



***LIETUVOS SVEIKATOS MOKSLŲ
UNIVERSITETO
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS***

***INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
LIETUVOS SVEIKATOS MOKSLŲ UNIVERSIETAS***

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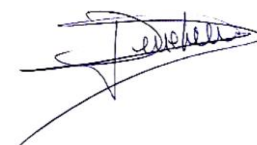
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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Lithuanian
University of Health Sciences.

Prof. dr. Joke Denekens



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.
2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.
3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#) and included the following members:
 - Prof. Dr. Joke Denekens, chairperson
 - Mr. Pieter-Jan Van de Velde, review secretary
 - Prof. Dr. Staffan Eden, academic member
 - Mr. Olev Kalda, academic member
 - Dr. Laimutis Paškevičius, social partner
 - Mr. Máté H. Huszár, student member
4. As a result of external review **Lithuanian University of Health Sciences** is given a **positive/negative evaluation**.
5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	4
QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	4
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	4

*5 points - **excellent** – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **8** examples of good practices were found; **12** recommendations were made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of **Lithuanian University of Health Sciences** (hereafter referred to as LSMU or the University) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education SKVC and was carried out in April 2023 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 March 2020, Order No V-32 (hereinafter – the Methodology).
8. According to the Procedure, the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.
9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a self-evaluation report (hereinafter – SER) with over 100 annexes, of which a substantial part contained information in Lithuanian, which made the interpretation for international experts sometimes challenging. The self-evaluation report contained a lot of relevant information and an honest SWOT analysis at the end of each section. In some cases, the analysis leading to weaknesses in the SWOT could have been better outlined in the text of the self-evaluation report. The Panel requested additional information, such as translation into English of the provided annexes, feedback reports on student surveys, overviews of the professional development of staff and several internal procedure documents.
10. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the University, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-post study field reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; State-budget allocations for research activities; information on violations of academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania.
11. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the University from April 26th to 28th, 2023, where it had meetings with internal and external stakeholders. Subsequently, the Panel met virtually to review and agree on conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.
12. In line with the Procedure, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management, Quality Assurance, Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review.

13. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.
14. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).
15. In line with the Methodology, the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to submit comments on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.
16. The Panel did not receive comments from Lithuanian Health Sciences University, as a result no changes were made to the report.
17. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalises it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (hereinafter – the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 January, 2020, order [No. V-5](#), SKVC takes one of the decisions:
- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
 - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

The higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre.

The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

18. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:
- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if the performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;
 - to **accredit for a period of three years** if the performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;
 - to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.
19. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on its website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the review of the higher education institution together with the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

20. The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (hereinafter – LSMU, the University) is a state higher education institution having the rights of a legal entity and operating as a public institution. It was established in 2010 by way of merger of Kaunas University of Medicine (hereinafter – KMU) and the Lithuanian Veterinary Academy (hereinafter – LVA). The origins of the University lie in the establishment of Higher Medical Courses in Kaunas in 1919. Those formed the basis for the Faculty of Medicine, with the Veterinary Department within its structure, after the establishment of the University of Lithuania in 1922. Today, LSMU is a unique higher education institution in Lithuania bringing together human and animal medicine and health.
21. LSMU has two main departments: the Academy of Medicine (hereinafter – the MA), which comprises five faculties (Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Odontology, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Public Health and Faculty of Nursing) and three research institutes (Institute of Endocrinology, Institute of Cardiology and Neuroscience Institute) and the Veterinary Academy (VA), which comprises two faculties (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Animal Science) and a research institute (Animal Science).
22. The University operates in Kaunas city (with Medical and Veterinary Academic Campuses), Kaunas district (VA Practical Training and Experimental Base), Baisogala, Radviliškis district (VA Institute of Animal Science, VA Practical Training and Experimental Base) and Palanga (Palanga Clinic of MA Neuroscience Institute).
23. In the academic year 2022–2023, LSMU offered 32 first-cycle, second-cycle and integrated study programmes in 6 study field groups (life, health, veterinary, social, physical, and agricultural sciences), 78 residency study programmes and 10 doctoral programmes in 10 research fields.
24. On 31 December 2022, the University totalled 7,709 students, 1,584 (21%) of whom were foreign students. In 2022, 1,578 students graduated.
25. On 31 December 2022, LSMU had 2,787 employees, including 1,272 teachers, 264 researchers and 1,251 other staff members (administration, doctors, veterinary doctors, nursing and other professionals, and support staff).
26. The University is a participant (founder, shareholder, or owner) in five public bodies:
 - Hospital of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences Kauno Klinikos (hereinafter – Kauno klinikos) – together with the Ministry of Health (since 1990);
 - LSMU Kaunas Hospital (hereinafter – Kaunas Hospital) – together with the Ministry of Health (since 2014);
 - LSMU Practical Training and Testing Centre (PMBC) (since 2009);
 - LSMU Baisogala Centre of Animal Husbandry (BAHC) (since 2016);
 - LSMU Gymnasium (since 2013), including a Primary School (since 2020).
27. The LSMU Emmanuel Levinas Centre was established in 2018 to organise and carry out social, cultural, and other diverse activities contributing to the progress of the University, the society, the region, and the state.
28. LSMU's performance was first evaluated by external experts on 18-20 March 2014, where LSMU received a positive evaluation. Based on the findings of the external evaluation, the Centre

