



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of JOURNALISM
at Klaipėda University

Expert panel:

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5. Mr Matthew Kitching, *students' representative.*

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	<i>JOURNALISM</i>
State code	6121JX068
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3,5 years
Credit volume	210 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	16 June 2000

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

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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 the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on *30 April, 2021*.

Prof. dr. Jörg Matthes (panel chairperson) *Head of Dep. Of Communication, University of Vienna, Austria;*

Dr. Penelope H. Sheets Thibaut, *Senior lecturer at Dep. of Communication Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands;*

Prof. dr. Adrian Hadland, *Deputy Dean of Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Stirling, U.K..*

Ms. Vaiva Žukienė, *Chair of the Lithuanian Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers, Lithuania;*

Mr. Matthew Kitching, *PhD student in Higher Education: Research, Evaluation and Enhancement at Lancaster University, U.K.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. No additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit.

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

Located in Western Lithuania, Klaipėda University hosts 17 departments and is home to about 2700 students enrolled in 108 three-cycle study programs. The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities has seven departments, provides four areas of studies and 21 fields of studies with over 1100 students overall. The Journalism programme is currently implemented at the Department of Journalism, after a number of structural changes throughout the past years. In this programme, students are meant to finish in 3.5 years, collecting 210 ECTS overall.

The key relevance of the programme lies in the training of professional journalists, particularly for the region of Western Lithuania, providing state of the art practical and applied knowledge as well as a theoretical background and skills on journalism and journalism research. There are strong ties to the local media scene, such as the National Radio, “Balticum” Television, and the newspaper “Klaipėda”, among many others. Classes are not only taught by KU faculty, but also by experienced practitioners from print, TV, and online media, among others. Main aspects of the training involve the theoretical understanding of key concepts drawing on various disciplines such as communication or sociology, and the learning of practical skills to prepare media content for various formats in efficient, ethically responsible, and creative ways, particularly with the help of state-of the art technology. While the program has a scientific and theoretical background, the main focus is practical journalism education. In the last evaluation, the Journalism study programme was positively evaluated, and accredited for three years.

It is safe to say that the journalism programme at KU has a great relevance for the cultural region in general and the media market in Lithuania in particular. Journalism as a field is of utmost importance to democracy, and the practical and theoretical training of future journalists in an ever-changing media environment bears great relevance for civil society, particularly in the age of misinformation, global challenges, and uncertain truths. This program is particularly relevant for the media scene in Western Lithuania, and overall, it is an important pillar for journalism education in the entire country.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Journalism study field and second cycle at Klaipėda University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

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

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

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

3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The purpose of the journalism study program corresponds to the activity, vision and mission of KU, as a significant institution of science and studies in the West Lithuania region, which contributes significantly to the development of this region. The programme plays an important role in contributing to the main goals of KU: ensuring the quality of science and studies, and contributing to the needs of society and the labour market of Western Lithuania and Klaipėda city.

The program was renewed in 2019 with the intent to contribute to the popularity of the Journalism study program in the Western region of Lithuania.

The aim of the Journalism study program is to train professional journalists. The program focuses on developing students' abilities to analyse the communication area, its needs and changes, and its links with political, economic, legal, and organizational factors. It also trains students to analyse the specificity of communication channels (different media), their applicability and impact on the society. Students also learn to assess critically the impact of disinformation and propaganda on the work of journalists and the audience. All in all, the program aims to accommodate the rapid development and changing perspectives of modern journalism.

Graduates obtain a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree and are eligible to work in the media as journalists, public relations specialists, in the editorial offices of periodicals, television and radio stations, online media, or in public relations services of institutions, companies, and organizations.

Cooperation with social partners is reflected on different levels: when organizing and assessing internship of students, by facilitating research, practical workshops, and study visits. In addition, representatives of social partners are involved in the activities of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH) Study Program Committee, other self-evaluation groups, and participate in organized seminars, discussions and other events.

Students of the Journalism study program are actively involved in cooperation with social partners. During lectures, when performing practical tasks (reporting, preparing articles, creating video clips, radio shows) they have the opportunity to establish and maintain close contacts with business representatives and social partners.

