

APPROVED
by resolution No. 151-05 of 30 September 2021
by the Senate of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences

STUDY QUALITY GUIDE OF THE LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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INTRODUCTION

The study quality guide (hereinafter - the Guide) is the main document of the internal study quality assurance system of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (hereinafter - LSMU, the University).

The purpose of **the study quality guide** – to foster the implementation and development of a quality culture, identifying the main processes, structure, and mechanisms to ensure the quality of studies and to achieve external quality assessment and recognition of the University in the international ranking systems of higher education institutions of the world.

The guide is intended for members of the University community, and all interested parties, with the aim of enabling each member to take responsibility for quality assurance and improvement by developing a quality culture and responding to specific needs aligned with the University's mission, vision and strategic objectives.

The **first part** of the guide presents the University's vision and mission, development directions, study quality assurance policy, names the main internal documents guaranteeing the quality assurance processes, introducing the essential principles of quality culture of education. The **second part** describes the internal study quality assurance system, distinguishes the main areas of study quality – high quality study programmes, effective study process, continuous improvement of lecturers' qualifications and ensuring study resources, defining the criteria and indicators for each of them. A survey model for feedback from different stakeholders is also provided. The **third part** of the document presents the processes of external quality assessment, which include the assessment and accreditation of both the University's activities and study areas, which are carried out by external assessment agencies. In order to achieve international recognition and visibility of the University in the international space, the **fourth part** lists the globally recognised and most popular ranking systems.

The guide describes the quality assurance system of the University's studies, focused on ten priority areas of activity according to [*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*](#) :

1. Quality Assurance Policy.
2. Development and approval of study programmes.
3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.
4. Admission of students, progress of studies, recognition and issuing of diplomas.
5. Lecturers.
6. Study resources and support for students.
7. Information management.
8. Publication of information.
9. Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programmes.
10. Periodic external quality assurance.

1. LSMU STUDIES QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

1.1. Vision, mission and strategy of LSMU

The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences was founded in 2010, after the merger of the Kaunas Medical University and the Lithuanian Veterinary Academy. Currently, LSMU is one of the largest universities in Lithuania that nurtures the traditions of European life sciences – not only developing

and passing on to future generations the classical values of health-protecting professions, intellectual and professional behaviour attitudes, but also open to scientific and practical innovations, discussions and opinions.

VISION – A leading European university of health sciences for the prosperity of the society.

MISSION – to create, accumulate, systematise, and disseminate scientific knowledge, the latest achievements of science and studies, to teach and develop a creative, honest, proactive, educated, healthy, independent, and entrepreneurial personality, to foster democracy and well-being, to develop a healthy and educated society. The exceptional role of LSMU in this education process is the pursuit of a healthy society that guarantees social and economic progress of the country, the civilisational identity of Lithuania, creation of the country's and the world's culture and traditions, their preservation and development. Ensuring animal health and welfare is an integral part of this aspiration.

This University mission is based on **values** that are inseparable from **respect for life**:

- **Academicity** – creativity, innovativeness, creative and scientific freedom.
- **Community** – collegiality, collectivity and mutual respect, service to society and citizenship.
- **Openness** – diversity of opinions, beliefs, religious and cultural diversity, internationality and equal opportunities for all.
- **Justice** – responsibility, honesty, principles, solidarity, freedom.
- **Professionalism** – the highest competence of a specialist for the benefit of the person, society and animals.

2017-2021 [strategic development guidelines](#) of the university foresee five strategic **development directions, objectives and indicators of the impact of objectives**.

1.2. Study Quality Assurance

QUALITY OF STUDIES at the University – the result of mutual interaction between lecturers, students and the learning environment, where the content of study programmes, learning opportunities and resources meet the goals set by the University's mission.

The study quality assurance system is based on the strategic documents of the University – [Statute](#) of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, 2017-2021 [strategic development guidelines](#), which define the principles of quality assurance and formulated indicators.

The following documents define the internal study quality assurance system

- [Regulations of Studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) ;
- [Regulation of residency studies of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) ;
- [Study regulations of doctorate studies of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) ;
- [Regulations of study quality assurance at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) ;
- [Regulations of the Study Programme Committee of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#);

- [Procedure for creating, improving and managing study programs of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) ;
- [Organisation procedure for improving the quality of studies' feedback of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#).

Formalised study quality monitoring at the University began in 1998, when a coordinated survey of students' opinions was conducted for the first time in the faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy.

In 2003, at the Kaunas Medical University, the **Study Quality Assessment Commission was formed from the Study Centre, vice-deans delegated by the deans of the faculties and members of the Student Representation**, which was headed by the vice-rector for studies. The commission's functions were to organise student surveys about studied study subjects, daily employment, the ethics of the study environment, and to summarise and evaluate the collected data. By 2006/2007, it was achieved that all studied study subjects were evaluated at least once. In 2012, after the senate approved the provisions of Study Quality Assurance at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, the **Study Quality Assessment Commission** became the **Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance** , and its areas of competence and activities expanded.

The following processes respond to the development of the study quality assurance system at the University:

- Since 2001, the University has been implementing study quality assessment principles based on inter-institutional cooperation with University of Ghent.
- In 2003, the first system for evaluating the quality of studies was created – studies of students' opinions and the ethics of the study environment were begun.
- In 2003, the procedure for evaluating the quality of studies was approved by the Rectorate.
- In 2009, the assessment of the quality of studies in the electronic environment was begun.
- Since 2012, the quality assurance system has been improved and expanded: the university approved the provisions for ensuring study quality monitoring at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, which correspond to the spirit of European Higher Education, and expanded the functions of the former Study Quality Commission.
- In 2020, new regulations on the quality assurance of LSMU studies were approved, and the functions of the Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance were adjusted.

The following main processes help ensure a high level of study quality at the University:

- **Involvement of students and social partners in decision-making.** *Student representatives* participate in all institutions dealing with study issues, from the highest governing bodies of the University (University Council, Senate, Faculty Councils) to committees and working groups. *External social partners* help to ensure that the knowledge and abilities provided in study programmes meet modern requirements – they participate in evaluating the activities of study programme committees, faculty councils, and student achievements.
- **Collection and analysis of relevant information to assess the quality of studies** . Various quantitative and qualitative data are collected at the university, allowing to evaluate the study process and study quality – surveys of students, lecturers and graduates, statistical study information, discussions on selected study quality issues. The collected information is

analysed and evaluated by the university's Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance and management bodies: Rectorate, faculty councils, senate.

- **Providing feedback on study quality assessment and improvement to the academic community** . The results of the study quality assessment are presented not only to the University's management bodies, which can make decisions to improve quality, but also to the University's academic community: Quality assessments and actions taken in response to these assessments are published in the university's weekly newspaper and website. The public presentation of information promotes the academic community's interest in quality, a more responsible approach, and develops a quality culture.

Quality assurance of studies at the University is carried out in accordance with the following **regulations**:

1. The study quality assurance policy is being implemented.
2. Approval, monitoring and regular internal and external evaluation of study programmes and qualifications are carried out.
3. Assessment of students' study results and progress monitoring is carried out.
4. The improvement of lecturers' competences and the quality of teaching are ensured.
5. Supervision, assessment and development of study resources and support for students are carried out.
6. A system for collecting information about studies (study programmes, study subjects, study results, lecturers' competence, study quality assessment results, students' opinions about studies) is ensured.
7. Public information is ensured.

Quality assurance is the responsibility of the University's academic self-government bodies, administration, departments that carry out study, research and experimental development activities. Quality assurance of studies is carried out through external and internal assessment of the quality of studies. The figure below shows at what level and how quality assessment takes place.

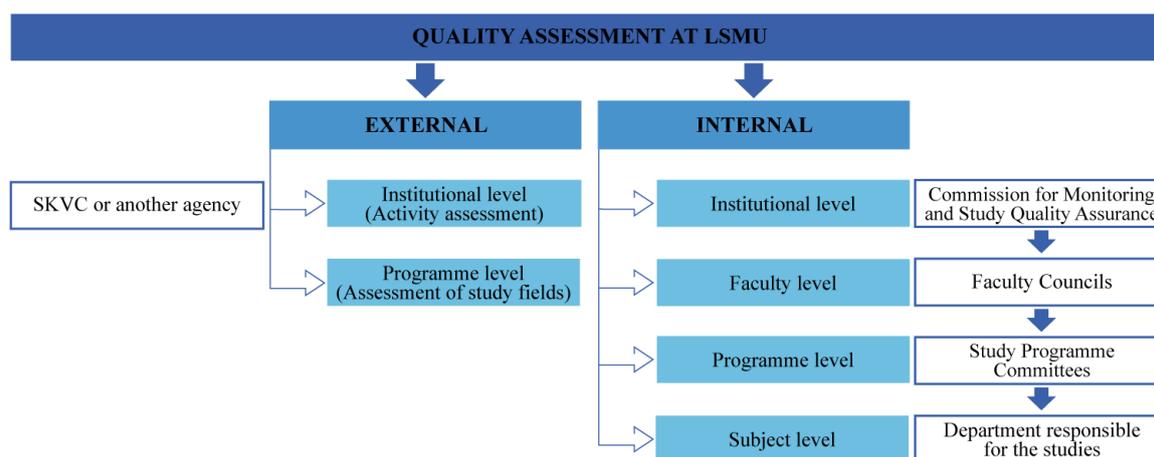


Figure 1. Quality assessment at LSMU

The internal study quality assurance policy is implemented and/or coordinated by:

- **University Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance** – coordinates the monitoring, assessment and improvement of University study quality.

