extensive organisational review. While being in a period of considerable internal transition and only having

recently agreed a range of new management structures, strategic initiatives and organisational developments, LAPE appeared engaged with the process and accommodated the needs and requests of the team in advance of and during the review visit. The Team considered, however, it was unfortunate that the institutional review of LAPE was scheduled at this time. It was felt that an institutional review later in the SKVC review schedule would have enabled LAPE to implement the significant restructuring required of it as a result of the recent change of Legal Status. At the time of this review, LAPE had not yet fully enacted a range of key initiatives of relevance to the scope of review.

In terms of the LAPE Self Evaluation report, the Team were satisfied with the quality and quantity of information provided in the document and in its numerous appendices. Information was presented on the processes and timelines followed to prepare the Self Evaluation, utilising over thirty members of staff at varying levels of seniority within LAPE through the establishment of five section-specific work groups. The document itself was commended by the Team as being largely evaluative, explicitly identifying areas of acknowledged weakness and shortcomings. This was seen as a strength and confirmation that LAPE is a critically aware institution. Discussions with the Students' Union, 1st and 2nd cycle students, alumni, social partners, researchers and administrative staff during the site visit, however, identified that they had little or no opportunity to contribute to the substance of the Self Evaluation. This was a disappointment to the Team. Furthermore, it was reported that the final Self Evaluation document did not appear to have been issued to or read by the majority of stakeholders met by the Team. While LAPE is commended for the critical nature of its Self Evaluation and for undertaking a SWOT analysis in preparation for the review, it is encouraged to recognise the benefits organisationally of widening its consultation process for future reviews. A wide range of stakeholders has the ability and asserted their desire to contribute more actively and systematically to support LAPE in delivering against its mission, vision and goals. This is a valuable resource and should be utilised by LAPE more proactively in the future.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Fitness for purpose, publicity, guarantees for implementation and management effectiveness of the Strategic Plan

The Academy presents its strategic plans through two key documents, (i) Strategic Planning of Activities – covering a three year period and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science, and (ii) the LAPE Developmental Strategy – this is the main strategy utilised internally. The Self Evaluation document is commended for being explicit in acknowledging that whilst aware of the need to track systematically the implementation of its strategic plans, LAPE did not to date have any accurate indices or any mechanisms in place for monitoring delivery against strategic plans. Additionally, LAPE identified that it also did not have any mechanisms for modifying or improving strategic plans once formally approved. The Self Evaluation identifies that a working group would need to be established to develop a monitoring process. During the visit, the Team received an organisational chart, approved by the Council in June 2011, wherein the Director of Development and International Relations was responsible for a Project Management Department within LAPE. The Team would expect the functions of monitoring and evaluating delivery against institutional Strategic Planning to be assigned to this task should be assigned to the Project management Department, under the Director of Development. As a matter of urgency, LAPE is encouraged to establish a clear process and reporting structure for monitoring the implementation and impact of its strategic plans.

In terms of the accessibility of LAPE strategic plans, throughout the preparatory and site visit stages of the institutional review process, the Team sought clarification on the connectivity and currency of the numerous annual reports and strategic plans made available to the Team. Additionally, when

the Team asked internal and external stakeholders of their involvement in the development of the most recent strategic plan, the vast majority of respondents were either unaware of or unconnected to the latest strategic planning documents. The Team would therefore encourage LAPE to establish a more comprehensive structure for communicating with both internal and external audiences about LAPE's strategic planning and eliciting their contributions. Increased effectiveness in communicating the LAPE strategic plan is indeed an aspiration identified by LAPE within the Self Evaluation document, yet the Team saw no evidence of any proposed timelines or mechanisms for this to be achieved. Additionally, LAPE should provide opportunities and mechanisms for a wider group of internal and external stakeholders, particularly students and social partners to contribute to the assessment of the fitness for purpose of the plan, and the design, development and delivery of any future strategic plans.

Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance systems

The Self Evaluation document identified that in line with the Law of Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Lithuania, LAPE strives to ensure the effectiveness of its study programmes. To this end, LAPE conducts student questionnaires to periodically evaluate the quality of teaching. The Team was advised that the completion rates of student questionnaires was impressive, at between 45-60 per cent, and also that LAPE supplemented survey information with the use of roundtable discussions and seminars on student issues. It was reported that Heads of Departments regularly assess student feedback and summarise the findings for staff members. Additionally, every three-six years each study programme undergoes a formal evaluation, and every five years the teaching and research staff are individually evaluated. There is no evaluation system for administrative or service staff.

Discussions with student representatives and current 1st and 2nd cycle students during the review visit confirmed that student questionnaires were indeed made available online for students to assess the quality of teaching. These would usually be completed at the end of the academic year for each courses of study. However, it was reported that LAPE's student surveys were not systematically conducted across the institution and that the survey itself was difficult to complete. As a result, the Students' Union representatives that met the Team reported that they were in the process of designing an alternative student questionnaire and were aiming for a 75-80% response rate. The Team commends the Students' Union for its proactive approach but recommends it liaise with the Rectorate to see if the official LAPE questionnaire can be amended in line with Students Union feedback, to avoid overburdening students with two questionnaires. Future student questionnaires could be expanded to explore the student experience beyond the study programme to take account of the range of student support services and other learning resources available within the University.

In terms of its formal quality assurance process, in December 2010 the LAPE Senate approved *Regulations of the Study Quality Assurance Committee*. The Regulations established a collegial body aimed at evaluating the study quality within LAPE. During the site visit the Team met eight members of the LAPE Study Quality Assessment Committee who reported that the Committee had met on four occasions within 2011. The Vice Rector for Academic Affairs was identified as having overall responsibility for the Committee's work and would also have responsibility for the Studies Quality Supervision Centre that was identified in the new organisational structure of June 2011, but was yet to be established at the time of review.

In January 2011, the Rectorate was noted as having approved a proposed organisational structure that would deliver an internal quality assurance system (QMS) to assess all stages of LAPE's study programmes. The proposed QMS appeared to the Team to be consistent with the Part 1 European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Additionally, the (i) organisational structures, (ii) arrangements for planning and implementation

alongside (iii) the mechanisms for monitoring delivery of outcomes identified through the QMS process, were considered to be robust and also in line with European practices. The Team commends LAPE for having based its proposed QMS on established quality assurance (QA) structures operating in universities in Finland and Portugal and for mapping its proposal against ESG Part 1.

The proposed QMS system was developed by a Quality Monitoring Group (QMG) the members of which were heads of administrative and academic departments. During the site visit the Team also met with the project manager who prepared the LAPE QMS proposal for submission for European Funding. At the time of the Team's visit however the outcome of the funding submission was unknown. While the Team therefore found much to commend about LAPE's proposed internal quality assurance system and its consistency with European standards and guidelines, it was disappointed that LAPE had yet to implement any formal internal QA review process or establish any centralised quality support facility. LAPE is therefore encouraged, with immediate effect, to initiate its proposed QMS system and establish its central service to support and monitor the QMS implementation and its consistency with the Part 1 ESG requirements.

Appropriateness of the organisational structure

LAPE is a state university with its structures defined by the acts of law of the Republic of Lithuania and the Academy Statute. From 2011 onwards, linked to its change in legal status, LAPE's governance, management, organisational and decision-making arrangements were restructured as LAPE transitioned from a budget to a public institution. A Council, a Senate, and an Academy Rector now direct LAPE's governance. The Senate is the governing body for academic affairs, with members representing the academic community and LAPE's administration. The Council is the body of local management authority. Its remit is defined by Law and its membership includes academic staff and social partners. The Rector heads the Rectorate, which discusses organisational, academic, research, economic and other activities of the Academy, to assist the Rector implement the decisions of the Council and Senate.

The functions of both Council and Senate are set by the law. The Council is required to meet biannually, but over the last year it was reported by its members that it met eight times linked to the development of the new Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision of LAPE. The Team saw this as a positive sign of the organisational challenges encountered during the transition period and the Council's commitment to its new functions. Council and Senate members confirmed they were clear on the split between their roles and confirmed there was connectivity between the two groups, including one member who sits on both. Discussions between the Team and representatives of both Council and Senate identified a willingness and ability of the two bodies to work efficiently and effectively together.

As a state university, LAPE had autonomy to create its own internal structures. The Self Evaluation reports that LAPE used this autonomy several times during the last five years to rationalise its structures in order better to deliver its strategic aims and goals. Many of the initial structural changes undertaken since 2008 were in response to the recommendations of the first international evaluation, wherein LAPE was encouraged to streamline its structures. The most notable changes were made in relation to: (i) the reorganisation of faculties, (ii) the restructuring of departments, (iii) the restructuring of research laboratories, and (iv) the restructuring of administrative and service divisions. The Team was advised that the majority of structural changes were coordinated by the Rectorate in consultation with the academic community. Meetings with academic, research and administrative staff undertaken during the review visit confirmed that LAPE had gone through a period of significant organisational and cultural change and a second phase of changes was in the process of being implemented. But the changes undertaken to date were found to be well managed

with minimal disruption reported by staff and students. The Team commends LAPE for successfully implementing the various restructuring projects and is confident that the current implementing of the transition phase will be equally successful. LAPE is, however, encouraged to establish robust mechanisms for systematically measuring deliverables when implementing the new organisational structures, for assessing their fitness for purpose and for regularly monitoring the impact of the changes on internal and external stakeholders.

Human resource management

The Self Evaluation document provided information on the mechanisms used within LAPE to recognise and reward the quality of teaching, research, and administrative staff. It acknowledges that at the time of the preparation, there was no formal Human Resources (HR) Strategy within LAPE. It advised that in Autumn 2010 a working group had been established to prepare a staff development implementation plan, but at the time of the site visit, the Team failed to see any evidence that an HR Strategy or implementation plan had been prepared or approved. Additionally, the Self Evaluation revealed that while teaching and research staff vacancies are allocated to areas of need within departments and laboratories, there is no formal connection between HR and strategic planning. This was confirmed in various discussions during the site visit. Heads of departments were able to explain to the Team the criteria used for staff selection and appointments and confirmed that clear criteria are provided for all posts. Each year Heads are invited to submit requests for new posts as part of an open competition. All applications are considered and a Commission makes the final decision based on the strength of the arguments received. It was reported that LAPE had recently extended this process to involve the views of study programme directors.

The Team encourages LAPE to finalise and publish its HR Strategy and Implementation Plan and ensure that, where appropriate, flexibility is afforded within it to include staff recruitment, selection and the recognition and reward of excellence in allocating the priorities of the LAPE Strategic Plan. LAPE is also encouraged to devise a distribution system for the strategic allocation of human resources between teaching, research, support (technical, library) and administrative staff as an essential element in implementing the Plan. The Team was made aware of the official staffing requirements for departments and study programmes as defined in the Academy Statute and in law. From the information received, the Team is confident that LAPE's new structures meet all such requirements. The Team was also informed of the remuneration constraints for teaching, research and administrative staff.