for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – SKVC) accredited LSMU for a period of 6 years (the maximum possible period).

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;

1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;

1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

29. LSMU's mission is to create, accumulate, systematise, and disseminate scientific knowledge, the latest achievements in research and education, to teach and educate creative, honest, enterprising, educated, healthy, independent, and entrepreneurial personalities, to foster democracy and prosperity, and to nurture a healthy and well-educated society. The exclusive role of LSMU in this educational process is the pursuit of a healthy society, guaranteeing the social and economic progress of the country, the civilisational identity of Lithuania, and the creation, fostering and development of cultural traditions of the country and the world. The health and welfare of animals is an integral part of this aspiration. The mission of the University is based on the principles of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and the Statute of the University (hereinafter – the Statute), as well as on the University's fundamental values of respect for life, academics, sense of community, openness, fairness, and professionalism.
30. The University develops 5-yearly Strategic Development Guidelines (SDGs), which are translated into an implementation plan (Plan). The current SDG runs from 2022 to 2026 (SDG2026). The strategic directions in the SDG are based on the University's mission and vision and a context analysis.
31. While developing the SDG, the University took the following environmental factors at the European level into account: the increasing commercialisation of higher education; the increasing globalisation and internationalisation of education and research; the increasing use of information technology (IT) in operational processes (IT-intensive development and virtualisation); the growing strategic importance of internationalisation; and the increasing focus on rankings and the positioning of the institution in general.
32. Key national environmental factors that have been assessed and taken into account when defining the strategic development directions are the demographic crisis and emigration, leading

to a decreasing number of potential applicants; the free movement of human capital in Europe and worldwide, encouraging the introduction and improvement of human resource management and promotion systems; increasing national and international competition; the orientation towards the commercialisation of research results and innovation; insufficient funding for higher education and the declining demand for medical and health science specialists from the state, encouraging the search for alternative sources of funding; and the declining attractiveness of agricultural professions.

33. The SDG2021 had 5 strategic development directions:

1. Internationally competitive graduates;
2. Research-based health technologies and innovations;
3. An international university;
4. Healthy People and Healthy Animals;
5. A united, creative, and socially responsible University community.

Also, 5 prerequisites were defined for the implementation of these strategic directions of development:

1. Staff having the highest qualification;
2. IT systems and infrastructure that meet the needs of staff, students, and administration;
3. Efficiency and quality of solutions and processes;
4. Economic/financial sustainability;
5. Effective marketing and communication.

Altogether, 27 key performance indicators (KPIs) were identified for the achievement of the objectives, including 14 qualitative and 13 quantitative indicators.

34. The SDG2026 contains four strategic directions for the development of the University:

1. Research-based Health System and Sustainable Technologies;
2. Competitive Graduates and Academic Excellence;
3. Healthy People and Healthy Animals;
4. Sustainable University.

There are also 4 horizontal activities (Community, Collaboration, Infrastructure, Processes) and 4 general principles of action (Internationality, Creativity, Equality, Sustainability) that guide the implementation of all the strategic development directions and their goals and objectives. Altogether, 9 KPIs for achieving the objectives have been set, including 3 qualitative and 6 quantitative indicators.

