



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of ANTHROPOLOGY
AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Expert panel:

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3. Associate Professor dr. Odeta Žukauskienė, *representative of social partners*;
4. Ms. Augustė Grakavinaitė, *students' representative*.

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Social Anthropology
State code	6211JX057
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time (2 years)
Credit volume	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Minimum education required	Bachelor's degree in Social or Humanitarian Sciences
Registration date of the study programme	2004-06-07

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 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 (SER) prepared by HEI*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 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 is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on *28th of November, 2022*.

Prof. dr. Michael Sinclair Stewart (panel chairperson), Professor of Anthropology at University College London, Department of Anthropology;

Prof. habil. dr. Waldemar Kuligowski professor at Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland);

Associate Professor dr. Odeta Žukauskienė Chief Researcher at the Lithuanian Cultural Research Institute, Department of the Comparative Cultural Research (Lithuania);

Ms. Augustė Grakavinaitė, First-year second cycle history program student at Vilnius University Faculty of History (Lithuania).

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER 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.	
2.	
...	

1.4. BACKGROUND OF ANTHROPOLOGY FIELD STUDIES AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

1) Vytautas Magnus University (henceforth VMU) is a classical university orientated towards humanistic culture, offering degree studies in all three cycles – bachelor’s, master’s and PhD studies over a broad spectrum of fields ranging from humanities, social sciences and arts to the fundamental sciences, environmental sciences and biotechnologies. The University’s liberal arts profile ensures that the studies offered are comprehensive. It is an international, multilingual institution that continuously develops international networks and intercultural dialogues, participates in international scientific, academic and social projects, encourages mobility of academic staff and students. VMU is managed by two collegial bodies, the Council and the Senate, and the separate managerial body of the Rector. The University is headed by the Rector, and the Rector’s advisory institution is the Rector’s Council. The programme we examined sits within the Faculty of Social Sciences, one of 14 such divisions within VMU.

2) The Social Anthropology study programme in the study field of Anthropology is carried out in close collaboration with the Department of Sociology (DS), the Department of Psychology, the Department of Social Work, and the Centre for Social Research and notably the Centre for Social Anthropology and Psychology Clinic. This provides a structure of which enables collaboration with competent teachers from other faculties and departments. The Social Anthropology Programme has since 2004 been run by the Department of Sociology (DS) in the Faculty of Social Sciences (SSF). This is one a leading academic centre of sociology with over 20 full and part-time staff members (professors, lecturers, and PhD students) with ongoing research in sociology, demography, anthropology, and political science. The Department is involved in international (European) research initiatives such as EC Horizon 2020, COST projects, and other international, national and local projects or initiatives.

3) The previous external evaluation of the study programmes submitted for study field evaluation too place in 2013 with final reports submitted in early 2014. The recommendations of that time were consulted in the preparation of this report and the SER itself makes extensive reference to these as well. The second external evaluation team consisted of the Chair, Dr. Michael Stewart (University College London, UK), Prof. habil. dr. Waldemar Kuligowski professor at Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

(Poland); Associate Professor dr. Odeta Žukauskienė Chief Researcher at the Lithuanian Cultural Research Institute, Department of the Comparative Cultural Research (Lithuania); Ms. Augustė Grakavinaitė, First-year second cycle history program student at Vilnius University Faculty of History (Lithuania). The Programme was accredited for the maximum period, i.e. 6 years.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Anthropology study field and second cycle at Vytautas Magnus 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.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	5
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	5
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	31

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

The Social Anthropology MA Programme at VMU is the only Programme in the study field of Anthropology in Lithuania. It aims to educate professionals in the field of sociocultural anthropology putting particular emphasis on intercultural understanding and a full comprehension of global transnational and multicultural aspects of the modern world. The programme aims to develop in its students an appreciation of the dynamics of contemporary global and local processes. It stresses the development of a traditional holistic and comparative approach, through bringing together of ethnographic methods and anthropological theories. Wisely for a small program, across its design it focuses on a small number of grand challenges: *transnational mobility, contested cultural practices of inclusion and exclusion, and state transformation*. This is complemented by a regional emphasis on the experience of central and Eastern Europe which corresponds both to student interests and social needs. In terms of the development of the human capacities of participants and their readiness for the labour market, beyond the extension of knowledge and skills within sociocultural anthropology, the programme also aims to develop research skills that will equip them not just to work in anthropological teams but anywhere where observational skills are beneficial. It also aims to cultivate a series of special skills in intercultural understanding, social abilities in terms of being able to deal with situations of social conflict and give voice to marginalised perspectives or opinions and increase their personal abilities to communicate effectively in public. Beyond these, the programme also aims for an outcome of increasing the students' abilities to deal with all kinds of social exclusion.

The evaluation committee was able to establish that these programme aims have a very strong and plausible set of connections to the needs of Lithuanian society and the national labour market. The importance of having a group of social entrepreneurs in society who are capable of working to address moments of crisis, using their methodologically well-grounded expertise in social science, has recently been demonstrated by the many situations that arose around Covid-19. It is not just the specialist training in medical anthropology that the programme offers that is of relevance here (and in other public health scares that are bound to recur in the next decades) but the more general interpretive ability of anthropologically trained scientists will also play a crucial social role (and lead to greater employment). Understanding vaccine-reluctance is, for instance, well served by ethnographic research as are contact tracing networks. More broadly, the inevitable social conflicts that arise around refugee movements (and the likely long term nature of the Ukrainian crisis) demands experts in ethnic and social conflict – precisely the sort of person this unique program aims to form.

The aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes are in near perfect alignment to the needs of society and the labour market, and in so far as they are not this is due to lack of government investment in educational infrastructures, personnel and salaries rather than to any intellectual incoherence in the programme.

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

We established that VMU is indeed a locally rooted research, art and educational institution, which aims to create liberal learning conditions, to develop social partnerships as part of its contribution to the public life of Lithuania. Importantly, the strategy has five main goals that encompass contributing to social harmony and integration; establishing itself as an international research University; maintaining the integrity of its own governance and contributing in various way to the social development of its host society

The field and cycle study programme’s aims and outcomes stand in close conformity with this mission. This can be seen, for example, in the very strong focus on international collaboration in research and teaching in particular. Exemplified by ongoing work with the University of Southern Illinois, the engagement with international scholarship extends to an outstanding programme of recurrent visiting professors who seriously raise the connection of the programme and VMU more generally to the international research community. The ability of the programme leadership to exercise the self-governance needed to reform their teaching over the evaluation period is discussed below but stands as further confirmation of the alignment of this programme with the activities and strategies of its HEI.

The field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes are in complete conformity with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI.

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

The study plans of the field study programmes were presented (as an annex to the SER) and the compliance of the curriculum design with the legal requirements is substantiated in the following Table.