In relation to teaching and research staff, it was noted that salaries are defined at three levels directly linked to research productivity. During the last five years, the qualification requirements were revised on three occasions to encourage increases in research productivity. But despite the qualitative and quantitative increases in requirements, the Self Evaluation identified a need for the whole remuneration and workload allocation system within LAPE to be adjusted to emphasise the needs for quality in research and teaching activities. The remuneration of administrative and support staff in LAPE is linked to nationally agreed levels and requirements. The Team were advised that within LAPE administrative salaries are reviewed at the end of each calendar year but there is little possibility of salaries being improved by the post-holder directly or any improvements in their qualifications. This was identified by LAPE as being a cause for concern in relation to staff motivation. The administrative staff who met the Team appeared very capable, qualified and competent. The Team consider this to be an area of significant opportunity and strength. LAPE is encouraged to explore ways to engage formally and fully with and utilise the skills and experience of its committed and competent administrative staff to better effect, particularly in relation to the contribution they could make to strategic planning design, delivery and monitoring.

The Team noted from the Self Evaluation that there was no approved order within LAPE to create preconditions or raise the need for the improvement of staff skills to be linked to the strategic plan. During the site visit the Team questioned staff on whether systems were in place to support their career planning and for providing continuous professional development. It was confirmed that limited structures and provision are available for teaching and research staff. For administrative staff, however, with few exceptions there is no such availability: exceptions include in-service training for staff within the Office of Finance, Accounting and Economics, and the Office of Personnel Management. Given its restrictions in rewarding administrative staff excellence, LAPE is encouraged to establish a programme of continuous professional development to help motivate and reward the professionalism of administrative staff. This is particularly crucial for the staff within central service departments such as the Project Management Department, the International Relations Department, the Marketing and Careers Centre, the Language Centre and the forthcoming Quality Supervision Centre. From their experiences of higher education nationally and internationally, the Team is confident that the establishment of an in-service training and mobility plan for the development of professionalised and specialised staff within core central units would impact positively on the effectiveness of teaching, research and administration across the entire university.

In terms of maximum impact, the Team identified the swift implementation of the proposed Workload Allocation Model as a priority for the Academy. The Team noted that the LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-12 indicated that the new workload accounting process was to be in place before 1 November 2011. At the time of the review the Team saw no written evidence of the new system, but heads of academic departments who met the Team confirmed they were aware of the new model and the requirements expected of them in working to it. Additionally, teaching and research staff confirmed they were anticipating its introduction in 2012. It was noted that the new model would take account of pedagogic workload, research and regional activities, and for the first time formally account for staff time in relation to curriculum design, innovation and quality assurance. After one year's operation, it is proposed that the Rectorate will assess its impact.

In the Team's view, implementing the Workload Allocation Model will lead to good practice. LAPE is clearly endeavouring to ensure that research activities inform the study programmes. The distinction between teachers and researchers has been quite restrictive but the Team anticipates that the new model will enable more staff to have greater diversity and flexibility within their contracts. Currently it was noted that all full-time teachers mainly undertake research in their leisure time, as only a very small amount of their salaried time is allocated to anything other than contact hours. Time spent on curriculum development, teaching innovation and lecture preparation currently receives no formal recognition. Thus although it is yet to be implemented the Team is confident that the proposed Workload Allocation Model will have a significant positive impact in terms of redressing the balance between research, study, voluntary and enhancement activities within staff workloads.

Change management

Evidence considered by the Team confirmed that LAPE undertakes no formal analysis of the processes it employs to manage change. As identified in the sub-sections above, no formal tracking processes were found in relation to strategic planning, monitoring the impact or implementation of restructuring, or for assuring the quality of its policies and procedures. A listing of a wide range of implementation activities, together with envisaged would-be dates for completion, was presented within the LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-12. There is no evidence however, in that or any other document seen by the Team, of details on the speed and level of advancement of priorities, or the identification of individuals charged with performing the multiple tasks involved.

Without a formal tracking system in place, the Team considers that LAPE is unable systematically or strategically to manage change. It would struggle to downgrade or upgrade activities linked to strategic priorities or revise its original plans to respond to wider changes in the internal and external environments. This lack of system in monitoring change could also result in confusion and internal conflict. Indeed, it may result in mis-communication and failure to deliver priorities. The Self Evaluation identifies and indeed the LAPE SWOT analysis identified weaknesses in monitoring and tracking. The Team therefore encourages LAPE to develop as a matter of urgency robust formal and informal communication channels and structures within the Academy, both horizontally and vertically, to assist in the systematic tracking and monitoring of change-management activities.

Learning resources management and allocation

The LAPE Self Evaluation reports that funds are distributed effectively within the Academy in line with strategic priorities. It states that LAPE not only managed to get out of debt within the period for review, but also managed to build up a reserve. Investments made by LAPE were primarily directed towards improvements in the quality of the study infrastructure. Evidence considered by the Team confirmed that between 2005 and 2010 LAPE invested more than 3.7 million Lt in the renewal of its infrastructure, with support for study programmes being the priority for investment. Significant investments were noted in the Department of Adapted Physical Activity, the Library, the track and field arena, and the auditorium–laboratory building.

The Team received evidence orally and in writing that within academic and research units, responsibility for financial management is maintained at faculty level. While Faculty Deans maintain budgets, long-term financial decisions are made by Faculty Councils, not the Deans personally. Additionally, it was noted that a central infrastructure budget can be accessed again through Faculty Councils. The Council monitors financial management and budgets. The Team considers the reporting systems to be satisfactory, with confirmation given that strong discussions are regularly held around issues of budget, income and expenditure.

In advance of the site visit, the Team received from SKVC an evaluation of LAPE’s learning resources, commissioned by the Ministry for Education and Science. The new indicators were produced by the Centre for Monitoring and Analysis in Research and HE (MOSTA) (Order N° V-1170 of July 1, 2011), for evaluating an institution’s learning resources, associated infrastructure and human resources. The Team noted the methodology was not yet stabilized and thus still under review. The document considered by the Team outlined indicators evaluating LAPE’s learning resources, infrastructure and human resources in 2008, 2009 and 2010 against national minimum and maximum values. The evaluation metrics gave a mixed review of LAPE’s compliance; some indicators are above and others below the minimum levels set by the Ministry. The Assessment summary that concluded the document indicated that LAPE does not comply with minimum resources in two areas, (i) adequacy and availability of learning resources and associated infrastructure, and (ii) prior academic preparedness and motivation of entrants and changes in student numbers.

During the site visit, the Team held one meeting specifically to discuss LAPE’s evaluation outcomes. In relation to the adequacy of learning resources, having seen evidence of the recent investments made to the infrastructure, including the Library, and having undertaken a tour of LAPE’s learning resources, the Team is confident that identified shortcomings had already been adequately addressed by the Academy. With respect to the academic ability of entrants, the Team discussed the metrics with staff and deliberated on the points raised. It was noted that LAPE entrants frequently relied on strength in physical rather than purely academic areas. Furthermore, the vocational and practical emphases placed on LAPE students in the study programmes reinforced

the importance of skills and physical aptitude. Academic excellence alone is insufficient for success in LAPE programmes. While the arguments presented were persuasive, the Team encourages LAPE to establish a systematic, centrally managed student recruitment and retention policy and process. This would enable LAPE to monitor the academic progress of its students and ensure that any academic weaknesses are identified and supported where possible.

While noting that the methodology used by MOSTA was still in its infancy, the Team identified some significant shortcomings. In particular, the application of the Learning Resource metrics is unconvincing, especially in the values set as maxima and minima. Many seem arbitrary, and are unaccompanied by any explanation of their logical basis. Thus while outside the direct brief of the Team, it was considered important that for future evaluations, the Ministry and MOSTA are encouraged to work alongside Lithuanian HEIs to ensure that any future metrics are based on best European and international practices. The aim would be to enable Lithuanian HEIs to benchmark themselves more effectively against European and other international competitors. This would maximise the value and use of the data collection process and its outcomes at an institutional and national level.

The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:

1. The Students' Union's proactive approach to enhancing the LAPE Student feedback questionnaires.
2. The proposed internal quality assurance system and its alignment with European standards and guidelines.
3. The successful implementation of various restructuring projects.
4. LAPE's awareness of the need systematically to track the implementation of its strategic plans and the Rector and Rectorate's willingness to address this issue.
5. The quality, competence, commitment and enthusiasm of LAPE's staff.
6. Although yet to be implemented, the proposed Workload Allocation Model will have a significant positive impact in terms of redressing the balance between research, study, voluntary and enhancement activities within staff workloads.

The team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

1. The student questionnaires are narrowly focused on the study programmes; they fail to take account of the range of student support services and other available learning resources.
2. LAPE has not yet initiated its proposed QMS system; as yet there is no central service to support and monitor the QMS implementation and its consistency with the Part 1 ESG requirements.
3. LAPE currently lacks robust mechanisms for systematically measuring deliverables when implementing the new organisational structures; for assessing their fitness for purpose; and for regularly monitoring the impact of the changes on internal and external stakeholders.
4. Also currently lacking are a clear process and reporting structures for monitoring the implementation and impact of LAPE's strategic plans.
5. A more comprehensive structure is needed for communicating with both internal and external audiences about LAPE's strategic planning and eliciting their contributions.
6. There is no system in place for the strategic allocation of human resources between teaching, research, support (technical, library) and administrative staff; this should be an essential element of process of implementing the strategic plan.
7. Administrative staff are currently a valuable but underutilised resource.
8. There is no formal HR strategy in place and hence no formal connection with LAPE's strategic plan.
9. Monitoring and support of students, in the interests of their retention, are inadequate.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given a negative evaluation

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Links between study programmes, the LAPE strategic plan and national priorities

LAPE's vision is to be one of the leading European universities of sports, physical education, rehabilitation, health promotion and recreation. In line with its Mission, LAPE is committed to constantly developing its study programmes for all cycles in each of the areas identified in the vision statement. The Self Evaluation document provided detail on the numerous curriculum revisions undertaken over the past decade in line with this commitment. LAPE's discipline specialities are also longstanding. The Academy has been training physiotherapists since 1991, specialists in adapted physical activity since 1993, tourism and sports managers since 1995, health related physical activity since 2002 and recreation sports organisers since 2006. It offers 17 study programmes, eight first cycle and nine second cycle. LAPE has repeatedly modified its study programmes in line with changing internal and external factors, including in response to feedback from social partners, with an aim to ensure the employability of its graduates. The oldest study programmes provided by LAPE in physical Education and sports coaching have been significantly modified over the last decade with the aims of introducing new specialisms – such as dance and golf in addition to increasing employment possibilities for graduates. The Team commends this commitment. Strategic documents, including the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan confirm a clear aim to train specialists who will answer the needs of the Lithuanian population through physical activity.