Employment opportunities for students of the Journalism study program are good: about 80% of graduates work in journalism; the rest choose to study in the second cycle or to work in other creative fields (in the sector of creative industries). Furthermore, graduates work not only in the regional media or information media, institutions and organizations, but

also in national ones (it is worth mentioning that in 2017-2018 there was no admission to this study programme. The programme was renewed in 2019, therefore the above given numbers are from the earlier period).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

According to the previous expert team recommendations (2015), the study program has been renewed in cooperation with social partners, and integrates study methods that ensure that graduates of the Journalism study program can successfully enter the labour market. Student feedback is monitored, on the basis of which the aim of the program, outcomes, and study subject modules were updated, and the staff was supplemented with professional journalists.

The preferences and notes from social partners are taken into account. The social partners are satisfied with a strong emphasis on practical teaching.

There are a lot of very well-known teacher-practitioners mentioned, who ensure the practical side of teaching takes place at a sufficiently high level. This seems, in particular, to have been improved since the last evaluation - the coursework is very practically oriented and focuses on core journalistic skills. We noticed that those skills still focus on relatively “old” media types, but in consultation with the panels understand that this best serves the local media market in which most graduates work. At the same time, of course, a university should provide universal knowledge to its students, to prepare skilled professionals with a solid theoretical knowledge base. This will help graduates adapt to future changes in the media market and give them the skills to shift markets during their careers if they so choose.

This study program is the only one aimed at training professional journalists in the Western region of Lithuania. Taking into account the generational change, it is very important for this region to have such a program. However, KU should make more efforts to popularize this programme, appealing to a wider audience, not just in Western Lithuania.

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

(1) Factual situation

Klaipeda University has ambitious plans for journalism including the introduction of an English-language program, a second cycle program and hopes for greater international engagement. The delivery of practical teaching (creative practicums) by a cohort of young practitioners from social partners has modernized the delivery of teaching and enthused students. The university has been willing to back up its ambitions by investing resources in the program including a new Media Laboratory and approving the launch of a Youtube television channel.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

While there are good signs of revised learning outcomes, updated content and investment, the Review Panel is a little concerned the current academic team may struggle to upscale and diversify KU’s journalism offering in line with the institution’s expectations without additional support, training and resources.

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

(1) Factual situation

The scope of the cycle one Journalism program at KU is 210 ECTS (= 3.5 years). Each semester of a full-time student's individual plan is 30 ECTS, and the volume of one year of studies is 60 ECTS. One credit accounts for 26.67 study hours. There are two Professional Practice courses which are allotted a total of 15 ECTS. The Journalism study program is completed in semester 7 following the submission of a Bachelor's Thesis (15 ECTS).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Journalism program at KU has been restructured and the learning outcomes have been updated and revised. New areas of interest to contemporary journalism have been added such as online media, strategic communication and investigative journalism. In addition, students are provided with knowledge and skills related to the ability to critically assess the impact of disinformation and propaganda on the work of a journalist. The review panel feels this has been done constructively and has improved the program by, for instance, adding new subjects such as online journalism. The program conforms with legal requirements and is a suitable platform for students to proceed to second cycle studies, or to enter the workplace.

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

(1) Factual situation

Significant improvements have been made to the learning outcomes of the journalism program since the last review, in particular the students have more practical work which is taught by a range of media organisations including LNK, radio station "Laluna", LRT: Lithuanian National Radio, "Balticum" Television, daily newspapers "Klaipėda" and "Vakarų ekspresas", "Lietuvos rytas", among others.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The curriculum – particularly for the first two years of the programme – offers a very traditional perspective on the media industry conferring important skills and knowledge including media literacy and ethics. New subject areas include strategic communications, new media and misinformation. However, there is still more room for consideration of emerging media technologies, such as data journalism or artificial intelligence, and contemporary journalism practices to ensure students are fully equipped for the new, largely digital workplace environment. Even if, as noted earlier, these skills are not yet urgently needed in the local media market, they are certainly relevant for the future of the field globally, and would give graduates a cutting edge to become leaders in the local market.

The content and assessment methods along with the intended learning outcomes are compatible with the aims of the program which focus largely on preparing students to become professional journalists.