Table No. 1. Study programmes’ compliance to general requirements for *second cycle study programmes*

Criteria	General* legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for the study field Information Services	No less than 60 ECTS	108-120

ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	0-12
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30
Contact hours	No less than 10 % of learning	30%
Individual learning	No less than 50 % of learning	70%

It is, perhaps, worth underlining that all 11 elective courses also address the learning outcomes of the Programme by applying anthropological theory or methodologies or contribute to the various thematic foci of the Programme in ways that broaden and deepen particular anthropological subfields.

The Programme also corresponds to national standards concerning learning outcomes, study methods and workload appropriate for a second-cycle higher education diploma. It also demonstrably corresponds to VMU Study Regulations, the HEI's Code of Academic Ethics, and various internal regulatory conditions set by the Rector or University bodies. Most importantly, the content of the Programme complies with the descriptions of knowledge and skills for Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) enabling international recognition of the programme.

The Programme also meets the requirements covered in the Descriptor of the study field in terms of its goals, learning outcomes and content of the modules. The Descriptor of the study field of Anthropology (dated February 2021) states that practical training, that is fieldwork, must amount to less than 12 ECTS in the second cycle. From academic year 2022-2023 the programme will fully meet this requirement with a new compulsory module, 'Ethnographic Practice' (6 ECTS) added to the 6 ECTS already allocated to Anthropological Fieldwork. Had it not been for delays induced by Covid, this reform would have been completed before the evaluation visit.

The field and cycle study programme conform wholly with legal requirements.

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

The aim and learning outcomes of the study programme are formulated in compliance with the HEI's Regulation of Study Programmes as well as the Description of the Study field of Anthropology and with reference to international and national legislation or standards. The learning outcomes are described in detail and stand in coherence with both the field and cycle study programmes.

For example, a detailed table is presented explaining the coherence of the field study programme learning outcomes with the learning outcomes of the programme courses and/or modules, study methods and assessment methods in relation to methodologies. We cite this here (the original Table 1.1.1.) to illustrate the ways in which learning outcomes derive from module content and correspond to appropriate assessment methods.

Learning outcomes of the study programme <i>Social anthropology</i>	Learning outcomes of the study field course <i>Research Methods in Social Anthropology</i>	Study methods of the study field course <i>Research Methods in Social Anthropology</i>	Assessment methods of the study field course <i>Research Methods in Social Anthropology</i>
Ability to write a research project addressing issues of social rupture caused by the interaction of ethnic, racial, religious, other social identifications with global, transnational and local developments, and to conduct ethnographic research by applying anthropological fieldwork methodology and closely following requirements of research ethics.	Able to formulate a research problem, choose proper methodology and methods, identify ethical and practical research challenges while preparing research project.	Preparation of research project and its presentation, narration, explanation, consulting, debates.	Assessment of report preparation and presentation.

Ability to analyse and synthesize research data, to develop an argument based on critical engagement with research material on cases of social interaction particularly in the context of the state, transnationalism and addressing problems of inter cultural understanding.	Able to analyse research data by hand and using computer software of qualitative data analysis, to formulate arguments based on research data.	Preparation of pilot research by practicing selected methods (interview, observation, Participant observation) explanation, preparation and performance of practical tasks.	Assessment of the performed practical tasks (conduction of observation or participant observation and interview) and pilot research.
Ability to identify, interpret and communicate in situations of socio cultural conflicts and rupture caused by encounter of different social cultural groups and to suggest solutions based on research materials in managing or precluding such collisions.	Able to understand emic perspectives of research participants and voice these findings for different auditoriums.	Report preparation and presentation	Assessment of the performed and presented report.

The aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes are extremely well harmonised and fully compatible.

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

The curriculum can be grouped into three areas of study: six anthropological theory and methodology related compulsory modules (36 ECTS); seven modules dealing with topics and subfields of anthropology that form part of the elective courses (42 ECTS); two modules contributing to preparing and prototyping research work (12 ECTS) courses and, finally the 30 ECTS credited Master Thesis. The list of electives extends to 11 modules, covering a wide range of topics such as “Visual anthropology”, “Area studies in Anthropology”, “Economic Anthropology”, “Religion, Culture and the State”, “Anthropology of Socialism and Post-Socialism”, “Cognitive Anthropology”. Two of the electives – Sociology and Anthropology of Gender and Sociology of Civil Society: E-Citizenship – are delivered in the study field of Sociology. A longstanding history of cooperation between Social Anthropology Programme at VMU and Department of Social Anthropology at Southern Illinois University (USA) now offers students the opportunity to obtain a Certificate in Intercultural Understanding (Southern Illinois University, USA). To do so they must complete 18 ECTS credits (a total of three courses given on the VMU campus as part of their degree studies but delivered by a wider range of teachers including international visiting faculty – all under the approval of SIU. Looked at over the two-year time scale, the course begins with an introduction to the core theories and methodology of social anthropology, proceeds in the second and third semester to widen engagement with specific topics in alignment with plans for the Master’s thesis. In the third semester students also have to collect material for their Master’s thesis, and then write up this in the concluding fourth semester. This course design is intended to encourage students to link theory and practice, to connect their research question to the gathering and analysis of relevant data.

Overall, the evaluation committee was very impressed with the totality of the field and cycle study programme. It engages in an admirable fashion that is clearly of an international standard with great questions of our time around nationalism, multi-culturalism, gender, modern family structures but using the classical methods of social anthropology to do so. It thus links the past, present and future of the field in a very good fashion. While we debated the role of the sociology components in the programme the electives from this field very clearly include discussions that are just as important in anthropology and, crucially in our view, add interdisciplinarity to the Program. It is important in a unique but small programme both to maintain its distinctive profile as a totality – as this does – but also to engage in friendly cooperation with neighbouring disciplines – as this programme does too. All this praise given, it was also our sense from the reading of the MA theses that there are two areas where the programme leaders could work to improve outcomes. The integration of particular bodies of theoretical reasoning was not sufficiently well developed in the theses we saw. While the presentation of novel empirical data was often impressive there was tendency to cite sources with insufficient logical connection to the argument being made. We also noticed the lack of visual materials across the theses we considered and wondered there too if more emphasis might be made on the integration of

visual anthropological methods with the written – in line with best international practice. These notes do not count as weaknesses but point to areas where the evaluators felt attention could profitably be given in the years ahead.

The totality of the field and cycle study programme modules do indeed ensure consistent development of the competences of students.

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

Each student has the opportunity to choose a total of 7 courses (42 ECTS) in each semester, except for the last one. Due to the fact that the elective courses cover a wide range of subjects (sociology and anthropology of medicine, gender studies, religion studies, cognitive anthropology, visual anthropology or anthropology of particular areas of the world), it enables students to actively co-create their own educational path.

In addition, each student has the opportunity to obtain a Certificate in Intercultural Understanding (Southern Illinois University, USA). This requires obtaining 18 ECTS credits and completing three courses taught on the VMU campus as part of postgraduate studies. A certificate from SIU is issued along with a Master's degree from VMU. This is an outstanding feature of the programme and clearly increases its value and attractiveness to students, both local and international.