The Self Evaluation identified instances of LAPE continuously cooperating with academic, social and business partners, and examples of how this cooperation impacts on the content of study programmes, the organization and the equality of studies. Cooperation with academic, social and business partners is carried out primarily by study programme coordinators and study programme committees. Evidence was presented that the Physiotherapy study programme is prepared according to the competencies indicated in guidelines of the World Physiotherapy Association (WCPT) for training physiotherapists. The programme coordinator is also the President of the Lithuanian Physiotherapy Society. Similarly, the programme in Tourism and Sport Management has had close contacts with academic partners since 2004-2008 participating in EU Erasmus Thematic Network *Aligning European Higher Education Structure in Europe*. Emphasis is placed on programmes meeting the needs of the labour market especially in sports management. The study programme "Sports Coaching" is improved by cooperating with the Department of Physical Education and Sport, the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee, the Union of Lithuanian Sports Federations, the departments of physical education and sports in regional and city municipalities, and sports schools in the country. Herein, social partners evaluate the programme and give their comments.

The Team received documentary evidence outlining the myriad ways LAPE influences and informs national developments in physical activity. Over the past decade LAPE was active in calling for the establishment of a national strategy to improve Lithuania's health. As a consequence, a group of researchers in Health and Physical Activity prepared a *Strategy for the promotion of physical activity in the Lithuanian population: 2008-2020*, which was integrated into the *Lithuanian Republic Physical Education and Sports Development Strategy for 2011-2020*, adopted in March 2011. This is just one example of several initiatives seen by the Team where LAPE had directly influenced Lithuanian politicians and national strategies. LAPE's expertise and research were also noted as making a valuable contribution nationally in relation to the *Longterm Economic Development Strategy of Lithuania*, the *National Security Strategy*, the *National Concept of Health*, and the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development*.

One of the most specialist study programme areas provided at LAPE aligns closely with the *National Programme of the Social Integration of the Disabled People*. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the work undertaken within LAPE of staff and students linked to adapted physical activities was considered both unique and essential to Lithuania, regionally and nationally. The demand for specialists in this area can be traced back to the *UN Standard Rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities* (1993) and the EU provision, *Equality of opportunity for people with disabilities – a new community disability strategy* (1996). LAPE trains students who are competent to deliver quality services to the disabled in all areas of social activity. It also carries out research nationally and internationally on issues of rehabilitation, education, recreation, the participation of disabled people in the labour market, and the development of social policies for ensuring the wellbeing and socialization of disabled people. In this regard, LAPE is seen as directly providing a valuable service to Lithuanian society. The Team is therefore confident from the information it considered, that LAPE study programmes are entirely in keeping with the institution's strategic vision and plan. The profile of courses LAPE delivers is also of specialisms informed and required by partners regionally and nationally.

Studies and Lifelong learning opportunities

The Lithuanian Law on Higher Education and Research (2009) required universities to make a variety of learning opportunities available to students, including full-time/continual, and part-time/extended studies. Data from 1 October 2010 showed there to be 2417 undergraduate and postgraduate students at LAPE, 687 of them full-time, 370 part-time, 1073 in the continual form of studies and 287 in the extended form of studies. In 2010 the state-funded places at LAPE were taken by 1084 students, with a further 1333 students paying their own fees. The majority of fee-paying students were registered on first-cycle programmes. Competition in 2010 was greatest for state-funded places in Sports Recreation and Tourism (14.52 requests:1 place) and Physiotherapy (9.95 requests:1 place). The most popular programmes for applicants were in Sports Coaching and Physiotherapy. LAPE is recognised as increasingly the destination of choice for students in the Kaunas region, but also attracts students from across Lithuania and beyond. 81 per cent of applicants to second cycle studies were LAPE graduates.

On several occasions during the site visit, the Team was advised that the national admission system is ineffectual and socially unfair, particularly for state-funded places. The public health programme, for example, in 2010 secured only one-state funded place; the adapted physical activity programme secured no state-funded place. This situation was considered to be inequitable. Furthermore, it operates against a policy purporting to support and encourage lifelong learning. The fact therefore that a high percentage of LAPE students were fee paying resulted in them being hardest hit in times of economic crisis. The Team is concerned that uncertainty in state funding will constrain LAPE's ability to undertake long term budgetary and strategic planning.

The Academy currently provides opportunities for students to follow individual study programmes prepared by the *Regulations of Individual Study Programmes*(2007). This initiative enables individual students to follow a programme tailored to their individual needs. The individual study route is only available to advanced students and the numbers choosing it are small. The Self Evaluation identified shortcomings within LAPE in relation to distance learning and individualised learning opportunities. It confirms that LAPE is yet to offer any programmes through distance learning. The 2011-2012 Activities Guidelines, however, states that the Academy is now offering staff the possibility to undertake training at Kaunas University of Technology to prepare modules for use in distance learning and by non-traditional students. Programmes of non-formal education are to be prepared by July 2012, with a view to being implemented from September 2012. The Team encourages LAPE to have distance-learning modules in place from the next academic year onwards and establish processes to monitor the quality of the student experience.

Study programmes, employability and social partnerships

Staff, students and social partners were unanimous in their praise for the employability focus of the LAPE curriculum. The inclusion of internships within the majority of its programmes worked well and was seen as a unique facet of studies at LAPE. The students confirmed that placements undertaken were always of good quality, in management (skilled) rather than junior (unskilled) roles. Students on the Tourism programmes, for example, reported that they had excellent placements provided to them, all managed by a practice co-ordinator within their department. Students undertaking placements outside Lithuania are also supported by staff in the International Relations Office. Postgraduate students also confirmed that LAPE staff continued to contact and support them while working at a 2nd- or 3rd- cycle level at other national and international institutions. Erasmus programmes were also regarded by undergraduate and postgraduate students as excellent opportunities to enhance their skill and employability levels.

The Team is therefore satisfied that study programme and departmental levels, LAPE excels in its emphasis on students being workforce ready. Nevertheless, the Team was surprised that the Academy had not yet established a centralised careers unit and disappointed at the lack of progress in this important aspect of student support. While it was noted that the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs would have responsibility for a new Marketing and Careers Centre, the 2011-2012 Activity Guidelines scheduled regulations for the new Centre to have been prepared by 1 September 2011, and a strategy to be prepared by 1 November 2011. During the site visit the Team saw no evidence of either document being in place. Current and former students, along with Students' Union representatives all expressed the view that a central careers service would be extremely valuable for LAPE students and were frustrated at the delay in its inception. The Self Evaluation reported that LAPE currently participates in a national career monitoring system implemented by the Vilnius University Careers Centre. The project includes the analysis of careers service activities in other universities, the ranges of services provided and the competences of careers advisers within the universities. LAPE should ensure that the Careers Centre it is proposing to establish is benchmarked against both national and international examples of best practice. The lack of a Careers Service is a significant shortcoming. The Team encourages LAPE to establish the new service, based on identified best practice, as a matter of urgency.

The Self Evaluation identifies a desire to enhance the ways that LAPE monitors and communicates with its Alumni. While an Alumni Club has operated since 2004, its membership is limited to former LAPE teachers who meet informally. LAPE graduates were noted as playing a significant role in the regional community. They occupy key roles in local tourism agencies as well as in teaching posts within the region and in LAPE itself. The Team held discussions with eleven alumni during the site visit and identified a desire and enthusiasm from them for an official Alumni Association to be established by LAPE. This would not only be of interest to them personally, but would also be a valuable resource for graduates and LAPE professionally when seeking internships for current students. It would also provide LAPE with an additional fundraising stream for future activities and developments. The Team noted that monitoring and communication with alumni currently operates informally at a departmental or study programme level amongst staff and former students. LAPE is encouraged to explore the possibility of utilising the national careers monitoring system as the basis for developing its own centrally managed tracking and alumni facility within LAPE.

The Self Evaluation also identifies an acknowledged weakness in LAPE's interactions with business. Despite the Team being impressed by the range of interactions LAPE enjoys with social partners, the Self Evaluation states LAPE needs to establish more formal networks or clusters with the business community to increase employability in the sports sector. The Team saw no indication

of how this would be achieved, how progress would be monitored or how the impact would be assessed. During the site visit the Team discussed with social partners whether they would be interested in engaging with LAPE on a more formal level, possibly through a structured forum. There was general agreement that social partners would indeed welcome having more formal and structured engagement with LAPE at a more corporate and strategic level. They felt that this would supplement the already strong relationships between social partners and individual staff at study programme and departmental level. LAPE is encouraged to establish a Social Partners Forum that would meet regularly from 2012 onwards. This would provide opportunities to improve the visibility of LAPE's enhanced roles in research and academic excellence to businesses, social partners and the wider Kaunas community.

Compliance with provisions of the European Higher Education Area

The Self Evaluation document identifies an awareness of the various key documents and developments associated with the evolution of the European Higher Education Area from 2001 onwards. Evidence is present on how LAPE adapted its internal development strategies to respond to the advancing European level requirements. This included the introduction of two study cycles and the use of the ECTS credit system. The LAPE Development Strategy for 2001-2005 is cited as being committed to the promotion of internationality of studies and the improvement of study quality. The LAPE Developmental Strategy for 2005-2010 encourages research in the study area and emphasises the push towards research-informed teaching. The strategy also included proposals for the expansion of LAPE's international cooperation, staff and student mobility and greater participation in international networks and projects. From 2007 onwards, LAPE identified the implementation of three cycles of higher education, incorporating doctoral studies and a commitment to expanding access to higher education for non-traditional students. The LAPE Strategic Activities for 2007-2009 reflected this commitment. Included was the development of a system of lifelong learning opportunities. These would increase the number of students in part-time and extended forms of study, including programmes for continuous studies and in-service training. The 2011-2012 Activity Guidelines confirm pedagogical training courses are to be provided to novice teachers from November 2011 onwards. A new procedure for distance education is also to be available before the end of 2011.