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

(1) Factual situation

The journalism program has a modular design with a cumulative grading system. First-year students acquire the basics of journalism theory, learn historical developments and, among other things, are equipped to ethically and responsibly prepare texts of various types and

genres. In second year, students are taught subjects that are directly related to the professional activities of a journalist (such as photojournalism and media management). In third year, skills are developed around the ability to think critically while thinking about the future and development of modern journalism. Practical training is included in a number of study subjects and is designed to help students gain the professional experience required for practical work.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is a logical progression of the modules which will see students developing appropriate knowledge and confidence. Not much progress has been achieved with the objective of internationalisation. Opportunities for internships with media companies appear limited. The Review Panel felt students could be more passionate about the importance of journalism as a critical tool of democracy and accountability if this aspect was expressed more clearly in the curriculum. Thus, the “moral imperative” of journalism to society is something that could be better integrated into the curriculum at various stages.

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

(1) Factual situation

Individual choice is offered in the selection of up to 18 credits of general university study subjects while each student is free to choose (according to the criteria for practical training provided in the study program) the media, institution or organisation where they will carry out practical training. The choice of subject for the BA thesis and the accompanying journalism project is also up to the student.

(3) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Adequate opportunities exist within the programme for the personalisation of study programs.

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

(1) Factual situation

The Bachelor's Thesis is worth 15 ECTS and is completed in semester 7 at the same time that a related Journalism Project is conducted. A unified thesis/project enables the student to tailor their studies toward specific employment-related outcomes and interests.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The combination of a thesis with a project is a good way to achieve a final balance in journalism students' education between theory and practice.

The summaries of the theses provided indicate a relevant range of topics of importance to contemporary journalism including migration, gender, objectivity and professionalism. The projects also enable students to evidence their skills and interests while providing potential employers with useful materials to promote employability.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The restructuring of the journalism course since the last review has been positive and in the right direction.
2. The journalism course is valued and supported by the University which has plans for the programme's expansion.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a need to more specifically relay the importance and role of journalism in terms of democracy, accountability and in the development of Lithuania and beyond. This goes hand-in-hand with the teaching of core competencies and theoretical knowledge that should serve graduates regardless which version of the media field they later work in.
2. Not much opportunities for internships with media organisations.
3. Not much movement on internationalisation efforts.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

(1) Factual situation

There are important research activities, yet the number of publications and their development is not entirely clear, although the report states that "in 2018 FSSH scientists and researchers have published over 70 publications in scientific journals". The nature of these journals is not clear, from the examples provided, most of them have not appeared in impactful international outlets. That said, there is however a broad scope of research activities, some of them international, in line with the general purpose of the program. Faculty members are involved in research collaborations as well as in the Erasmus+ Program, and the research activities are associated with the needs of social and non-academic partners.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The visibility in journals can be further improved, particularly in top notch outlets in journalism research. Additional measures to improve the research output of faculty members are needed, especially with respect to English language publications in international journals.

Also, there are important practical research projects but international collaborations could be further strengthened. The research program needs a stronger connection to international research activities, especially regarding grants. It is not clear to what extent students are involved in research activities. Large scale European grants such as ERC are missing and should be pursued. There needs to be a more supportive infrastructure for doing research and writing publications.

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

(1) Factual situation

Overall, the program is very well suited to the needs of the labour market, there is a strong practical focus and good relations with media practitioners in the region. The program corresponds to the goals of KU activities and is aware of the professional responsibilities of journalists in society.

The program mainly reflects traditional media, but is also increasingly engaged with online and digital media. Current trends in journalism research are not fully embraced yet but are in the process of developing; the programme has a traditional focus but is very well aware of its need to further develop.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It is not clear how the program responds to the rapidly changing context of journalism. In particular, recent developments in data and digital journalism as well as multimedia could be strengthened. Statements in the self evaluation report such as "Experts' recommendation have been taken into account" are too general, so the improvements in response to the last report are not entirely clear. The program needs to be more dynamic, respond more strongly to current developments in international journalism research. Or, if the emphasis on traditional skills is still too important given local labour demands, then the program needs to better communicate how it teaches students skills related to adaptability, critical thinking, and lifelong learning that would serve them in the future media market.

