



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of LINGUISTICS
at Kaunas Technology University

Expert panel:

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Report language – English

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Vilnius
2021

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Programme “New Media Language”
State code	6121NX035
Type of studies	Bachelor
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (4 years)
Credit volume	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Humanities
Language of instruction	English
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	18-04-2013

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

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

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

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

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

The study field is **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The study field **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was completed according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The Visit to HEI was conducted by the panel on **12/05/2021**.

Prof. dr. Srebren Dizdar (panel chairperson), *Bosnia and Herzegovina*;
Prof. dr. Alberto Fernandez-Costales, *Spain*;
Doc. dr. Karolina Grzech, *Spain*;
Mr. Snorre Karkkonen Svensson, *Latvia*;
Mr. Gabrielius Simas Sapiega, *Lithuania*.

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Exam tasks
2.	Student projects

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

Although the interest for studying diverse language features could be traced several thousand years ago, it was only in the last two hundred years that there had been a number of attempts to establish a specific academic / scientific discipline on its own. However, despite rather productive activities and results that classical Philology studies have attained in the course of 19th century, it was in the 20th century *Linguistics* gained its renowned status as a vibrant research area and respective study field in Humanities and Social Studies across universities, primarily in Europe and USA, and, subsequently in other parts of contemporary world. In this ongoing process, at the outset of the 21st century and its first two decades, certain burning issues about the actual nature of these studies have still remained unresolved. They mostly revolve about the interrelated set(s) of issues of how Linguistics as the field of studies should be and could be organised in ever changing approaches to phenomena in and around language as the primary focus of academic and scholarly interest. This dilemma is present not only on the theoretical level, but even more so in the practical organisation, structure, facilities, management, and, above all, in regard to the key actors – students, teachers and researchers that happen to be involved in the actual execution of different activities closely related to the manner respective departments respond to the needs and requirements that had been set up within the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA) under the auspices of the Bologna Process. It also seems feasible to bring the current Linguistics study field closer to international standards and academic excellence both at the level of the national legislation in higher education in Lithuania and its actual legal requirements. A rather fair and objective evaluation about the state of such studies, their features, challenges in view of opportunities and threats, and possible recommendations to help improvements and further advanced organisation and execution of these studies was not only needed from the point of view of the regular assessment, but highly necessary for future activities in the envisaged period following the evaluation.

That is why the international Team of experts (hereafter - the Team), having been entrusted by SKVC to perform the review of the Linguistics field of studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Kaunas Institute of Technology (hereafter – KTU), had to take into account many issues that could better illuminate how these studies could be understood from external perspectives, as well as to, in a number of online interviews with the senior management, the team that has prepared Self-Evaluation Report (hereafter - SER), teachers, students, alumni and social partners; gather as much as possible additional findings that, in the end, form a larger picture in the form of the Final Report. Having followed the prescribed methodology, the Team tried its best to assess not only the required seven specific areas of expertise, but, also, to take into consideration that the difficulties having been caused by the Covid-19 pandemic since mid-March 2020 had definitely affected the process of instruction and research, as well as all aspects of everyday life, in particular the inability to carry out traditional face-to-face classes and communication between teachers and students. That is why virtual visits, although they could never replace a direct human communication, seemed to be the best solution under the given circumstances, and, thanks to a good will and efforts of fellow-colleagues, the interviews conducted by the Team at the Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) provided a diverse set of information for the assessment.

Although it regained the status of university in 1990, KTU had inherited 70 years long tradition of the University of Lithuania, having been established in 1922, as well as Kaunas Polytechnic Institute (KPI), and their impressive orientation to a continuous technological advancement and progressive scientific ideas in a number of study fields. The KTU consists of 9 faculties, the library, 8 research institutes as well as the departments of administration and support. The University has 1915 employees. The University premises currently host 8.442 students, and out of whom 5.965 happen to be bachelor students, 2.035 are master students, whereas 319 pursue the Third (Doctoral) Cycle studies. The Linguistics study field (LSF) at the bachelor (the First Cycle) level is a part of diverse disciplines (translation, philosophy, communication, politics, music, education, etc.) that have been offered within the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, after the reorganization of the University in 2014.