In advance of the site visit, the Team had been provided with an internal analysis of LAPE's compliance with the Part 1 European Standards and Guidelines. The paper documented the evolving formal internal review system within LAPE. It also provided information on the range of structured tools used internally to maintain quality in study programmes. Activities including the use of Study Programme Committees were cited as being used to improve the quality of programmes, alongside student feedback processes. During the review visit, the Team met with members of Study Programme Committees. They affirmed that the committees were actively engaged in revising LAPE programmes in line with ECTS and learning outcomes. They also confirmed that following a Rector's Order in February 2011, academic staff have been updating study programmes against ECTS. Emphasis had also been placed on student-orientated studies. Thus while a learning-outcomes approach had not yet been fully embedded, staff were aware that learning outcomes had to be agreed before 2012 for all study programmes, in advance of the next academic year. The Team commends LAPE's good progress and supports the proposed formal mapping exercise of LAPE programmes, scheduled to be undertaken by the Quality Assurance Committee in 2012.

Staff and Student Mobility

Since 1999 LAPE has actively engaged with various exchange programmes and initiatives, including Erasmus. This process is managed by the International Relations Office (IRO) under the authority of the Rector. The development of internationality is one of LAPE's strategic aims and

consequently the Team saw evidence of the quality and quantity of international networks and organisations with which LAPE staff and students are connected. In 2010 – 2011 the Team noted that LAPE signed 48 bilateral cooperation agreements with institutions in 22 countries for Erasmus exchanges. Bilateral cooperation agreements were also established with universities in the USA, China, the Ukraine and Belorussia; however, due to resource constraints, four teacher internships at Marquette University in the USA were not initiated.

During the visit the Team met with staff and students who had participated in Erasmus exchanges facilitated by the IRO. The positive feedback from both staff and students on their experiences and the support provided by the IRO impressed the Team. Monitoring data presented within the Self Evaluation showed that within 2009-10, 31 academic and seven administrative staff had participated in mobility opportunities. During the last six years, the number of outgoing students on mobility exchanges increased by 65 per cent. Partial studies and placements were chosen by 51 students (48 bachelor, three masters students). In the 2009-2010 academic year, LAPE received 17 incoming students (16 1st cycle and one doctoral candidate). The current incoming to outgoing ratio is therefore 1:3. The growing number of outgoing students was seen to reflect their increased understanding of the benefits of participating in Erasmus programmes. These relate both to the quality of the learning experiences available and enhanced employability skills and opportunities. It was noted that the most active participants in Erasmus programmes were from Tourism and Sports Management and from Physiotherapy. The least active students were identified as coming from the Adapted Physical Activity, Social Pedagogy, and Health and Physical Activity programmes. The reasons cited for inactivity included poor knowledge of English, lack of motivation, financial restrictions and employment commitments in Lithuania. LAPE is commended for its commitment to making mobility a priority for its staff and students. The International Relations Office is also commended for its effective collection and monitoring of qualitative and quantitative data on participation and non-participation rates in exchange programmes.

The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:

1. The institution's continuing commitment to modifying its study programmes in line with changing internal and external factors, including in response to feedback from social partners, with an aim of ensuring the employability of its graduates.
2. LAPE's academic excellence and research make valuable contributions to national developments in physical activity.
3. The work undertaken within the field of adapted physical activities is both unique and essential to Lithuania, regionally and nationally.
4. The number of students choosing LAPE as their first priority is an indication of the attractiveness and reputation of its programmes.
5. The emphasis on employability in the LAPE curricula, the practical and didactic competence of the staff and the inclusion of internships in the majority of programmes work well and are important and distinctive aspects of the LAPE experience.
6. The progress made in terms of Bologna compliance and the proposed formal mapping exercise of LAPE programmes against ECTS, scheduled to be undertaken by the Quality Assurance Committee in 2012.
7. The commitment to making mobility a priority for its staff and students.
8. The International Relations Office in its effective collection and monitoring of qualitative and quantitative data on participation and non-participation rates in exchange programmes.

The Team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

1. The lack of distance learning modules provided as an alternative study mode.
2. The lack of a centralised careers service.

3. Interactions with Alumni are pursued only at department or study programme levels.
4. There is no formal networking of LAPE with the business community.

Judgment on the area: Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is given a positive evaluation.

V. RESEARCH

Research Activities and the institutional mission and strategic documents

Research activities at LAPE are regulated by the LAPE Regulations of Research Activities (2009), which determine the organization and administration of research activities, planning, delivering and accounting. Although research is carried out in four key areas of science (physical, humanities, social and biomedical) the main research output is in the area of social and biomedical sciences. Research at LAPE is approved at a strategic level by the Senate. In 2006 there were five approved areas for research, (i) modelling athletes' training, (ii) physical education, physical activity and health, (iii) rehabilitation of the disabled and adapted physical activity, (iv) sports psychology and motor control, and (v) modelling and management of the leisure sector in the context of the global economy. In 2010 the strategic priority areas remained, although (v) was revised into the dynamics of tourism, sports and active leisure sectors. The Self Evaluation reports that twenty groups of researchers worked in these five areas that are closely aligned with LAPE's strategic vision and goals. Between 2005-2010 researchers at the Academy published more than 950 research articles, 121 in journals on the ISI Web of Science and the ISI Journal Master List. More than 470 articles were also presented at domestic and international conferences. During the last six years LAPE researchers also published thirteen scientific monographs. The Team was impressed by LAPE's raising of priorities, productivity and culture with regard to national and international research.

Until the international review in 2008, research had been conducted in fifteen departments, across six research laboratories and the Centre for Experimental Development. After the review, LAPE made good progress and implemented the majority of recommendations, including amalgamating units to create research clusters based on strategic priorities and also to encourage staff to work closer together and undertake multidisciplinary research. One of the most significant obstacles to research productivity within LAPE was identified as being the high percentage of researchers who work part time. The Self Evaluation document identifies an objective to increase the number of full-time scientific-researchers. It looks to increase the research productivity of staff through the introduction of the workload allocation model. The Team considers this model should indeed optimize research time for teaching staff who were found currently to undertake research in their own personal time. LAPE is encouraged to ensure the new model does deliver a more flexible system to address the raising of the teaching staff's research productivity. Furthermore, the Team recommends that staff recruitment needs to be planned strategically to strengthen research priority specialisms and clusters.

In addition to an institutional commitment for increasing the time and opportunities for research amongst the academic staff, the Team also received evidence of the emphasis the institution places on encouraging and recognising excellence in 2nd and 3rd level students. Between 1993 and 2011 the Academy operated two branches of doctoral studies, in the areas of Social Science/Education Science and Biomedical Sciences/Biology. Between 2006 and 2010, doctoral dissertations were defended by 78 per cent of PhD graduates. The majority of those who defended their dissertations had already published at least three research articles. Scientists at LAPE publish research nationally and internationally. Some of the best Masters students are invited to be teaching assistants in LAPE as part of a commitment to retain doctoral students. In many cases, the Team were told that potential doctoral candidates were invited to apply to areas strategically allocated in biomedical science or social science aligned with LAPE's Strategic Plan. The Team encourages LAPE to

continue to ensure PhD scholarships are linked to the institution's research priority areas. From 2011 onwards, it was noted that PhD students were asked to sign contracts to complete their dissertation within four years. Formal arrangements for monitoring progress on single and joint doctoral awards were in place, managed by a committee of experts. At the time of the review, over all years, there were 19 PhD students on Education Studies and 19 on Biology. Progress by PhD students is monitored annually by a programme level committee and a central committee. Reports also go to each institution involved in any joint awards. The Team was impressed by the robust monitoring and support arrangements for doctoral students.

The Team saw a range of evidence that confirmed good progress had been made in terms of the quality and quantity of research at LAPE since the last institutional review. The Team was satisfied that the Academy had responded positively to the last review outcomes in terms of research structures and priorities. Significant investment had been made to restructuring research laboratories to better serve the needs of teaching and research as well as expanding the availability of technical support to maintain equipment in optimal condition. There was evidence that robust monitoring systems were in place for assuring the quality of research and also for monitoring the quality of doctoral students. Monitoring systems were also evident to review unit research as well as individual staff research productivity. While there was clear evidence that the quality and quantity of research had significantly improved, the Team observed that publications are unevenly distributed among the study fields, with a clear dominance of natural science and biomedicine. Infrastructure improvements are needed to boost competence and national and international publications in the area of social science/humanities research. Strategies and resources are required to support this alongside the need to explore the use of existing laboratory facilities more effectively. The Team encourages LAPE to consider the strategic benefits of specialising its research still further into niche areas and not spreading its research too thinly.

Links between research and national priorities

The Self Evaluation report stated that research at LAPE is aligned with six national priority areas. An example is research linked to the *National Sports Development Strategy for 2011-2020*. Herein LAPE's scientists are researching genetic factors affecting physical working capacity and health. Within this work it is noted that one physically inactive person in Lithuania is found to cost the state between 1,000-3,000Lt a year. This particular research project is therefore considered to be of importance not only for the health and quality of life for Lithuanians individually but also for the state economically.

Nationally important research was also noted in the area of establishing and creating modern muscle and neuro-rehabilitation technologies. Within this priority area, LAPE researchers are exploring the links between motor control and learning, and functional changes in muscles after injuries or disease. The Applied Physiology & Motor Control Laboratories and the work undertaken on the isolated muscle testing system is unique in Lithuania and acknowledged by the Team as an international specialism. The Team noted that a special type of mice is used in this work and a new Animal House had been developed to accommodate it. LAPE had also commissioned specialist equipment to monitor movement and test flexibility. Some laboratories internationally have similar equipment but the Academy's equipment is unique in Lithuania's academic community and thus of national value. The research is expected to benefit the country by creating new and effective neuro-rehabilitation technologies for patients suffering from multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, or after a stroke.

During the site visit the Team met researchers and doctoral students working on many of the research projects identified as having national significance. It was confirmed that much of the research undertaken is related to national priorities within physical education, coaching and sports,

tourism and sports management, and physical activity and health. Rehabilitation research was noted as being important to social partners and nationally but had yet to be developed. From the evidence considered, the Team found LAPE to be engaged in nationally unique areas of research that should continue to be strengthened and prioritised.

Impact of academic, social and business partners on research activities

The Self Evaluation provides examples of how research activities are prepared and implemented in co-operation with academic, social and business partners. In relation to academic partnerships, the Self Evaluation identifies the ways LAPE cooperates with partners throughout Lithuanian and the Baltic State, particularly following the establishment of the Association of Sports Science of the Baltic States in 2009. One of the aims of this Association was to integrate academic partners into the European and World Sports Science Research Area. This is achieved by partners sharing their research experiences, collaborating on research activities and organising joint seminars for doctoral students. One key activity arising from this Association is the annual Baltic State Sports Science conference. There have been four conferences held to date, with the 2012 conference scheduled to be held at LAPE. Through engagement with such an initiative, LAPE endeavours to benchmark and enhance its research activities in line with other European universities. The Team noted that collaborations between the Academy scientists and researchers from other institutions have resulted in over 300 joint research publications.