35. The Panel analysed the strategic directions. It appreciates the continuity and coherence in the strategic planning to realise a research university, with a focus on internationalisation, with special attention to research-based education in the study programmes. The Panel was surprised to find out that the concept of Sustainable University only included some aspects (such as the use of renewable energy) of the sustainable development concept as it has been defined internationally since the publication of the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 Brundtland report 'Our Common Future'. The University may make its ambitions related to sustainable development more explicit by referring to the UN Sustainable Development Goals it wants to contribute to.

36. In the preparation of the SDGs and their Implementation Plans, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis has been conducted following a broad analysis of

external and internal factors, taking into consideration the suggestions of the University's community and social partners. The Panel considers that the SWOT analysis includes many of the relevant strengths and weaknesses of the University, such as insufficient international mobility and insufficient cooperation with business.

37. Taking into account the concept of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) within the framework of the Bologna Process and in line with the Communication from the Commission on the renewed EU agenda for higher education, the SDG2026 aims to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of LSMU higher education by creating a new quality and value of LSMU's studies, improving the efficiency of the administration of the study process, and by the mobility of students and teaching staff. The analysis of the ERA and EHEA documents has taken into consideration the orientation of the guidelines in the fields of education, research, society, economics, and other areas (Horizon Europe, Cohesion policy, Next Generation EU, etc.).
38. The SDG2026 focuses on innovativeness and other priorities, which are in line with Lithuania's progress strategy "Lithuania 2030", which sets out the state's development priorities and their implementation directions until 2030. The provisions of the National Progress Plan 2021-2030 (NPP) are also reflected in the SDG2026 through links with the 10 strategic objectives of the NPP to achieve progress in the social, economic, environmental and security areas, and, most importantly, breakthroughs in the sector of life sciences whose member the LSMU is.
39. An important ambition of the University is to improve its position in international rankings. The Panel found out that many of the performance indicators the University has set, are aligned with the requirements of international rankings, which is in line with the strategic ambitions of the University.
40. During the site visit, the Panel learned that the University has the ambition to become one of the leading universities in Eastern Europe. The Panel recognises the potential of the University to develop in this direction. The Panel, however, considers that to achieve such an ambitious goal, a more articulated strategy will be necessary. A path to achieve such ambition might be to make more radical choices in order to fully benefit from the specific features of the University. The Panel sees a lot of potential for the University in concentrating resources around and further specialisation in those areas which benefit most from the combined expertise in human and animal health.
41. Overall, the Panel considers that the SDG2026 contains relevant objectives and actions covering all aspects of the activities of the University, which are based on the analysis of the current situation (mainly through the analysis of the implementation of SDG2021). The actions in SDG2026 address most of the weaknesses which are mentioned in the self-assessment report and build on the current strengths of the University. However, no reference is made in the SDG2026 to how the lower students' satisfaction with the VA clinics will be addressed. The Panel considers that the planned actions will contribute to the incremental improvement of the quality of the University's activities. For all performance indicators and actions, the University has assigned responsibilities and resources. The Panel considers the number of performance indicators very high. The Panel recommends indicating more clearly what are the main priorities among the long list of performance indicators, in order to provide more strategic guidance to the Academic community. Such focus may be empowering and strengthening the connections between internal and external stakeholders.

42. The LSMU's SDGs and their implementation Plan are monitored in accordance with the current version of the Procedure for the development, approval, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and adjustment of LSMU's SDGs and their Implementation Plan. The procedure provides that the responsible persons indicated in the Plan provide the Rector with the information on the implementation of the SDG and the Plan as well as the results achieved in terms of monitoring indicators. Having achieved a monitoring indicator provided for in the Plan or a part thereof, executors declare it in the Monitoring System. The Monitoring System is available and maintained on the University's intranet and/or other information systems. This allows for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the SDG and, if necessary, adjustments thereto.
43. Heads of all structural units plan and report on unit activities on the basis of the SDGs and their implementation indicators. All faculties and research institutes have their strategic action plans approved by their Councils, and other structural units – by their direct superior.
44. The Panel recognises the effort of the University to monitor its extensive set of indicators, and to aggregate the indicators achieved within the individual structural units at the University level.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:

1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;

1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;

1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.