The Commission's functions are as follows:

1. Organises the preparation and approval of study process quality assessment forms and the tools used for them.
 2. Coordinates the process of quality assurance of the study process in faculties and other departments, selects the areas to be evaluated, which determine the improvement of the quality of studies.
 3. Monitors, analyses and evaluates the results of improving the quality of the study process at all levels (faculty, programme, subject).
 4. When evaluating the results, if necessary, can invite heads of departments responsible for study subjects, deans of faculties, lecturers, students and other members of the academic community to discuss the results together and foresee possible ways to eliminate shortcomings.
 5. Taking into account the results of the assessment of the quality of the study process, it provides information, proposals regarding study programmes, quality of teaching and the execution, improvement and changes of the study process.
 6. The results of study quality monitoring, evaluation and improvement at the University are publicly announced on the University's website, intranet and in other ways, and may also publish other data needed to inform the public about studies.
 7. Makes a decision on the time and form of publication of the results of the quality assessment of the study process.
- The **University Study Centre** coordinates the implementation of first-, second-cycle and integrated studies, third-cycle studies are coordinated by – **the University Research Centre**, non-degree studies – the **University Postgraduate Studies Centre** , international students' studies – **the University International Relations and Studies Centre** ;
 - Faculties of the University participating in the university study process, **faculty councils** coordinate and supervise the quality of studies conducted at the faculty.
 - The **Study Programme Committees participate in the process of quality assurance and improvement of the first, second study cycles and integrated study programmes**, **Residency Committees** for residency studies, **Doctoral Committees** for doctoral studies.
 - **Departments conducting university studies** collect information, evaluate and improve the quality of studies of the subjects taught by the department.
 - **Lecturers** plan and implement subject/module studies, analyse and improve their competences.
 - **Students** participate in the process of improving the quality of studies by providing feedback on the quality of subjects/modules taught at the University and the study process.

The following LSMU study quality assurance scheme (Fig.2) is presented:

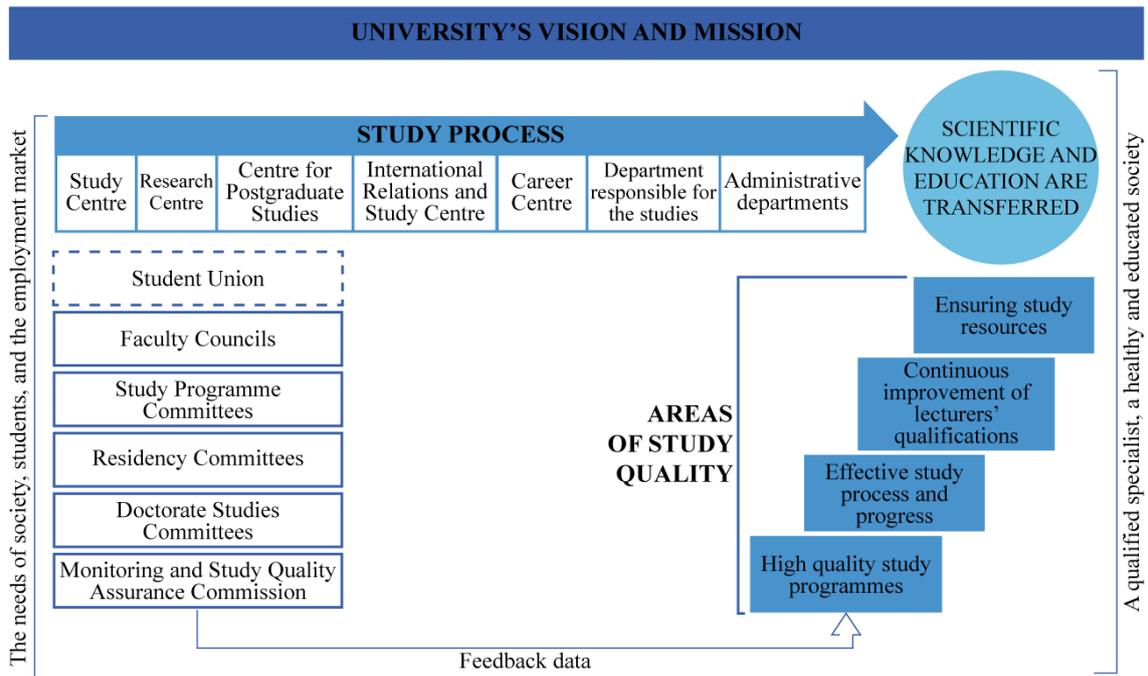


Figure 2. LSMU study quality assurance scheme

The quality of studies at the University is assessed according to the following areas, each of which has relevant evaluation criteria and indicators:

1. **High-quality study programmes**, which are characterised by the following criteria: meeting the expectations of the employment market and society, students, accreditation of study areas, internationality, awareness at the national and international levels, and constant monitoring of the quality of the programmes.
2. **Effective study process and progress**, which is reflected by the smooth admission and achievement assessment procedure, attractive study environment, support and effective system of information and career planning services.
3. **Continuous improvement of lecturers' qualifications**, enabling lecturers to improve their educational competences, assessing their involvement in scientific activities and research, participation in project activities.
4. **Ensuring study resources**, including both human resource management, the sufficiency and quality of material resources, and the availability and suitability of methodological resources.

The following figure shows the quality areas of LSMU studies and the criteria for quality improvement at the University. A detailed list of indicators is provided in [ANNEX 1](#).

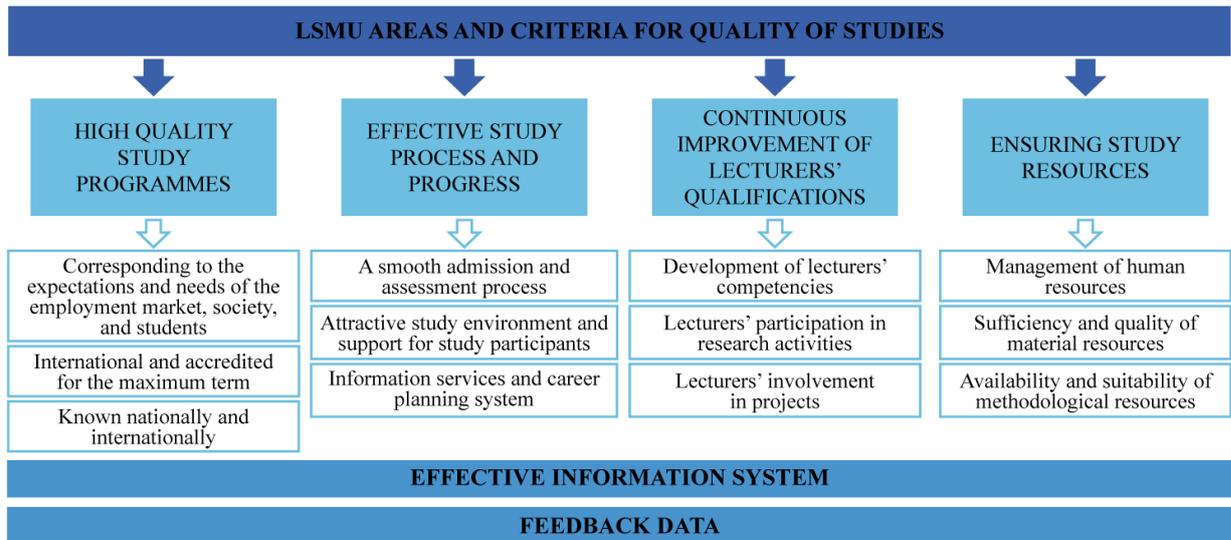


Figure 3. LSMU areas and criteria for quality of studies

1.3. Cultivation of quality culture

In order to create an effective study quality assurance system and procedures, the role of the University community in the quality improvement process becomes extremely significant. Every member of the community is a quality culture nurturer, because in one way or another they are responsible for the implementation of studies at the levels of the taught module/subject, department, faculty, University. EUA (2006) provides the following model of quality culture.