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

Some students have been involved in research activities, and students actively cooperate with social and public sector partners as well as media professionals. However, the SER lacks in depth information about student involvement. But from the site visit, it was apparent that students are generally well integrated and taken care of by faculty members, including inclusion in scientific research.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The practical involvement of students in journalistic work is excellent, but systematic involvement in research activities could be strengthened further. In general, research activities of students could be enhanced and supported more systematically. Additional measures to foster research activities of emerging scholars need to be reflected.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The program is in line with the practical needs of journalists.
2. There are strong connections to the local media scene, and the career perspectives of students are excellent due to the appropriate training.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Research activities are not much visible internationally.
2. Publications in top level outlets are largely missing.
3. Grant activities are present, but leadership in top level international research grants has not been achieved yet.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The University has a set of Admissions Rules which are approved by the Senate and applied in line with national legislation. Students are required to have certain prerequisites, which include secondary education at a specified level.

Due to a combination of national higher education policy and reorganisation at the University there was no recruitment to the journalism study program between 2017 and 2019. In 2020 the program attracted 73 applicants, and ultimately admitted 14 students (8 state funded and 6 privately funded).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Appropriate admissions regulations and processes are in place. Students found the process clear and accessible and informed the panel that they receive timely and comprehensive responses from the University whenever they had questions about the process or the admission.

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

Recognition procedures for academic credit earned from other universities are set out in the KU Study Regulations and the Regulations for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Achievements and adhere to requirements set out nationally in Lithuania.

KU applies the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Head of Department is responsible for determining whether to credit learning outcomes achieved at other higher education institutions. These decisions are approved by the Dean of the Faculty. Between 2017 and 2020 there have been no international students admitted using recognition procedures.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Despite the fact the Faculty has not had cause to operate its procedures for recognising prior learning, the institution's regulations are appropriate, robust and in line with European expectations.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

When students decide to undertake a period of academic mobility, they meet with the Head of Department to ensure that the partner's program and units align with the KU course of study. Students sign an ERASMUS+ learning agreement in order to confirm that their credits will be recognised at the end of the mobility period. The completed transcript is then held on the University's Academic Information System and detailed in the student's Diploma Supplement upon graduation, including reference to the country in which the credits were obtained.

The expert panel heard from students that there are a wide range of mobility opportunities available for students. Although the pandemic has posed problems in terms of organising ERASMUS+ and other mobility activity, arrangements are still being made (one example was provided from a student who was due to study at the University of Barcelona).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

A robust system is in place for planning and approving mobility opportunities. Students feel there are a broad range of possibilities that are well communicated to them and that staff are very encouraging and supportive of their mobility. Despite this the University's self-assessment report recognized the need for the program to search for opportunities to encourage students' academic mobility for both study and internship and the expert panel agrees with that analysis.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University offers psychological, spiritual and pastoral support services for students and employs both a psychologist and chaplain, with whom students can book appointments.

The University operates three scholarships that are relevant for journalism students: The Senate Scholarship, Faculty Council Scholarship and Incentive Scholarship. In addition to scholarships operated by the University, students can apply for social scholarships awarded by the State Studies Foundation.

The Students' Union provides support in the form of representation. Each faculty has an autonomous union and is represented at the KU Council.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has a broad range of appropriate and effective support services in place for students. These services are very well understood and valued by students. Students also informed the panel that the quality of support has remained high throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

Study information is provided to applicants through the University website, social media, Career Days, which are currently being held online, and programme materials produced by teachers. Students on the programme are provided with detailed information at induction, over social media, through email and at the start of each unit.

The range of counselling services at KU is comprehensive, spanning students' academic, pastoral and spiritual needs. KU employs a career counsellor and students can book appointments with them by phone or email to receive support with writing CVs and cover letters or to assist with recommendations and psychometric testing. Academic staff maintain consultation hours which students can book by email. Students can also access spiritual services at the University.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The comprehensive nature of student counselling is a strength of this program. Students informed the panel that they feel the support provided by program and other staff enhances their experience and stressed that this support is not restricted to one facet of their program, this was confirmed by the expert panel.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The comprehensive range of student counselling and support, which is highly valued by students.

(2) Weaknesses: none found

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

(1) Factual situation

The Journalism program is delivered on a full-time basis, using a session-based schedule. Units are taught in periods of up to two weeks at four separate points across the academic year. A variety of teaching and learning methods are employed including lectures, group discussions, practical observation and independent work, among others.

KU also has a range of mechanisms available to provide flexibility for students where personal circumstances make attendance in person difficult. These include distance learning, deferring studies for a period, taking exams individually and/or postponing the thesis defence.