45. LSMU has collegial governing bodies – the Council (11 members), the Senate (49 members, 10 of whom are students), and a single-person governing body – the Rector, elected and appointed by the Council, as the Law on Higher Education and Research requires. The governing bodies are constituted in accordance with the principle of parity and representation of all the main areas of the University's activities.
46. The highest decision-making body at the University is the Council, which is elected for a five-year term. It consists of 11 members: one member appointed by the Student Representation (SR), five members (at least two from each of the two academies of the University) elected by representatives of the teaching and research staff of the University, five members selected by way of a public competition from candidates who are not staff or students of the University (four of whom are selected according to the procedure laid down by the Senate, and one selected by the SR according to the procedure established by the SR).
47. The Senate is the governing body of the University's academic affairs and is composed of 49 members. The term of the Senate is 5 years. The Rector and the Chancellors are ex officio members of the Senate, and ten members are appointed by the student representation. The elected members of the Senate (36) are staff members whose main activity is teaching, research and human or animal health care. The Senate is responsible for managing the University's academic affairs, approves the regulations of all the University's structural and functional units, elects the heads of all academic structural and functional units, approves the internal system of quality assurance and controls how it is implemented, in accordance with the University personnel selection and evaluation principles established by the Council, determines the qualification requirements for the faculty and academic staff, establishes the procedure of teaching and research staff certification

and competition for vacancies and follows up the Standing Committees of the Senate in its activities. The Senate's standing committees play an important role in the preparation of the Senate's work. Students participate in the work of each of those standing committees.

48. The Rector is the sole governing body of the University. The Rector is responsible for all aspects of the management and operating results of the University. The Rector is assisted by two Chancellors responsible for the MA and the VA, three Vice-Rectors responsible for education, research and clinical medicine, and a Director of Administration and Finance. The Rectorate is a collegial advisory body chaired by the Rector and composed of 37 members: the Chancellors of the Academies, the Vice-Rectors, the Director of Administration and Finance, the Deans, the Directors of the Research Institutes, two members delegated by the student representation, and the Heads of the other main structural units. Furthermore, the University has a total of 151 structural units and 7 functional units, which are which play a role in the implementation of education, research, and clinical practice and to meet social, cultural, administrative, and other needs.
49. Decisions are made in balancing the principles of collegiality and personal responsibility. Issues related to the planning, management, allocation of resources, implementation and quality assurance of study programmes and research activities of the University are discussed collegially, taking into account the complexity of the issue under consideration, after they have been discussed in units, at meetings of the Councils of Faculties and Research Institutes, the Rector's Office, the Senate's standing committees, the Senate, and the Council, as per the Statute of the University.
50. A Quality and Strategy Monitoring Department was set up in 2022 under the direct authority of the Rector. It is responsible for the quality management system, the preparation of the SDGs, the monitoring of their implementation, the coordination of the preparation of the annual activity plans of the University's units, the monitoring of their implementation, the timely identification of non-conformances with the expected results, and the proposal and/or initiation of respective corrective actions.
51. Although the University management has already taken initiatives to reduce the number of structural units and many processes have been revised to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the internal processes within the University, the Panel learned that the complexity of the internal structure and the high number of structural units and processes makes it difficult to guarantee the efficiency of the University management. Although the internal procedures provide a lot of information on the distribution of responsibilities, the Panel noticed that the distribution of responsibilities between the many different structural units is not always clear in practice, e.g. concerning internal quality assurance and lifelong learning.
52. Based on the results of internal audits and advisory activities, the Internal Audit Service is appointed to make recommendations on the strengthening of the University's internal control procedures, their development, operation, and improvement.
53. The University included in its SDG2026 a review and update of the risk assessment and management regulations in 2023, with plans to develop more detailed risk management plans to respond to the changing environment and make rational decisions in a timely manner. The plan is to also introduce performance measurement criteria in some processes in 2023. The Panel considers this a positive development.
54. Teaching, research and administrative staff represent the University's activities, including research, education, human and animal health care, and administration in the governing bodies of

the University. Pursuant to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, the University also has a Labour Council for specific HR-related issues.