The Team saw information on a bid recently submitted for European Social Funding that would involve LAPE doctoral students participating with students from eleven institutions across Estonia, Germany and Spain. The aim of the project was to develop a package for rehabilitation devices and methods for people after stroke, suffering with multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease. The value of the project is noted as being €2.5 million. A second project was reported based on a bilateral agreement between LAPE and Worcester University in the UK wherein a FIBA European Basketball Research Centre was being established. The main aim of the project was to promote the development of European basketball through the latest research.

Since 2003, LAPE has also aimed to create a favourable environment for transferring knowledge and technologies to business. LAPE established the "Recreation, Tourism and Sports Park", as a vehicle for developing and sharing with business partners new technologies in the areas of recreation, health promotion, sports, rehabilitation and tourism. The Team received a comprehensive list of activities undertaken at the Park since 2004, many of which attracted external funding, meeting the needs businesses and social partners regionally and nationally.

International participation and mobility

LAPE's Self Evaluation identifies the strategies used to improve the quality and quantity of its research activities in line with the European Higher Education Research Area. Since 2008, a range of incentives encourages researchers to produce high quality international level research output. The Academy has invested heavily in its research infrastructure over the last six years (from 0.5 – 1million Lt per annum) to support internationally competitive research, particularly in the field of biomedicine. Since 2005, LAPE scientists have participated in four international projects, conducted nine research projects in Social Sciences and 18 projects in Biomedical sciences. In 2011, LAPE researchers applied for EU Framework 7 funding and for funding from the European Basketball Research Centre. LAPE successfully secured European Social Funding between 2006-2008 to improve the competitiveness of its researchers; this enabled research and teaching staff to attend seminars where the experiences of staff from fourteen countries were shared.

The academic staff that the Team met confirmed that one of the main issues inhibiting international research and participation was the heavy workload allocated to them for teaching and supervision. The reduction in contact hours once the workload allocation model is introduced will hopefully enable staff to engage and publish internationally. The results should also benefit students in terms of research-informed teaching. LAPE is encouraged to ensure that the workload allocation model is introduced efficiently and effectively with a monitoring system in place to ensure its fitness for purpose. It was reported that the International Relations Office supported international partnerships and placements. While this is considered a useful resource, the Team encourages LAPE to consider expanding the skills and expertise within the unit to deliver a centralised professional service in the preparation of research funding bids. The development and investment of expertise in this area would not only enable staff to draw upon a central support unit for assistance when preparing bids but would also enhance LAPE's success rates in securing national, European and other international funding.

In June 2011 LAPE was granted the right to establish joint doctoral studies programmes. These have been undertaken in Social Sciences (nationally with Vilnius University of Educology, Kaunas University of Technology and Siauliai University) and Biomedical Sciences (internationally with the University of Tartu in Estonia). In addition to the joint programmes, doctoral students at LAPE are provided with opportunities through the Erasmus programme to work with other students across Europe. There are also opportunities to undertake internships internationally. Examples were provided of 2nd and 3rd level students undertaking placements in the USA, Austria and Warsaw. The Team also met a doctoral student who had worked at the Institute of Medicine at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. His experience there was very positive and he commented on how valuable the opportunity had been to him personally and professionally. The experience had led to his research in the Academy being now part of a joint project with Aberdeen.

While it was noted that only a small number of doctoral students currently undertake Erasmus placements, LAPE had hoped that it would become the norm for more students to elect to have a placement at another national institution or internationally. The Team was advised that LAPE makes funding available for doctoral students to attend one international conference each year. This was welcomed as a positive initiative. The Academy also now requires all doctoral students to publish two articles in international journals. To assist staff and students to publish internationally, the Team was advised that the Language Unit provides a free translation and proofreading facility. This is potentially a valuable resource, but the PhD students who met the Team appeared to be unaware of the service. The Team was therefore unsure how widely known this resource is amongst students and staff. LAPE is encouraged to be more vigorous in communicating and promoting the services of the Language Unit to staff and students wishing to publish internationally.

The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:

1. The Academy's positive response to the outcomes of the 2008 international review of its research structures and strategies.
2. Engagement and publication in areas of research that are unique in Lithuania.
3. The investments being made to support and nurture PhD students.
4. The linkage of PhD scholarships to LAPE's research priority areas.
5. Robust monitoring and support arrangements for doctoral students, with a new contractual requirement to complete the dissertation within four years.
6. The encouragement of national and especially international activity by doctoral students, by taking placements at other national institutions, or internationally; by availing themselves of the funding available to attend one international conference each year; and by publishing in at least two international journals during their doctoral studies.

The Team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

1. In a much improved record of research publications, the relative paucity of national and international publications emanating from social science/humanities research.
2. Staff recruitment is not strategically planned to strengthen research priority specialisms and clusters.
3. There is no central unit with expertise to assist in the preparation of bids for national and international funding.

Judgement on the area: Research is given positive evaluation

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The LAPE mission statement explicitly identifies a role for the University in enhancing the regional and national community. It commits to making LAPE more attractive to the young people of Lithuania and to being responsible for the social development of Lithuanian people through sport and physical activity. A wide variety of evidence convinced the Team that LAPE takes its role in this regard very. The Self Evaluation reports that between 2006-2010 LAPE undertook the following key activities in relation to its impact in the social and economic development of the country: (i) scientific applied research and experimental development; (ii) energy/resource saving and environmental projects, social exclusion reduction and human resource enhancement projects; (iii) practical projects for the country and the regional community; and (iv) health promotion and sports services to the community. In the majority of these activities, LAPE was successful in attracting national and international funding.

Since its establishment in 1934, LAPE is noted as having made a substantial national contribution to sports science within Lithuania in addition to delivering a core service to the Kaunas regional sports and physical education system. Senior staff and members of the LAPE Council and Senate affirmed that LAPE is committed to serving the whole of Lithuania. LAPE is noted as having trained over 13,000 specialists in physical education and sports and having made a substantial contribution to the success of national teams, including Olympic Teams in the past and in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games. Some laboratories and researchers were identified as working principally at a national level, while others focus primarily upon assisting and enhancing the Kaunas regional health care and health promotion programme. This includes working in partnership with the Kaunas University of Medicine and the Kaunas University of Technology.

Measuring implementation and impact

LAPE's goals in relation to its impact on the region are identified in its Statute, namely (i) providing its graduates with the conditions for continuous education, professional development and retraining, (ii) training scientists to enhance the impact of science and studies on the Lithuanian economy, culture, health promotion, recreation and sports, as well as the prosperity of society, and (iii) promoting the development of regions and the country as a whole when carrying out educational, scientific and cultural activities.

The Team was provided with information on the numerous Orders and Strategies approved by the Minister of Education and Science upon which LAPE's work was focused for meeting regional and national needs. The Self Evaluation provided a range of information of several national and internationally funded projects that impacted on the regional and national economy and society. It was noted that since 2005 LAPE has been working in cooperation with the Department of Physical

Education and Sport to develop strategies of Physical Activity Promotion for Lithuania. This work has been integrated into the National Strategy of Sport Development for 2010-2020.

Staff members also confirmed that politicians and civil servants often approach them to undertake work nationally, linked to specific towns, schools etc., especially in respect of the promotion of health and physical activities. It was reported that LAPE staff often contributed to the continuous professional development of teachers working in local and national schools. Social Partners based within local schools confirmed they undertook in-service training at LAPE two to three times a year. Furthermore, LAPE, through its *Science Park of Recreation, Tourism and Sports* applies its research achievements to the practical needs of regional and state social partners and to society.

The Strategic Plan confirms LAPE will continue to meet future regional and national requirements. There were, however, no formal measures or key performance indicators identified for the Team nor any evidence provided of mechanisms for systematically monitoring implementation or impact. Within the Self Evaluation, LAPE acknowledges this weakness and states that a working group is to be established to prepare a procedure for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan in the future. The Team encourages LAPE to ensure that it establishes and rigorously operates a mechanism to monitor the impact of LAPE nationally and especially on the local community.

Engagement with regional and national priorities

During the site visit, the Team was able to meet representatives of eight regional social partners. The discussions made it clear that the contribution LAPE makes to the region is varied, valued and of good quality. When asked if any of the social partners had contributed to LAPE's decision making or strategic planning processes through involvement on institutional or programme level committees, several examples were provided, particularly linked to the content of internships and study programmes. Documents were also supplied to the Team that illustrated instances where LAPE had responded to proposals from social partners in relation to the Sports Recreation and Tourism study programme.

In terms of its scope, LAPE has a strong relationship with a wide range of social partners. The Self Evaluation reported that LAPE has agreements with 26 health supervision institutions and 36 schools and gymnasiums nationally. Social partners indicated that LAPE staff were also involved in numerous developments and health promotions with the local business community. It was further reported that LAPE maintains close relationships with rehabilitation centres within the region; its work in Physiotherapy is a good example of how the Academy has responded to regional needs.

One notable area of uniqueness and strength was seen to be LAPE's contribution regionally and nationally in relation to The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2009-11-06) and The Law of Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities (2005-07-01, No. IX-2228). The Self Evaluation document claims that LAPE *aims at protecting and ensuring full and equal access of the disabled people to all human rights and essential freedoms, as well as encouraging respect to the inherent dignity of those persons*. The Team found the aims to be satisfied through a wide range of successful initiatives, including new research areas and study programmes, but particularly the Adapted Physical Activity study programme. This programme was established in cooperation with academic partners from European universities (Belgium, Great Britain, and Portugal) and is funded by the European Commission. The demand for specialists in adapted physical activity is linked to recommendations of UNO (UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 1993), strategic political provisions of the European Union (Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities - A New Community Disability Strategy, 1996) and other later EU documents. Preparation of adapted physical activity specialists supplies the needs of both

the Kaunas region and the state. During its visit, the Team met with staff and students associated with this particular programme. They all commented on its high quality and uniqueness.

Student and study programme engagement with regional and national priorities

Evidence available to the Team during the site visit confirmed that LAPE provides approximately thirteen different study programmes that directly relate to areas of national importance. Examples presented included: (i) Health, Quality of Life, Prevention of Diseases: Physiotherapy, Health and Physical Activity; (ii) Education, Training and Occupation: Physical Education and Education Science; (iii) Tourism, Recreation, Leisure: Tourism and Sports Management, Recreation and Tourism; and (iv) Achievement in Sport, National Identity, Citizenship: Sports Coaching, Master in European Basketball Coaching.