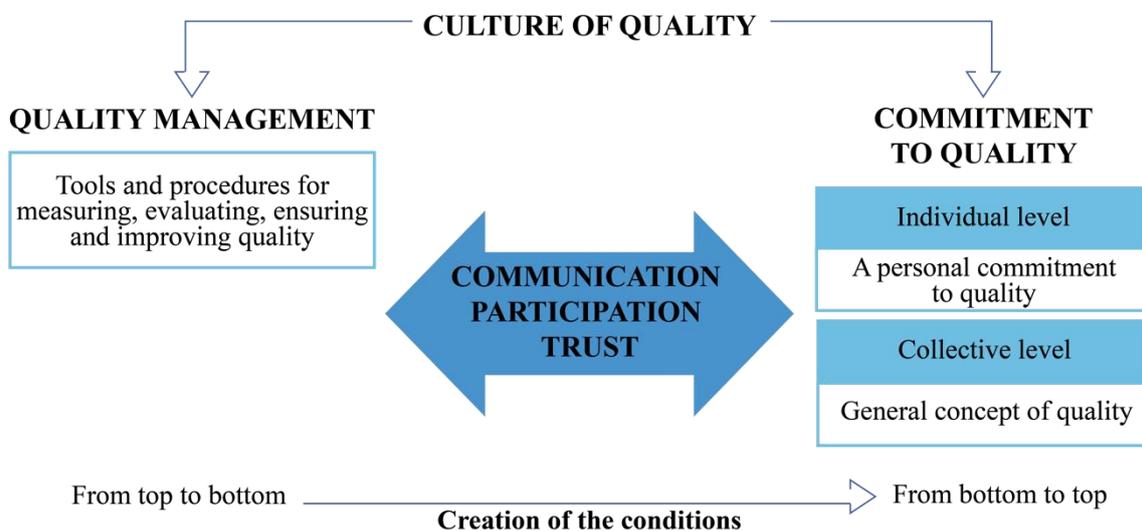


Figure 4. Culture of quality (EUA, 2016)

The quality culture in the institution includes:

- A transparent and active commitment to ensure quality at all levels.
- Readiness to participate in critical self-evaluation.
- Clear internal regulatory guidelines and procedures.
- Clear responsibilities for quality assessment and control.

- The need to collect feedback from both internal and external stakeholders.
- Agreement to identify and disseminate good practice.
- Rapid appropriate and sensitive management in response to problems based on objective information.

Fostering a culture of quality is a strategic goal of the University.

The creation of a **quality** culture is possible only by implementing an open approach to the formation of quality and mutual relations and the principles of effective leadership, developing a harmonious community and ensuring human resources management, leadership, quality implementation, an approach to change in the University, quality assessment of the institution, orientation to the user, decision-making, strategic planning.

The concept of quality as change and exchange in higher education is associated with a change in condition, transformation. The conscious awareness and recognition of the need to change is inseparable from the conscious awareness of the need to improve one's competence and performance and the commitment to continuous improvement.

2. CONTINUOUS QUALITY CONTROL AND IMPROVEMENT OF STUDIES

2.1. Preparation, monitoring and improvement of study programmes

The university conducts first, second and third cycle studies and continuous studies covering the first and second cycles (so-called integrated studies) as well as non-degree studies. Studies are carried out in permanent and integrated forms of studies.

In order to carry out the highest quality studies, which provide the individual with a higher university education based on scientific research that meets the modern level of knowledge and technology, and to constantly improve the content of study programmes and the organisation of execution, **study programme committees**, subordinate to the deans of the faculty, are formed to create, manage, evaluate and improve first- and second-cycle and integrated study programmes.

Objectives of the Study Programme Committee:

1. Prepare the description of the intended study programmes.
2. To ensure the constant quality of the supervised study programme(s) in cooperation with the units conducting the studies, the faculty council, the dean's office, the Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance and other University units and the Student Representative Office.

The activities of the study programme committee are managed by **the chairperson of the committee**. The committee consists of at least 5 members. The composition of the committee includes:

- at least three lecturers from the departments conducting studies of the programme(s);
- one or more student representatives of the programme(s) delegated by the Student Representative Office;
- one or more representatives of the social partners.

The study programme committee's composition, operational goals and functions, work organisation, rights and duties are regulated by the regulations of the [Study Programme Committee](#).

The internal processes of preparation, monitoring and improvement of study programmes are defined by the Procedure for development, improvement and management of study programme of the Lithuanian University of Health Science (*Approved by resolution No. 21-12 of May 30 2012 by the Senate of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences*).

The internal **OBJECTIVE of study programme evaluation is to ensure the continuous quality of study programmes**. The figure presents the criteria and indicators of a quality study programme.

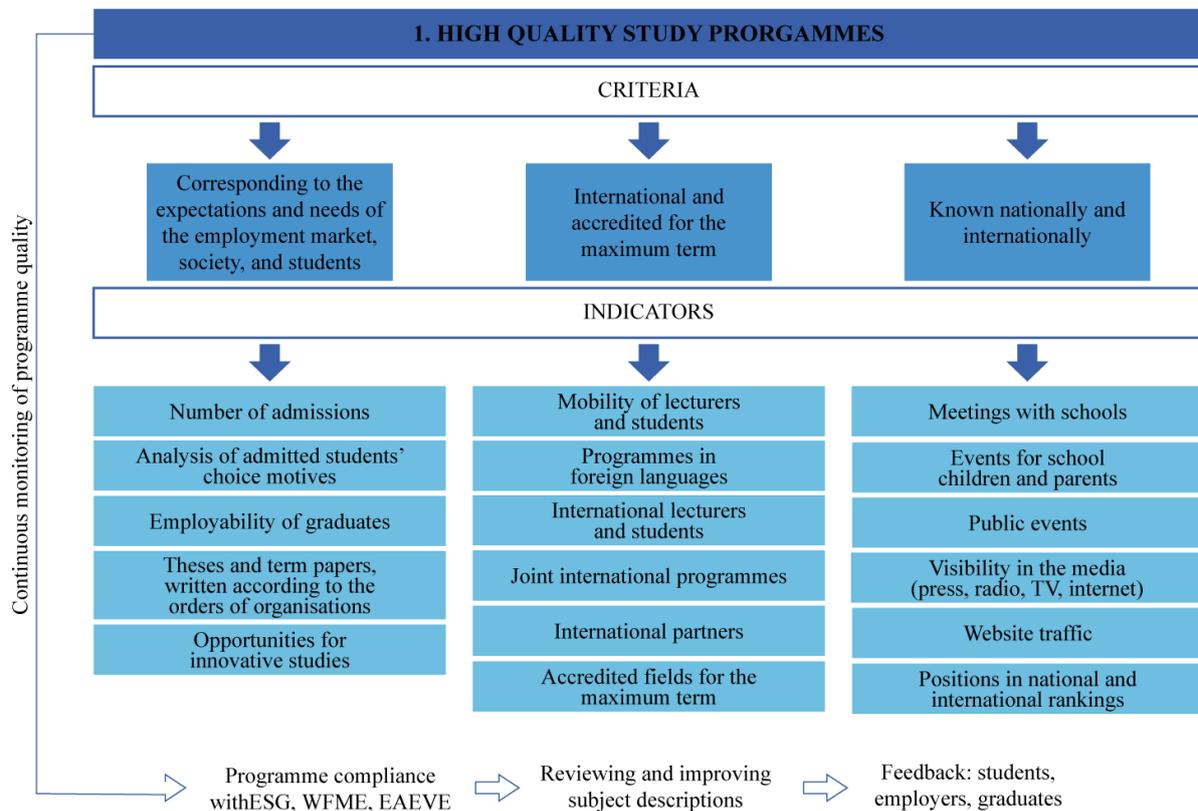


Figure 5. Criteria and indicators of a high-quality study programme

2.2. Organisation and support of the study process

[LSMU Study Centre](#) is a department of the University that plans and coordinates first- and second-cycle and integrated studies. The main functions of the Centre (*from [LSMU Study Centre regulations](#)*):

- to plan studies, coordinate their organisation and implementation;
- to record studies;
- to monitor and analyse studies;
- to provide methodological assistance;
- to organise and carry out the admission of students of the first, second cycle and integrated studies;
- to coordinate and implement the improvement of lecturers' educational competence;
- to coordinate and improve the internal quality assurance of studies;
- to coordinate, plan and implement the development of the University's distance studies administration and organisation.

Residency studies are organised and coordinated by the [Centre for Postgraduate Studies](#) , and third-cycle (doctoral) studies by the [Research Centre](#). The [International Relation and Study Centre](#) is responsible for organising the studies of international students, the development of healthcare personnel from other countries, exchange programmes for lecturers, students and staff, cooperation with other higher education institutions, informing the community about the possibilities of financing international cooperation.