Students benefit from a comprehensive induction, which includes presentations from academic and support staff to ensure students know where to direct any issues they may have throughout their studies. During the first lecture for each unit students are informed about the syllabus and assessment.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has a series of appropriate mechanisms in place (for varied teaching methods, flexible study modes, clear and published learning outcomes) designed to ensure that students can achieve the intended learning outcomes. Students confirmed to the panel that the program is structured in such a way that it enables them to combine work and study.

The panel also found evidence of individual study plans being implemented effectively for students with special requirements.

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

(1) Factual situation

Financial support is available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes tuition fee remission, social scholarships and discounted accommodation. Students can also access the financial support discussed under 3.3.4.

Students with disabilities can request individualised study plans and reasonable adjustments. These include the provision of learning materials in alternative formats, adaptation of the physical environment, human assistance and amended timetables. Students with disabilities are also able to access financial support to assist with study expenses from the State Study Foundation.

The University has systems in place to identify students with disabilities at the point of admissions. A dedicated member of staff is in place and the institution also intends to appoint a further staff coordinator in autumn 2021.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has appropriate systems and support in place for students from socially vulnerable groups and with special needs.

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

(1) Factual situation

The University monitors students' progress closely through individual units. Students are informed at the start of each course about how their progress will be overseen and provided with information at assessment, which is central to this process. Students will usually have three interim assessments, with a cumulative grade, and then a final assessment. Staff will discuss students' performance in these assessments with them individually.

Students' personal competencies are clearly addressed, through the practical elements of the program but also by staff, who are also practitioners, facilitating a constant dialogue about skills and competencies which are necessary for successful careers in journalism and allied fields.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University's Self Evaluation Report did not discuss this criterion in detail. Nevertheless, the panel found that student progress in relation to assessment was robustly embedded in the program's approach to supporting students. In addition, staff monitor students' progress in relation to practical and soft skills which are not assessed but nevertheless important attributes for professional journalists.

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

(1) Factual situation

Journalism students at KU benefit from a broad range of exposure to industry, including study trips to media companies and, in particular, contact with journalists, broadcasters, producers and public relations specialists. As part of the study trips, students are also assigned live briefs which they then have to deliver and present during lectures. In addition, the program plays a central role in serving the profession in Western Lithuania. The culmination of these factors leads to 80% of graduates working in the journalism profession.

The University also encourages students to pursue higher level study and academic careers through student involvement in research activities. This is primarily centred on preparing course papers and the final thesis. However, students are also encouraged to work with academic staff to develop funding applications for joint research projects and to engage with ERASMUS internships at research institutions. Students are able to attend scientific conferences organized by the Faculty and present their work, which currently has limited take-up. The University also has a cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Union of Journalists, providing an outlet for staff and students to publish their work. The Panel was also provided with several examples of staff/student publications (SER Para 84).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

A high proportion of students graduating from the program enter directly related careers, which is a strong feature of the programme. The expert panel was provided with a wide range of examples of employers and practitioners who engage with students on the programme (SER, Paras 78-80). The extent of student involvement with social partners is a positive feature of the program.

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

(1) Factual situation

The KU Description of General Requirements for Students' Academic Papers provide students with information about academic integrity, including how to avoid plagiarism. This guidance is based on the University's *Code of Ethics for Teachers and Researchers* and the *Code of Academic Ethics of the KU*. The authenticity of work is checked through the information system of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library. Where a member of staff considers a breach of ethics has occurred, they must report the student to the Ethics Committee.

The KU Study Regulations set out the appeal process for students. Where a student disagrees with the allegation, they can challenge this with the Committee of Dispute Settlement between Administration and Students. Where a student has to sit an exam more than twice they are only permitted to repeat the entire course and to do so in a privately funded capacity.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The University has not identified any violations of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination in the period under review. Regulations and systems are clearly in place; however, while the panel found no evidence of academic misconduct it was difficult to

ascertain whether the absence of identified breaches was due to the fact that none had occurred or because the University had failed to identify offences. The University would benefit from considering how its internal quality assurance can robustly determine the effectiveness of its procedures in this area.