Moreover, all students are actively encouraged to gain new experiences on foreign University programs through Erasmus programme partners. On average, 1-2 students take advantage of this opportunity each semester. The popularity of the Erasmus program is also due to the fact that it enables field research at ethnographic sites abroad.

The choice of topics and research problems carried out as part of master's theses depends on the individual interests of students (it is important that they correspond to the objectives of the SA Programme and the teacher's qualifications).

In conclusion, we confirm that students have great opportunities to personalize the structure of the field study programmes, in accordance with their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes.

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

The rules regarding the preparation and defence of final theses are regulated by VMU Rules of Studies and the General Order on the Final Theses Preparation and Defence. There are also special guidelines prepared by the Social Anthropology Programme Committee - which are presented to students. This document specifies in detail the requirements for ethnographic fieldwork, structure, format style, use of citations, etc.

Each student has the opportunity to work on their own idea for a final thesis. From the second semester, two compulsory courses are dedicated to this goal: Research Project (6 ECTS) and Anthropological Fieldwork (6 ECTS). This second course creates space for students to conduct field research. The condition for defending the master's thesis is that the student meets all the requirements of the study program. It should be added that all master's theses are checked with Thenticate plagiarism detection software.

Diploma thesis defences are carried out in an open mode by the Commission appointed by the Order of the Rector. The Commission includes at least 5 people. It should be emphasized that the Commission includes social partners and practitioners/professionals from the professional world and other higher education institutions.

Master's theses are normally evaluated by the supervisor and the reviewer. The student can get acquainted with these grades a few days before the defence. During the public defence, members of the Commission ask questions and make comments. The decision on the final evaluation of the MA theses is taken at a closed meeting of the Committee. Importantly, each member of the Committee evaluates the MA theses separately (except for the scientific supervisor of the theses). In the case of a negative evaluation, the student has the right to defend again, but not earlier than 6 months after the first defence. When the second defence is evaluated negatively, the student must prepare a new diploma thesis. All appeals due to procedural violations are considered in the manner specified in the VMU Study Regulations. From the student's point of view, it is important that the list of supervisors includes both teachers employed at VMU and researchers from partner institutions (e.g. Southern Illinois University). This allows students to think flexibly about their research problem. The fusion of students' ideas and the specialist knowledge of individual supervisors makes the topics of the master's theses implement the assumptions of the SA Programme.

The fusion of the ideas of the students, the competences of the supervisors and the goals of the SA Programme is visible in the topics of diploma theses (Annex 2). There are works focused on (1) exclusion and ethnic identity ("Negotiating Sámi Ethnic Identity. Struggles Over Indigeneity in Finland", "Between Humanitarian Ideals and the Constraints of National Identity: Negotiating Principles of Refugees' Inclusion into Danish Society"), (2) issues of identity and resistance ("Place of Resistance, a Place of Alternatives: Affect and Construction of Space in the Occupied Forest", "Transnational, national and ethnic identities (Politics of Identities on the Border: A Case of Punska)"), minority studies ("*Lutshaja Zhizn*: Participation of Vilnius Roma in Transnational (Im)Mobility"), (4) issues of contemporary capitalist culture ("From Startup to Global Company: The Ambivalence of Growth", "Conceptions of Business Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication: A Case of Lithuanian Business Representatives"), (5) gender studies ("Aspirational Masculinity Model Shaped by Contemporary Ugandan Media: The Case of NTV.Uganda Show 'Men').

However, a very positive evaluation of master's theses requires attention to two matters on which we would comment. Firstly, the theoretical parts of diploma theses give the impression of a rather superficial recall of certain concepts and names (sometimes repeated like a ritual

academic mantra). Secondly, the small amount of visual material in master's theses is surprising. During fieldwork, students certainly collect a lot of photographs, scans, illustrations, etc. - including them in diploma theses would definitely enrich them.

To sum up, we are pleased to say that final theses are in line with the field and cycle requirements. In addition, they are created on the basis of students' own ideas, represent a high substantive level and concern key problems undertaken by contemporary social anthropology.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. This is a programme that delivers a curriculum that manages both to maintain a link to the classical traditions of social anthropology and to renew it in innovative and locally appropriate ways.
2. The maintenance of a strong contribution in the elective module offering of international visiting faculty makes a great and distinctive contribution to the curriculum, the learning outcomes that are realisable at the second cycle. This enables the learning outcomes and the curricula to be a very good feature of the programme.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

The study programme of Social Anthropology is carried out in close cooperation with the Centre for Social Anthropology (VMU, the Faculty of Social Sciences) - one of the basic research platforms in Lithuania for research topics in anthropology. Research projects come into the programme in the main from the centre. Teachers are employed both in the programme and in the research center, thus connecting their scientific research with studies. In addition, teaching staff participates in the scientific activities of multidisciplinary clusters ("Citizenship and Identity in Modern Society" and "Migration and Diaspora Studies") of the VMU. This brings together the resources of teachers and researchers in anthropology, sociology and other fields, focusing on a broader interdisciplinary and cross border research projects.

The field of study is concentrated on the areas relevant to modern communities: transnationalism, intercultural understanding, and state transformations. The focus is on the modalities such as migration, inequalities, and identity. Table 2.1. of the SER demonstrates that

the modules match the main fields of expertise of teachers and lead to research-informed teaching. Programme members find the balance between research and teaching, and publishing in their fields of enquiry. Considering the recommendations of previous visit, the staff is more engaged in international activities: research projects, publishing, different levels of cooperation. There are good relations with foreign institutions. The Faculty strengthens the internalization of research and studies.

According to annual evaluation of scientific results, in last years the Department of Sociology is in the 2nd place or the 3rd place in Lithuania, but anthropological research is evaluated in an integrated way with sociological research. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely define a scope of research in anthropology as distinct field of research.

As demonstrated in the SER, the field of research and the field of study bring out the strengths of contemporary anthropology - multidisciplinary, links between global and local issues. This allows including in the study a variety of subjects such as ethnicity, migration, medicine, religion, economy, politics, city, and a diversity of social and cultural contexts. The emphasis in the research and study are reasonably placed on Central and Eastern Europe and local inquiries. Collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology at Southern Illinois University expands the programme with the development of comparative studies.

There is a good cooperation between teachers. However, more scientific research projects consolidating teachers could be carried out to strengthen the profile of anthropological research in Lithuania.

The members of the programme build relations with various organizations and alumni club "Anthropos", promoting applied science activities. The applied anthropology organization, founded by alumni, with whom joint events are held, is a good example. But the partnership network and activities of applied science related to the study field could be expanded, aiming to increase possibilities to apply anthropology, promoting public recognition of anthropology, and attracting more students.

In sum, the expert panel were pleased to find an excellent correlation between research and teaching. The panel noticed that the strong emphasis is placed on the cross-level, national and international research. Although, the expert panel would like that the faculty administration develop a sabbatical leave policy to enhance a further advancement of academic research and the development of its anthropological profile.