The Career Centre operating at the University maintains close relations with the University' graduates and social partners, expands career opportunities and develops students' career planning abilities and, in cooperation with employers, strives to match the students' competencies with the domestic market demand.

THE PURPOSE of evaluating the organisation of the study process is to ensure an effective and efficient study process.

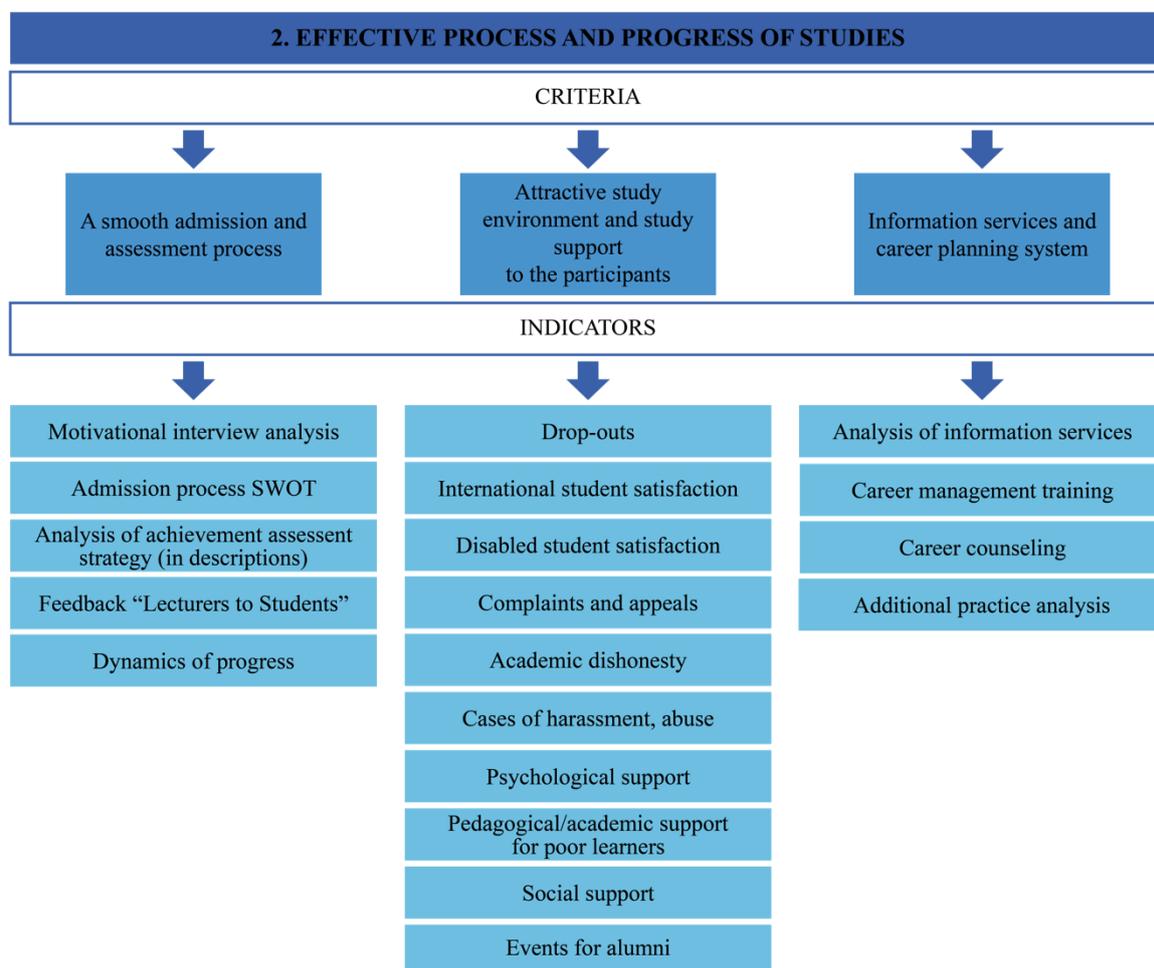


Figure 6. Criteria and indicators of effective process and progress of studies

2.3. System of improvement of lecturers' competences

The role of lecturers, as one of the main participants in the study process, is prominent in order to ensure that the main direct recipient – the student – remains satisfied with the quality of studies. The lecturer's knowledge and experience of the taught subject, the ability to convey the material,

the use of innovative methods and interaction with the student, both when providing feedback and receiving it, are important in the process of evaluating the quality of teaching.

By implementing LSMU's strategic development guidelines for 2017-2021 and by being guided by 28 May 2020 May LSMU senate resolution no. 134-04 which approved the procedure for determining the [qualification and attestation requirements for the positions of lecturers and researchers, announcing, organising and conducting tenders for the positions of teachers and research workers, as well as the certification of teachers and research workers](#), the improvement of the educational competence of lecturers is provided as one of the evaluation criteria for the certification of pedagogical staff. Continuous monitoring and improvement of the educational competence of teachers, which corresponds to the prevailing global trends, is carried out by the [Innovative Education Department](#) of the LSMU Study Centre, whose activities are defined by the regulations of the University Study Centre.

Ensuring the improvement of lecturers' educational competence coincides with the period of lecturer certification. The University provides the conditions for each lecturer to improve their educational competence within five years in the seminars held at the University free of charge in a volume not less than that determined by the qualification and certification requirements for the positions of lecturers and researchers. Improvement of educational competence can take place:

- when the lecturer participates in educational competence improvement courses, seminars, conferences organised by the University and other domestic and foreign universities;
- when the lecturer prepares reports on educational topics;
- when the lecturer prepares and conducts educational competence improvement seminars;
- when the lecturer is preparing a scientific article for a magazine in the field of education;
- when the lecturer participates in the activities of the University study process organisation structures;
- while the lecturer is studying in other higher education institutions for a master's or doctoral degree in educational sciences and other study programmes of a similar profile.

The programmes for improving the educational competence of lecturers are prepared and implemented by the Department of [Innovative Education](#) of the Study Centre, academic departments of the University and lecturers invited from outside. Programmes are prepared for face-to-face/contact, distance and mixed teaching/learning methods according to the approved non-formal education programme description form.

Non-formal education programmes are offered to lecturers, which provide an opportunity to develop both educational (learning challenge programme – I want and can learn innovatively) and innovative/general competencies (entrepreneurship, leadership, scientific and professional competencies).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of attention was paid to improving the quality of distance learning. On 17 June 2021, LSMU senate resolution no. 150-10 approved the [Description of the procedure for the primary self-analysis of the quality of distance studies subject \(module\), asynchronous lectures and \(a\)synchronous seminars](#) . This micro-level self-analysis encourages the lecturer to reflect on which aspects of the lecture and/or seminar should be improved in order to achieve deep student learning, engagement in studies and maximum progress of each student.

THE PURPOSE of lecturer qualification assessment – to ensure quality lecturing, assessing not only the quality of lecturing, but also the involvement of lecturers in scientific activities/research and projects.

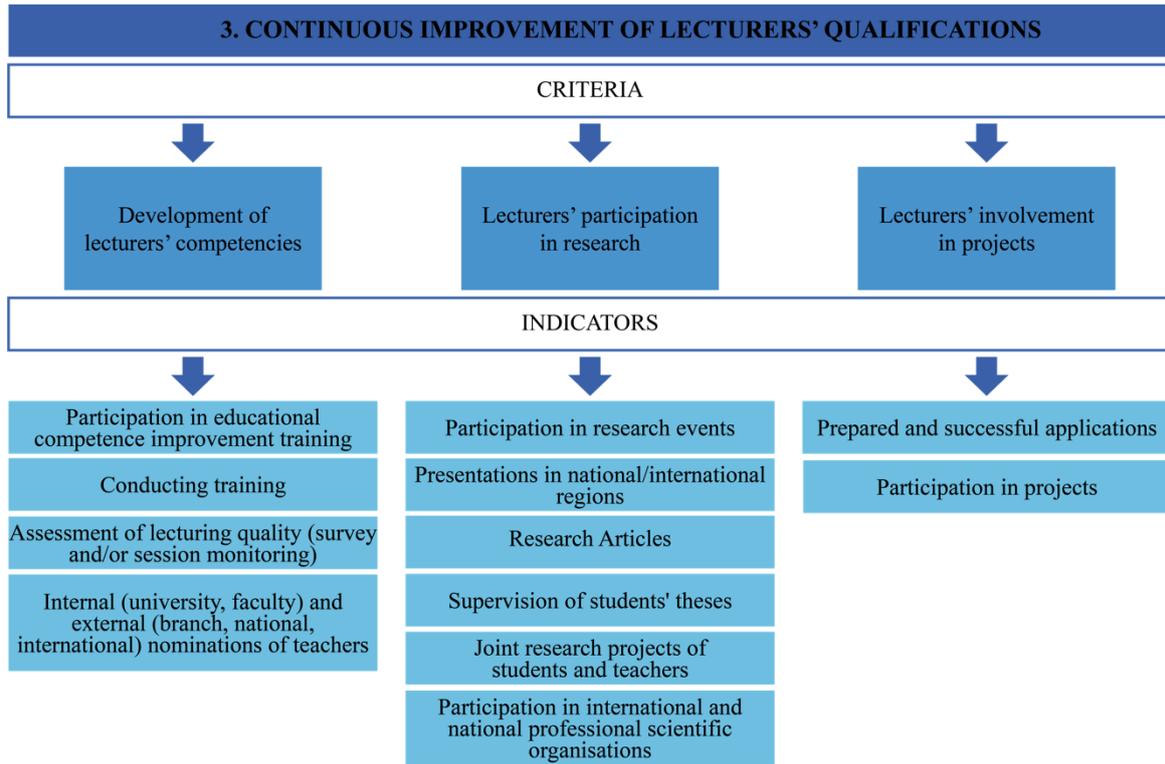


Figure 7. Criteria and indicators of continuous improvement of lecturers' qualifications

2.4. Study resources

The university ensures that the resources required for the study of each study programme are adequate and sufficient. These resources can be both human and material, methodological. The figure presents the criteria and indicators for the evaluation of study resources.