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

The University has processes in place which enable students to submit a complaint and/or appeal an assessment outcome. This involves the student submitting their concern in writing to the Dean. The Dean then appoints a three-person Commission to consider the complaint or appeal and make a ruling.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students reported that they were having a very positive experience on their program; however, in the instance that they needed to make a complaint or submit an appeal they would trust it would be resolved informally, through discussion with the program leader. Despite this, students were largely unaware of the formal process for submitting a complaint or appeal.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The high rate of graduate employment in related jobs and the important contribution this makes to the journalism profession in Western Lithuania.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The University should strengthen information for students on the program so that they are aware of the formal processes for complaints and appeals.

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 program(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The program is home to four professors, three associate professors, five lecturers as well as non-academic lecturers. Teaching staff do appear to have a sufficient level of professional work experience. Teachers are involved from organizations such as Balticum TV, LRT, LNK, Klaipėda daily, Vakarų ekspresas, the news portal Atvira Klaipėda, to name a few. There is hardly any turnover of teachers, and the orientation of most teachers lies in traditional journalism (TV, radio, print).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is a broad teaching staff with broad skills, and very good professional work experience, and a great team of dedicated teachers as well as a good team spirit. Teaching staff are evaluated every five years, but the nature of this evaluation is not entirely clear. The measures to increase English language classes are also not fully clear. More efforts to respond to the rapidly changing media environment are encouraged, yet the general awareness for that is present.

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

(1) Factual situation

There are teaching visits abroad, but they don't appear to happen on a systematic basis for all teachers. There are opportunities for teaching staff to attend courses, do scientific trips or take creative leaves. There have been visits at University of Pardubice, West University of Timisoara, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, or Nisantasi University in Turkey. Participation in the Erasmus+ program is encouraged by the University.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Visits of teachers to other international programs and the number of foreign lecturers should be increased. In general, it is recommended to increase the international orientation of teaching staff. There seems to be little time for research. Also, the program relies heavily on key individuals and is therefore particularly vulnerable, should these leaders leave the program.

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

(1) Factual situation

There are opportunities for teachers to take additional courses, to do scientific trips, engage in events for professional development, or have a creative sabbatical, among other things. It is stated that teachers must improve their qualifications at least once every five years, but the nature of this training is unclear.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is very strong practitioner experience, especially with respect to traditional media. Evolving topics such as data journalism in particular and digital developments in general should be incorporated into the competencies of teaching staff to a greater extent in the future.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is strong practical expertise among the teaching staff.
2. The teaching staff is well trained to respond to the needs of the regional and national media market.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The international orientation of the teaching staff could be strengthened.
2. Responsiveness to the rapidly changing media market needs to be improved.

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 Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities has 28 well-equipped classrooms with 780 workplaces. FSSH has a library, 2 sports clubs, and premises for the Student Union. Students also use premises of the KU classroom corpus Aula Magna (H. Manto str. 84), which has two modern (250 seats) classrooms and a 100-seat conference room with teleconferencing broadcasting and reception equipment. All classrooms of the FSSH have an Internet connection and are equipped with stationary multimedia equipment. Students can use Wi-Fi in the Faculty premises. FSSH has a Media laboratory.

All information resources intended for the study programme may be found in the KU Virtual Library. By applying the so-called Single Window principle, students can find bibliographic data on various publications stored in the library, and also pre-order publications in advance.

KU, like other Lithuanian research and study institutions, subscribes to the majority of electronic resources through the project eMoDB.L.

Books necessary for studies and research can be ordered from other Lithuanian and foreign libraries through the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system. Textbooks and other teaching aids, as well as multilingual publications related to the history of European countries, and collections of specialized publications are also physically stored in the KU Library.

The amount of multilingual publications and textbooks available in the departments of the KU Library, is very good to achieve the goals and objectives of the Journalism study program. During classes and through independent work, students have access to the Internet and various international databases, and in this way they can read the latest scientific literature. The Library has an Internet connection and online access to databases of other libraries.

In order to ensure the accessibility of studies to students with special needs, library departments have specialized equipment and software.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Faculty is located in a building which is listed as a structure of important cultural heritage for Klaipėda city. This means that any improvement has to comply with the requirements for protecting cultural property, placing constraints on the ability of KU to adapt premises, facilities and equipment to students with individual needs.

During the online visit to the University, teachers and students expressed their satisfaction with the Media Laboratory. In their opinion, the installation of the Lab was one of the most significant moments for improving the quality of studies and stimulating the creative self-expression of students.