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

The courses of the programme integrate the latest research developments. Social anthropology dialogues with other disciplines. The content of the studies include new theoretical concepts, methodological and problematic aspects. The modules are characterized by interdisciplinary

perspectives, in particular contributing to fields of migration, ethnicity, identity, civil society, gender studies.

The panel were pleased with the ways in which the committee members introduce changes in the programme, focusing into actual research practice, new theories and methods (as the SER Annex 1 shows, new courses “Research Methods in Social anthropology”, “Engaging with Ethnography” were introduced in the programme plan 2022-2023). It has been underlined by the panel that the study content resonates with the latest development of knowledge, opening new ways to frame local and global issues. Underlining the excellent unity of anthropological foundations and innovation in the programme, the panel suggest that further developing it, additional attention could be given to the issues of visual culture and analysis of representations.

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

The students of the programme are encouraged to participate in various research-related activities. They gain practical experience in scientific work through workshops, seminars, and roundtable discussions. This allows them to engage in discussions and present their works. The faculty offers opportunity for students to participate in the annual conference “Young Sociologists and Anthropologists”, however, the students who participated in the meeting, reported that they lacked knowledge about it. This suggests that there should be more dissemination of information.

The master’s students have the opportunity through internships with associated assignments or through academic exchange programme to undertake original ethnographic analysis. During the period of 2018-2021, 6 students (5 of them under ERASMUS program) have implemented internships abroad related to the preparation of MA thesis. 4 students published their articles based on master’s thesis in the Lithuanian anthropological journal. Students in their individual research projects are engaging in ethnographic fieldwork, mastering empirically grounded investigational tools and methods. Research active teachers provide help and practical advice. The expert panel appreciated a good environment for students to develop and continue their research.

The expert team was impressed by the fact that a high percentage of graduates continue their research into doctoral studies: 4 graduates of Social Anthropology from 2022 have continued further studies pursuing doctoral degree in Lithuania and abroad. This shows that students are provided with excellent research skills, intellectual abilities and motivation to continue research.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. All teachers of the programme are experts in their fields, actively involved in research activities, working across interdisciplinary clusters, national and international projects.

2. Latest research developments are taken into the curriculum of study programme, connecting ethnographic research to central issues of migration, ethnicity, identity, inclusive societies and state-society relations.
3. A strong international cooperation with the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University, USA, increasing a range of modules that contribute to intercultural understanding.
4. Students are involved in scholarly and applied research activities, and encouraged pursuing their research in PHD studies.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

The procedures for admissions to the programme have been approved by the University and meet all rules of transparency and equity, according to the national procedures. Information about entrance requirements, application procedures, programme contents and forms of assessment is publicly available to prospective applicants and in English. Information is accompanied by details of the programme's aims, intended learning outcomes and modes of study and - once students are enrolled - other information such as living and studying in Lithuania. Although it seems that information about study curriculum in English website has not been renewed as it is in Lithuanian.

However, as the procedures of admissions meets all requirements, our expert panel has some doubts about motivational interview as part of the admission. It seems to be a good way to get more students in to the programme, but the evaluation method in these interviews remains a little unclear and the risk of bias could not be eliminated by the experts. We would kindly suggest that Evaluation criteria are made clearer at the student's selection for a motivational interview.

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

The academic recognition of prior and foreign qualifications follows national and international regulations and recommendations. The University has a specific procedure for enrolling students, recognizing their previous formal or informal studies. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications is done according to the resolutions and regulations of the Republic of Lithuania. This procedure is conducted centrally by International Relations department. The recognition of partial study results is regulated by the procedures for crediting study results of VMU.

Competences acquired through non-formal and self-education or volunteering are regulated by University documents. Students have the opportunity to get recognition of their competences acquired outside of the study program through volunteering or other activities within the framework of the study program.

However, it seems that it's hard for students to get their summer practise/field work recognised as part of their programme and to get credits for this work. We would advise looking thoroughly at such a procedure of recognition as we noticed during our visit that summer practise and field work may not be recognized sufficiently in the study programme.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

The University's International Relations Department coordinates all the procedures related to academic mobility. The University suggests a huge variety of Erasmus+ and Erasmus internships. Student mobility, although encouraged by the University, is low, it seems for a variety of different reasons related to personal problems, family, or financial situation. Students don't use this mobility opportunity because of a lack of fit to their research field and there is lack of funding for going to international conferences or other practise relevant to their research. The Expert panel advises to look thoroughly into this problem as it would increase mobility of the students.

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

According to the SER, all students can receive support of various kinds, and most of these services are provided anonymously. The Student Service and Career Department is responsible for dealing with administrative problems. There are individual consultations with lecturer's and the website gives a clear overview of scholarship and financial support in Lithuania, and in English there is also useful information given to the international students. In addition, student representatives also offer support and help to all the students in case of problems. Students can also get free consultations during individual meetings or online with a psychologist at VMU in the psychology clinic.

However, during our visit students made quite clear that there is lack of financial support and that all of them are working students which is of course concerning when we imagine the ideal conditions for study. In the SER student representation was only briefly mentioned, and it would be good to establish a clear view of the help to the students. We notice the lack of discussion of this during our visit and advise that due consideration is given to this in future.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

VMU has an orientation week during which new students receive information about their study programmes and other information related to University. All other useful information is given

in the University website. All other information during study years is given through University email or Moodle platform. There are also students' questionnaires that helps to evaluate students counselling and received information quality.

However, during our visit, we noticed that very few of the students knew about the orientation week – though we are aware that if most students come from the area of the University this is likely hard to change - and that centralized surveys not always gives a clear view and results. It would be interesting to devise questionnaires at a local level about study programme. Perhaps the importance of the first week and participation in the orientation week could be more stressed in terms of building a strong cohort early on.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. It seems that students have an opportunity to have all kinds of students counselling forms which they need. The information about these is easily accessible. Students are satisfied with the services provided and give positive feedback about them.
2. The expert panel is satisfied about the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies, and prior non-formal and informal learning. It shows University path of understanding the importance of competences acquired in informal ways and gives the opportunity to count it as some part of credits.
3. The expert panel is impressed about the information variety given in the English website to the international students. There are sections about arrival not only to University but also to Lithuania. The information is comprehensive, comprehensible and conveniently arranged.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

A variety of study methods are in use across the programme delivery, including lectures, seminars, puzzle solving – as in interpretation of materials and solving challenges, analysis of professional problems and presentation of reports. These lie mostly within the core socratic practice of questions and answers arising through conversation. Students are also systematically introduced to evaluation procedures, learning outcomes, assessment methods. Assessment itself ranges across written assignments, tests, observation and evaluation of discussions/presentations, fieldwork reports. All examinations and mid-term exams are taken

in written form and must be similar for all examinees. Students' learning is assessed in midterms or other work and the final examination or defence of the students' projects with the final examination making up 30-60% of the overall mark. There are also opportunities for distance learning using Teams, Adobe Connect and BigBlueButton video conference tools and there is one optional module "Sociology of Civic Society: E-citizenship" that is approved to be taught as a distance course. In a Social Anthropology module of 6 ECTS the individual workload of students constitutes 100 hours leaving 60 hours for contact-based teaching.