In the study programme New Media Language, 23 teachers have been teaching the subjects or parts of the subjects of the programme for at least 3 years. The programme employs 4 professors, 4 associate professors or senior researchers, 6 lecturers with a doctoral degree, 8 lecturers without a doctoral degree, out of whom 3 lecturers are currently studying for a doctoral degree, and 1 assistant. In the 2017-2020 period under evaluation, the number of students who enrolled in the recently created New Media Language study programme rose steadily, but usually reached 32-34. The total number of students in the LSF was 111 in 2020. There is also a solid influx of international students, which can be explained by the internationalisation strategy of KTU. According to the statements expressed by the management during the online interviews, they do not aim to be a 'classical linguistics programme', and KTU, in general, does not aspire to be a 'regular university with classical programmes' - what, in their opinion, distinguishes them, is use of technological tools, network analysis, text analysis, etc. With the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic, they put even more emphasis on technology. It is very clear that switching to online teaching was a

challenging process, but KTU regarded this major challenge to have been met “relatively successfully” in terms of learning and experimenting with new tools and technology. The university offered specific courses on teaching tools to be used by both the teaching staff and the students, having relied on an excellent technological potential within its campus premises. Together with the two highly important aspects of their strategy to be different and rather specific in comparison to similar programmes in Linguistics across Lithuania – interdisciplinarity and internationalisation – the four years long BA New media Language study programme can be seen as a solid nucleus for further studies in applied linguistics at both MA (Second Cycle) and Doctoral studies.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Linguistics study field and **first cycle** at Kaunas Technology University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Study aims, outcomes and content	4
2.	Links between science (art) and study activities	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Studying, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and publicity	3
	Total:	25

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The BA programme in New Media Language offered by Kaunas Technology University (KTU) aims at providing graduates with relevant skills and competencies to work in environments where a solid basis of the interrelation between language, communication and technology is required. The SER justifies the need for such professionals adequately, and it substantiates the relevance it may have for the Lithuanian context relying on several institutional and national reports (e.g. the Lithuanian Employment Service).

KTU see interdisciplinarity as the added value of this BA programme, as they understand it is different from other undergraduate study plans offered in Lithuania. The main objective of the programme is training language specialists capable of working in multilingual and interdisciplinary settings with a high technological component: The BA equips students with skills to be ‘the writers of media’. The graduates from the programme may work in education, cultural and health institutions, and in governmental and industrial sectors (including marketing, public relations, publishing, communications, translation and project management).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The BA in New Media Language does offer a unique study opportunity in Lithuania, as this programme emphasises the use of language and technology. As mentioned in the visit to the institution, KTU is not aiming to compete with classical philology, but the programme has been set to stay true to the technological focus of the University. As it can be drawn from the SER and the meetings held with the university representatives, the BA New Media Language does not aim to be a “classical linguistics programme”, and KTU, in general, does not strive to be a “regular university with classical programmes”. There is a clear focus on the interdisciplinarity of the programme, and this is positively valued by students and social partners. Entrepreneurship is also promoted, as graduates from the programme can create and develop their own business in translation, publishing, marketing, advertising and related fields. The graduates of this study programme have the possibility to continue their studies in the second cycle study programmes in linguistics and translation.

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

(1) Factual situation

The study programme is well framed within the institutional strategy of KTU, its mission and objectives. There is also a robust justification in the SER of how the overall strategy of KTU aligns with the Lithuanian Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030”. The main aim of the BA (“to provide knowledge of linguistics and modern media language and skills of its usage as well as abilities to create, analyse and publish interdisciplinary and global digital media content”) matches the mission of the KTU of providing research-based studies, creating and transferring knowledge and innovative technologies, and creating an open creative environment.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The BA programme is coherent with the mission and objectives of the university and there is a well-defined strategy to offer a distinctive study field which differs from more classical views on linguistics. The focus on the relationship between language and technology is at the core of this programme, and it aligns the essence and the ethos of the university. The programme aims to be very practical and provide graduates with appropriate tools to access the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

The scope of the programme New Media Language is 240 ECTS (4 years). The field studies comprise 168 ECTS and general university study subjects add 12 ECTS. The internships and the final thesis are also in accordance with the legal requirements, as they are of 15 ECTS each. As for the elective subjects, the programme includes 30 ECTS. The scope of a student's individual study plan per semester is 30 credits.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All legal requirements are met, and the BA programme fits the main standards of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ECTS are allocated in a correct way with a good estimation of student workload.

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

(1) Factual situation

The programme has been designed in line with the study outcomes of the first study cycle (according to the description of the first cycle studies in the European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework) and it matches the sixth level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework.

The aims and objectives of the BA are described with sufficient detail and rigour in the SER and the learning outcomes are coherent with the ethos of KTU. Each course is described in terms of learning outcomes and all the results of the courses cover the expected results and goals of the whole study programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The aims, objectives, and the learning outcomes are clearly specified in the SER, and they have been consistently justified by the university representatives during the visit to the institution. The structure of the modules is appropriate and match the descriptor of the first cycle for the study programme: to acquire knowledge and be able to apply it (A1–A7), be able to conduct research (B1–B2), include subject-specific skills (C1– C5), develop social (D1–D3) and personal (E1–E4) skills. As claimed in the SER, there is an “interrelation among the title of the study programme, its learning outcomes, structure and the awarded bachelor’s degree in linguistics” with a specific ratio of contact and independent work hours with the results of study programme.

