STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is the report of an evaluation of the University of Vilnius undertaken by an international review team commissioned by Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras (SKVC - the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) which by law is the authorised agency to carry out evaluations of higher education institutions and to accredit higher education institution as well as their study programmes in the Republic of Lithuania. The review team has conducted its evaluation of Vilnius University (hereafter interchangeably: Vilnius University or the University) in line with the methodology and guidelines provided by SKVC, specifically the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education (pursuant Government Resolution No. 1317, 22 September 2010).

2. In line with the guidelines set down in the Methodology, the purpose of the evaluation was "to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of [Vilnius University] and the promotion of [its] quality, also to offer recommendations for the development of the [University's] activities". The team was advised to take into consideration autonomy and accountability; the mission, strategy and operating conditions; the interaction and compatibility of the areas under review; stakeholder involvement; and the unity of internal and external quality assurance. The University has previously undergone two voluntary institutional reviews by the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European University Association (EUA-IEP) in 2004 and 2011. The present review was, however, the first institutional evaluation by SKVC; as a result there were no follow-up actions following earlier SKVC reviews for the team to examine.

3. The review team received the University's self-evaluation report (SER) some two months before the site visit. In addition to 34 annexes with statistics and documentation from the University, the team was provided with a website link with additional online information on the University and Lithuania's higher education system. The team found the SER thorough and informative, if over-long. It did, however, leave open numerous questions. It was more descriptive than analytic, and did not focus on issues of particular concern to the University's or identify the University' especial priorities. Nevertheless it provided a good basis for the review team to explore these questions during interviews at the University.

4. The review team received the University's SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis only a few days prior to the site visit. The analysis appeared to the

team to be a general list of various miscellaneous issues and gave the impression that the University had not reflected on which ones it considered more important than others. The review team wondered why the SWOT analysis had not been used as a tool for the University to initiate its self-evaluation process, as is common practice in quality assurance. At the site visit, however, the University informed the team that the SWOT had been based on input from all groups of the University and it had indeed been the complex discussion and consultation process surrounding its compilation that had delayed its completion.

5. The review team site visit took place at two of the University's campuses in Vilnius (the Central Building and the Saulėtekio Avenue campus) on 8-10 October 2013. The team was competently assisted by SKVC in preparation for and during the visit.

6. Prior to the visit, the review team was presented with the latest analysis of learning resources (the assessment decision, issued on 14 of June, 2013, No. Sp-RI-15/13) at Vilnius University by Lithuania's Research and Studies Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA). This evaluation, conducted according to the indicators set down in ministerial orders and a methodology, evaluates material and human learning resources in order to establish whether they meet state requirements.

7. The MOSTA findings presented to the review team showed that Vilnius University did not meet the criteria in two areas, namely the required number of library places and the number of state-funded third degree entrants in proportion to staff with doctoral degrees. The team learned during the site visit that the former ratio had improved since the old library was refurbished with additional places, and the newly built Scolarly Communication and Information Centre, with a new library, which the team visited, had started operations. With regard to the ratio of doctoral students, the University informed the team that, according to its own calculations, which consider other factors than those MOSTA concentrates on, such as the number of students on sick leave and maternity leave, the ratio actually fulfilled the requirement. In spite of these discrepancies, however, MOSTA had concluded that "for 2010-2012 the learning resources of the higher education institution [were] assessed positively in line with Point 11 of the procedure for the external evaluation of higher education institutions, approved by the Decision No. 1317 of 22 September 2010 of the Lithuanian Government (OJ No. 113-5760 of 2010, No. 64-3235 of 2012)."

8. During the two and a half days of the site visit, the team was able to interview the University's Rector; Council members; representatives of the Quality Department; Senate representatives; Self-evaluation Group members; teaching staff; students' union

representatives and, separately, other students; deans of faculties and heads of departments; administrative and support staff; graduates; social partners and employers; research staff; the head and representatives of the human resources office and the Chief Accountant; and post-graduate and post-doctoral students. The review team also visited the historic University library and the main library and Scholarly Communication and Information Centre completed in 2012, as well as laboratories of the Physics Faculty at two campus locations in Vilnius.

9. The chair of the review team was Peter Williams, international consultant on quality assurance and higher education, formerly Chief Executive of QAA (UK) and President of ENQA. Team members were Dr. Annie Doona, President of the Institute of Art, Design and & Technology (IADT, Ireland); Dr. Gintaras Gavenas, independent business consultant in management and nuclear energy (Lithuania); Professor Paavo Okko, professor emeritus, former vice-rector of Turku School of Economics at the University of Turku (Finland); Christian Tauch, head of Education department at German Rector's Conference; and Margus Tiru, PhD student, Tartu University (Estonia). Christina Rozsnyai, Programme officer for international affairs at the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, acted as team secretary.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

10. The following chapter describes Vilnius University in its present situation as explained in the SER and other documents and, to a considerable extent, by the information the team gathered during the site visit.

11. The review team was struck repeatedly during its interviews with the members of the University community, whether they were students, staff or the leadership or, indeed, external stakeholders, by the sense of history and tradition that pervades their thinking in relation to their institution. The team could well understand this sentiment, not least because of the visual impact of the centuries-old building complex in the heart of the old city; it was easy for the team to appreciate the significance of such a past and how much the prestige of the University within Lithuania has affected, and continues to affect, those who are a part of it. As an international group of higher education experts the team was equally aware of the risk to the University of being too much in thrall to its past: that such a position of local and historic pre-eminence as Vilnius University enjoys could blunt the recognition of a need for

nimbleness and a drive for continuous innovation that are the hallmarks of a successful university in the global market. Indeed, the need to balance the achievements of the past with the challenges of the future proved to be the overriding motif running through the evaluation.

12. Vilnius University is among the oldest not only in the region but in Europe, established by Jesuits at the time of the Counter-Reformation. The original Vilnius Academy was founded in 1570 and became a university in 1579. Over four centuries later, at the time of the present evaluation, the University operates 23 academic units comprising 12 faculties and two institutes "with faculty rights"; five research institutes in the natural sciences; and four "inter-faculty study and research centres" (Sports and Health; Gender Studies; Oriental Studies; and Religious Studies). Most units are located in Vilnius, but there is also a campus in Kaunas. "Core academic units" comprise the following faculties,

and the following institutes

- Chemistry
- Philology
- Physics
- Natural Sciences
- Communication
- Medicine
- Law
- Economics
- Philosophy
- History
- Mathematics and Informatics
- Humanities (in Kaunas)

- Foreign Languages
- International Relations and Political Sciences
- Theoretical Physics and Astronomy (including a Planetarium)
- Applied Research
- Mathematics and Informatics
- Biochemistry
- Biotechnology (the latter two will soon be part of a new Centre for Life Sciences).

13. Vilnius University offers studies in all three cycles (bachelor, master and doctor) as well as integrated programmes (for degrees combining more than one cycle) and non-degree programmes. ECTS credits are awarded for all studies.