Video, presented to the panel, shows in detail the good possibilities of the Faculty in practical teaching. The Faculty is equipped to comply with relevant standards of journalistic needs.

The University premises, the Media Laboratory, practical activity spaces and available information resources (i.e. library publications and databases) make KU an appropriate environment in which to conduct high quality studies.

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

(1) Factual situation

In 2019–2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania together with the EU Structural and Investment Funds allocated 1.000.000 EUR for the renewal of the entire infrastructure of the new Faculty. KU also contributes to the renewal of the Faculty infrastructure.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Both the material and intangible infrastructure necessary for University-level studies are regularly updated at KU. Premises are repaired, classrooms are renewed, new furniture, and computer equipment, etc. are purchased on a regular basis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Premises, places for practical activities, information resources for studies (i.e. library publications and databases) are highly suitable for implementing high quality studies.

(2) Weaknesses: none found

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

(1) Factual situation

There is a complex system of committees and oversight at the university and faculty level at KU. The SER does not specify who is accountable for what aspects of the program, beyond the Chair of the Department. The Study Field Committee is the main quality assurance body, but it could be clearer in the SER who serves on that body, and how it interacts with all the other bodies named in the SER. Two of the teachers during the site visit stated that they served on this committee, but it wasn't clear for how long they were supposed to serve, nor how others

might obtain a post. What emerged was that a considerable amount of work was required by the SFC in December each year to evaluate the large number of study programs.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The foundations of a study quality management procedure are in place, but the system could be improved by making it a bit more transparent for all those involved. The higher level SFCs are difficult and time-consuming, yet at the same time, a lot of very valuable on-the-ground discussion happens at a departmental level and with alumni/stakeholders to monitor and improve the curriculum. The panel would suggest a clearer and more formal set of procedures at the departmental level to reflect the clearly active communication that already takes place at this level. Documenting and systematizing the study quality monitoring that is already happening within the department will formalize this, and publishing reports might be one way to make these quality assurance mechanisms more visible. It would also help to document these procedures a bit more clearly in the SER. What was clear for the panel was that there is a lot of informal monitoring and adaptation of the program; what's less clear is how formal this process is, and how well documented, should students or other stakeholders want to be informed about these procedures.

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

(1) Factual situation

Here the panel sees a disconnect between the regular informal communication – students and stakeholders (i.e. social partners) seem to be frequently consulted – and formal documentation and reporting of this input. While the report discusses course evaluations (students) or yearly evaluation meetings after internships/practicum courses (social partners), how this feedback is systematically reviewed and digested within the department could be clearer.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Similar to the previous point, the formality of these procedures could be improved. There is a lot of formality at the SFC level, but transparency could be improved (at least in the report) as to how one is appointed to the SFC, which alumni/stakeholders serve there, etc. And there is a lack of formality in terms of the structures and reporting related to the input of stakeholders. More transparency at the SFC level but more formality and structure at the internal level would improve this. There are a large number of social partners, but the way in which their feedback and input is gathered is not much formal or systematic (at least not visibly in the SER).

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 self-evaluation report suggests that there are internal portals for data, available for the entire University, at least in terms of graduation rates, placements, e.g. The report also states that all information regarding the program, admissions, learning outcomes, etc are publicly available on the website. Furthermore, students reported feeling well-informed about the

program during the application process as well as while it progresses. During the site visit, it was made clear that there are plans in place to systematically gather student feedback each year on each course, and to have the evaluation committee reflect on that feedback and react to it. The hiring of newer, younger (teaching) professionals has also helped monitor the programme quality as they enter the curriculum and provide feedback on its development. Such feedback is thus gathered formally and informally and incorporated into the annual evaluations of the programmes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The communication with students overall seems to be very positive, particularly regarding one of the central lecturers, whose role as a central support and „mother“ figure to the students. The students are very happy with their studies, and expressed a sense of open communication and high trust. The involvement of newer younger (teaching) professionals has also been very well received by students, and both students and such professionals feel able to communicate and suggest improvements to the curriculum to address their professional needs. The panel encourages the formalization of these procedures, but also commends the programme on having made such improvements over the past few years.