The way in which possible improvements and future restructuring of the study programme are envisaged is adequate. Modifications can be introduced every year, with a compulsory review every three years. It is worth mentioning that roundtables with students and researchers are organised by the administration to provide the SPC with information on possible improvement proposals.

The study methods are diversified and adapted to the study subjects. There is a suitable combination of teaching methods, and new (online) teaching modalities seem to have been successfully incorporated by the teaching staff.

Sufficient attention is paid to the development of research skills in the specialty aiming to prepare students for doctoral studies.

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

(1) Factual situation

The New Media Language programme comprises 36 modules delivered in 8 academic terms. 31 modules include subjects from university education and study field (including the internship and the final thesis), while the remaining 5 modules incorporate optional courses. Every module is described according to the methodology of the Preparation of the Study Module Programme of KTU. The evaluation system is adequate, and it includes diverse methods and tools.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The organisation of the courses and the curriculum is in line with the aims and vision of KTU, and it aligns with the essence of the programme New Media Language. Interdisciplinarity is clearly favoured, and there are no repetitions in the study plan.

The bridging courses on languages and informatics offered in the first terms guarantee that the students reach the minimum level required to progress with their studies. Although the programme can clearly offer a broad view on linguistics and, specifically, on the interrelation between language and technology, there should be more courses on theoretical linguistics to set the foundation required of graduates in the field.

There is a good balance between mandatory and optional courses. Good attention is paid to skills and competencies that prepare students for the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students can personalise the study programmes by selecting specific optional courses in semesters 5, 6 and 7 with a total of 30 ECTS in elective subjects.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The study programme of the BA in New Media Language allows students to personalise their learning experience to some extent, with the possibility to choose “competence elective courses of the BA” (30 ECTS). Students can also choose a second foreign language (French, Spanish, German, Russian, Swedish and Italian) starting in the first semester.

Without being a specific weakness of the programme, the programme could offer more elective courses. Although the BA complies with the legal framework, additional subjects could be included in the current study programme or the number of elective credits (30) can be increased to allow students to reinforce their minor field combinations in multimedia, marketing, etc. Also, a course on Lithuanian language and culture would be a valuable addition to attract international students.

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

(1) Factual situation

The preparation and defence of final theses complies with KTU regulation (Description of the procedure for preparation, defence and storage of KTU final projects). Topics are proposed by the teaching staff according to their research interests and expertise, although proposals are also welcome from students and social partners. Specific training on databases and reference systems is provided by the library of KTU. The evaluation committee of the thesis includes researchers with experience in the study field, professional practitioners and social partners. At least one of the members must come from another institution.

The final theses developed in the programme address contemporary socially relevant topics (e.g. 'Greta Thunberg's Communication on Social Media in Raising Public Awareness about Climate Change and Sustainability'; 'Semantic Analysis of Cryptocurrency Terms'). Their format is compatible with the study cycle requirements, and they include appropriate, up to date references to the relevant literature.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The preparation and defence of the final thesis meet all the legal requirements, and the information provided to the students is appropriate regarding the elaboration of their dissertation, editing issues, the preparation of the defence and plagiarism. The topics of the theses in each programme address a diversity of areas within the general field of new media language, including multimodal media language issues, media ethics, linguistic expression of topics relevant to society and so on. So far, not too many topics have originated with social partners (only 5-6 since 2020).

The degree projects need to be presented in the form of written theses. The students deliver quality final projects and receive clear guidance along the steps of the process. However, the adherence to the classical, written thesis format means that they cannot apply the practical skills to which much of their training is dedicated, such as media content creation and editing. It would be beneficial for the students' learning experience to allow more flexible forms of delivering the degree projects.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The study programme of New Media Language provides a unique offer within the context of Lithuanian higher education.
2. The specific approach of KTU, focusing on the interrelation between language and technology, seems appropriate to provide students with suitable skills and competences to enter the labour market.
3. The study programme allows students to continue with international studies on a variety of areas within linguistics.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Additional courses on general linguistic theories could be included in the programme.
2. More elective courses could be available for students.
3. The engagement of social partners in the proposal of topics for the thesis could be more evident.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The *New Media Language* study programme combines teaching linguistics with skills related to creation and critical evaluation of digital media content. Through the curriculum, the students are acquainted with the basic notions of linguistic theory, and with practical and theoretical skills related to new media language. The study programme includes both theoretical and practical classes, as is necessary to realise the aims of the course's curriculum. The aim of the programme is to provide the students with interdisciplinary education.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The *New Media Language* programme aims to equip its graduates with two types of skills: (1) practical competencies related to creating and evaluating the content of new media; (2) research and analytical skills in the field of linguistics, which – in how the programme is formulated – also includes language skills. The programme combines a variety of courses with different learning outcomes to achieve both these results. The content of the curriculum, types of degree projects and employment prospects of students suggest that the programme successfully educates competent creators of digital media content.