The Self Evaluation also identified that study programmes explicitly incorporate topics about social cohesion, improvement of the quality of life, health and wellbeing etc. Such topic areas are also included in the graduation thesis requirements for students in the 1st and 2nd cycles of studies. Indeed, graduation papers require the analysis of issues of importance and relevance to society. The main aim of graduation papers is indeed referenced in the Self Evaluation as being *to develop graduates' abilities in applying research findings in practice*. The thesis for Tourism and Sports Management study programmes, for example, requires students to deal with ecotourism and possibilities for its development within Lithuania. They are also required to look at the impact of sports and tourism on the economy of Lithuania alongside possibilities for the development of the sports sector within the region. Similar examples were presented in relation to several other study programmes, including Social Pedagogy, Sports Psychology and Education; Sports Coaching and Adapted Physical Activity.

The majority of study programmes include compulsory internships within the regional community. Students have at least two placements in each study term, working, for example, from two to six weeks in different rehabilitation centres. The Social Partners that met the Team expressed their high levels of satisfaction with LAPE students and graduates. One welcomed the recent introduction of new study areas and specialisms, such as golf. Social partners cited examples where interns working alongside LAPE graduates had subsequently found employment in their organisations. In each instance, the students/graduates were considered to be of excellent quality and were consistently workforce ready, when compared with interns and graduates from other institutions. The employability focus of the LAPE curricula was recognised as a significant strength, both by social partners who employed LAPE students and also by the students and graduates themselves.

Most LAPE students come from the Kaunas region although LAPE is reportedly the destination of choice for students interested in sports and physical activities, particularly Sports Coaching and Physiotherapy. This was confirmed by discussions with current and former students. The vast majority were clear that they chose to study at LAPE for its specialisms, linked with employability as professionals in the study fields, rather than simply for its proximity to their homes. Students and graduates recognised the importance and value that the internships provided in terms of workplace knowledge and professional skills and contacts. All students who met the Team confirmed the internship posts were all of good quality and enabled them to contribute positively to the Kaunas region. Furthermore, alumni representatives added they in all cases were successful in securing employment linked to their discipline specialisms quite soon after graduation. Often employment is with regional employers where internships were undertaken as part of the students' studies.

The Team met with representatives of the Kaunas Special Olympic Club who confirmed that the contribution of LAPE, both from its staff and students, was invaluable to them. Students who held internships in the Kaunas Special Olympic Club were reported to have played a significant role in organising and managing events. They also helped with translating the latest resources. The

Adapted Physical Activity programme's unique curriculum includes studying emotional and psychological problems in children. A school-based social partner greatly values students from this programme, as they demonstrate skills and a level of awareness lacking in other interns when working with those children. As specialists trained in providing support to such children, these particular students meet an important need in the regional and wider national society.

Staff participation in voluntary work regionally and nationally

LAPE organises and engages with a wide range of performances and activities within the Kaunas region and beyond. Details of over 213 events were shared with the Team, including examples of LAPE participation in annual events such as World Health Day, World Day of Tourism, and National Physical Education and Sports day. LAPE staff who met with the Team also identified a range of voluntary activities they were engaged in, frequently supplemented by groups of their own students. These included work in relation to coaching, health promotion and rehabilitation activities and social/cultural events.

Social partners confirmed LAPE actively participates in the Kaunas region in the field of study and health promotion. LAPE involvement in the 'Kaunas as a healthy city' initiative and the Health & Physical Activity department's project on 'Fitness with the Elderly' which involved exercises in the local parks at the request of the Municipality were cited among a range of examples. The Team was also informed that LAPE organises events for Kaunas inhabitants, including golfing events linked to the Kaunas Golf Federation.

The Team identified the following areas of STRENGTH:

1. LAPE makes a substantial contribution to sports science within Lithuania and in the Kaunas regional sports and physical education system.
2. Social partners in the region acknowledge the commitment to the community of LAPE students and graduates. They greatly value contributions they describe as varied and of good quality. The work undertaken with the Kaunas Special Olympic Club is particularly noteworthy.
3. The Adapted Physical Activity study programme is unique in Lithuania.
4. LAPE's growing recognition as a destination of choice for Kaunas students interested in sports and physical activities, particularly in the areas of Sports Coaching and Physiotherapy.

The Team identified the following areas of WEAKNESS:

1. There is no mechanism in place to monitor LAPE's impact nationally and on the local community.
2. The Academy needs to enhance its visibility as a centre of excellence in its specialist areas of study and research, hence ensuring it becomes a destination of choice for high quality students.

Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given a positive evaluation

VII. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

1. The critical nature of the Self Evaluation and LAPE's cooperative engagement with this institutional review process.

2. The successful implementation of various restructuring projects as a positive response to the 2008 review of organisational structures and research priorities.
3. The design of the proposed Workload Allocation Model, aiming to achieve staff workloads balanced between research, study, administration, professional enhancement and voluntary activities.
4. The Academy's continuing commitment to reviewing and modifying its study programmes to reflect appropriate changes in internal and external factors.
5. Work in unique study areas, especially notable being teaching and research in adapted physical activities, which makes an essential contribution to the Kaunas region and to the nation.
6. The employability focus of LAPE's curricula, especially the inclusion of internships within the majority of its programmes.
7. Making good progress in aligning programmes with the conventions of the Bologna agreement.
8. Making mobility a priority for staff and students.
9. Effective collection and monitoring by the International Relations Office of data on participation and non-participation rates in exchange programmes.
10. Best practice in the support and nurture of doctoral students, which includes the following:
 - investing in the research infrastructure;
 - linking PhD scholarships to research priority areas;
 - robust monitoring and support arrangements;
 - encouraging PhD students to have a placement at another national or international institution;
 - funding doctoral students to attend one international conference per year.
11. Making many valued contributions to the Kaunas region, which generates high levels of satisfaction with students and graduates amongst social partners; work undertaken with the Kaunas Special Olympic Club is particularly noteworthy.
12. The valuable contribution nationally in relation to the Long term Economic Development Strategy of Lithuania, the National Security Strategy, the National Concept of Health, and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Team recommends that LAPE recognise the organisational benefits of widening its consultation process when preparing future self-evaluation reports.
2. Also highly recommended is to establish more comprehensive structures and documented procedures for conducting the strategic planning processes; these should include a clear reporting structure for monitoring the implementation and impact of the strategic plans and the systematic tracking and monitoring of associated change-management activities; the general aim should be to communicate with and elicit contributions from all internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis, and to promote a culture of inclusiveness in planning and enabling LAPE's progress.

3. Revise student questionnaires in line with Students' Union comments and extend them beyond programme level to cover the range of student support services and other learning resources available within the Academy.
4. Pay special attention to engaging formally with and utilising the skills and experience of administrative support staff to better effect; in-service training and a mobility plan for the development of professionalised and specialised staff within core central units would improve the effectiveness of teaching, research and administration across the entire university.
5. Develop strategies to boost competence and national and international publications in social science/humanities research.
6. Communicate and promote better the services of the Language Unit to staff and students who publish internationally.
7. Establish centrally managed procedures to monitor the recruitment of students and promote their retention.
8. Establish mechanisms to promote and monitor LAPE's impact on the local community; a Social Partners' Forum, recommended to be in place by 2012, and an Alumni Association could help.
9. Three broad recommendations combine to address the two principle areas of weakness that the Team found in the evaluation. One is to **implement**, in several cases as a matter of urgency, developments that are reportedly '*in progress*', and for some of which scheduled target dates have already been missed. Many are covered by expressions of '*should do*' in the self-evaluation report. The second is to develop robust mechanisms and procedures to **track** the progress of the implementation and **monitor** the fitness for purpose and effects of the implementations, a need that LAPE also acknowledges in its self-evaluation report. And the third is to **document** comprehensively the implementation and monitoring procedures, including clear reporting channels. The text of the evaluation report directs attention to the following proposed or much-needed developments:
 - i. a Centre and comprehensive system for quality monitoring – QMS – designed to conform with the Part 1 ESG requirements;
 - ii. the human resources strategy and implementation plan, to afford appropriate flexibility to align staff recruitment, selection and the recognition and reward of excellence with the priorities of LAPE's Strategic Plan; and the constituent Workload Allocation Model, to provide for the strategic allocation of human resources between teaching, research, support (technical, library) and administrative staff;
 - iii. making distance-learning modules available from 2012 onwards;
 - iv. a central Careers Service;
 - v. investment in developing the expertise of staff in the International Relations Office to enhance LAPE's success rates in securing national, European and International funding.

It is the timing of the evaluation, when developments had been specified but not yet implemented, together with the lack of adequate documentation for many of the proposed developments, which greatly constrained the Team's evaluation task. In those circumstances, it was impossible to give a positive evaluation.

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education is given **negative** evaluation.

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader: Prof. Geoffrey Robinson

Vertinimo sekretorius:
Review secretary: Karen Jones

Grupės nariai:
Team members: Prof. Sigmund Loland

Thiery Malan
Dr. Mindaugas Strumskis
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Kotryna Peilakauskaitė

ANNEX. LAPE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

I. GENERAL RESPONSE

- We are grateful to the experts for their great job. We have no doubt that competent recommendations of experts will help us achieve a more effective implementation of LAPE mission. LAPE was evaluated first among other Lithuanian universities, thus we believe that neither LAPE nor SKVC and the Team had adequate working experience in evaluating not only the past and the present of LAPE, but also its progression opportunities. There is no doubt that this has been good experience to all of us. LAPE team agree that in the future self-evaluation activities should more actively involve students and social partners, and the text of the self-evaluation report should be publicized and discussed with social partners. LAPE also agree that the communication forum of social partners should be strengthened not only at the level of study programmes, but also at the institutional level, uniting them into a permanent network, strengthening Alumni activities and ensuring continuous monitoring of students' career.
- Besides, we understand that we should have paid more attention to the analysis of LAPE strategic management philosophy. We view LAPE as a complex dynamic system which should continuously respond to external and internal changes (self- evaluation provided evidence to the Team about the dynamics of LAPE environment at present: changes in the LAPE legal status, the system of student admission to universities, requirements for research and studies, increased activity of the society for university benefits, more intensive changes in business and university relations, increased competitiveness not only among Lithuanian, but also among European universities). Thus, in the management of LAPE we follow the current progressive management paradigm - „**Complex Systems Dynamics and Evolutionally Perspective of Organizations** (Eva Mitleton-Kelly, 2003, Ralph Stacey, 2003). We have no doubt that this is a great challenge to us, but we are learning it.
- While preparing LAPE strategies we have always viewed them and we still view them not as an end product but as a continuous opportunity to improve, respond to, change, and especially as a possibility for the organization members to learn to implement their own mission more effectively. We are trying to involve as many people as possible into the development of LAPE vision and mission (**this can be seen from the latest LAPE project for the development of managerial competence of LAPE staff, 2010-2012; this project has been supported via ES structural funds**). We are sorry that due to the lack of time the Team had no opportunity to learn about the outcomes of this project. We believe that LAPE is one of the leaders in Lithuania according to the number of working groups where LAPE employees not only solve the problems of making studies and research more effective but also learn how to do that better.
- One of the greatest “obstacles” which did not allow the Team to grasp the achievements of LAPE activities and management philosophy in a very short time was the inappropriate time for the institutional review. The Team arrived at the time when LAPE had just started to live with a new legal status and a new reorganization period accompanied by numerous initiatives and reconstructions. Our self- evaluation report contains many initiatives which have just started being implemented, and this proves that we are not only waiting for the experts' conclusions, but we are undertaking urgent tasks.
- LAPE would like to draw the experts' attention to the fact that the new LAPE vision, mission and management structure were approved in July 2011. When the structural changes were reasoned at the Council, the main emphasis was laid on the reorganization of the study area and the quality of studies aiming at a better sharing of functions between study programme directors and the heads of departments. LAPE would like to draw the experts' attention to the fact that before the spring of 2011 teaching workload of a teacher absolutely depended *on one person*- the head of the department. The head of the department planned the workload not for a certain study programme,

but for the teachers at the department, and those teachers served several study programmes. LAPE want to emphasize that such system of planning workloads still exists in all other universities of the country.