At the current time there is still no institutional framework to pursue PhD studies in Anthropology at Lithuanian universities, though graduates of the Social Anthropology study programme may pursue further studies in the doctoral study programme in the fields of Sociology and Ethnology. During the period analysed in this Self-evaluation Report, two graduates have pursued doctoral degree abroad (as New York University and Oxford University) and two in Lithuania (Vilnius University and VMU pursuing doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social sciences).

The success of the core teaching methods was demonstrated to the evaluation committee both in the quality of ethnographic investigation revealed in the theses – and their breadth – but also, through the meeting with the students.

A list of some of the best of these indicates not just the geographic range of study encouraged but the thematic richness: 'Construction of Cultural Differences Through Traditional Rituals and Music: The Case Study of Alevis in Adiyaman'; "Food Parcels are the Gift from our Organization": Food and Social Relationships in a Lithuanian NGO; Power Relationships and Religious Practices in the Rehabilitation Institution: From Drug Addicts and Alcoholics to the Identity of Recovering from Dependences; A Place of Resistance, a Place of Alternative: Affect and the Construction of Space in an Occupied Forest; Negotiating Sami Ethnic Identity. Struggles Over Indigeneity in Finland; Conceptions of Business Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication: A Case of Lithuanian Business Representatives; Nursing the Elderly at Home: Everyday Life, Challenges, Experiences; From Startup to Global Company: The Ambivalence of Growth; Leverage for Power: Sardinian Sand Theft Phenomenon; Between Humanitarian Ideals and The Constraints of National Identity: Negotiating Principles of Refugees' Inclusion into Danish Society (A Case of Voluntary Organization); Imagining Lutshaja Zhizn: Participation of Vilnius Roma in Transnational (Im)Mobility; Aspirational Masculinity Model Shaped by Contemporary Ugandan Media: The Case of NTV Uganda Show "Men". We find here work carried out in different regions of Europe from the far North to the far East and South as well as in West Africa; work on ethnic minorities from a number of perspectives, work on key issues of the day around the environment and on the nature of modern businesses. There is an ambition here that is outstanding given the very limited financial resources upon which VMU can count.

The teaching and learning process properly takes into account the needs of the students and fully enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

The University has a clear disability policy – University of Inclusive Opportunities – which has been in place since 2021, focussing on adapting study and working conditions for students with access issues but also works to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities to acquire higher education, find employment in higher education institutions and ensure accessible study or working conditions for them. There are provisions also for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs to study according to individual study schedules. VMU provides a disability coordinator for students who are also given parking places near the buildings and students can find accommodation in specially adapted dormitory rooms, if necessary, with an accompanying person. Educational programs and events are also organized at VMU around these issues. It should be noted that though the new building for this programme is fully accessible with ramps and lifts, during the period covered by the Self-evaluation report there were no students with disabilities studying in the Social Anthropology programme.

Though the provision of facilities for disabled persons has not been put to the test, the evaluation committee was very struck by the great willingness of the leaders of this Social Anthropology programme to structure the delivery of their course of study around the special needs of the students. Given the funding arrangements in place, almost all the students live from part time work but the VMU team have organised all teaching on two days of the week enabling the students' particular access needs to be met in an exemplary fashion. We were also struck that the current cohort of students contains a number of mature students who, it became clear, feel most at home in their cohort and in this welcoming environment.

Conditions of access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are fully assured.

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

Student learning progress is monitored according to VMU Study Regulations including systematic checks on student enrolment in studies, the reasons for students' non-participation in interim and final examinations, study of the pattern of final evaluation and the adoption of preventive measures to manage student failure. This programme demonstrated that it monitors learning achievements regularly. Feedback for students on their study progress is systematically provided and tailored to the particular place of modules in the programme. Students are acquainted with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria then with the results of their mid-term examinations which are also discussed during subsequent lectures. There are standard provisions in place for retaking assessment which has been failed. Students' surveys on teaching quality indicate that students of the Social Anthropology study programme evaluate the feedback provided by the teachers as highly constructive.

During the visit the members of the programme committee admitted that although anonymised online surveys often fail to provide fully useable data – this issue was discussed during the course of our visit – it is clear that the staff of Social Anthropology study programme both provide appropriately detailed and timely feedback to students both in formal and more informal means. Students reported that whenever they wish further feedback on, say, a topic particularly relevant to their further studies, they were able promptly and easily to access this.

The monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress is systematic, consequential and effectively delivered.

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

The employment of graduates is monitored through online surveys performed by VMU Career Centre. Twice per year VMU gets statistical information about graduates registered for a job search from Employment Service. Graduating students' (EXIT) survey conducted in 2020 and 2021 by VMU Career Centre shows that more than 66 percent of Social Anthropology students were enrolled in the programme while already having a job in the field related or close to their study profile. It shows that the majority of students of the master's degree aim to upgrade their qualification in order to broaden their competences and strengthen their career options. After graduation about 83 percent of the students have professional positions that require high level of competencies. The overall employment rate is high.

The committee of the programme keeps regular contact with alumni via informal communication and collects information from graduates and employers about the career of alumni. The aim is to monitor graduate career through focus group to obtain more substantial feedback about the integration of students' knowledge in work environment. As revealed by meetings with alumni and social partners, the efforts are made to keep strong connections with stakeholders.

The expert panel found that there is an excellent communication with alumni and social partners. Representatives of social partners participate in the activities of the programme (classes, seminars and theses defend procedures) and host internships. Alumni in the Social Anthropology study field cooperate with the teaching staff through "Anthropos" organisation and other activities. These close relationships help the committee of the Programme to collect data about graduates and to know better the needs of the labour market.

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

The Statutes of the VMU as well the Code of Ethics and procedures for detection and prevention plagiarism are all in place. These include measures prohibiting discrimination. There is a five-year taking VMU up to 2025 which has a series of activities encouraging cultural change in the University, promoting moves to greater gender equality in the staff.

We discovered that there had been no cases that contravened the regulations so were not able to examine the practice in detail. However, the panel found that the policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination were fully compliant with best practice.

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

There are in place procedures for appeals and complaints as well as plagiarism prevention procedures. Students can also appeal their grades or a violation of procedures. There is an advertised procedure for this.

The panel heard that there have been no cases of appeals and complaints regarding the study process during last three academic years. It was clear from our discussion with both staff and students that learning outcomes are discussed in class and feedback includes advice on how to improve individual learning outcomes.

The procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies are wholly effective.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The provision of step free access and other facilities for disabled staff and students is a major improvement on the previous accommodation.
2. There is excellent communication with alumni and social partners.
3. Employability of graduates from the programme appears to be greatly enhanced.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

In terms of numbers, the members of Social Anthropology programme consist of 9 teachers, including 5 full-time and 4 part-time teachers. The current ratio between the number of teaching staff and students comply with formal requirements and is favourable to a small group teaching. Teacher-to-student ratio during lecture classes and seminar courses is low and vary from 10 to 5. One teacher supervises 1 to 2 Master theses and can provide an individual mentoring assistance.