New Media Language programme gives students a variety of skills, but its focus is practical rather than research-oriented. Formally, the curriculum includes theoretical linguistic courses, but many of them focus on practical language skills – e.g. the focus of the phonetics and phonology course is on the use of IPA inasmuch as its relevant for the pronunciation of English. The training in theoretical linguistics lacks focus, and it is not always clear how it complements the more practical aspects of the study programme. For example, students learn about language universals, but it is not clear how this fits with the other learning objectives of the programme. This lack of focus also affects the students' motivation and learning experience.

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

(1) Factual situation

The courses within the programme are updated frequently and practical exercises are based on latest audio-visual productions. The teachers who attend international conferences introduce the recent findings in the field into their courses. The students also have the opportunity to work with the latest software relevant to different aspects of their field, e.g. website development or video editing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the access to these tools was ensured through enabling remote desktop access for students who needed to use the software. New technologies are also used in language teaching.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The study programme is deeply rooted in new technologies, and the software students use is constantly reviewed and updated, which is commendable. It is also a great advantage that KTU is able to develop its own software, e.g. for the purposes of language learning. While the cutting edge technological solutions are in place, the extent to which they are implemented seems to vary. For instance, during COVID-19, the teachers were given the option to consult with EduLab and implement innovative solutions, but not all of them updated the Moodle pages for their courses regularly. Therefore, the extent to which the existing technical solutions are implemented across the programme could be monitored more closely.

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

(1) Factual situation

The programme places much more emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to apply it than on research skills. In the study programme, the knowledge/skills related to the discipline of linguistics are combined with language learning and writing skills, and the programme is intended as interdisciplinary, rather than as competition for more traditionally understood philological studies. Only between 3 and 5% of students are interested in becoming involved in research. This includes mentorship (since 2017), encouraging students to participate in conferences, financial support for conference participation etc. The students who do choose to get involved in research activities do so successfully, and the staff encourages promising students to pursue second cycle studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The programme emphasises practical skills and interdisciplinarity. This is helpful in educating versatile graduates able to do well on the job market, but can hinder the students' preparedness to focus on specific research topics, especially at first cycle level where they have to decide what interests them. The mentorship programme is in place, but in 2020 research- and study-related mentoring were fused together, which can further obscure the student's understanding of what academic research could be. The teachers in the programme support research-minded students, but the Team is under the impression that this support is more personal than systemic. This should be addressed, and more solutions focusing specifically on developing research potential should be implemented, especially in the light of the plans of implementing second cycle studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strongly interdisciplinary environment and the focus on technology.
2. Effective training of skilled professionals who can create quality content for new media.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Inadequate focus on developing research competences, especially within more theoretically-oriented branches of linguistics.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

Admission criteria are clear, consistent, and well applied. The field of study is presented in an excellent way on appropriate websites and the country on the whole..

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Student selection and admission is valued excellently by the team, as is dissemination.

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

(1) Factual situation

The criteria for recognition of foreign degrees is in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition and in cooperation with the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. If students embark on a study abroad programme, they first agree on a study plan with their advisors so that the credits obtained abroad can be recognized at KTU. Students entering with higher language levels are able to take alternative credits.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

"Study Abroad" is valued well, especially the promotion of students strengthens the core competence programs. There is enough information about it, provided in various ways like on KTU website, verbal call, etc. Agreed study plans are a very effective way to ensure students remain on track.

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

(1) Factual situation

KTU takes part in the Erasmus+ agreement, enabling a large share of its student body to study abroad for any period of time. Mobility grants enable the students to also study outside of the EU at one of the partner universities, or do internships abroad. The information is disseminated through various channels and students can access them on a daily basis.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The choice to study abroad gives students the opportunity to deepen their living language competencies, to strengthen their knowledge so that they can be integrated as consistently as possible into future career opportunities.

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

(1) Factual situation

KTU informs its students about all possible forms of funding. The University promotes a variety of funded projects with partners that open up not only deeper prospects for the field of study, but also careers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students are informed about the various sources of funding available, as well as the psychological assistance provided. The administration pays a lot of attention to informing students and providing psychological and professional support.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling.

(1) Factual situation

Information reaches students on a regular basis. Most communication takes place in general by email. Some information is provided at the faculty or department-level, or communicated orally by lecturers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students are satisfied with the possibilities of getting the necessary information that is easily accessible. It should be noted that during the meeting with students, several shortcomings were mentioned, which are recommended to be solved: study materials in *Moodle* are sometimes not posted on time or are not updated. A better co-ordination between lecturers and the management structures can help overcome these problem in the future.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The strengths of the university from the students' point of view are internationality, innovation, cooperation with social partners in deepening students' practical skills.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. A lack of appropriate communication for international students can become a real challenge during their studies, especially in regard to their process of adjustment to local culture and the way of life.