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

Students give feedback each semester in course evaluations, and there is also a lot of “internal research” carried out at KU each year, beyond these student evaluations, including graduates’ assessments, evaluations of practical trainings, and the impressions of faculty and staff.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There seems to be a wealth of data gathered from students and graduates about the program, at both departmental and university levels. Evaluations of the programme are shared regularly during departmental meetings, with the Dean’s Office and Faculty Council. Summative findings from student evaluations are published, presumably where students can also view them (though this is not precisely stated in the SER).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Very high level of comfort, personal attachment and trust among the students to the program.
2. Frequent informal conversations about study quality among students, faculty, and social partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Somewhat lack of clear, formal procedures at the departmental level to reflect the clearly active communication (among faculty, partners, students, and alumni) that already seems to take place at this level.

2. Somewhat lack of transparency (and possibly resource support for the heavy workload in December) at the SFC level – about who is invited to serve, and for how long.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The panel believes that the program has very close ties to the local media market and plays an essential role for its development. The program’s importance to the region is very high.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>In light of KU’s ambitious expansion plans, it is recommended the University ensure the current academic team is provided with additional support, training and resources to be able to deliver on these new expectations.</p> <p>There is still more room in the curricula for consideration of emerging media technologies, such as data journalism or artificial intelligence, and contemporary journalism practices to ensure students are fully equipped for the new, largely digital workplace environment.</p> <p>Expand opportunities for student internships in industry.</p> <p>The panel felt that the importance of journalism as a critical tool of democracy and accountability should be expressed more clearly in the curriculum.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>The panel felt that international orientation of research activities should be increased in general.</p> <p>There needs to be a stronger orientation to publish in the leading outlets of international journalism research, such as Journalism, Journalism Studies, Journalism Practice, or Digital Journalism.</p> <p>International grant activities need to be strengthened, especially with respect to large scale European grant schemes.</p>
Student admission and support	-

Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	Ensure students are provided with comprehensive information about complaints and appeals.
Teaching staff	<p>Teaching staff needs to better respond to recent changes in international journalism, especially with respect to digital media.</p> <p>The international orientation of the teaching staff should be increased. The panel recommends an increase in the efforts of teaching staff to engage in teaching visits abroad.</p> <p>The panel also recommends an increase in the number of international guest lectures and visiting scholars.</p> <p>The program relies on the outstanding engagement of key leaders, and is therefore vulnerable, which should be reflected. Key tasks should be distributed more broadly to several faculty members.</p>
Learning facilities and resources	It is important to not lose focus on measures that ensure quality of studies, to have up-to-date scientific literature and modern equipment; to continuously ensure that students have the possibility to access the main online resources also in the future.
Study quality management and public information	<p>The panel would suggest a clearer and more formal set of procedures and documentation of study quality management at the departmental level and also in a form available/published for students.</p> <p>More transparency is needed at the SFC level about who is invited to serve, and for how long.</p> <p>The panel is concerned about the heavy reliance and centrality of the main lecturer for the programme – whose work is very highly valued by students, but without whom students would have a very different experience. Broadening the central roles of other faculty members would make the programme more robust to unforeseen future changes.</p> <p>The SER should be more detailed, concrete, and clearly written for the next evaluation.</p>

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Journalism* at Klaipėda University:

The Journalism program at Klaipėda University serves an essential role in Western Lithuania. The expert panel commends the program on its clear commitment to students, and on the improvements in practical skills training made since the last evaluation. The program has also developed well since the last evaluation period, and is generally in good shape.

In journalism programs, there is always a tension between practical and theoretical elements, just as there is a tension between traditional media skills and the latest trends. This program tends to fall into the traditional, practical skills domain, which seems best to serve the local labour market. In fact, the program can be commended for its excellent connections with and contributions to the local media market. While this is a strength, it is also a potential weakness as the media field continues to evolve rapidly, and newer digital, data-focused and programming skills are increasingly important for journalists worldwide. Even for journalists not engaging directly with programming or empirical data analysis themselves, the competencies in evaluating and understanding these newer skills and trends is important to guarantee longevity and adaptability in the field. The panel believes that with the strong investment and support on the part of the University into the Journalism study field, it is capable of integrating updated skills and competencies, as well as reinforcing the moral imperatives of journalism in democracy for its students. Finding the right balance between these tasks, the core skills already emphasized, and – very importantly – further internationalising the staff, research, and outlook of the department will continue to raise KU's profile as a competitive and valuable journalism program.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. dr. Jörg Matthes