14. Based on information presented in SER, the total student enrolment in 2012 was 21,496. Of these, 15,850 were in the first cycle and in integrated programmes, 3,533 in second cycle, 811 in third cycle, and 786 medical student residents. The remainder were enrolled into non-degree courses.

15. The total number of the University's employees in 2,012 was 4,371. They included 1,834 teaching staff; 510 research staff; 1,357 auxiliary research and teaching staff; 521 maintenance personnel, and 149 administrative staff. Over 70% of the academic and research staff hold academic degrees.

16. Following this short description of the University, the next four chapters provide the evaluation by the review team of the main areas of University operation conducted in accordance with the methodology provided by SKVC.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Constitutional position

17. In 2009 The Lithuanian parliament passed a new higher education law, which changed the entity of universities from budgetary to public institutions. Vilnius University consequently drafted new statutes that it submitted to parliament in early 2013. The review team was informed that the 2009 law was to be amended by parliament, but when a new government came to power in 2012, the amendment was postponed, and hence Vilnius University still operates under its old statutes. These changes found Vilnius University in a transitional state at the time of the visit of the review team: it was noted by the team that the University was looking forward to the law being ratified in parliament in the coming months and new University statutes coming into effect in early 2014.

Mission and values

18. The University first defined its mission following the recommendations of the EUA-IEP evaluation in 2004, which it set down in its Strategic Action Plan 2007-2013. It subsequently refined the mission following the second EUA-IEP evaluation in 2011; in its new Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020 the mission is described thus:

> "The obligation, which arises from the past, is stimulated by modern challenges and will be passed to future generations, to strengthen national and global cognitive and creative abilities, to foster academic and other moral and social values, and to educate active and responsible citizens and society leaders. This mission of the University is based on the principles of academic freedom and responsibility towards society and is an inherent right and duty of Vilnius University."

19. Together with this mission, the University has defined a core set of values and set down a vision and strategic objectives, according to which it "seeks coherence between fostering classical academic values, continuity of activities and the ability to change".

20. The mission statement is complex and highlights the tension observed by the team between the traditional university models which Vilnius University has grown out of and still aspires to be, and its stated declaration to be a modern, globally-oriented university. The mission statement identifies a need for change whilst maintaining the University's own core values.

21. The University's "Vision for 2020" is to become "The leading research university in the region offering international-level studies, promoting active partnership, fostering a sustainable and open community." These objectives are in line with those for higher education institutions set down in the country's higher education law, and are congruent with the aims of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)[1] and the European Research Area (ERA)[2].

22. The review team heard in various interviews that the members of the University were well aware of their institution's mission and vision, and leaders at various levels, as well as many academic staff and students, were familiar with the main directions set down in the Strategic Action Plan. This was not corroborated in all of the interviews. The Plan provides a self-analysis of the University's position in teaching and research, and the intended strategic directions it describes seemed to the team to be sound, bearing in mind the legal changes expected by the end of 2013.

Governance structures

23. Under the Statutes currently in effect, first issued in 1990 and last amended in 2006 the Senate is the highest governing body of the institution and includes the Rector *ex officio*. The members are elected according to a set formula to ensure equal representation from all

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[1] "Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness."
Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process,
London Communiqué, May 2007

[2] Formulated by the European Council at the end of the Portuguese presidency of the European Union on 2000 and later known as the "Lisbon Strategy". "The European Research Area is composed of all research and development activities, programmes and policies in Europe which involve a transnational perspective. Together, they enable researchers, research institutions and businesses to increasingly circulate, compete and co-operate across borders."
http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/understanding/what/what_is_era_en.htm

faculties and academic institutes and other members are appointed, including students. The latter group should make up at least 10 percent of the members but in fact there were 17 students out of the 81 member body at the time of the evaluation.

24. The Rector is "the head of the University" and is appointed by the Senate. There are four vice-rectors, for academic affairs, strategic affairs, administration and research, nominated by the Rector and approved by the Senate.

25. The University Council, set up in accordance with the national legal provisions to include external members, has the function of supervising the University's public function and use of public funds. The current Council, acting in a temporary capacity pending approval of the new statutes, consists of 11 members, including the President of the Union of Student Representatives (hereafter the Student Union) and seven members who are external to the University. The new Council will have more powers and should provide an important boost to the capacity of the University's governance and leadership.

26. Given the provisional organisational status of the University at the time of its visit, the review team cannot comment on the present effectiveness of the organisation. The proposed changes include smaller and more operative managing bodies, which the review team can only support, this being common and effective practice in many European universities. The team would, in addition, support the proposal for external stakeholders to be key members of any revised organisational bodies.

27. The review team also noted that in both the past and future, students were and are to be involved on all levels of decision-making. The Student Union seemed to be an active participant in the various bodies, and its representatives believed that their interventions were being heard. The team was less assured of the effectiveness of non-Student Union student representation at all levels across the University. There appeared to be differences across faculties as to the ability of the student representatives' voice to be heard and responded to. Lack of good communications was brought up as one of the main reasons.

28. One of the most striking features of the University's organisation is the degree of autonomy enjoyed by its constituent faculties, departments and institutions. These units operate with an extraordinary degree of freedom, to the extent that there appears to be only very limited central control or even influence over what they do and how they do it. This creates the impression to an outside observer of a series of separate organisations whose links to the University as a whole extend only so far as the allocation of resources and the provision of accommodation. Time and time again the review team was told that the answer to one of its

questions depended on which faculty or department was concerned - all did it in different ways. Most of the other activities seem to be undertaken without reference to University protocols, expectations or requirements leading to an almost complete absence of uniformity or consistency. The arguments in favour of this state of affairs are based on a profound belief in academic freedom and a distrust of centralisation; the effects, however, include an absence of any possibility of a common approach to academic quality and standards, any comparability of the learning experience of students in different departments or any guarantee of equity or fairness of treatment for staff and students.

29.   The review team does not believe that the unusual and extreme degree of this autonomy is sustainable or desirable in a university that wishes to forge ahead and stake a claim in the world of high-reputation international higher education. The team suggests to the University that it takes the opportunity provided by the forthcoming changes in governance arrangements to review its organisational structure and establish and implement common operational requirements, approved and monitored by the University through its committee system. This should ensure that anything that is done in the name of the University can be shown to meet the highest quality standards it requires. It should also reduce the chance of bad practice going undetected and enhance the prospect of good practice being shared and promulgated across the institution. This does not imply a soulless uniformity or standardisation of practice, but would go some way to ensuring that the University is working everywhere within agreed and acceptable parameters.