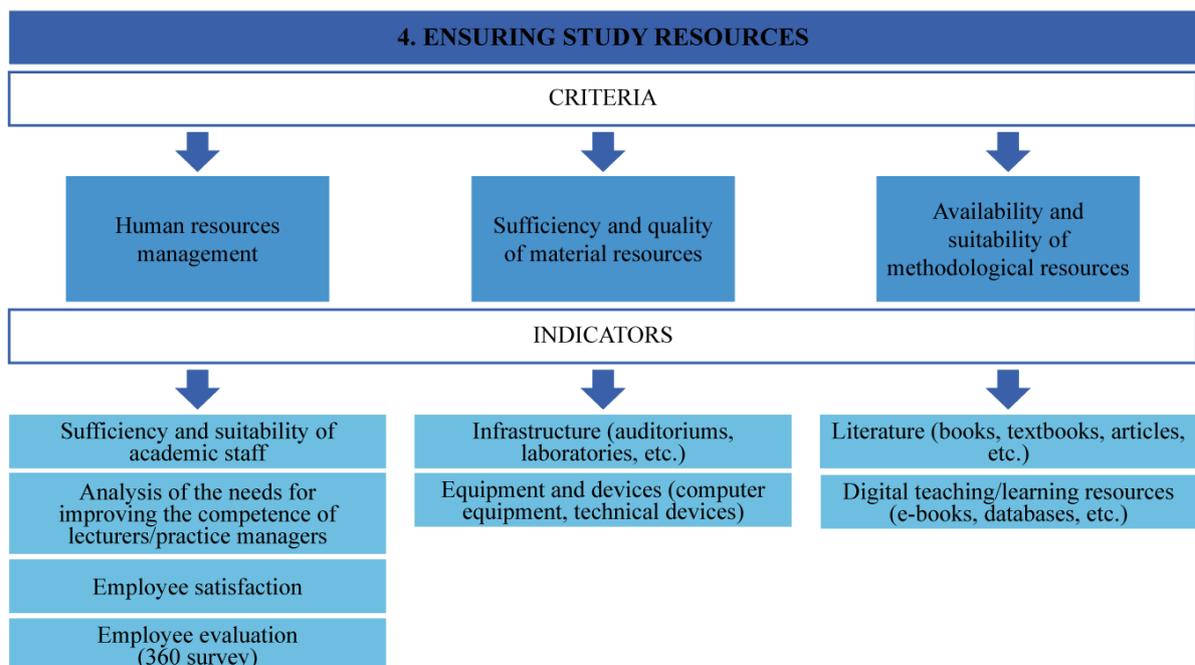


Figure 8. Criteria and indicators of ensuring study resources

2.5. Stakeholder feedback / survey delivery model

Stakeholders of the University can be individuals, groups or organisations that influence the University's activities and quality assurance of studies. The following interested parties can be distinguished: students, graduates, employers and business entities, teachers, research workers, administrative workers, social partners, state institutions and other institutions, society. Each group's needs, expectations, interests are important, and feedback becomes one of the most appropriate ways/tools to find out. The basis of the studies is the implemented study programmes, students, teachers, employers are interested in their results, the wider context is the society, the progress of which will be contributed by the graduates of higher education institutions. In this study delivery process, the interaction of stakeholders is depicted as follows:

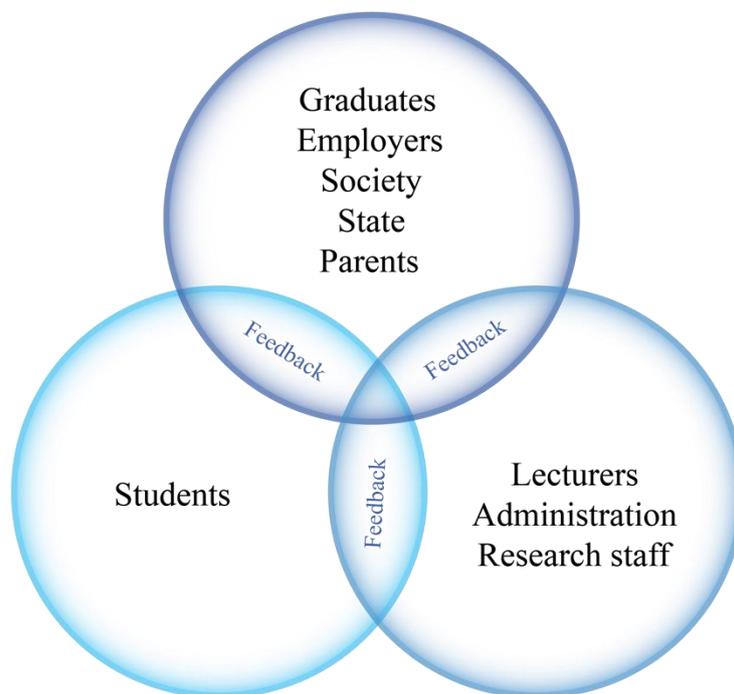


Figure 9. The interaction of stakeholders

The following sequence of actions is followed when organising feedback surveys and developing instruments related to the collection of information about the quality of studies.

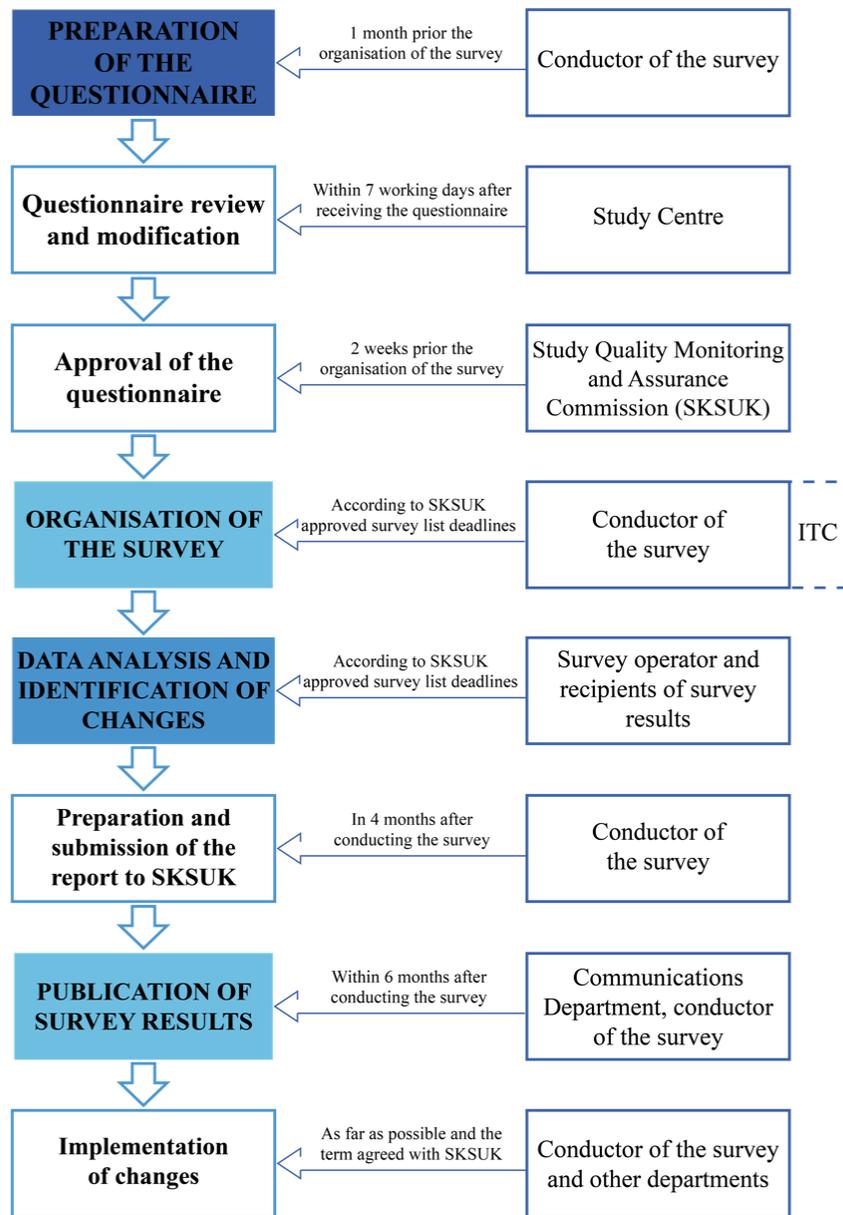


Figure 10. Stages of organization of study quality survey instrument

FEEDBACK SURVEYS

The following surveys are approved/recommended by the **Commission for Monitoring and Study Quality Assurance** and are implemented/planned to be implemented at the university:

STUDENTS' SURVEYS:

1. [*Survey of modules/subjects and teaching quality \("Quality thermometer"\).*](#)
2. [*Study programme quality survey.*](#)
3. [*Study practice quality survey.*](#)
4. [*Final thesis preparation and defence survey.*](#)

5. [*A survey to identify the reasons for dropping out of studies.*](#)
6. [*Survey of the quality of doctoral studies.*](#)
7. [*Survey of international students' adaptation and satisfaction with studies.*](#)
8. [*Residency study quality survey.*](#)
9. [*A survey of the quality of clinical medical practice.*](#)
10. [*Additional Practice Evaluation Survey.*](#)
11. [*Study programme selection motives survey.*](#)

ALUMNI SURVEYS:

1. [*Survey of graduates' preparation for the employment market and determination of career opportunities .*](#)

LECTURERS SURVEYS:

1. [*Study process and the demand for competence development survey.*](#)

STAFF SURVEYS:

1. [*Surveys of employee satisfaction with the working environment and conditions.*](#)

EMPLOYER SURVEYS:

1. [*Survey of graduates' readiness for the employment market.*](#)

The surveys are organised and the data analysed and the results made public by the academic and non-academic departments of the University according to the nature of the surveys and the expected deadlines for the completion of the surveys, in accordance with the [*organisational procedure for improving the quality of feedback studies at LSMU .*](#)

Feedback information is collected not only through questionnaire surveys, but also during conversations, discussions, meetings, during the collection of proposals and feedback from the Student Representative Office and other organisations responding to students' needs, analysing publications in the press and research conducted by social partners.

2.6. Change implementation algorithm

In order to clearly name the processes of solving problems related to the quality of studies, the responsible structures, and when moving to the culture of initiating and implementing changes, the following **Study Quality Assurance Algorithm** has been prepared, which is applied to solving problems.

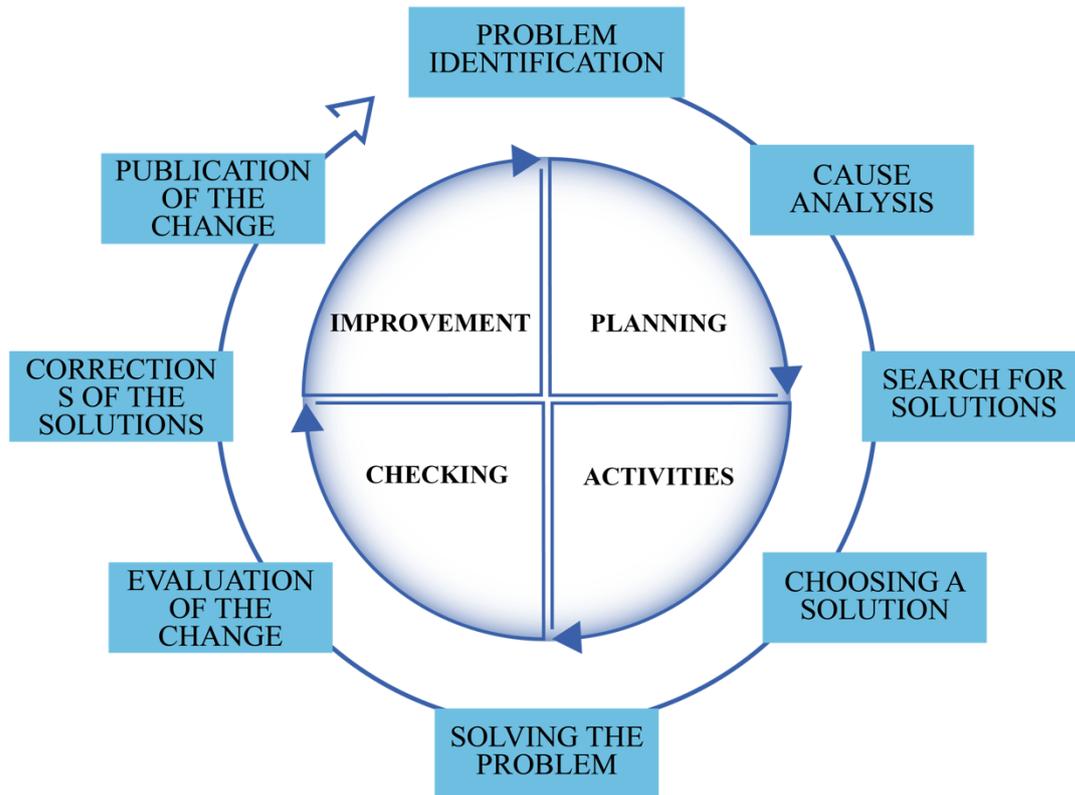


Figure 11. Study Quality Assurance Algorithm

The university's weekly newspaper *Ave Vita* informs the community about changes in the quality of studies and the implementation of innovations. The articles prepared by the members of the community discuss the applied elements of innovative education and provide students' opinions about the quality of studies.

The administration actively communicates with student organisations, e.g., in February 2020 the series of talks between the Study Centre and the Student Representative Office [*"Open for a cup of tea" has been launched.*](#) During these informal meetings, students are encouraged to be active, ask questions and find the best solutions together. After the meetings, feedback is provided to the community about resolutions and planned/implemented changes, with the help of the Student Representative.

3. EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

3.1. Evaluation and accreditation of study fields

Stages and terms of external evaluation of study fields:

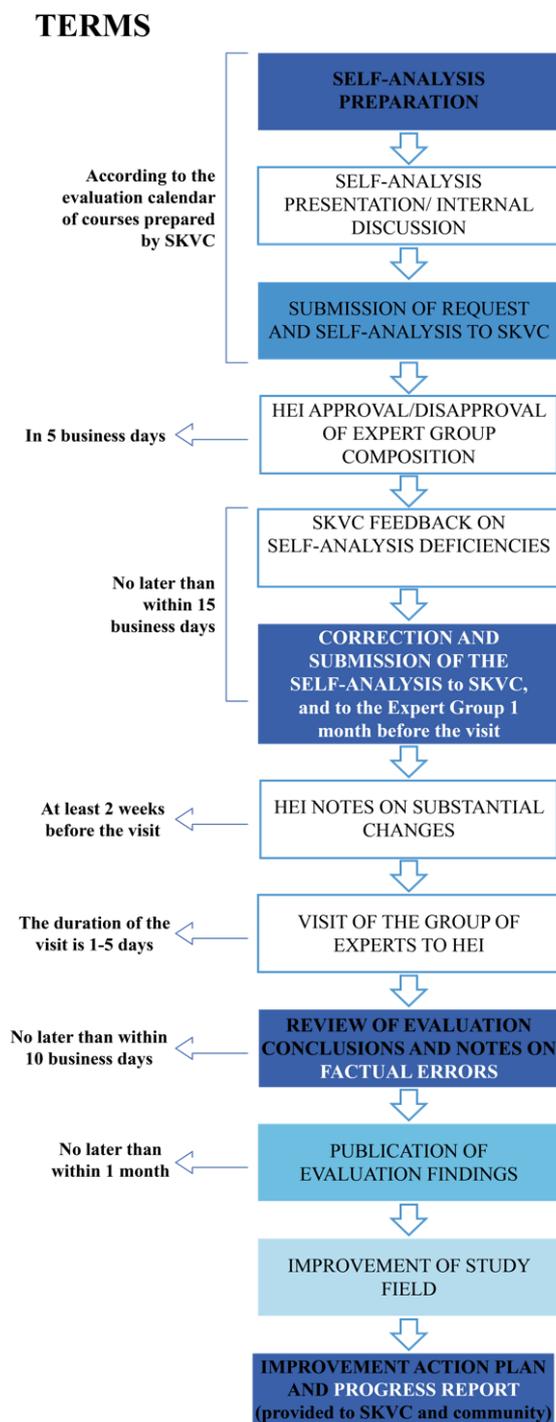


Figure 12. Stages and terms of external evaluation of study fields

On 17 July 2019 the order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania no. V-835 approved the new [description](#) of the procedure for external evaluation and accreditation of studies, evaluation areas and indicators, there was a transition from study

programmes to the evaluation of study areas (from 1 January 2020). Based on this document, external expert evaluation and accreditation of study areas is carried out at least every 7 years. At the same time, all studies of one field, carried out in all higher education institutions in Lithuania, are evaluated. Possible field evaluation solutions:

- 1) accreditation for **7 years** (*all areas rated at least 3 points*);
- 2) accreditation for **3 years** (*if at least one area received 2 points*);
- 3) non- **accreditation** (*if at least one area received 1 point or if at least one area received 2 points for the second time in a row*).