3.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

A variety of different learning and teaching methods are applied, also within separate courses, and teachers have been trained in teaching Design Thinking. Students have the possibility to participate in projects based on this approach.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

For the language courses the application of CEFR is only schematic, by connecting the CEFR levels to each semester. The number of hours to reach the next level is increasing. This creates an imbalance, e.g. A1 level should be reached in shorter time than a whole semester taken into consideration the mother tongue of the learners and skills in English and other languages, but for the higher levels the goals are too ambitious and for most students, as there is not enough hours per semester to achieve the intended learning outcome. We also learned at our visit, that in real life, that the exams were on lower CEFR levels than stated in the programme. The university must revise the programmes for language courses, based on the CEFR-descriptors, both the original book, and the supplement from 2017, to ensure more realistic targets of learning outcome.

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

(1) Factual situation

There is a University policy for equal opportunities and diversity. The premises used for the programme are adapted for persons with special mobility needs, and the social welfare coordinator organises the needed adaptations, and the students are given consultations by KTU Student Information and Service Centre.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There seems to be a good system within this area, with the University also actively working to identify needs, e.g. through surveys, which is positive. However, it is difficult to evaluate how it would function in practice, as there were very few cases of students with special needs in this programme. During the visit it showed that the University should provide more support for international students from countries for which a visa is needed.

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

(1) Factual situation

Every year, a report of monitoring of the students' learning outcomes on university level has been prepared. The report is later used by the dean as a basis for discussion, also in meetings of the committee assessing the study field of Linguistics. There is a continuous monitoring of students' achievements in the academic information system, where also the attendance in class is registered.

Cumulative assessments are used, also different methods. Procedures, processes, and outcomes are defined and regulated which ensures the organisation of the study process and the monitoring of student progress. Students receive feedback on a regular basis during the study process.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The monitoring of the study process and feedback is done in a systematic and good way.

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

(1) Factual situation

Both SER and the visit shows that there is a high degree of employability of graduates in different types of companies, and the skills acquired during the studies are valued among employers. The university organises the career contact fair KTU WANTED Career Days.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Despite the high degree of employability of graduates and the activities carried out by the University, there is room for improvement regarding the connection between the University and graduates, as this is valuable both for promotion of the programme, its further development, and the connection with social partners. It would be useful to develop a more formalised forum for contact with alumni. There is no alumni tracking system at the moment, so gathering updated information on graduates and their current position in the labour market is a challenge for the University. This shortcoming makes self-evaluation difficult, as employability cannot be directly measured.

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

(1) Factual situation

The university has guidelines for detection of plagiarism and procedures to tackle instances of academic violations. Students are introduced to academic honesty in an introduction course. Librarians guide students in how to avoid plagiarism, and databases are used to screen final papers for plagiarism. The University has an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, and there is a system for handling complaints from students or employees regarding non-discrimination.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The university has good procedures to prevent plagiarism and handling complaints efficiently.

The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy of 2018 gives good guidelines with regards to non-discrimination of students and staff.

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

(1) Factual situation

Appeals can be submitted in accordance with the description of the procedure for submitting and examining student appeals and complaints, and there is a procedure for settling such

appeals and complaints with interim boards and, if needed, further with the University's Dispute Settlement Commission. During the academic period of 2017–2020 no appeals were submitted by the students of the study programme New Media Language.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The university has an appropriate system for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. High degree of employability, thanks to interdisciplinary skills.
2. A well organised monitoring of the study process.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Too little connection with alumni, also the potential for cooperation with social partners is not used fully.
2. Discrepancy of planned learning outcomes according to CEFR and achieved results for the language courses.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The number of students is relatively small and the student-teacher ratio allows for good learning experience. The majority of teaching staff conduct research alongside teaching, and they are involved in several research groups. The teachers within the programme are on different career levels and the length of their teaching experience varies. The teaching staff involved with the programme have a varying array of competences, and many combine practical and outreach activities with publishing scientific texts.

In transition to online teaching caused by COVID-19 the teachers received support from KTU, but the move to online teaching has nonetheless affected the student experience of the programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The teachers involved in the programme are spread between different research groups and faculties, which seems to contribute to varying quality of teaching within the programme. They can access adequate pedagogical training and support, especially with regard to

practice-based teaching. In practice, however, the transition to online teaching turned out to be challenging and affected the quality of teaching and the students' experience: the responsiveness of the teaching staff should be improved, and more emphasis should be placed on securing the students' active participation in the online teaching sessions. It should also be monitored more closely whether the resources made available to students via the online teaching environment are up-to-date and exhaustive.