Financial resources

30.   For the moment, pending the approval of the new statute, the Rector is serving in an 'acting' capacity and in consequence numerous measures for change and development within the University cannot be carried out. The Strategic Action Plan's purposes and objectives appear to be reasonable, and the University seems to have the necessary resources to achieve the proposed objectives. In the longer term, however, this will depend on a consistent and reliable flow of income. While this looks to be secure at present, there can be no guarantee of its continuance in perpetuity, and the team considers that the University would be well-advised to pursue future financial plans with this in mind. Moreover, the forthcoming changes to the Statutes will bring a need for additional management resources. The team believes that the University needs to give serious consideration to diversifying its sources of

income, which currently appear to be over reliant on government exchequer and EU funding.

31. The review team discussed the process of the internal allocation of financial resources with head administrators and could state that the processes themselves are functioning in a clear way that is understood by all concerned.

Strategic Action Plan

32. The University published its new Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020 in 2012. At the time of the visit, implementation of the Plan, with indicators and responsibilities assigned to the various members of the University, was still largely in the planning stage, and interview groups noted that wide discussion on this was taking place at various levels. The team would wish to support the University's goal to set down an operable plan of action based on the Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020 so that implementation can start as soon as possible. The Plan contains a very general set of performance and achievement indicators for its goals; the team considered that these would benefit from the development of a more concrete action plan. The goals seem to the team to be comprehensive, but further work is needed in order to develop more tangible and specific indicators with clear milestones, to enable those who will be assigned responsibility for them to track progress and be held accountable. The review and revision of the Strategic Action Plan should include specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) indicators.

33. As described in detail in the SER and told to the team during the site visit, a Strategic Planning Committee has a continuing responsibility for monitoring the achievements of the Strategic Action Plan. Various electronic questionnaires have been developed to measure progress. While commending these initiatives, the team would also stress the importance of communicating progress to the University community as a whole and consistently engaging it in the process.

Quality assurance policy and procedures

34. The University has recently introduced a central Quality Committee and Quality Management Centre. The "Quality Assurance Policy of the University and the Strategy on the Study Quality Improvement", passed by the University Senate in the summer of 2013, was included in the SER. The Policy makes reference to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (known as ESG) and the

European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence (known as EFQM) model as the basis for the internal quality assurance system developed for Vilnius University; the Quality Committee also confirmed this in the site visit interview. The Quality Committee is clearly pursuing a quality assurance policy based principally on enhancement rather than on accountability and compliance, as is stated in the Policy and was emphasised by the Quality Committee. This, to the team, seems a sensible starting point and it appreciates that the Committee plans to develop the system further, an objective that it needs to accomplish as quickly as it can. To this end the review team recommends that a central monitoring structure be established in place of the current disparate and variable localised practices. Knowledge and awareness of the ESG among University staff, including the deans, seem to be still rather limited and there remains considerable work for the Quality Committee to do in this regard.

35. For the moment, the quality assurance system relies primarily on student surveys of teacher performance, which is standard for all faculties. A system of quality coordinators in faculties has been established, and they are already doing good work, but there remain widely differing practices across faculties in the implementation of the established measures. The review team recommends that the University ensures that the quality assurance measures used and the resulting actions taken are brought to the same standard across all faculties. Some students reported that they filled out the questionnaires only reluctantly as they felt that they were not informed about the outcomes and follow-up measures taken in the light of their opinions. The team also heard, however, that the teacher assessments conducted periodically within faculties are obliged to consider the student evaluation results.

36. At present, general data collection in the University is undertaken by a number of departments within the central administration, and a new quality information system is being tested; in addition, data is being collected in administrative departments that can be accessed by the faculties. The University would be well-advised to ensure that this multiplicity of data collection points is used productively and does not lead to duplication, statistical inconsistency, confusion and wasted effort.

37. A system for monitoring teaching performance has been in place since 2010. Staff development opportunities seem to be offered generously in various departments and central units, ranging from courses and workshops on pedagogical development to information on implementing Bologna structures, such as the ECTS credit system. The review team is concerned, however, that there is no system in place monitor the benefits obtained from

these measures by individual staff. Nor is there a university-wide policy on staff development and it is up to the individual academic staff member to choose development courses. Nevertheless, the team appreciated hearing in several interviews that many staff are eager to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in such events.

Academic organisation

38. As already mentioned, at the time of the evaluation the academic divisions of the University were operating with a very high degree of autonomy, which gave rise to a quite varied set of operational processes. So far as the review team could judge, the operations are generally fit for purpose within the given loose-knit framework, although there is no obvious way for the University to be able to satisfy itself routinely that what is being done in its name by its faculties, departments and centres conforms with its requirements. Nevertheless, programme design and research initiatives and implementation seem to be operating within acceptable ranges in the existing structure at present.

39. On the other hand, the team appreciates that the University has been discussing the possible reduction of the number of its faculties. The team agrees with one of the respondents in an interview that such a reorganisation will require great care and may have both positive and negative implications. Nevertheless, any initiative that ensures transparency and equal and consistent quality across all academic units and for all students of the University should be welcomed. Moreover, if the University is to attain its strategic goal of attaining a higher position in global higher education institutional rankings, the reconsideration of the existing structures, to allow more flexible and interdisciplinary interchanges especially between related fields, could certainly be an advantage.

Kaunas campus

40. The team would like to note that it did not explore the status of the campus in Kaunas, where the Humanities Faculty is located, but in the interviews with deans, teaching staff and students the faculty was represented. The team could not definitively judge how well the faculty was integrated into the University and in how much it shares the University's identity. However the staff from Kaunas who were present did not articulate any major difficulties. Nevertheless the University should be alert to the possibility that the Kaunas campus may need greater degree of active integration to ensure it does not become isolated both culturally and academically.

External social partners

41. The external stakeholders and University partners whom the team was able to meet in the site visit seem to be wholeheartedly dedicated to the well-being and success of Vilnius University, and this was true not only of those who were graduates of the institution, although the latter were certainly the majority. Regular meetings on subjects ranging from programme design to student placement to organisational issues to research projects take place with stakeholders of the University at various levels. The review team noted, however, that the contacts between the University and external stakeholders are often based on personal connections rather than being the result of a University strategy or proactive policy. While matching interests between the two parties frequently exist, they are not exploited or managed in a structured way.

Appointment of staff

42. The recruitment and appointment procedure for academic staff involves is laid down in the law and the University's regulations. It involves a public job announcement, checking of submitted applications by the Human Resources Department and the forwarding of these to the relevant recruiting department. There, following a general discussion of all applicants, a commission, (which includes a foreign expert if the post being filled is that of a professor or lead researcher), chooses the successful candidate and the Human Resources Department carries out the consequent administrative work; the University Recruitment Commission approves the appointment and submits it to the Rector for final ratification. The review team was struck by the fact that choice of successful candidate is done entirely on the basis of consideration of submitted *curricula vitae;* candidates are not interviewed. Moreover, there does not seem to be a central staffing strategy or policy or an overall academic plan which would enable staff to be recruited according to defined strategic need. The University is advised to consider whether this approach to the recruitment of academic staff is in accordance with best international practice and if it can be sure that it leads to the appointment of the best candidates for the available positions.