- At the same time LAPE would like to inform the experts that Eastern European university culture and Western European university culture essentially differed in the approach to studies. Due to the requirements of the political system at that time, Eastern European universities did not compete in the international are, science was insular and non-competitive, and studies were often grounded not on the international level research but on the convictions of authorities laid down in censored textbooks. LAPE perceive its mission in the organization of studies grounded on international level research, so it directed fundamental forces primarily to enhance the international level research. We are happy that the experts have noticed that in the area of research LAPE have clear quality evaluation criteria and follow internationally recognized standards. This may be the reason why LAPE's breakthrough in research is solid compared to other universities in the country.

- LAPE agree with the experts' opinion that aiming at ensuring process management it is necessary to monitor the processes systematically and record the occurring changes. According to the experts, if there is no such a system, LAPE is unable to systematically and strategically manage changes. The absence of such a system will lead to confusion and internal conflict, LAPE will lose its priorities. LAPE team agree that systematic change management process is obligatory, but we would be unwilling to accept such a dramatic final. LAPE agree that such monitoring system would help more effectively manage the processes, but we would like to draw experts' attention to the fact that the development of such a system is a time consuming process which in Western universities did not appear immediately as well, it developed gradually. For this reason LAPE team will absolutely take this remark of the experts' into account while preparing its action plan for the financial year of 2012, the strategic five-year plan and annual activity plans. However, LAPE team absolute disagree that they do not have appropriate instruments for quality management. If it were so, we would be unable to change the quality of studies and research, which we are doing quite successfully (as it was noted by the experts).

- LAPE agree that it is necessary to enhance the research production in the areas of the social sciences and the humanities. But one again LAPE want to draw the experts' attention to the fact that this lag is programmed in the policy of our country and the country's Constitutional Court has interpreted that researchers in the social sciences do not have to publish their research articles in scientific journals in ISI databases. For this reason the Academy has limited possibilities promoting the development of research production in this area. However, in June 2011 LAPE Senate adopted the new criteria of teachers' remuneration coefficients, where the requirements for researchers in social sciences to publish research articles in the journals in ISI databases were included as well. It should be noted that our progress in this area is vivid even now.

- LAPE cannot agree that there is no centralized department which would help prepare application in the area of research. In the new Academy structure which was approved by the Council there is a Division for Development and International Relations. One of its functions is to help in the preparation of scientific projects. Besides, among the functions of the Finance and Accounting Office, as well as Doctoral Studies and Research Office, there is a function to provide assistance within their competence in the preparation of research projects.

- The experts suggest that the LAPE students do ne receive adequate support in order to retain them in their studies. As we have mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report, this problem is being solved in the study programme committees appointing programme coordinators of each year of studies who have to ensure feedback by communication with students of that year. Once a semester they have to report (Meeting protocols) to the Director of the study programme and the

Director reports to the Dean. At the moment of the Experts' site visit this system has just started operating, and there is all necessary documentation grounding those processes.

II. SPECIFIC RESPONSE

Having analyzed the conclusions provided by the experts we would like we would like to respond to the "BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS" (VII).

A) Best Practice Examples

- We are very happy that the experts have noted our progress in many of our key areas: research, studies, international relations, impact on the region, successful processes of LAPE restructuring (concentration of research and teaching potential, changing management model), the design of the proposed Workload Allocation Model (WAM) aiming to achieve staff workloads balanced between research, study, administration, professional enhancement and voluntary activities, in making good progress in aligning programmes with the conventions of the Bologna agreement. We would like to clarify that WAM was approved by the LAPE Senate, and this year (2011) it is being implemented.
- We would like to clarify Item 5 in the "Best Practice Examples": LAPE has unique research and studies not only in Adapted Physical Activity, but also in other areas: Physical Activity and Health, Sport Physiology, Sport Psychology, Coaching Science, Sport Management and Sport Recreation, etc.
- We would like to clarify Item 11 in the "Best Practice Examples": we believe that in this case a more suitable conclusion of the experts would be as follows "**LAPE makes a substantial contribution to sports science within Lithuania and in the Kaunas regional sports and physical education system**" (page 27). Besides, the following statement could be included there as well: "**Team found LAPE to be engaged in nationally unique areas of research that should continue to be strengthened and prioritised**" (page 20).
- We suggest inserting the following statement proposed by the Team among the strengths: "**The quality, competence, commitment and enthusiasm of LAPEs staff**".
- We believe that one of LAPE strengths noted by the Team is on page 14: "**The Team is therefore confident from the information it considered, that LAPE study programmes are entirely in keeping with the institution's strategic vision and plan. The profile of courses LAPE delivers is also of specialism informed and required by partners regionally and nationally**".

Besides, we believe that one more very important example of LAPE good practice might be the one given on page 13: "**LAPE has repeatedly modified its study programmes in line with changing internal and external factors, including in response to feedback from social partners, with an aim to ensure the employability of its graduates**". This undoubtedly proves the presence of Study Quality Monitoring System. On the same page we have found one more evaluation of LAPE activities, which is even more important: "**LAPE's expertise and research were also noted as making a valuable contribution nationally in relation to the Long term Economic Development Strategy of Lithuania, the National Security Strategy, the National Concept of Health, and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development**".

- We would like to note that one of the most important LAPE activities is high level research and its integration into studies. Thus, LAPE strengths might include one more statement provided by the experts: "LAPE's academic excellence and research make valuable contributions to national developments in physical activity" (page 17.)
- Finally, on more strength of LAPE, as it was mentioned by the Team, might be: "The number of students choosing LAPE as their first priority is an indication of the attractiveness and reputation of its programmes".

B) Recommendations

- Most recommendations have been accepted by LAPE team. They are relevant and will be useful for the further development of LAPE.
- We regret to say, but the Team did not clearly understand the Strategy of 2006-2010 (ST-1) as it was prepared in the Lithuanian language and there had not been a request for its translation into English (it had been agreed with Centre for Quality Assessment that during the site visit we will make comments on the topic). The Team went into the question of LAPE Strategic Activity Guidelines of 2010-2015 superficially. (ST-2; **Rector's Order "About the preparation of programmes of Development Conceptions"**, No. 239K of 29 September 2010) (Its brief abstract had been translated into English). It is the document prepared by the team of 30 staff members and it serves as a background for the new Strategy Development Plan to be discussed and approved by LAPE Council.
- Besides, a three-year strategic plan was discussed and introduced (ST-3) in the self evaluation. This plan was presented to the Ministry of Finance. It was agreed with the Centre of Quality Assurance that during the site visit the Team will be able to get acquainted with ST-1, ST-2 and ST-3 in greater detail. We hoped that we will have an opportunity to present and discuss them as specific targets for LAPE development in 5 years are introduced there (studies and research included). Especially advanced is ST-2 LAPE Developmental Conception where particular attention is being given to developmental directions and targets of Human Resources. Consequently, we cannot agree with Item 2 of the Recommendations, as we believe that major components of LAPE are managed well. We have a majority of necessary documents and skills which have been constantly improved. In the opinion of LAPE team, the experts' conclusion, that there is no formal connection between HR and strategic planning, is unsupported.
- We are proud of teaching staff and researchers' remuneration system approved on 27-02-2009, Senate Protocol No. 7) and *Qualification Requirements for the Establishment of Researcher's Salary Coefficient* (approved on 02-10-2006, Senate Protocol No. 1, changes approved on 29-01-2009, Senate Protocol No. 6). According to the requirements of *Evaluation Methods of Research (Art) of Science and Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Lithuania*, the Senate approved *LAPE Criteria of Research Evaluation* in June 2010, Protocol No. 11. According to these criteria the scientists are encouraged to produce more high quality international level research output.
- It is to be regretted that the Team confused ST-1 and ST-2 with a detailed plan of LAPE activities in 2011-2012 which was translated into English. Particular work and responsible persons were indicated there. However, it is not a one-year plan, and certainly, not a strategic one.
- We are sorry that the experts failed to clearly understand the LAPE quality assurance system. We agree that the system of quality assurance should be improved in the future as only the first steps are being done in Lithuania. Till now, the quality assurance system was based on the old quality monitoring culture: annual reports of heads of departments and laboratories, annual reports of teaching staff with analysis of their activities, annual Deans' reports as well as annual Rector's report at the enlarged meeting of the Senate.
- We aimed at involving more people in the monitoring process. In our opinion, distributed control is better than centralized. Reports are prepared by each subdivision. It is a pity that the Team did not understand that each subdivision participates in the preparation of reports. Since 2011 reports have been evaluated at the LAPE Council which consists of 50% of external stakeholders.
- Besides, a comprehensive self evaluation is performed by LAPE as well as evaluation of study programs by external experts. Evaluation of LAPE will be carried out every 2-6 years by external experts (which is being done at the present time). In our opinion, there is enough control. However, a more serious problem is mobilization of people for high quality studies and research quality.