Some teachers involved in the programme have very good publication records; For some others, however, it could be improved, especially with respect to publishing in high-ranking international journals.

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

(1) Factual situation

The teaching staff of the programme participates in a range of international research projects and initiatives which promote academic mobility. They are also involved in bilateral collaborations with academic institutions e.g. in the UK and Sweden.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The teaching staff within the programme are involved in a good range of international collaborations, but their mobility related to research-centred collaborations could be improved further. The recommendation of the 2018 report, that more publications could be co-authored with colleagues working outside Lithuania, remains relevant. Paradoxically, COVID-19 and the changes it brought about to the way academic collaborations and conferences are organised could constitute a good opportunity for 'internationalisation at home', and increased exchange of skills and experiences with international colleagues. Wider participation of the programme's teaching staff in research collaborations involving academic mobility, such as COST Actions, should also be encouraged.

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

(1) Factual situation

The competences of the teaching staff relevant to the quality of the study programme are twofold: (1) pedagogical; and (2) research-related. The teaching staff within the programme participates in a wide range of exchanges and teaching visits within Erasmus+ and collaborations with social partners such as IKEA. Training opportunities were also provided within EduLab when transition to online teaching took place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of research activities, the staff are supported by the Faculty to attend international conferences and to finance publication expenses if needed.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The teaching staff is committed to both research and teaching, but more systematic solutions should be implemented to support them in this endeavour. The difficulties with the transition to online teaching, and the adverse effect this had on student experience, described elsewhere in this report, suggest that – apart from training visits within Erasmus + – the teaching staff in the programme could benefit from more systematic local support, involving

following up on their teaching practice. It could be useful to implement a system whereby the lecturers visit each other's classes (also the online ones) and give each other feedback.

KTU should provide more systematic solutions allowing staff to combine research and teaching activities. Support for conference participation is in place, but support for teachers which would give them the time to prepare research to present at such conferences is more limited. The workload related to teaching is further exacerbated by the fact that the assessment of students is spread across several tasks which the students perform throughout the semester – this increases the amount of time the teachers have to devote to feedback and evaluation, and makes combining research and teaching even more challenging.

The management's efforts to attract young international staff, compensating for financial conditions with additional incentives such as paying for conference participation etc., are commendable and should be upheld. This kind of flexibility should also be extended not only to prospective, but also to current teaching staff if this is not done already.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A diversity of staff training opportunities, including technological skills and particular pedagogical approaches such as Design Thinking.
2. A variety of well-defined research groups exist in which staff can participate.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Limited follow up on the effectiveness of staff training.
2. Scarcity of publications with international co-authors.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The existing infrastructure, both in terms of physical buildings and virtual space allotted to the Linguistics study field at KTU, in regard to the required standards are quite appropriate and adequate to the needs of instruction, research and other related learning activities. Being hi-tech oriented, KTU has provided, as a part of its ambitious yet highly feasible plans for further development, suitable resources that have been used by students, teachers and researchers alike. There are 13 established rooms for lectures, with more than 500 places at the premises of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (A. Mickevičius g. 37), as well as four computer labs with sophisticated equipment (i.e., computer classrooms with computerized workplaces, wireless Internet access, video and audio equipment).

The largest part of the required literature for the study programme New Media Language is in the Central KTU library, which happens to be a modern education and research resource

centre equipped with 600 standard and 200 computerized workplaces. In addition to diversified open fund collection available in the reading rooms (comprising titles related to media philosophy, technical language translation, new media languages, and other publications, as well as universal, multilingual encyclopaedias, manuals, dictionaries, and conference materials), the Library has accumulated 473 titles of publications (544 copies) in the central library reading room, 1373 copies of 841 titles in the central library funds. Concerning Media (UDK 316.77) literature relevant to the study programme, the central library reading room offers 69 publications. Quite an impressive number of 55 international scientific databases with the access to 26,428 journals and 420,843 eBooks (in 2019), offer an excellent environment for studying and researching purposes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Given the current number of students and teachers involved in the New Media Language studies at BA level, the available facilities are quite suitable for all kinds of necessary activities both in face-to-face (in-class) situation, but even more so in the online environment, which proved to be crucial in the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Since it was not possible to take a closer look in the actual titles / authors available for students and researchers within the Linguistics study field at KTU, it can be concluded that they satisfy to the great extent the current needs that must be understood as well-developed physical, virtual and intellectual infrastructure, which is mostly new and located in close proximity to other premises at KTU. It has proved to be the major advantage in adverse conditions of pandemic, when a blended type of learning displayed its potential in full. It has also been quite useful in the case of student internships and the preparation of final theses, when the intensive communication between teachers and students helped to overcome some important challenges that could endanger the quality of the tasks performed.