The SER does not provide accurate information on the number of full-time positions of teachers employed in the programme. Teachers' workload overlaps with the work in other departments (clusters) and research projects. However, teachers are dedicated to the programme.

Academic staff includes 2 professors with high professional experience, 3 associate professors and 4 lecturers who holds a PhD degree and are involved in scientific and practical activities as well. It is significant that all of them have - with one exception - many years of experience, both pedagogical and practical. 4 members of the SA team declare sociology as their main field of academic activity. This, in consequence, would mean that almost half of the team teaching social anthropology are in fact sociologists. However, there is a simple explanation for this situation: Lithuania (nor the other Baltic states) does not offer doctoral studies in the field. Therefore, many researchers choose sociology, but they carry out research and teaching with a decidedly anthropological profile.

There is a good ratio of experienced and young colleagues and a positive relationship between staff stability and turnover - two postdoctoral level researchers, who defended their PhD at the universities abroad, were employed during the period of self-analysis, bringing the latest research into the program. During 2018-2021, 8 professors (USA, Poland, Scotland, Switzerland, United Kingdom) from partner institution and visiting teachers with considerable academic experience in anthropological fields contributed to the implementation of the programme.

Appendix 3 of the SER provides a list of teachers, their research interests, major outputs, and the courses taught. Competences in terms of scientific merit are evidenced by involvement of teachers in research activities related to both anthropology and sociology. More than half of the teacher staff has published scientific research in international journals, demonstrating ability to integrate their knowledge into the perspective of international research. The majority of teachers is involved in research projects and attends international conferences. Faculty teachers are members of various professional associations, committees and editorial boards. In terms of didactic competences, teachers are focused on active learning methods and student involvement, as well as on online teaching and learning. VMU Center of Career and Competencies provide training courses for professional development and invite teachers to participate in seminars that are intended to develop professional and personal skills.

The programme has highly qualified teachers who possess professional and pedagogical competences to develop student learning outcomes.

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)

VMU encourages teachers to participate in Erasmus+ exchange programme. Despite the Covid situation, teachers participated in the mobility programme (during 2018-2022, 7 Erasmus visits have been made, as seen in the Table 5.1 of the SER). One of the teachers participated in the activities of international research network COST. The pandemic years affected the

numbers of outcoming teachers and the possibility to participate in international workshops and research fellowships, however, the faculty's strategic goal is focused to incoming teachers and the recruitment of international guest teachers for elective courses. Between 2018 and 2021 as many as 11 visiting teachers taught courses of social and cultural anthropology. This is a major contribution to the study programme, supplementing it with international experience. While we greatly appreciated the idea of inviting foreign professors (and saw that this is also appreciated by the students), we wondered if the criteria for selecting the invited persons are as clear as they might be. While strong collegial ties no doubt make it possible to bring people over to Kaunas we wondered if young researchers/professors presenting new, innovative thinking and practicing social anthropology might be given a larger role in the future.

The panel experts were persuaded that the faculty's internationalization culture ensures teaching staffs' academic mobility. Cooperation with the Southern Illinois University promotes teacher exchanges, which is expected to be further intensified in pursuit of developing double-diploma in anthropology. The expert team supports the strategy and plans described by the administrations and the committee of the Programme.

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

The expert panel found that VMU has a well-defined strategy for the improvement of teacher development that includes general, professional and personal competences. University provides courses inside and outside the University according to teacher's needs. In recent years, the courses for pedagogical training have been focused on the methods of active learning and improving organization of distance teaching. In addition, teachers have the possibility to participate in the trainings by VMU Institute of Foreign Languages.

(1) Strengths:

1. Teachers competences entail scientific research expertise in the discipline, a broad range of teaching strategies and individual mentoring practice.
2. The SA programme team is "pocket-sized", but has adequate competences, qualifications and experiences. Thanks to the employment of new, young people, this team is renewed, both in a personal and intellectual sense.
3. A strong internationalization culture fosters teaching staff mobility which is also reflected in cyclical invitations of foreign professors (as well as efforts to obtain the right to award graduates with a double diploma in the future).

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

The building of the Faculty of Sociology (Jonavos p. 66, Kaunas) is where the classes for students take place; it is also where the faculty authorities, administration and individual employees have their offices. Our study visit enabled us to confirm through observation that the premises as well as the teaching and learning equipment are adequate in size and quality.

Thanks to the renovation of the building carried out a few years ago, it is adapted to the needs of people with disabilities. The building has stairs, elevators, etc. adapted to their needs.

The building is also equipped with a wireless Internet network dedicated to students and employees (eduroam). The requirements of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in the well-developed possibilities of organizing video-conferences. Two rooms with centrally placed round tables are ideal for this purpose. The auditorium with a capacity of over 100 seats is another important element of the didactic infrastructure. The social anthropology programme team also has two rooms with 40 multimedia workstations, which provide e.g. the ability to connect directly from home. According to a self-evaluation report, all the students and graduates of social anthropology programme agreed that didactic rooms are well equipped (multimedia, computers, wi-fi), comfortable and have enough space for all class members.

We also noted with satisfaction that there are several places intended for purposes other than strictly educational. These social spaces for students offer couches, armchairs, the possibility of using a microwave (one of these spaces is surrounded by large green plants, which definitely adds to its attractiveness). The building also has a canteen offering breakfast and lunch. Our conversations show that it is often visited by students who appreciate the relatively low prices of meals.

An important, bustling place is the Center for Social Anthropology, commonly known as the office of Professor Čiubrinskas. The relatively small space, with a few desks and bookshelves, attracts many people. This is a good proof that the reviewed infrastructure is conducive to establishing close relations between students and lecturers.

After reviewing the library resources, we confirm that the teaching materials (textbooks, books, magazines, databases) are adequate and available. The library located in the faculty building offers students a large space and various possibilities of using its resources. The library offers access to over 60 scientific databases, including such significant ones for the social anthropology programme as JSTOR, Oxford Journals Online, Blackwell Synergy, SpringerLink, Cambridge Journals and many others. The library has workplaces for people with disabilities. In its headquarters, it is also possible to print in Braille. The library website has two language versions - Lithuanian and English - which greatly facilitates the use of its resources (over 1 million volumes) for foreign students, lecturers and researchers. A great, modern solution offered by the library staff is the possibility of reserving a special, separate place to work.

The generally positive evaluation of the library as an important element in the didactic process has two exceptions. Based on students' opinions, we conclude that it would be necessary to

extend the working hours of the library. Currently, the library is open until 6.00 p.m. Due to the fact that most students work, we suggest extending the opening hours of the library so that working students can freely use its resources. The second controversial issue concerns the separation of a collection of classic books in the field of socio-cultural anthropology, which the library acquired as a gift. Currently, they are placed in the corner of the library, which gives the impression that they are of little value.

In summary, we confirm that the usefulness and adequacy of material, information and financial resources for an effective learning process.