- One more step forward was done in this area. In the last years much attention has been paid for the assurance of the quality of the Academy management. On 13 January 2011 the Quality Assurance Programme of the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education was approved at the Rectorate meeting (Protocol No. 13) (**Appendix 35**). **It includes all stages of occurring processes. The Academy Quality Monitoring Group was established as well. A new project is being prepared aiming at mastering the good experience of quality assurance in other European universities.** The Academy has cooperation agreements with Jyvaskyla (Finland) and Port (Portugal) universities about the internal quality systems of the Academy. LAPE QMG will be established at LAPE council in December 2011. Only three universities in Lithuania have QMG.
- Personal responsibility and responsibility of various subdivisions of LAPE as well as accountability for quality is ensured through implementation of regulations of subdivision activities, official staffing requirements, work plans, subdivision reports to their direct managers, the Rectorate, the Senate, self evaluation of study programmes and procedures of external review. The “Coaching” system has been successfully implemented recently.
- Although LAPE team agrees with the remark that there is a shortage of concrete impact criteria in the strategic plan ST-1 and ST-2, which would allow measuring the achieved results and their efficiency, however, these criteria are sufficiently developed in the research area. LAPE would like to draw the experts’ attention that studies based on highest level research are the core of the study quality. Consequently, promotion of international level research has been a priority for the last 10 years at LAPE.
- In their conclusions the experts acknowledge that LAPE’s impact on regional and national development is significant. However, they are of the opinion that there is no system in the Academy for evaluating and monitoring this activity. We agree that this was not done systematically. In the new structure of the Academy (approved by the Council in July 2011) Development and International Relations Department was established. It will promote monitoring of strategic plan administration.
- The Team indicated that in LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-2012 the dates presented are subjective and works are without indication of clear priorities and responsible persons. LAPE team would like to draw the experts’ attention to the fact that according to the project “Improvement of administration management competence” management model of LAPE is not classical, based on control, but flexible and organic. Organizational Development Committee was formed for solving the issues of LAPE strategic development. It is responsible for the breakthrough of the Academy and forms synergy teams for solving every particular issue. Synergy teams function on the principle of nominal groups.
- Although each unit is in charge for the final result, certain implementation activities are carried out in the work group which includes representatives from different units; therefore, specific individuals in charge are not identified in LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-12. Responsible persons (the implementer, integrator, administrator and members of the group which should include students and social partners) in each individual case are appointed by the Organisational Development Committee (ODC) and this procedure is documented by the Rector’s order specifying the deadlines when the activities are to be implemented. The Rectorate is in charge of operational matters forming work groups in a similar manner, while the ODC is the unit in charge of organising the development of LAPE Strategic Plan, setting priorities and monitoring the realisation of strategic objectives. During the site visit the Team did not request to meet the ODC members since their activity started after the Self-evaluation Report had been submitted when the first stage of the EUSF project was completed (May 2011). The Academy’s authority did not have any opportunity to present this new management initiative due to a very limited time.
- It is rather disappointing that the Team did not clearly understand distinct qualitative and quantitative standards raised for research, academic and financial management. The standards are apparent in the evaluation criteria for teaching staff (the Academy approved new criteria for the evaluation of research activities in June 2010, Senate Protocol No. 11, **Appendix 34**) and evaluation criteria for study courses (Study Quality Assurance Committee was set by Rector’s

Order No. 488-S on 17 January 2011 (**Appendix 33**). These criteria are combined qualitative and quantitative parameters

- Critical nature of the Self-evaluation was perceived by the Team as one of the major strengths: **“The critical nature of the Self Evaluation and LAPE’s cooperative engagement with this institutional review process”**(p. 28). It was our deliberate intention to demonstrate not only what has been implemented or what LAPE is capable to implement but what still needs to be implemented in order to reach our institutional goal to become an internationally competitive sport university. We considered critical awareness about the need for change to be of greater significance than emphasizing the past achievements. The concluding remarks of the review report suggest that this critical approach has led the Team not to give a positive evaluation. We therefore fully disagree with the statement that **“It is the timing of the evaluation, when developments had been specified but not yet implemented, together with the lack of adequate documentation for many of the proposed developments, which greatly constrained the Team’s evaluation task. In those circumstances, it was impossible to give a positive evaluation”** (VII.9), since the Team indicated in their report the effectiveness of our strategies in research and academic studies, impact on the region, international cooperation, competence of LAPE staff, the proposed Workload Allocation Model and monitoring systems in research and finances. Besides referring to the evidence provided in the Self-evaluation report and during the site visit the Team stated that **“The Team was impressed by LAPE’s raising of priorities, productivity and culture with regard to national and international research”** (p. 19), **“The Team saw a range of evidence that confirmed good progress had been made in terms of the quality and quantity of research at LAPE since the last institutional review”** (p. 20) and **“LAPE has repeatedly modified its study programmes in line with changing internal and external factors, including in response to feedback from social partners, with an aim to ensure the employability of its graduates”**. Moreover, the Team noted that **„There was evidence that robust monitoring systems were in place for assuring the quality of research and also for monitoring the quality of doctoral students. Monitoring systems were also evident to review unit research as well as individual staff research productivity”**(p. 20). In this light we think that the final remark (VII.9) does not adequately reflect the real situation since, in our opinion, the Team did not have enough time to get acquainted with all relevant documents and, on the other hand, being inexperienced in the institutional evaluation we did not succeed in communicating the quality management procedures that operate at LAPE. Even if certain part of the quality management system does not function properly, this does not prevent the whole system from operating – this is evident from the Self-evaluation and site visit findings. In our opinion, the identified minor shortcomings that need to be addressed can not hinder the overall implementation of LAPE mission. The Team recurrently noticed the successful implementation of the main institutional functions. Moreover the Team listed among LAPE’s strengths its **„awareness of the need systematically to track the implementation of its strategic plans and the Rector and Rectorate’s willingness to address this issue”** and **“The quality, competence, commitment and enthusiasm of LAPEs staff”** (p. 12). The remark that it is impossible to give a positive evaluation seems inadequate as, according to our calculation, the Team identified twice as many strengths compared to weaknesses

- The academic restructuring at LAPE and new management structure allowed empowering study programme directors. From September 2012 according to the new Workload Allocation Model, two individuals – a study programme director and Head of the academic department – will be in charge for planning the workload of teaching staff on the principle of an iterative dialogue. LAPE would like to draw attention that in the LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-12 it is not indicated that a new workload allocation regulation comes into force from November 1, 2011. Moreover, although the Team noted that during the site visit they did not see any evidence of the new model, we would like to note that in one of the meetings the Vice-rector for Academic Affairs informed that the new Workload Allocation Model had been approved by the Academy’s Senate. In LAPE Activity Guidelines 2011-12 it was indicated that until November 1, 2011 the new workload calculation programme (Excel file designed for planning staff workload). By the Rector’s

order, the work group had been appointed and the calculation programme was in the process of development during the site visit; therefore, the Team are not right stating that they saw no evidence of the new model and that this decision was yet to be implemented. At present, as planned, this workload allocation system is tested and, as planned, it will be introduced (this is also noted in the Review report) from September 2012.

- As indicated in the Self-evaluation, the teaching staff has all technical possibilities to design distance learning modules, part of the current academic disciplines are already taught using distance learning mode; however, the previous allocation of workload for teaching staff did not encourage this activity. Hence, from 2012 once workload allocation is planned according to the proposed Workload Allocation Model (the new model will account staff time for the design of distance learning module), the number of distance learning modules should significantly increase at LAPE.

- Finally, we would like to note that the Team commended LAPE for increasing quality in research and studies, positive impact on the region and competence of its teaching and research staff. It would be very difficult to triple research productivity in international scientific journals not having certain objectives, standards, mobilisation of financial and human resources and staff motivation system (**The Team was impressed by LAPE's raising of priorities, productivity and culture with regard to national and international research**" (p. 19), **"The Team saw a range of evidence that confirmed good progress had been made in terms of the quality and quantity of research at LAPE since the last institutional review"** (p. 20)). It would be even more difficult to increase significantly the quality of research and impact regionally and nationally without the well-functioning management system (**„LAPE's academic excellence and research make valuable contributions to national developments in physical activity"** (p. 17)). We are very proud of being able to raise research to the international level. Though it is still a long way to go to reach excellence our pace of development as noted by the Team is remarkable. We learnt and will still learn many lessons from this institutional evaluation. We would like to thank once again the Team for their sincere and enormous work.

III. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE BY LAPE AFTER THE TEAM COMPLETED THE EVALUATION – THE EVIDENCE THAT LAPE STRATEGIC PLAN PROCEEDS

Since May, 2011 LAPE has been implementing the priority tasks which are a part of LAPE Strategic Plan (2010-2015) and LAPE Activity Guidelines for 2011-12. We would like to point out that the strategic plan has been implemented according to the designed proceedings.

1. The implementation of the restructuring.The Centre of Sports and Leisure has started to operate. The activity of the Centre according to the new regulations (people were employed) has been started from October 1, 2011. The Centre of Marketing and Career has been established and a work group was formed to prepare regulations for this centre as well as new regulations for the Library were approved.

2. Human resources. Meeting the challenges of restructuring a new list of staff positions and remuneration system has been endorsed (The Protocol of the Rectorate meeting No. 6 of October 12, 2011).

3. The distribution of power between the heads of the departments and directors of study programmes. The formalization of a procedure was consolidated by a set of documents: The regulations of the Committee of Study programmes were endorsed by Senate, 9, June 22, 2011 (Protocol No); Workload Allocation Model – Senate meeting, June 22, 2011 (Protocol No); the positions descriptions of heads of departments were renewed and endorsed at the Rectorate's Meeting on 21 September, 2011 (Protocol No 3) as well as the position descriptions of directors of study programmes at Rectorate Meeting on 21 September, 2011 (Protocol No 3); positions descriptions of the deans - Protocol of the Rectorate Meeting on 27 September, 2011 (Protocol No. 4). The positions descriptions of the staff of the dean office and of the administrators of the

departments were endorsed at the Rectorate Meeting on 21 September, 2011 (Protocol No 3). New Study Programmes Committees were formed and endorsed by Rector's order No 94-s, 09-09-2011.

4. The reorganization of all study programmes into module system and the implementation of interdisciplinary system. A lot of proceedings have been accomplished since May 2011: the project of the Interdisciplinary order and plan of its implementation has been endorsed at the Senate meeting on 29 September, 2011 (Protocol No. 1). The refinement of the strategic position of English language teaching at LAPE, the students' internships and development of students' reflexion as well as the students' portfolio and the procedure of the diploma final paper, and distance-learning systems have been accomplished (Rector's order No 472-s, October 27, 2011. Reports of working groups). The seminars on "The Provision of ECTS Concept in Lithuanian Higher Education Area" have been held for directors of study programmes and annual study programme coordinators. The list of study modules has been prepared.

5. The promotion of study internationalisation. The work groups for making joint Master degree programmes were formed on 23 November, 2011 (Rector's Order No 563-s). English language courses for lecturers seeking TOEFL 550 level have been organized since November 5, 2011 (Rectors' Order No 338 k). The international project PALC has been presented for the academic community.

6. The strategic planning of research activities. A work group has been formed according to LAPE Activity Guidelines (2011-2012), new scientific research subareas (period 2012-2016) have been formulated and endorsed at the Senate meeting.