Physical infrastructure

43. The University's physical infrastructure seems to the review team to be in good order, and the general upkeep of facilities appears to be well managed and implemented. The team saw

impressive new investments at the Saulėtekio Avenue campus on the outskirts of Vilnius. As concerned learning resources, there appears to be greater variance, as reported by students. Again it seems to the team that the availability and quality depend entirely on the resources and management decisions of the departments and faculties.

Risk management

44. There was no indication in the SER or in the personal discussions that the University is regularly conducting risk analysis or that there is a systematic approach to risk awareness and change management in the overall operations of the University. The absence of risk management procedures poses a threat to the University, particularly in times of significant change and financial challenges. That is, again, an aspect of University management that should be looked into when the new constitutional structures are in place.

The demographic challenge

45. The University will be faced in the very near future with the challenge of a decreasing population of young people of university age in Lithuania and hence a possible decline in its own student numbers. The administration proposes three main solutions to sustain the necessary number of student admissions: maintenance of the University's leading position amongst the higher education institutions in Lithuania should guarantee continuation of the requisite number of students; life-long learning should provide a higher number of older students; and international mobility should attract more foreign students. Although the strategy appears to the review team to be basically sound, it will still require considerable efforts to achieve the objectives and a lot of work will have to be done to avoid any actual decrease in the number of students during the next five to 10 years.

Judgment on the area: Strategic Management is a given <u>positive</u> evaluation.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Programmes of study

46. The twelve faculties and two institutes with faculty rights at Vilnius University cover all fields of science with the exception of art. A total of 199 programmes are offered in all three cycles, bachelor, master and doctoral studies, with the state-regulated professions of law,

medicine and odontology being carried out in an integrated first-second cycle format leading to a master's degree. There are also non-degree professional programmes and what the University refers to as lifelong learning studies.

47. The broad spectrum of studies aligns well with the University's mission and vision "to strengthen national and global cognitive and creative abilities", and the strategic documents seen by the review team. The University states in its SER, that the "overall objective while developing new study programmes is to ensure their correspondence with the needs of the State and the society, building them on the intellectual and material resources available, and bringing them in line with the international achievements in the area of research and studies of a respective study field." While the review team certainly saw no evidence to the contrary, as a group of mostly foreign experts it was a complicated task to judge how far the study programmes on offer are meeting specific needs of the Lithuanian economy; as the largest and most prestigious higher education institution in the country, however, there is little doubt that Vilnius University plays an important role in this area, and this places a particular obligation on it to ensure that its academic planning and implementation processes are fully effective.

Student funding and admission requirements

48. State-funded study places are allocated to students by the government in the form of vouchers, introduced in 2009. Students are ranked against national-level criteria, and each year a certain number are successful in obtaining a voucher, with which they can apply to be admitted to the higher education institution of their choice. Voucher-holding students are therefore not only a source of income, but also an indication of the popularity and prestige of an institution. Vilnius University has an impressive record of attracting such students Institutions are also free to take on additional students who can pay their own tuition fees, but Vilnius University has set minimum requirements below which it will not take students, even if places are still available. The review team commends the rigour of this practice as a measure of quality assurance. It heard, however, that at least in respect of third-cycle studies the student admissions requirements are less stringent in many departments. If this is indeed the case, then the further development of the quality assurance system should bring it to the surface.

Approval and updating of study programmes

49. The University has conducted an analysis of its study programmes as part of the preparation of a new document, the "Regulations of a Study Programme Committee". The analysis shows that, on average, a programme goes through two accreditation cycles before it is updated and submitted for accreditation as a new programme. The review team recognises the value of such an analysis, which should become an integral part of the University's internal quality assurance system; the practice of regularly updating the content of programmes should then be carried out by all faculties and departments at the appropriate intervals for a given study field. The review team understands that there are complaints concerning the current functioning of study programme committees where students are sometimes appointed not by the Student Union but by the administration and students are not, in practice, involved in the preparation of new study programmes. The University should satisfy itself that this is not, in fact, the case, or, if it is, should take steps to ensure that the involvement of students is in line with its own declared policies.

Teaching and learning strategies

50. The "shift from teaching to learning", including the modularisation of study programmes and the formulation of learning outcomes/competences to be obtained, that is taking place across the European Higher Education Area, has also reached Vilnius University, but the approach in the different faculties so far seems to be rather haphazard. Competence-based teaching and student assessment represent a pedagogical change of paradigm that will not come about by itself. The review team recommends stronger institutional guidance on these issues, including training for teachers and curriculum designers.

Pedagogical innovation

51. Higher education worldwide is faced with challenges arising from new modes of delivery and styles of learning, e.g. through online and blended learning programmes and MOOCs. These developments can call into question the traditional way in which universities are organised and provide their programmes, including issues of funding, student intake, organisation of teaching, student assessment etc. They offer not only new possibilities but also threats, and defy universities to position themselves in relation to these alternative approaches. The review team has found little evidence that Vilnius University is fully aware of these issues and takes them into account in its long-term strategy, not least that of being a serious international university with a high reputation.

Student support systems

52. There is no tradition in the University of an established student support system, something that has been introduced in many European countries, albeit frequently only relatively recently. A number of disparate mechanisms for student academic support do exist, but these are frequently informal or can only be invoked when problems have led to serious difficulties or academic failure.

53. The University Statutes in effect state that the University shall offer equal opportunity for study, including for persons with disabilities. New buildings, such as the Scholarly Communication and Information Centre at Saulėtekio Avenue which the team visited, have wheelchair access and facilities for blind students. Such initiatives are expected to multiply as new buildings are raised, but the team hopes that this will be a major consideration with the refurbishment of old structures as well, given not only the pre-eminence and hence social responsibility of Vilnius University in the country but also the marketing advantage of facilities of this kind.

54. Psychological and personal counselling for students in need is another aspect that is now common practice in universities in many European countries. The review team heard that there is access for students to such a service in the Psychology Department but few students are aware of it. This appears to be a local arrangement; there is no university-wide support service for students in this area. The team would suggest that the University review its student counselling support and in the short term put in place more effective ways of disseminating information about the available student support services.

55. There is no defined support service for students who are experiencing difficulties with their learning, whether as a result of a specific need e.g. dyslexia, or general study difficulties. Support available appears to depend on the attitudes of individual departments or even individual academic staff members.

56. The review team did note, however, that international students appeared to fare better in this area. The team looked at the study catalogue for international students, where such support measures are provided and there seem to be support instruments at some of the faculties. International students appeared to be provided with good information and support. The general culture, however, is that of self-sufficiency for students.

57. With regard to assisting students with career decisions, a Career Centre, which is apparently active in a range of projects, including international ones, does not seem to be effective in its primary mission, as the review team heard from several groups of students. The primary mission, the team believes, is to provide one-on-one assistance to students who require counselling to explore their opportunities for the future, which cannot be replaced just by the organised seminars and projects that were reported to be the focus of the Centre at this time.