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

We are pleased to say that the infrastructural resources used to implement the SA program are being successively modernized. Further infrastructural plans include refurbishing some of the classrooms and equipping them with modern equipment for both remote education and videoconferencing. Certainly, as mentioned above, the location of the collection of books in the field of anthropological classics requires some rethinking.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Educational facilities and resources meet key criteria of relevance and usability.
2. Important facilities provide appropriate solutions for people with disabilities.
3. In addition to the high quality of classrooms, social space for students was also taken care of, serving both to rest and prepare their own meals.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

The management of the quality of studies is established in line with practices in the European Higher Education Area (2015) as well as being regulated by national and institutional provisions. At VMU the publicly available Study Regulations, which include study quality assurance procedures, were updated in 2021. It is now the case that courses are to be assessed at least once every 3 years. These institutional procedures are governed by the University Senate and Rectorate as well as the Faculty Council, the relevant Study Programme Committee with the involvement of the Dean of the Faculty and Head of Department.

Specifically, the Faculty Council assures the quality assurance of programmes within its faculty and hence anthropology and sociology too. There are clear lines of responsibility from the Dean of the Faculty through the Head of Department to ensure implementation of the regulations, the organization and administration of study schedules, improvement of facilities, dissemination of information about studies, the administration of teachers' workloads, student registration, the documentation of studies and so on.

It is the Study Programme Committee which administers curriculum related questions and the overall assurance of the quality of the Programme. The Committee performs internal Programme quality assessment and renewal and is also responsible for the preparation and implementation of quality improvement plans as well as ensuring that learning outcomes match labour market and social needs. This Study Committee has academic, alumna and social partner representation as well as professional service and student participation. There is a clearly documented division of labour among the Committee members with, for example, the academics responsible for revision of the Programme, learning outcomes and curriculum design and social partners' as well as alumni contributing to ensure that learning outcomes align with labour market needs. This committee carries out an annual analysis of the Programme

The panel heard from both staff and in particular students how the Anthropology Study Programme Committee had debated the implications of an imposed increase in hours of fieldwork practice. In what the students positively felt was a very rapid manner, a decision was made to introduce a new practical-research oriented course "Ethnographic practice" (6 ECTS) which aims to help students to collect empirical material for their Masters' theses and practice research methods in the field. We also heard how meetings were held in the same period to rethink the strategy around accepting students from other BA Programmes than anthropology – and their more effective integration into the field of anthropology at the very start of their studies.

It is clear that the internal quality assurance system of the studies is highly effective.

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

The main stakeholders of this programme are defined as being its teachers and students, social partners and alumni. Assessment of their appreciation of the programme is carried out using an electronic survey system, the results of which are shared with the administration and the Programme Study Committee. These surveys cover both the Programme as a whole and each individual module. It is also important that all teachers of the University have access to the detailed results of these surveys.

The surveys evaluate the teaching skills of staff, the fairness of testing and grading procedures, how far students are able to actively participate in classroom activities, the organization of teaching materials, clarity of the teaching, feedback on assignments, the quality of the e-learning environment as well as compliance with ethical standards.

Teachers are also surveyed once a year to identify suggestions to improve the teaching environment and facilities for professional development as well as students' involvement in. Beyond the electronic survey some teachers are also invited to join interviews to provide deeper insights. There is also a survey of alumni regarding their success on the labour market 12 months after graduation. Only a small number of graduates complete this survey. Finally, the Study Committee also enables other stakeholders such as former graduates and employers to share feedback on how the studies content or the teaching process can be improved.

The panel was able to ascertain that the involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance is most effective. We heard how two students were active participants in the Programmes' Study Committee discussion on improvements to the study plans during the academic year 2021. They explained how their suggestions and reflections were incorporated into the new study plan that involved a significant transformation of the weight accorded to fieldwork and ethnographic understanding in the programme. These were major changes that were considered in detail and then introduced with great alacrity much to the students' approval.

We also noted that the Programme Study Committee is keen to involve a wider range of employers in these discussions – something that is, perhaps, hard to achieve given the relatively small scale of the programme and the lack of a strong profile for social anthropology in the national landscape.

The involvement of stakeholder, that is to say students, social partners and employers in internal quality assurance is overall a strong feature of the Programme.

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

Information about the study programme is gathered, analysed and evaluated in order to ensure regular self-assessment and improvement. Through this mechanism teachers are able to monitor their teaching and respond to students' suggestions for subsequent deliveries of the same course. The assessment also invites students to think over their own learning and consider possibilities for improvement.

All decisions regarding studies are publicized for stakeholders through different channels to teachers, social partners and others. The student representatives at the Study Committee is responsible for passing on decisions to other students. The University's stakeholders also have the chance to feedback on these published results which appear on website of the Faculty of Social Sciences and on the University's main page.

The Panel heard how in 2021 student feedback had revealed that more ECTS had to be allocated to fieldwork practice to allow for more time for ethnographic research. This demand corresponded with a recently set requirement in the Anthropology study field. The result was that a new course "Ethnographic Practice" (6 ECTS) was devised. As a result students now obtain 12 ECTS for their practice in the field by taking two compulsory fieldwork-oriented

courses: “Anthropological Fieldwork” (6 ECTS) and the newly introduced course. We heard of other examples referring to the adoption of online research in the context of restrictions during covid-19 events.

We concluded that the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes is appropriate and also highly effective.

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

As note above students’ evaluations are gathered informally in class and formally through surveys. The results of the formal evaluations sit at the more positive end of the spectrum. The evaluation of teaching of key courses on contemporary theories and methods for the period of 2018-2021 range from 9 to 10 points (out of 10). The exit survey conducted in 2019-2021 which received responses from fifteen students revealed that more than half tended to evaluate positively the impact of their studies on their preparation for the job market. The general evaluation of the Program by graduates who exited in 2019-2021 was also positive, giving 3,5 points out of a possible 4 overall.

The panel confirmed in its meetings with students and alumnae that students evaluate their studies positively, stressing the critical thinking and reflexivity they are encouraged to develop as well as their tolerance of diversity and sensitivity to cultural differences. Students also noted that they had developed general personal management skills as well as skills in solving problems, in communicating ideas and cooperating with others. The students also particularly value the international orientation of the Programme as well as the general atmosphere cultivated in the Department and Faculty. We noted that there is a degree of inconsistency in the quality of feedback and while this is an international problem it may be that more formal methods of staff assessment in this regard would have some positive impact.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There are robust procedures in place for the effective and ongoing evaluation of teaching programmes.
2. The mechanisms by which student feedback is incorporated into the programme is not just robust but of international standard.

(2) Weaknesses:

None identified.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

There are a number of areas in which the expert group were able to identify excellent approaches and work on the part of the Programme Committee and the staff delivering the programme.