55. Student representation is guaranteed in the decision-making bodies of the University. Student representatives participate in the activities of the University's institutions specified in the Statutes with voting right. Students account for at least 20% of members of the Council of each Faculty, at least 10% of members of the Council of each Research Institute and are members of the Study Programmes Committees (SPC). The University's Student Representation appoints student representatives in the governing bodies of the University and its units, as well as in advisory and dispute resolution structures. Students are also involved in temporary working groups at the University or Faculty level. Although the structural conditions for student participation are in place, the Panel learned that students do not always feel fully empowered to always come to meaningful participation, especially at the university level. E.g. students didn't feel they could contribute meaningfully in the preparation process of the self-assessment report. The Panel recommends the University not only to provide the Student Representation with the opportunities to participate in relevant decision-making bodies but also to make sure that they are fully enabled to take up their role effectively. The University may provide the Student Representation with the necessary resources to empower them through training and support and create an environment which empowers students to take up their role as student representative, e.g. by making sure that they may adapt their schedules to be able to prepare for and participate in relevant meetings. The Panel learned that separate structures exist for the representation of national and international students' voice. The Panel also learned that international students are not structurally represented in the University's decision-making bodies. Therefore, the Panel recommends the University to structurally involve international students, which represent over 20% of the student population.
56. Furthermore, the Panel learned that the input of graduates is gathered mainly through informal contacts. As graduates have experienced the education process and experience the needs of the labour market, the Panel considers that they could contribute more systematically to the management processes of the University. Taking into account the ambitions of the University to further increase its international status, it may increase its efforts to involve international graduates more, both to gather relevant feedback and to represent the University in their country of origin.
57. Representatives of the University's own hospitals, as well as other employers from the public and private sectors and representatives of professional associations are involved in the governance structures of the University. There are five social partners in the University's Council. The social partners are also involved in the Faculty Councils, and the Study Programme Committees as voting members.
58. Women made up the majority of the management team (52%) in 2018–2022. The Panel commends the University for its relatively gender-balanced governing bodies. Only for the highest decision-making body, the University's Council, there is still a lot of room for improvement, with 9 out of 11 members who are men.

1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;

1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.

59. The persons responsible for the implementation of the SDG (Chancellors, Vice-Rectors, Director of Administration and Director of Finance) provide the Rector with information on the status of the implementation of the SDG and the Implementation Plan and the results achieved according to the evaluation criteria on the basis of the information on the implementation of the indicators and the achievement of the results provided for in the Plan, which is collected in the Monitoring System. Based on the documents drawn up by the responsible persons, the Rector prepares and submits to the Senate, for consideration and approval by the Council, an annual report on the University's activities, annual estimates of revenue and expenditure and a report on the implementation of those estimates.
60. Heads of units regularly analyse and report on their activities. The Dean reports annually to the Faculty Council and the Rector's Office on the activities of the Faculty. The Director of the Research Institute presents to the Council of the Research Institute and to the Rector's Office the main scientific activities of the Research Institute and annual reports on the activities of the Research Institute. Other structural units, pursuant to the structure of the University, report to their direct manager according to subordination (field of activity).
61. LSMU conducts subjective and objective monitoring of graduates' employment and careers. Subjective career monitoring surveys are designed to find out how LSMU graduates are doing in the labour market, and how satisfied they are with their studies, work and career. Response rates are often low. Objective career monitoring is carried out by collecting data on employed graduates and their average salary – data thereon is obtained from the Education Management Information System (SVIS), state information systems, state, or departmental registers. Information is also collected from the National Education Agency and the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Information on international graduates' careers is not gathered in a systematic way.
62. Students' study results and progress are evaluated and monitored on a regular basis at several levels: by the teaching unit (on a regular basis), by the Study Programme Committees (twice per year), at annual meetings with the Dean, at Faculty Councils and at the Rector's Office.
63. Within 4 months of the end of the financial year, the Senate considers, and the Council approves the University's Annual Activity Report, which the Rector then presents to the community and publishes on the University's website, both in Lithuanian and in English. The LSMU's Annual Activity Report is the main internal mechanism for monitoring the achievement of goals and objectives. It includes detailed reporting on the achievements of the SDG2026 and its Implementation Plan. Based on this report, the data gathered are used to improve the performance of the University.
64. Decisions adopted by the University's Council and the Senate are published on the University's website in Lithuanian. A summary of the reports is published in the weekly newspaper of the University and Kauno Klinikos "Ave vita".
65. Furthermore, the University publishes sufficient information on its website, including its detailed annual report, including the achievement of its KPIs, meeting minutes of quality assurance

bodies and the conclusions and decisions of the external assessments by SKVC. The Panel noted that the website of the official student representation (LSMUSA), including their operational documents, is only available in Lithuanian language. The Panel recommends that the University offers support to LSMUSA to make their website and operational documents available in English language, too.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:

1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;

1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;

1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;

1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;

1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.