58. Together, the student support arrangements seem to the review team to be significantly underdeveloped for a leading European university. This observation raises the question of the extent to which the University is following standard 1.5 of the ESG: "Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered".

Plagiarism and appeals

59. The review team raised in several interviews the question of measures being taken against plagiarism and considers that there is a general awareness of the issue at all levels. A Code of Ethics is in place and there are possibilities for appealing against decisions by professors, such as examination grades, which some students have in fact made use of.

Student placements

60. The review team was told that all students had the possibility of undertaking practical placements during their studies, but the interviews with students revealed that there seem to be contradictory perceptions of this question. Some students reported that they had to do compulsory placements, while others could not participate in the placements they were able to find for themselves, as they were told that such practice "was illegal". The University informed the team that practical training is compulsory in first cycle studies but in second cycle it may or may not be part of the programme. It also emphasised that placements found by the students themselves had to conform to the programme's requirements. Nevertheless, the review team sees a need for a consistent institutional policy regarding placements which needs to be communicated across all faculties (and especially to students) and reflected in curricular development.

Use of ECTS

61. The review team received the suggestion from the Student Union that the implementation of ECTS in terms of students' workload was calculated only formally and was not being monitored and adjusted to reflect the actual level of work required. Although the team did not receive any evidence of specific miscalculation of ECTS values, the implementation of ECTS and introduction of the concept of student-centred learning should be continuously improved.

Information about study programmes

62. Although an Electronic Study Information system is in place for registering on courses and obtaining detailed information about individual curricula (according to the feedback from meetings), the review team was informed by some of the students whom it met that students in some faculties were unable to access course descriptions and therefore had difficulties planning and monitoring their learning process. The review team would advise the University to look into such cases, to see how far this may be true and to take appropriate action.

Student feedback

63. Teachers are not obliged to provide any feedback on students' learning results and progress other than simple grades. Some teachers give feedback but mostly students are not given any comments on their performance, except when they are disputing the test results. Teacher-student feedback is an important part of learning and should be a fundamental part of an institution's quality assurance system. The University is advised to review its expectations for providing feedback to students and to ensure that they conform to international best practice and are applied consistently across all faculties and departments.

Staff workloads

64. A number of the teachers and doctoral students whom the review team met observed that the demands of their teaching workloads often left them with little or no time to undertake their research. A shortage of time was also stated to be a principal reason for the often insufficient quality of their pedagogical skills (especially among young lectors); this was said to be exacerbated by the limited possibilities open to them to participate in pedagogical training courses. The University acknowledges the workload difficulties at present being experienced by some of its academic staff and has expressed its intention to rectify the position. The

review team believes that this would be a step forward in ensuring that the University is making the most effective use of its academic staff.

Lifelong learning

65.   The review team explored in its interviews the lifelong learning courses offered by the University. It seems to the team that the concept is understood very narrowly, in terms simply of professional development courses, such as specialty courses for medical doctors by the Faculty of Medicine or foreign language courses offered by the Institute of Foreign Languages or Chinese offered by the Confucius Centre to the members of the University and the general public, to name just a few of the examples presented. The review team commends these initiatives, and also the "Children's University", but it also welcomes the intent of the University to broaden its lifelong-learning offer. In fact, the Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020, speaks of developing "a lifelong-learning system", which the team agrees with, especially if that means expanding on the currently accepted notion of professional development into a broader concept of structured studies for all ages that may also include courses for which ECTS credits are given. Moreover, an analysis of the needs of the wider community should provide the basis for planning the lifelong-learning offer in a strategic way. The stakeholders interviewed by the review team did not identify the need for such studies but they should be involved in the analysis and development of lifelong-learning programmes.

66.   So far as the review team is aware, the strategic documents of Vilnius University with respect to lifelong learning and studies are in line with general practices in the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area, a conclusion that the University itself has arrived at in the process of developing its new Strategic Action Plan.

Graduate careers monitoring

67.   The team was informed that a nation-wide system of monitoring the careers of graduates is being implemented in Lithuania. Vilnius University has a Career Centre, and in addition, the SER reports that "monitoring of career of graduates is also carried out at individual divisions by informally collecting the relevant information [and] establishing Alumni societies …" This is certainly helped by the fact that many graduates of Vilnius University are employed and have influence in the leading decision-making bodies and businesses of the country. The team would like to urge the University to move beyond this ad hoc system and to establish a

systematic monitoring procedure for all its graduates either through the national system, when it becomes operational, or on its own. Knowledge of what its graduates do once they have completed their studies is a crucial measure for strategic planning and quality assurance, and without it it is difficult to increase the University's ability to meet the needs of the national and local economy and to improve the study programmes it offers. Moreover, career monitoring impacts on internship placements, alumni relations and fund-raising strategies, and is crucial for serving current students in their career advice and guidance.

Collaborative partnerships

68. Cooperation with the University's academic, social and business partners exists, as described in several parts of this report. The review team notes, once again, that such cooperation tends to be ad hoc rather than systematic. While such contacts are very often based on interpersonal relations at the faculty and department level also at other universities in Europe, by embedding personal initiatives into a centrally developed and monitored strategy, the resulting synergies can produce greater impact for the whole University community as well as society. Vilnius University is better placed than most higher education institutions to take advantage of the external contacts it enjoys and the review team can testify that there is goodwill among social partners to contribute to University affairs on numerous levels. With more activity on the part of the University, not least by disseminating information about its activities and seeking strategic cooperation opportunities, much could be achieved beyond the existing student internships and placements, such as setting up, with social partners, scholarships for talented students or those in need.

69. The review team heard of some cooperation with other universities taking place. These include some agreements whereby students may get credit for courses taken at a partner institution; the agreement with the Lithuanian Academy of Arts to give joint lectures on art history was mentioned in an interview. An extensive table in the SER also list "Examples of the impact of research activities carried out by the University upon different organisations", the subjects of the impact ranging from public institutions to business to government institutions. Vilnius University is a member of several international networks, including the Baltic University Rectors' Conference, the international Utrecht, UNICA and the Baltic Sea region university networks and others. The review team noted in an interview that the Institute of International Relations is especially active in this regard.

Staff and student mobility

70. It has been mentioned in several places in this report that the rise in international rankings and expansion of the University's international dimension are among the top priorities of the institution. This is an ambition coveted by every member of the University community with whom the review team has spoken. The University is taking measures to increase the international mobility of its staff and students. Doctoral students of several faculties noted that they are required to go abroad, if only for short periods, during their studies. Courses taught in a foreign language, predominantly English but also Russian and others, are on the rise and strategically supported by the University and the faculties, even if the first programmes in English were taught only in 2005, but with three new ones introduced in 2012. International students are welcomed and mentored by local students and good induction programmes for them are in place. Outgoing staff mobility is on the rise. "In 2012, 2 498 University staff members were delegated abroad within the framework of international projects, also for academic exchange, internship programmes and research visits". The Rector's Report for 2012 states that "Erasmus agreements increased by 8 per cent". The review team welcomed information received from SKVC that the legal provisions for joint programmes and joint degrees will improve, as these can be valuable tools in the University's internationalisation efforts.