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

(1) Factual situation

It is obvious that KTU does not want to lag behind in the renewal of the current infrastructure facilities. The University has already undertaken a major study infrastructure modernisation project, with quite an increase in the number of workspaces and wishing to create an attractive study environment suitable for education, research and creativity. Repairs of classrooms, the purchase of new furniture, investing in brand new IT equipment and modern video conferencing equipment – all of these activities aim to boost innovative study methods and to secure a stable educational environment. Library funds have been updated on a regular basis and there are indications that the titles purchased of both printed and electronic resources will continue to grow in the future.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The planning and upgrading of resources have been carried out in accordance with the ambitious strategy that aims to retain the character of the linguistics field of studies at a high level, and, possibly, to make it more advanced in the foreseeable future. Considerable funds have been earmarked to accomplish these goals, especially in relation to licensed software and other electronic resources, but a more diversified influx in the recently published books that cover a number of related disciplines in the study field of Linguistics should be also envisaged in the longer term planning.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A comfortable and well-designed educational environment, with the strong emphasis on hi-tech resources within the larger framework of applied linguistics studies in the international context seems to be the major asset and more than solid basis for the future development of all three levels of studies (i.e., the Second and Third Cycle of studies) as a continuation and complement of the current four-years long BA programme.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Although the current facilities seem to be sufficient and suitable for the ongoing scope and nature of the New Media Language study programme, more classrooms and/or IT workspaces specifically designated for the needs of Linguistics study field should be considered as the real necessity in the next 5-7 years of development.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY

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

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

(1) Factual situation

KTU relies on a well established infrastructure concerning the internal quality assurance system of studies: the Senate, the Vice-Rector for Studies, the Department for Studies, and the SPC of Linguistics and Translation are engaged in the quality assurance of the programme.

Changes to the study programme are considered by the SPC, and roundtables are organised with students and the teaching staff of New Media Language.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The quality assurance system for the study field is appropriate and efficient. There are adequate tools and communication systems to guarantee quality assurance in the field. The procedures to propose modifications and check the progress of the BA programmes are adequately described and presented in the SER.

The organisation of roundtables and the information channels seem to be working smoothly according to the views expressed in the visit to the University.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies.

(1) Factual situation

Stakeholders are engaged in internal quality assurance at KTU through the mechanisms and bodies of the institution. Students and social partners are involved in university governing bodies and operating committees. In addition, they participate in the SPC, the Qualification Committee and the Faculty Council. Also, annual surveys provide feedback of students and social partners on the programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The stakeholders are effectively engaged in the quality assurance of the programme and the study field and they participate in the surveys and roundtable discussions organised since 2020. There seems to be a good communication rapport between stakeholders, the teaching staff and the administration, and the satisfaction expressed in the interviews with these sectors was high.

Regarding alumni, since there is no tracking system implemented, no feedback is regularly received.

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

(1) Factual situation

The surveys to assess the internal quality include surveys for students (*Survey of Study Modules and Teachers, Study Programme Quality, Compulsory Practice and Final Degree Project Preparation and Defence*), employees (Openly) and social partners. The information of the programme is available on the website in a detailed and transparent way.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The study Quality management is in line with the standards and Guidelines for Quality assurance in the EHEA. Systematic surveys, analyses of the data by all the stakeholders, and wide publication and dissemination of the process and results are the main elements which guarantee the efficiency and the success of this management. The process of the evaluation regarding the information available for the studies is transparent and efficient. A plan of initiatives and actions is drawn up every year in order to develop the best practices of KTU employees. Similarly, feedback provided by students is regularly checked by the administration of the Faculty and the University, and actions are designed to improve the overall quality of the programme.

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

(1) Factual situation

The quality of the study programmes is assessed by the students at the end of each academic term. The Faculty uses questionnaires to collect data and feedback on students' perceptions on the contents of the subjects and possible improvement proposals. The general results are discussed with the teaching staff and the departments.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