66. With the SDG2026 and the Implementation Plan making the Community one of the horizontal areas present in all the strategic development directions of LSMU, a number of measures directly aimed at attracting staff, strengthening their competencies and motivation, providing a clear career path, creating an attractive working and recreational environment and a number of other factors have been planned. There are documents approved by the Senate regulating human resource management, principles and procedures of staff development, management, evaluation and appraisal at the University. Staff development, management and qualification processes are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the approved Equal Opportunities Policy Implementation and Monitoring Programme.
67. The qualification requirements for academic staff have been set out in the job description for each position. Of the selection and recruitment of academic staff, most are subject to public competitions. In 2018-2022, more than 1,100 competitions and almost 400 attestation evaluations were conducted. Visiting teachers and researchers are not subject to the appointment procedure but must meet the minimum qualification and certification requirements, even if they are employed for a short period of time.
68. Non-academic staff include staff performing a variety of job functions: administration, specialists in various fields (doctors, veterinary doctors, nursing specialists, staff of administrative units), and service staff.
69. CVs sent by candidates are evaluated by the direct manager and a member of the Human Resources team, and candidates who meet the qualifications are invited for an interview. The candidate having the best professional, business, and personal qualities for the position is awarded an employment contract.
70. The University is facing challenges to attract highly qualified foreign staff. Although wages are increasing, they are not yet considered to be competitive enough in an international environment. Efforts to convince Lithuanian diaspora to come back to Lithuania have not been successful. The Panel recommends the University to benchmark with other institutions and develop an effective strategy to attract foreign staff, in order to be able to achieve the international ambitions set out in the SDG2026. The Panel is convinced that, as suggested above, an increased focus on some

priority areas in which the University is leading in research and innovation, may help to attract ambitious staff, as well as international research funding, which may allow to pay more competitive wages.

71. To assess the performance of staff for the previous calendar year, to identify weaknesses and strengths, to improve competencies and skills, qualifications, and abilities to perform their duties, to represent the University well and to ensure ethical performance, an Annual Staff Performance Assessment was held for the period 2019-2022 in accordance with the 360 Methodology. However, pursuant to the SDG2026, the plan is to review and update the assessment methodology in 2023 as the current methodology is considered by the University to be too burdensome. When developing a new tool, the Panel recommends making sure to systematically take into account student feedback in the staff performance assessment.
72. In 2018–2022, the University had an average of 1,237 teachers each year. They held an average of 780 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts. The number of professors and associate professors recruited by way of competition increased slightly in 2018–2022, while the number of assistant professors and lecturers remained similar over the period.
73. The number of permanent teachers (having at least 0.5 FTE and having worked for 3 years at the least) has increased each year over the period analysed. There were 571 teachers in 2018 and 608 teachers in 2022. This is due to a decrease in the number of guest lecturers, who are invited to participate in competitions for lecturer positions.
74. The number of researchers is mainly depending on the number of projects. In 2020–2021, as the number of ongoing projects increased, the number of researchers also increased to 278.
75. In 2018-2022, the University had an average of 1,306 other staff members.
76. Women account for the major share of the University's academic staff (>65%). The composition of the administrative staff is relatively balanced by gender.
77. The review Panel met motivated and competent staff, eager to realise the ambitions of the University and giving the best of themselves. Overall, the Panel considers that the University is well-staffed. The ratio of teachers to students at the University has further improved over the past years. There were 8.5 students per teacher in 2018 and 8.3 students per teacher in 2022.
78. LSMU had only 1.32% of international lectures in 2020, and aims to achieve 5% by 2026. The Panel discussed the efforts to achieve this goal with several stakeholder groups, but found out that the University has not found an effective strategy to achieve this goal, yet. The review panel recommends to benchmark with other universities with international ambitions from countries with relatively uncompetitive wages to learn which strategies may be effective to attract highly qualified foreign staff. The Panel is convinced that further specialisation in some areas which benefit from the combined expertise in human and animal health may be one way forward to attract more international staff.
79. The Panel considers that the qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the implementation of the SDG2026. The University benefits from a broad range of skilled staff in the areas of human and animal health. More than half (60–61%) of the academic staff of LSMU hold a PhD, while the majority of other staff holds a university degree or equivalent (60–66%). The expertise of the staff ranges from research and didactic skills to technical and clinical expertise, including in the affiliated hospitals and veterinary clinics. Nevertheless, the