71. A graph, although without actual figures, shows the countries of origin of incoming foreign academics teaching or doing research at Vilnius University between 2007 and 2012. From the number of schemes presented in the SER it can be deduced that over 4,000 academic staff and researchers participated in activities abroad, in addition to those who attended conferences. The University is also actively promoting to increase inward mobility, and over 1,000 academic staff and researchers lectured or did research at the University. The review team, while aware that the differences between West European and Lithuanian salaries make longer stays difficult in both directions, nevertheless supports strongly the University's strategic initiatives in this respect.

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

V. RESEARCH AND (OR) ART

72. According to its SER, "The University carries out fundamental, applied research and development (social and cultural) in all areas of science that by nature of the activities breaks down as follows: humanities – 22%, social sciences– 19 %, physical and technological sciences– 34%, and biomedical sciences – 25 %. All 23 academic units perform research activities and thus Vilnius University is active in all research areas that are essential to the very nature of a comprehensive university.

Research strategy

73. In its "Vision for 2020", the University aspires to be the "leading research university in the region", which it defines as Central and Eastern Europe. The University also sets itself the goal of international excellence in interdisciplinary research. The unity of research and studies is an overriding principle in the University, which, as was evident in many of the interviews, also sees itself as having a special national responsibility in research. This drives and motivates its members to uphold the University's leading position in the country and to enhance the international competitiveness of Lithuanian science.

74. The University proposes four action lines to achieve its target to become an internationally-recognised research university, "to increase the scope of research output of the highest quality, to develop applied research and carry out commercialization of research results, to develop international cooperation, [and] to increase the number of world-class researchers".

75. Research activities seem to the review team to be in alignment with the University`s mission and strategic documents. The research strategy has been evaluated (EUA-IEP evaluations 2004 and 2011) and these evaluations have contributed to the further development of the strategy. The University has constructed a monitoring and motivation system for research staff in order to achieve its targets. Close cooperation between research and teaching has been targeted for development, but even better possibilities for the teaching staff to participate in research work are needed.

76. The current strategic orientation towards a research university is well-argued in several sections of the SER. For a large traditional and nationally dominating university, the best way forward is in high quality and internationalisation. However, competition in international science is very intense and the University has much to do in focusing and allocating its resources in order to achieve its demanding targets. A major challenge in strategic focusing is how to get all the faculties to work towards the common targets in a situation in which the balance between faculties may be changing.

77. In order to achieve its strategic research targets, the University has formulated an institutional activity for this area: "improving the effectiveness of science" in its Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020. The Plan describes three separate categories of implementation criteria, and there are altogether 14 implementation measures to improve the effectiveness of science. These measures and their implementation activities and targets are, though, very general in nature, making it difficult to formulate measurable indicators with which to monitor the Strategy effectively.

78. The University has an active Vice-Rector for Research. The Strategic Action Plan foresees a more centralised, University-level approach to research than at present. It was apparent to the review team that under the current arrangements all initiatives and implementation take place at the level of the faculties, and activity depends on both the dedication of their staff in seeking research projects and individual connections which can be used to create new opportunities.

Monitoring research outputs

79. The monitoring of research output is mainly based on publications statistics. During the evaluation period the statistics showed some output expansion and some structural features indicating better scientific quality. Researchers in the University have published on average about 3,000 publications annually, including around 50 monographs and about 1,900 scientific articles. Observations from the year 2012 show the highest total of 3,657 scientific publications (apparently including those up to April 2013). This number of publications is not, in truth, very high for a university of such size, especially when conference abstracts are also included in the total figure. Quantitative values are not a direct indication of scientific quality; however; some important indicators of scientific quality can be detected from an analysis of where the research was published. There was, for example, a sharp rise in articles included on the Web of Science database, from 482 in 2010 and to 691 in 2011. Articles also appeared in the top journals of different fields (e.g. *Lancet*, *Science* or the *New England Journal of Medicine*). This is a positive development that seems to be related to the integration of four research institutes into the University.

80. According to the SER, there are also other reasons for this positive development, including the "development of international research cooperation,… changes in the qualification requirements for holding academic positions; [and] allocation of the State budget in regard to the assessment of the qualitative, rather than only quantitative research results".

Research and national priorities

81. Research activities and doctoral education cover a very large spectrum of studies, and the University has a central role in Lithuanian national cultural development. It has also been involved in many research projects directed especially at regional or national development priorities. The Strategic Action Plan 2007-2013 indicates that the University aims to strengthen relations with social partners. In addition to contributions of its research in the natural and social sciences to the socio-economic development of the country, research in humanities contributes to the cultural capital of the country. The well-developed University Library with its information services also plays an important role within the local community. A target in the current Strategic Action Plan is that Vilnius University "generates a significant cultural, social and economic value". In addition, it is targeting to develop entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of research results.

82. The national system of allocation of state-funded doctoral student places is based on research output of the faculty. As a consequence, doctoral education is not necessarily in close alignment with the priorities of national and regional development, even if the University targets these priorities in general. The University aims to increase significantly its scope and income from applied research and plans to promote joint activities between its staff and the private and public sectors. The result of this is that research activities are driven also by national and regional needs for knowledge. As far as the review team can see, research activities at Vilnius University are in alignment with the priorities of the national and regional economic, cultural and social development.

National and international research links

83. The University has a large cooperation network with domestic and international academic partners. Cooperation is pursued in the form of joint research projects; joint publishing activities; joint access to research facilities; and joint organizing of scientific events. As examples of international cooperation with academic partners the SER reports on cooperation of the Faculty of Physics with a US partner, the Faculty of Philology with partners from UK and Baltic States, and the Faculty of Law with German and French partners.

84. The SER describes numerous research application initiatives of the University. With its business partners, it implemented about 100 projects during the evaluation period. During the same time 66 patents were issued to protect inventions to which researchers of the University had contributed. In 2007-2010 the University itself obtained 15 patents, nine of them domestic. These figures indicate the potential for the application of research pursued by the University and also the potential (at present under-developed) to earn from intellectual property rights. Cooperation with social partners has also contributed to the development of research and teaching facilities. A Chinese and a Lithuanian telecommunications company have invested in a new and impressive scientific training laboratory at the University, which is used for both research and training in the area of telecommunication technologies. A similar kind of cooperation exists in the field of physics, where the review team was shown state-of-the-art laser equipment donated by a company for a joint project. The University has benefited from cooperation with its academic, social and business partners. Based on the strong support expressed by the social partners, the review team can conclude that they could be involved more extensively in the development of research activities of the University.