Annual monitoring of direction indicators is also carried out, which is carried out by SKVC according to established indicators (data collected in state registers and the Science and Studies Monitoring and Analysis Centre are also used).

From 2025 January 1 before starting the expert external evaluation of the ongoing study areas, the master's study fields are evaluated according to the threshold evaluation indicator.

The table presents the areas and indicators of the external evaluation of study fields.

Table 1. Areas and indicators of the external evaluation of study fields

Assessed area	Objectives	Indicators
1. The objectives, outcomes, and content of studies	<p>1.1. The field of study is based on the needs of the country's economy and society, as well as the institution's strategy.</p> <p>1.2. The studies of the field meet the requirements of legal acts, the structure, content, teaching/learning, and assessment methods of the programmes enable students to achieve the study goals and results.</p>	<p>1.1.1. Assessment of the compliance of the goals and study results of the field and degree programs with the needs of society and/or the employment market (does not apply to higher education institutions operating in exile).</p> <p>1.1.2. Assessment of the compliance of the goals and study results of major and degree programmes with the mission, operational goals, and strategy of the institution.</p> <p>1.2.1. Assessment of the compliance of the field of study and the level of study programmes with the requirements of legal acts.</p> <p>1.2.2. Assessment of the compatibility of study objectives, study results, training, and assessment methods of the field of study and the level of study programmes.</p> <p>1.2.3. Evaluation of the totality of subjects (modules) of the field of study and the level of study programmes, which ensure the consistent development of the student's competencies.</p> <p>1.2.4. Assessment of opportunities for students to individualise the structure of the field of the study programme, taking into account personal learning goals and expected study results.</p> <p>1.2.5. Assessment of the compliance of theses with the requirements of the field of study and the level of study programmes (does not apply in the case of intended study programmes).</p>
2. Connections between science	<p>2.1. The studies of the field integrate the latest scientific</p>	<p>2.1.1. Assessment of the adequacy of the level of scientific (artistic) activities carried out by the</p>

(art) and study activities	(art) and/or technological achievements and they create conditions for the development of students' abilities to carry out scientific (art) activities.	higher education institution in the scientific (artistic) direction related to the field of study. 2.1.2. Assessment of linking study content with the latest achievements in science, art, and technology. 2.1.3. Assessment of the establishment of conditions for students to engage in scientific (applied science, art) activities corresponding to the level of study (does not apply in the case of intended study programmes).
3. Admission and support for students	3.1. The selection and admission process of students is compatible with the study goals and study results of the field. 3.2. The field of study has an effective support system for students, enabling them to achieve maximum learning progress.	3.1.1. Evaluation of the appropriateness and publicity of the student selection and admission criteria and process. 3.1.2. Assessment of the procedure for the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, partial studies and previous non-formal and informal learning and its application. 3.2.1. Assessment of conditions for academic mobility of students (does not apply to intended study programmes). 3.2.2. Assessment of suitability, sufficiency and effectiveness of academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students of the field. 3.2.3. Assessment of the adequacy of information about studies and student counselling.
4. Studying, academic achievements and employment of graduates	4.1. The field studies prepare students for independent professional activities. 4.2. The field of study has an effective and transparent system for evaluating student achievements, monitoring progress, and ensuring academic integrity.	4.1.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that allows taking into account the needs of the students and enabling them to achieve the intended study results. 4.1.2. Assessment of the conditions ensuring study opportunities for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. 4.2.1. Assessment of the systematicity of the ongoing monitoring of student study progress (does not apply to intended study programmes). 4.2.2. Assessment of feedback provided to students during studies, which encourages self-evaluation of the results achieved and further planning of study progress (does not apply to intended study programmes). 4.2.3. Assessment of employment and career monitoring of graduates in the field of study (does not apply to intended study programmes). 4.2.4. Evaluation of the implementation of policies for ensuring academic honesty, tolerance, and non-discrimination. 4.2.5. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application for appeals, complaints regarding the study process and examination procedures in studies.
5. Lecturers	5.1. The academic staff of the field of study is suitable in order to ensure the	5.1.1. Assessment of the sufficiency of the number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of the lecturers

	<p>achievement of the study results of the field of study programmes.</p> <p>5.2. The teachers of the field of study are provided with conditions for improving their competences, and they are periodically evaluated</p>	<p>working in the institution in the study programme(s) of the field to achieve study results.</p> <p>5.2.1. Assessment of the conditions for ensuring the academic mobility of lecturers of major subjects (does not apply to the assessment of studies at a higher education institution operating in exile and intended study programmes).</p> <p>5.2.2. Assessment of the conditions for improving the competences of lecturers.</p>
6. Study material resources	<p>6.1. The physical, informational, and financial resources of the field of study are sufficient and allow to achieve the expected study results.</p>	<p>6.1.1. Assessment of the adequacy and sufficiency of the physical, informational, and financial resources of the field of study, allowing to ensure an effective learning process.</p> <p>6.1.2. Evaluation of the planning and updating of the resources required for conducting studies of the field.</p>
7. Study quality management and publicity	<p>7.1. The improvement of studies in the field is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all interested parties, as well as continuous monitoring and publicity.</p>	<p>7.1.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies.</p> <p>7.1.2. Evaluating the effectiveness of involving social stakeholders (students and other interested parties) in internal quality assurance.</p> <p>7.1.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information about studies, their assessment and improvement processes and results (does not apply to intended study programmes).</p> <p>7.1.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the students of the field (collected by the methods and means chosen by the Centre or the higher education institution) about the quality of studies in the higher education institution (does not apply in the case of intended study programmes).</p>

Director of the Study Quality Assessment Centre by order no. V-149 approved [Methodology for the external evaluation of study areas](#) on 31 December 2019 , which describes in detail what data and information are needed to describe each area and indicator.

3.2. Assessment and accreditation of university activity

The purpose of the external evaluation is to determine the quality of the University's activities, to help reveal its strengths and weaknesses, to provide recommendations for improving the quality of studies, to develop a culture of quality assurance of science and studies, and to publicly present conclusions on the quality of activities.

The external evaluation of the University's activities includes all areas of activity specified in the University's Statute and is based on the activities and the mission specified in the Statute, the international level of science and studies, the evaluation of study results and compliance with the established requirements, the fulfilment of the requirements of academic ethics and procedures, the effectiveness of the use of state funds and the compliance with the criteria of the requirements established by legal acts.

During the evaluation, the activities of the higher education institution are evaluated according to the following evaluation areas, based on the order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania no. V-152 approved on 19 December 2019 [Regarding the approval of the description of the external assessment and accreditation procedure, assessment areas and indicators of higher education institutions and branches of higher education institutions of foreign countries.](#)

1. Management.
2. Quality assurance.
3. Study and scientific (art) activities.
4. Impact on the development of regions and the entire country.

The areas and indicators of the external institutional evaluation organised by the Study Quality Assessment Centre (hereinafter - SKVC, the Centre) are presented in the table.

Table 2. Areas and indicators of the external external institutional evaluation

EVALUATED AREAS AND INDICATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION ACTIVITIES	
ASSESSED AREA	INDICATORS
1. Management	1.1. Compliance of the strategic activity plan of the higher education institution with the mission, ensuring its implementation 1.2. Effectiveness of higher education process management 1.3. Publicity of information about the activities of the higher education institution and the effectiveness of its management 1.4. Effectiveness of human resources management 1.5. Effectiveness of financial and material resource management
2. Quality Assurance	2.1. Functionality and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system
3. Study and scientific (art) activities	3.1. Level of scientific (artistic) activity, compatibility of studies and scientific (artistic) activity and compliance with strategic activity goals 3.2. Internationality of studies, science (art)
4. Impact on the development of regions and the entire country	4.1. Effectiveness of influence on the development of regions and the entire country 4.2. Ensuring conditions for lifelong learning

The external evaluation is carried out in the following stages:

1. submission of the self-analysis summary prepared by the higher school to the Centre;
2. creation of an expert group and examination of the self-analysis summary;
3. visit of the expert group to the higher school;
4. preparation and public announcement of external evaluation conclusions;
5. subsequent activities aimed at improving the activities of the higher education institution, taking into account the findings of the external evaluation.