Panel encourages the University to further invest in trans- and interdisciplinary collaboration between the different departments, research institutes and clinical practitioners, in order to benefit even more from the diverse available skills to develop the unique profile of the University.

80. Teachers are provided with extensive opportunities to develop their educational, scientific, and general competencies at the University's expense. The number of academic staff having engaged in competence development in 2018–2022 ranged from 486 to 708 teachers and from 47 to 82 research staff. Until 2019, trainings were organised and coordinated by the Teachers' Educational Excellence Unit of the Study Centre. Since then, the development of educational competencies of teachers has been coordinated by the Innovative Education Unit (IES). The Panel values positively that the educational competence development is coordinated by a central unit.
81. Furthermore, the Panel considers the competence framework for academic and non-academic staff and students which the IES has developed, as a good practice. The focus has been on the development of general competencies (e.g., teamwork, leadership, public communication), research (e.g., statistical analysis, academic ethics), training and learning (e.g., active learning methods, *Moodle* virtual environment tools, development of study programmes, interactive lectures, and seminars). The IES coordinates the distance learning process, provides methodological support to the units, participates in the development of new and updated study programmes, organises public lectures, education conferences (e.g., the annual Education Spring Conference since 2017) and meetings of teachers in other formats.
82. Overall, about 1/3 of staff engage in professional development annually. The Panel values positively that the University has allocated over 3 million euros for the development of staff competencies in 2018–2022. On average, the University spent between 319 and 779 euros per staff member per year on professional development. The Panel encourages the University to ensure that also less motivated teaching staff participates regularly in professional development activities.
83. Non-academic staff members are trained according to the general and specific competencies required, considering the performance evaluation of an individual staff member and the funds available in the unit's budget. LSMU also regularly initiates and conducts open-access free professional development activities (e.g., INFO days) and in 2022, it organised a training course for a group of managers for the first time (in 2022, priority was given to strategic planning and related topics). Non-academic staff may engage in various international mobility activities. Based on the positive evaluation of the variety of professional development opportunities by the staff, the Panel considers this offer to be sufficient.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:

1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;

1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;

1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;

1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.

84. The SDG2026 and the Plan2026 contain a number of measures directly aimed at ensuring the economic/financial sustainability of LSMU and at the renewal and development of material resources (including infrastructural resources) that meet the needs of LSMU staff and students.
85. The financial and material resources of the University are managed in accordance with the Public Sector Accounting and Financial Reporting Standards, the principles set out in the Law on Higher Education and the LSMU Statute, and other relevant legislation. The Procedures for the Management, Use and Disposal of LSMU Funds and Assets is the main internal legal act of LSMU, which includes the above principles and their application at LSMU. As far as the Panel could judge from the provided information, resources are managed efficiently, and the use of resources is rational. The Panel values this positively.
86. To rationalise the use of the funds allocated to education and research, they are distributed to the units which are responsible for the planning and management of the funds allocated to them. The head of each unit takes decisions on the use of the salary fund, and the Dean of the Faculty, the Director of the Institute or the head of other structural units take decisions on the use of goods and services related to the organisation of activities. The need for funds for the development of the infrastructure of faculties, research institutes and other units and for the purchase of goods and services beyond the financial capacity of the unit are considered and decided by the management of the University on a collective basis. The Council takes decisions on the use of funds to finance important facilities to guarantee the implementation of the University's strategic objectives. Before that, the Rector's Office, the Senate Panel, the Senate Commissions, and the Senate consider the decisions on the use of funds.
87. Acting on a Rector's proposal, the Council approves the estimates of revenue and expenditure and the reports on their implementation, while the Senate Panel, the Senate Commissions and the Senate discuss these documents before they are submitted to the Council. Detailed results of the University's financial activities are made public and form an integral part of the University's annual activity report. The reports are published on the University's website and submitted to the public Register of Legal Entities.
88. The University's operating income consists of the following:
1. Direct appropriations from the state budget: 39 million euros in 2022
 2. Revenue from services rendered: 35 million euros in 2022
 3. Project and other earmarked funds: 20 million euros in 2022
89. The University's operating income from all sources of funding at the end of 2022 was 94 million euros, which was 57,6 % more compared to 2018. Since 2018 onwards, LSMU has also been successfully raising more revenue from sources other than the state budget each year. Especially since 2020, revenue from other than state budget funds, including EU research funds, has accounted for more than 60% on average of the total share of LSMU's income. The Panel positively values the diversification of income, and the significant attraction of income from sources other than the state budget increases the economic/financial sustainability and self-reliance of LSMU. It encourages the University to further strengthen this approach in the coming years.
90. At the end of 2022, LSMU's operating expenses amounted to 86 million euros which is an increase of 47% compared to 2018.
1. Most of LSMU's expenses are related to organising, maintaining, and improving the study process, accounting for about 51.5% of the University's expenditure. Research