85. Vilnius University envisages becoming a top-level research institution in the European Research Area. The new Strategic Action Plan includes a goal to participate in important international research projects and partnerships. There are four key measures for achieving this target, "to use the researcher mobility promotion fund; to develop the international project application system; to enhance the inclusion of research journals published by the University into recognised international databases; [and] to prepare and implement a system for attraction of foreign scientists and other researchers". The University has been active in participating in European research programmes, e.g. Eureka, FP 6, and FP 7, including Marie Curie schemes. It has been implementing about 84 international projects on average annually in 2007-2012. The most active researchers have been participating in projects under the EU framework or COST programmes, but a large number of cooperative projects have also been implemented under bilateral or trilateral agreements with some EU countries or Belarus, Ukraine and Taiwan.

86. Foreign visiting researchers to the University in 2007-2012 came from 39 different countries, mainly from European countries but also from, e.g. Japan, USA and Canada. For the purpose of researcher mobility the University has allocated its own resources via the Research Promotion Fund, and it has used funding from the Research Council of Lithuania

and also other funding sources. There are possibilities for researchers, for post-doctoral fellowships and also for doctoral students. During the period 2007-2012, altogether 690 University researchers worked at different higher education and research institutions abroad. Another 870 researchers undertook their internship periods in 53 different foreign countries, and the number of various researcher visits was much higher (not counting conference participation). According to numbers presented in the SER approximately 800 visits were made annually from the University to foreign universities. These numbers include also mobility of teachers. A significant number of the staff also have a variety of roles and positions in international scientific organisations and publication forums.

87. Lithuania has an unbalanced flow of incoming and outgoing international researchers that is typical for a small European country. Incoming mobility was mainly for the purpose of delivering lectures. This imbalance has been considered within the University and ia addressed in the new Strategic Action Plan, which contains proposals for new measures to increase the inflow of international researchers. Further internationalisation of research activities is needed in order to realize the targets of the University to become an internationally recognized research university.

  Judgment on the area: Research is given a <u>positive</u> evaluation.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

88. The University's relations with external stakeholders from business and society have been discussed in previous chapters. The need to seek and sustain active relations with these groups in a strategic way has also been mentioned. The University states in its SER,

  "Although the objective to respond to the needs of the country and its regions, and produce an impact on the development of the country has not been defined as a separate goal or area of activity, it is emphasized in all descriptions of activities and constitutes and integral part of the Strategic action plan."

  The impact in a number of areas presented in the SER follows not so much from strategic action as from the sheer size and prestige of Vilnius University within Lithuania. This is underscored by the quote from the SER that "in 2013 out of 138 members of the Lithuanian Seimas 59 members, 8 Ministers of 14 Ministers of the Government, 14 Vice-Ministers of total 34 Vice-Ministers have acquired their higher education at Vilnius University."

89. The mission, values and vision of Vilnius University focus on educating "active and responsible citizens and society leaders" within their educational programmes but there is no mention of involving society in its own activities. The review team had the impression that in fact the University has not prioritised internal and external activities related to external groups in its Strategy and recommends, again, that the University should do so.

90. During its site visit, the review team was given the opportunity to look into student graduation theses, some of them written in English. The projects, ranging from research into the effects of regime change after 1990 on society to natural science work, provided persuasive evidence of the impact the University has in local and regional projects through the work of its early-career researchers..

91. As can be expected from a university of this calibre, the academic and research staff is active in numerous scientific and professional bodies and editorial boards. In addition, they provide expertise in various organisations and industrial and business projects.

92. The SER offers an analysis of the territorial coverage of the University's impact. The methodology used for this purpose does not, however, allow specific conclusions to be drawn: although the graph depicts a rather uniform impact on the different Lithuanian counties, exempting the capital, a more thorough analysis would be required to reveal the contributory elements of the impact; the intake of talented students from other counties and employment destinations of graduates, for example, might show rather different patterns. A more thorough analysis of the University's impact in cities as opposed to rural areas in general, and an analysis of the impact in Vilnius city and Vilnius county, might bring valuable insights for planning programme development.

93. The impact of research activities on Lithuania's national development has been clearly visible for several decades; Vilnius University has been the recognised centre of research and science promotion in the country. The impact of its research activities is visible in two layers; first, top level research labs increase the visibility and credibility of the country and in this way create value to society; and secondly, the more numerous applied research and development cooperation projects at local level with businesses, public institutions, government or NGOs, bring considerable value to the communities involved. A number of examples are listed in SER. The review team heard interesting examples of cooperation between University research staff and businesses in meetings with social partners and employers.

94. The review team noted, as a particularly strong point, the University's cooperation with schools, both at the level of contacts with teachers and its involvement in programmes targeted at school children. Such cooperation is fruitful for both parties in several ways: by contributing to the quality of general education and simultaneously building 'brand awareness' for the University, and by attracting gifted graduates of secondary schools to the University's study programmes. These activities are in line with the strategic targets of the University.

95. As already mentioned, Vilnius University's graduates can be found working in numerous national governing institutions, businesses and NGOs. The review team had the pleasure to meet representatives from a number of leading businesses and branches of government who testified to their readiness to support the University and to cooperate with their *alma mater*.

96. In several interview groups, which also included alumni of the University, it became evident that their cooperation is spontaneous rather than being the result of proactive and structured actions of the University. An important opportunity to harness the evident willingness of these valuable supporters is largely being missed. It believes that the alumni organisation could be developed in a more targeted way as yet another possible way to strengthen relations with society and enhance the University's impact on national development.

97. A further way for the University to develop its impact on society is to disseminate information about its activities. Examples given in the SER concern the popularisation of natural sciences (especially in laser and biotechnology areas) and historic, linguistic, politic and economic sciences. The review team would encourage the University to expand its reach in this area, using innovative and imaginative communications techniques, across the whole territory of Lithuania.

98. The University's campuses are well suited for organising scientific, business and political events, and the review team would encourage Vilnius University to take advantage of this opportunity more frequently. A good example of such activity was presented to the review team at the new library, which has already been hosting numerous public and business meetings. The hosting of national and international events builds awareness about the University and can lead to cooperation with new social partners in a productive way.

99. During meetings with graduates, employers and social partners the team explored the perception of Vilnius University as a 'brand' and in all cases the answer was that it is seen as a national rather than an international brand. The review team believes that the University

management should take vigorous steps to expand its image as it aspires to become the leading research university in the region as set down in its "Vision for 2020".

Judgment on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given a <u>positive</u> evaluation.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

100. Concluding its evaluation of Vilnius University, the review team believes that the manifest strengths it saw during its visit amongst the teaching, research and management staffs, as well as the students, will hold it in good stead as it enters the latest transitional stage of its long and distinguished history. The team was not fully convinced, however, that the University is sufficiently aware of the external environment in which it may soon find itself, or at least that it will readily be able to deal with any unexpected reverses. For this reason, the team would like to proffer some recommendations for the University to consider on its way forward.