The link between scientific work and students studies is outstanding. Over the period since the last evaluation visit the staff associated with the program has grown greatly in number. All these teachers of the programme are real experts in their fields, actively involved in research activities, working across interdisciplinary clusters and often involved in national and international projects. They then integrate this research into the curriculum of study programme. This enables students to focus on a number of locally relevant grand challenges: issues around migration and refugees, ethnicity, identity, inclusive societies and state-society relations. This area is further strengthened by the outstanding international cooperation with the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University, USA – something that is far from a given for a regional Lithuanian University. Anthropology is inevitably a global discipline and so students particularly value the international orientation of the Programme as well as the general atmosphere cultivated in the Department and Faculty. The maintenance of a strong contribution in the elective module offering of international visiting faculty makes a great and distinctive contribution. The real measure of how strong this area of work is, is given by the very high number (nearly all) of the students who wish to continue their research activities after completing the Study Programme and pursue PHD studies. This is quite a rarity.

The provision of teaching, learning and its impact on graduate employment is also an area of true excellence. The study programme focuses on a small number of grand challenges: *transnational mobility, contested cultural practices of inclusion and exclusion, and state transformation*, complemented by a regional emphasis on the experience of central and Eastern Europe which corresponds strongly both to student interests and social needs. The programme aims to develop in its students an appreciation of the dynamics of contemporary global and local processes. It stresses the development of a traditional holistic and comparative approach, through bringing together of ethnographic methods and anthropological theories. Because these programme aims have a near perfect alignment to the needs of Lithuanian society and the national labour market, graduate employment is strong. The importance of having a group of social entrepreneurs in society who are capable of working to address moments of crisis, using their methodologically well-grounded expertise in social science, has recently been demonstrated by the many situations that arose around Covid-19. Moreover, it was clear to us that the mechanisms by which student feedback is incorporated into the programme is not just robust but of international standard. The students we spoke with had a lively and convincing appreciation of the dedication of the staff to their intellectual welfare.

The quality of the teaching staff is also clearly excellent. All are experts in their fields, actively involved in research activities, working across interdisciplinary clusters, national and international projects. As a result they are able to incorporate the latest research developments into the curriculum of study programme. The influence of this excellent staff body was

demonstrated to the evaluation committee both in the quality of ethnographic investigation revealed in the theses – and their breadth. There is truly great thematic richness in this work which speaks to the quality of the teaching staff. There is an ambition here that is outstanding given the very limited financial resources upon which VMU can count.

Finally we were struck that though, for reasons far beyond the power of VMU to resolve, the financing of Higher Education remains not entirely adequate, there is a clear devotion to the welfare of all student. In the new building of this faculty proper provision has been made of facilities for disabled persons and the evaluation committee was very struck by the great willingness of the leaders of this Social Anthropology programme to structure the delivery of their course of study around the special needs of all the students. This once again is a mark of the excellence of the human resources that VMU provides to this programme of study.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>In the theoretical parts of diploma theses work could be done to deepen the ability of the students to cite theories and authors more carefully. Secondly, students could be encouraged to make better use of visual material in their master's theses. During fieldwork, students certainly collect a lot of photographs, scans, illustrations, etc. - including them in diploma theses would definitely enrich them. Finally, maintain and work to develop the international profile of the programme and its impressive external links.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>Disseminate more and better information about the opportunity for students to participate in the annual conference “Young Sociologists and Anthropologists”.</p> <p>Increase the partnership network and activities for applied science related to the study field aiming to increase possibilities to apply anthropology, promoting public recognition of anthropology, and attracting more students.</p> <p>Work to institute the policy of Sabbatical leave to enhance a further advancement of academic research and the development of its anthropological profile.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>Ensure that information about study curriculum is in English on the website as this has only been renewed in Lithuanian.</p> <p>Review the transparency of evaluation criteria for the motivational interview (to ensure none are put off by this process); review the use of questionnaires to obtain fiable feedback.</p>

	<p>We would advise looking thoroughly at more recognition of the summer practise and field work in the study programme.</p> <p>Work to increase student mobility which is sometimes not possible via Erasmus because of a lack of fit to their research field and there is lack of other funding for going to international conferences or other practise relevant to their research. The Expert panel advises to look thoroughly into this problem as it would increase mobility of the students.</p> <p>Devise questionnaires at a local level about study programme to improve the quality of student feedback.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	Work to deepen the involvement of social partners in the programme and its delivery.
Teaching staff	Work to enable maximum involvement of teaching staff in the anthropological research of the Centre for Anthropology. Work towards the adoption of sabbatical periods for staff as part of a HEI wide initiative.
Learning facilities and resources	Explore the desire for and possibility of longer opening hours for the library, especially in the light of the fact that most students also work.
Study quality management and public information	Work to expand the range of employers involved as social partners and, separately, work to improve the quality and use of student feedback through the anonymous questionnaires (the involvement of students otherwise being a strong feature of programme development).

VI. SUMMARY

This is a programme that delivers a curriculum that manages both to maintain a link to the classical traditions of social anthropology and to renew it in innovative and locally appropriate ways. It has developed in impressive and important ways since the last evaluation above all in the recruitment of new and impressively young staff. The continuing provision of teaching from international visiting faculty makes a great and distinctive contribution to the curriculum. This contributes to the fact that the curriculum represents a very good feature of the programme.

Student support is also present in all kinds of ways. Students can access counselling in a variety of forms and the provision of information about these is well managed. Students are clearly satisfied with the services provided and give positive feedback about them. More generally the attention to students' contributions is well reflected in the way the University understands the importance of competences acquired in informal ways or externally (e.g. internationally) and provides the opportunity to count these as part of credits. We were also impressed by the way in which a small programme continues to exercise international appeal. From the website on the service for international students is outstanding.

We also noted that the longstanding tradition in this Study Programme of excellent communication with alumni and social partners continues. And we acknowledge that this is the result of great effort being invested in this area of activity. This is also reflected in the strong employability of graduates from the programme.

The teachers' competences are based on strong scientific research expertise in the discipline, a broad range of teaching strategies and individual mentoring practice. The SA programme team is "pocket-sized", but has excellent staff with a wide range of relevant experience. Thanks to the employment of new, young people, this team is renewed, both in a personal and intellectual sense. A strongly international culture fosters teaching staff mobility which is also reflected in cyclical invitations of foreign professors (as well as admirable efforts to obtain the right to award graduates with a double diploma in the future).

The facilities are in conformity with national standards but a notable feature is the provision for handicapped students including step free access and other facilities for disabled staff. This represents a major improvement on the previous accommodation addition to the high quality of classrooms, social space for students is also taken care of, serving both to rest and prepare their own meals.

Finally, there are robust procedures in place for the effective and ongoing evaluation of teaching programmes. The mechanisms by which student feedback is incorporated into the programme is not just robust but of international standard.

In conclusion we would particularly like to thank all the staff of the Higher Education Institution HEI for their efforts in preparing a most comprehensive and impressive self-evaluation report

as well as organising a rapid but intensive and successful site-visit during which they, their students, administrative staff and social partners/alumnae all engaged in serious discussions with the expert panel.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. dr. Michael Sinclair Stewart