During the visit, most students were satisfied with the study programme, the learning outcomes and the skills and competences learned. Their perception of the performance of the teaching staff is also rather positive, although some comments were made regarding the lack of knowledge on feedback procedures (how to raise issues with the administration). Also, some students suggested that some of the lectures could be recorded, as this is not a well-established pattern in the pandemic.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Internal quality system is well established and complies with the guidelines and best practices for quality assurance in the EHEA.
2. The tools to receive feedback from students, employees and social partners are appropriate. Information is analysed consequently, and action plans are taken by the administration.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. No information is received from graduates, as there is no established procedure to track and keep contact with alumni.
2. Students seem to demand some of the lectures are recorded to promote independent learning and facilitate some flexibility.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation area	Recommendations for the evaluation area at HEI (study cycle)
Study aims, outcomes and content	The engagement of social partners in the proposal of topics for the thesis should be promoted.
Links between science (art) and study activities	More emphasis should be placed on encouraging students to do research, and on systematically developing their research-related skills throughout the curriculum.
Student admission and support	To strengthen the integration of foreign students into academic and cultural life, to solve problems with students during their studies, so that information is clearly resonated, especially when there are disagreements with the student and the lecturer about assessments. Provide students with the opportunity to study languages or have seminars with native speakers.
Studying, student performance and graduate employment	<p>The connection between university and graduates should be further improved and formalised, and the connection with social partners/employers should be tightened.</p> <p>The language programmes must be revised to be more realistic, given the hours, based on CEFR.</p>
Teaching staff	The management should implement more holistic ways of supporting staff in conducting research, rather than only rewarding outstanding results.
Learning facilities and resources	<p>More classrooms and /or IT workspaces specifically designated for the needs of the Linguistics study field should be considered as the real necessity in the next 5-7 years of development.</p> <p>Although considerable funds have been earmarked to accomplish these goals, especially in relation to licensed software and other electronic resources, a more diversified influx of the recently printed books in the study field on an interdisciplinary basis should be also envisaged in the longer-term planning.</p> <p>It is important to improve the attained level of internationalisation and interdisciplinarity that could lead to the balanced ratio between traditional and most recent theoretical concepts in linguistics, and such approach could attract a wider spectrum of qualified international teaching and researching staff ready to implement the newly proposed linguistic descriptors in the years to come.</p>

Study quality management and publicity

An alumni tracking system should be implemented by KTU.

Lecturers should consider recording some lessons to promote independent learning.

V. SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the findings of the expert panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and the interviews with the university / college administration (senior management and faculty administration staff), staff responsible for the preparation of the SER, teaching staff and stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, social partners).

The expert panel gives a positive evaluation to the implementation of the Linguistics First cycle Study Field at the Kaunas University of Technology with all areas of evaluation assessed as good or very good.

It is very positive that the study programme of New Media Language provides a unique offer within the context of Lithuanian higher education with its interdisciplinary approach. KTU focuses on the interrelation between language and technology, which provide students with suitable skills and competences to enter the labour market. Although this is commendable, general linguistics has been put a bit in the shade, something that can be solved with some not too drastic changes in the programme.

KTU shows a strongly interdisciplinary environment connected to the field of Linguistics and the competence and focus on technology at the university certainly is an asset for the field as well. On one side, students are trained to become skilled professionals who can create quality content for new media, however, the other side of this is inadequate focus on developing research competences for students who chose to chase an academic carriere.

There is no doubt that the students benefit from internationality, innovation, and cooperation with social partners. Being international, it also means to be sufficiently supportive towards international students, and this is an area of improvement.

The programme ensures a high degree of employability, thanks to the developed interdisciplinary skills and current study areas. However, there is too little connection with alumni, also the potential for cooperation with social partners is not used fully. The foreign language courses are not appropriately aligned to Common European Framework of Reference which has resulted in a discrepancy of planned learning outcomes and achieved results.

It is very positive that there exist different training opportunities for the staff like technological skills and particular pedagogical approaches such as Design Thinking. The staff also has the possibility to participate in research groups. The number of publications with international co-authors could be larger. The Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities seeks to have certain newly proposed linguistic descriptors in place that can allow them to attract a spectrum of qualified international teaching and researching staff. It is their longer-term policy to continue targeting especially the younger candidates, who only just graduated from a PhD and who are internationally-oriented in their understanding of contemporary

linguistics studies. However, this orientation remains to be a major challenge, and the Faculty management tries to be rather flexible with other features of the respective contracts that hope to compensate for a relatively low salary, such as covering conference participation and other benefits for research and publication. The other equally pertinent solution to these issues is seen in further strengthening ties with their international partners that have already created a stable network. And, finally, there should be a balanced approach to the inclusion of both traditional and most recent theoretical concepts in linguistics with the current emphasis on interdisciplinary aspects of linguistics with attractive areas of expertise, not necessarily limited to humanities and social sciences only.

KTU ensures a good physical and educational environment, with emphasis on hi-tech resources.

KTU has a well-functioning internal quality system. Feedback is analysed consequently, and action plans are taken by the administration. The lack of an alumni tracking system hinders the possibility for opportunities in different areas of the field.

Expert panel signatures:

1. **Prof. dr. Srebren Dizdar (panel chairperson),** *academic*
2. **Prof. dr. Alberto Fernandez Costales,** *academic*
3. **Doc. dr. Karolina Grzech,** *academic*
4. **Mr. Snorre Karkkonen Svensson,** *representative of social partners*
5. **Mr. Gabrielius Simas Sapiega,** *students' representative*