The university's self-analysis is an integral part of the quality assurance system, which contributes to the proper functioning of this system.

The self-analysis summary must reveal the University's ability to analyse and critically evaluate its activities and foresee the perspective of its improvement. The statements presented in the self-assessment summary are supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence.

During the external evaluation of the higher education institution, reference is made to the self-analysis summary prepared by the higher education institution, the data obtained during the visit to the higher education institution, and the results of the comparative expert evaluation of research

and experimental development activities provided by the Centre and/or the results of the annual formal evaluation of research and experimental development and art activities, conducted studies the results of the evaluation of courses, other documents of the higher education institution, conclusions and recommendations of the previous external evaluation and data on the progress and results of the implementation of the recommendations, data on the activity of the higher education institution from state registers, other information on the activity of the higher educational institution (survey results, official statistical data, etc.) .

The University's external evaluation is carried out by the Study Quality Assessment Centre under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Lithuania at least once every 7 years.

The procedure for external evaluation is regulated by [the Law on Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the description of the procedure for external evaluation of higher education institutions, the methodology for evaluating the activities of higher education institutions](#) approved by the order of the director of the SKVC , other legal acts regulating the activities and evaluation of higher education institutions, and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*.

The university's research and study activities are constantly improved taking into account the results of self-analysis and external evaluation. The university provides measures to eliminate identified weaknesses and improve operations.

4. INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION

4.1. National and international university rankings

Evaluation of *Reitingai* magazine

The evaluation of the university on a national and international scale largely determines its popularity, uniqueness and attractiveness of choosing studies and education for future domestic or international students. Based on the University's strategic development guidelines for 2017-2021, the University's vision is to be among the top 701+ in the World University Ranking.

Every year, the magazine *Reitingai* carries out a national assessment of higher education institutions, which is carried out:

1. When ranking Universities in general according to the following criteria (May 2020 criteria and point weighting):

- *scientific, artistic and/or sports activities and staff achievements (25 points);*
- *added value created by alumni and employers' evaluations (25 points);*
- *students and studies (18 points);*
- *competition in the international study area (16 points);*
- *current and future academic staff (10 points);*
- *students' opinion (6 points).*

2. When ranking Universities according to the subject ranking of university study areas (December 2020 criteria and weighting of points):

1. Criteria for bachelor study courses:

- employers' opinion about alumni (30 points);
- the average entrance score of school graduates admitted to study (10 points);
- admitted top graduates (graduates who passed the state matriculation exams with 86-100 points) (15 points);
- the lowest score of school graduates admitted to study (15 points);
- alumni employability and salaries (20 points);
- student dropout (10 points).

Based to the subject ranking of university study areas, as of December 2020 LSMU according to the *Reitingai* magazine, leads in 8 fields of study.

2. Criteria for master's degree courses:

- employers' opinion about alumni (40 points);
- scientific knowledge (25 points);
- the number of state-funded doctoral positions (15 points);
- employability of graduates (5 points);
- wages received (5 points).
- Student dropout rate (10 points).

Studies in Medicine, Pharmacy, Odontology and Veterinary medicine are assessed slightly differently, as these studies are non-degree integrated studies. In the evaluation of these studies, part of the evaluation criteria for bachelor's study areas and part of the evaluation criteria for master's study areas are used.

World ranking of higher education institutions [QS World University Rankings assessment](#)

[QS World University Rankings](#) is the most widely known and one of the most reliable rankings of higher education institutions in the world. QS World University Rankings ranks universities according to **the following criteria** :

1. Reputation among academic partners (or Academic reputation, affects the final assessment 40%).
2. The ratio of students to lecturers (or Faculty students affects the final assessment 20%).
3. The ratio of citations to the number of academic staff (or Citations per faculty affects the final assessment 20%).
4. Reputation among employers (or Employer reputation affects the final assessment 10%).
5. Number of international academic staff (or international faculty affects the final assessment 5%).
6. Number of international students (or international students affects the final assessment 5%).

In order for an institution to be included in the overall QS assessment, **the following conditions must be met** :

- Carry out studies at several levels (bachelor's, master's studies).
- Pursue studies in at least two of the following five fields: Arts and Humanities (1), Engineering and Technology (2), Social Sciences (3), Natural Sciences (4), Medicine and Life Sciences (5).

The QS World University Rankings by Subject includes evaluation in 48 subjects. Subjects/areas are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Reputation among academic partners (or Academic reputation).
2. Reputation among employers (or Employer reputation).
3. Citation (data taken from the Scopus database, 5-year period) (or Research citation per paper).
4. H-index

In the QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2019, institutions are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Reputation among employers (or Employer Reputation, 30%).
2. Alumni achievements (or Alumni Outcomes, 25%).
3. Partnership with employers (or Partnerships with Employers, 25%).
4. Employer-student interaction (or Employer - Student Connections, 10%).
5. Employability of graduates (or Graduate Employment Rate, 10%).

Ranking of emerging universities in Europe and Central Asia (or. QS Regional Rankings EECA) criteria:

1. Reputation among employers (or Employer Reputation from Global Survey, 20 %).
2. Reputation among academic partners (or Academic Reputation, 30%).
3. The ratio of students to lecturers (or Faculty Student Ratio, 10%).
4. The ratio of citations to the number of academic staff (or Papers per Faculty from Scopus, 10%).
5. International Research Network Index (10%)
6. Accessibility and visibility of the university on the Internet (or Web Impact from Webometrics, 5%).
7. Citation (or Citations per Paper from Scopus, 5%).
8. Number of academic staff with a doctorate degree (or Proportion of Staff with PhD, 5%).
9. Number of international students (or Proportion of International Students, 2.5%).
10. Number of international academic staff (or Proportion of International Faculty, 2.5%).

EECA (Ranking of Universities in Emerging Europe and Central Asia) is based on the data provided to the QS WUR ranking, but only universities in Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia are ranked. When ranking universities, some criteria, based on the ranking methodology, are used from the QS World University rankings ranking criteria, and other criteria are also introduced that are not included in the general QS World University Rankings (for example, the university's accessibility and visibility on the Internet, the number of academic staff with PhDs and etc.).

In 2020 LSMU was ranked for the first time and ranked 115th in the QS Ranking of Emerging Universities in Europe and Central Asia. In the same year, LSMU entered the QS World University Rankings and was among the top 550 universities in the world for medical studies, and in 2021 improved its position in this ranking and rose to 401-450 place.

U-Multirank rating

This is the ranking intended for the assessment of the field of study. The purpose of the [U-Multirank](#) ranking is to allow prospective students to choose a university based on their personal interests and study programmes. Compared to other rankings such as world university ranking and others, this ranking is unique because the organisers of U-Multirank do not provide a final list with places and overall ratings. In the ranking, the activities of higher education institutions are analysed by

evaluating the indicators of the fields. They are grouped by nature into the following areas and graded on one of five grades: A, B, C, D, E (A for 'very good', E for 'poor').

1. Teaching and learning (study criteria).
2. Research.
3. Transfer of knowledge.
4. Internationality.
5. Involvement in the region (impact on the region).

In 2020, the highest - A - grade at LSMU is intended for evaluating 7 indicators in different settings, and this is two indicators more than in 2019. The evaluation analysis of Lithuanian universities according to this ranking criterion can be found in this [document](#).

[Ranking Web \(Webometrics\) academic ranking of world universities](#)

The Webometrics <http://www.webometrics.info/en> ranking is compiled every six months based on university activity and visibility indicators. The ranking is made up by the Cybermetrics Lab established by Spanish National Research Council. The purpose of the Webometrics ranking is to encourage institutions and researchers to provide information about their activities online and to promote open access initiatives.

In 2020, the Webometrics ranking was based on four criteria: *impact* , *presence* , *openness* and *excellence* . These indicators are determined by evaluating third-party links to university websites, the visibility of websites in search engines, the number and frequency of citations of works by university researchers published in open access scientific databases and influential scientific journals. Ratings evaluate the visibility of 30,000 global higher education institutions in the online space twice a year. In 2021 one of the criteria, namely *presence* , was abandoned.

In 2020 LSMU took third place in the overall ranking of Lithuanian universities. (<https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Lithuania%20>)

The ranking systems presented in the document will hopefully ensure the right direction and community involvement in maintaining the high positions of the University both in the country and internationally and will encourage the pursuit of maximum indicators by improving the quality of studies.