101. To begin with, however, the team would like to stress the features of Vilnius University that it found particularly commendable. The team would like to note that these features necessarily reflect more the facilities and practices it was able to witness first-hand and it is certain that a great many additional commendable features exist in addition to those listed below.

102. Commendable features of Vilnius University

1. The aspiration to be a world-class University with set targets and considered improvement of the facilities to that end.

2. The commitment to academic excellence in research and the deliberate and ongoing improvement of facilities and equipment.

3. The ready and open cooperation with social partners, and the partners' goodwill towards the University.

4. The policy and practices related to both international students and the support to the mobility of Lithuanian students.

5. The activity of the Student Union and services arranged by them.

6. The commitment by the leadership to create a culture of excellence, and the dedication and enthusiasm to quality of the Quality Department staff and department coordinators, as well as many members of the University.

7. The staffing and management, resources, responsiveness and client awareness of the library, from services for impaired users to the labelling of shelves in English and the ease of access to on line resources.

8. The stringent anti-plagiarism arrangements.

103. Recommendations for Quality Enhancement

The review team recommends to the University that it:

1. takes the opportunity of the forthcoming statutory reform to reconfigure the University's organisational structure, reducing the number of operational units, and implementing common operational standards to be followed throughout the institution, approved and monitored by the University through its committee system in order better to fulfil its ambition of being an international research university.

2. pursues future financial plans to ensure a consistent and reliable flow of income by diversifying income sources, and securing the resources needed to implement the changes that will flow from the actions set down in the new Statutes.

3. reviews and revises the Strategic Action Plan in a more concrete form, to include specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) indicators.

4. ensures that academic programmes and associated practices in all academic units are fully consistent with Part 1 of the ESG.

5. ensures that its quality assurance procedures and actions are brought up to the same standard in all parts of the University and sets up a central structure to monitor the implementation of its quality assurance requirements, in place of the currently disparate and variable practices.

6. implements institutional standards for staff development which include staff training for teaching staff and programme designers in student-centred teaching and assessment, as well as methods of on-line and blended learning in all faculties. Sets up a system to monitor this in order to provide general benefit from individual achievements.

7. makes sure that everything done in the name of the University by all units and entities is acceptable in quality and related to the achievement of its Strategic Action Plan.

8. develops a more systematic and strategic approach to human resources planning and staff development. Revisits the academic staff recruitment and appointment policies and practices

to ensure that they are in accordance with best international practice and lead to the appointment of the best candidates for the available positions.

9. develops further the engagement of students in pedagogical and quality assurance activities. Ensures that the involvement of students in study programme committees is effective, in line with University policy.

10. modernises its approach to teaching and embeds fully within the University's culture the importance of excellent teaching in addition to that of research. This will include assessing staff workload properly; standardising and disseminating good practices in teaching and learning; providing ready information about study courses; and introducing minimum quality standards for teaching and learning.

11. reviews the student services at the University. This will include assistance to students with study difficulties, student counselling support, such as psychological counselling and effective dissemination of information about the student support services available.

12. expands the Career Centre services to provide not only seminars but also one-to-one assistance to students to explore their opportunities for the future.

13. sets up a University policy to ensure that student placement in internships is implemented consistently across all faculties and is reflected in students' curricular development.

14. reviews the effectiveness of the internal communication system to see if it can be improved, in particular between staff and students at all levels; ensure that students are given feedback on surveys on teaching performance.

15. reviews teaching loads of staff and doctoral students, in order to ensure that there is sufficient time for research.

16. develops a more strategic approach to lifelong-learning and involves a broader range of stakeholders; expands the currently-accepted limited concept of lifelong-learning to include structured studies for all ages and courses for which ECTS credits are given.

17. establishes a structured system of career monitoring of University graduates as a tool to aid strategic planning and provide information on the success and value of study programmes.

18. establishes a more considered policy to build a constructive relationship between teaching and research: research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research.

19. develops a more focused research strategy aimed at achieving international recognition of research; ensures that all the faculties work together towards the University's common strategic targets.

20. makes better use of the willingness of social partners to assist the University in a variety of ways, including provision of placements, setting up scholarships for talented students, participation in business clubs, providing teaching opportunities, taking on advisory roles, and mentoring.

21. develops targeted ways of working with alumni to strengthen relations with society and enhance the University's impact on national development.

22. takes active steps to ensure a wider awareness of the University's reputation both nationally and internationally.

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Vilnius University is given a <u>positive</u> evaluation.

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Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

ANNEX. VILNIUS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

VU comments on factual mistakes

20-01-2014

1. Comment regarding 36th Article. We would like to draw the attention that Quality management office is not responsible for general data collection in the University. Departments at the level of central administration are responsible for data collection regarding their competence. Information system of quality performance indicators is running testing and validation applications.

2. Comment regarding 42th Article. We would like to draw the attention that conclusion in Article No 42 of evaluation summary report does not reflect real procedures of academic staff apointment process.
   Procedure itself is defined by the Law of Science and Studies, University's Statute and Provisional Regulations on the Performance Evaluation of the Pedagogical and Research Staff of Vilnius University and the Organisation of Competitions to Fill Positions (approved by Decision No SK-2010-5-34 of the Commission of Senate).
   Regarding Art 65 part 1 of Law of Science and Studies and Art 34 part 1 of University's Statute all academic staff is apointed by public competition for 5 year procedure. In the Provisional Regulations there are defined such main steps:
   1. A public competition for filing positions is called for by an Order of the Rector.
   2. Information about competition is published in the Information Bulletin of University, announced in the media of University, and certain web portals defined by Law.
   A multi-level process takes place. It involves:
   1. General discussion of all applicants at the branch units,
   2. Evaluation of academic and research achievements and rating of candidates at Faculty's / Institute's Commission of Recruitment and Performance Evaluation. In evaluation of the applicant to the position of a professor or lead researcher, one member of the Commission has to be a foreign expert.
   3. Final approval of applicants by University Recruitment Commission.

   University Recruitment Commission also resolves disputes related with the activity of the Commission of Recruitment and Performance Evaluation of core academic units, determines final evaluation results based on material presented from units and submits conclusions to the Rector. An open-ended employment contract is concluded with selected candidates.

3. Comment regarding 46th Article. We would like to draw the attention that the fourteen faculties at Vilnius University cover all fields of studies with the exception of art while 23 academic units are involved in research activities.

<div align="center">Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras</div>

4. Comments regarding 60th Article. We would like to draw the attention that for the First cycle students' practical training course is a compulsory (integral) course of the study program, whereas for the second cycle students (depending on the study program) practical training can be integrated into study program or it may be not. Moreover, It would be accurately to use: „did not meet the requirements of the study program for the practical training", instead of: „was illegal".

5. Clarification regarding Commendable features of Vilnius University No. 6 The commitment to building up a quality culture on the part of the leadership and many University members and the dedication and enthusiasm of the Quality division employees and faculty quality coordinators.