accounts for about 20% of the expenditure. The administration and servicing of the University's education, research, and other activities account for about 24% of the total expenditure of the University. The remainder is spent on animal health, health care, culture, and sports activities (about 4.5%).

2. Salary, social security, and social benefits dominate in the University's expenditure structure, accounting for 71% of total expenditure. Salary expenses have increased in all job categories of LSMU staff in 2018–2022, but the average salary increased more for research staff and other researchers (>70%) than for teaching (>40%) or other staff (<34%).
3. Goods, services, and other expenses (21% of total expenditure), as well as costs of acquisition of tangible and intangible assets (8%), account for another significant share of expenditure.

91. The University has significant material resources at its disposal, with more than 375 units of real estate (>227,000 square meters) and more than 90 units of land (>1,600 ha). This infrastructure is used for education, research, health, agriculture, administration, and other activities. Part of the infrastructure was invested in LSMU in 2022, with a view to rationalising and making more efficient use of the infrastructure, including removing infrastructure that does not meet modern requirements and replacing it with new infrastructure in accordance with legislation. The area of facilities adapted for education and research per LSMU student was increasing since 2018 and totalled >12 square meters per student in 2022. The Panel visited some of the learning infrastructure for medical students (i.e. library, simulation infrastructure and labs for practical training) and was impressed by the well-equipped simulation and practice rooms and the library. The concentration of teaching facilities and a hospital campus facilitates the interaction between teaching, research and clinical practice. The Panel encourages the University to further invest in material infrastructure to guarantee all students' infrastructure of such quality. The Panel also encourages the University to make sure that the material infrastructure encourages trans- and interdisciplinary among students from different fields of study.

92. **In summary**, LSMU has developed its SDG2026 and Implementation Plan 2026 based on a thorough analysis of the results of the SDG2021, also taking into account external context factors. The SDG2026 builds on the detected weaknesses and complies with the institution's published mission and vision. Those documents clearly reflect the ambition to gradually improve in all areas of LSMU's activities, resulting in a (too) high number of performance indicators. Transparent communication on a limited number of core priorities may inspire and connect internal and external stakeholders more. If the institution wants to achieve the ambition to become one of the best universities in Eastern Europe, which was referred to during the site visit as a goal, the Panel considers that a more disruptive strategy will be needed. Management processes are functioning well, resulting in detailed public reporting. Stakeholder involvement is in place, but the effectiveness may be further improved, especially considering foreign students and graduates. LSMU is well staffed, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, although additional efforts are needed to attract more international staff. The University has managed to attract substantial amounts of additional resources over the past years and invests a lot in new infrastructure, including simulation labs which are of top international standards.

93. **Judgment**: the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 points.

94. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends to indicate more clearly what are the main priorities among the long list of performance indicators.
- The Panel recommends the University to make sure that student representatives are fully enabled to take up their role effectively and to structurally involve international students, who represent over 20% of the student population.
- The Panel recommends to benchmark with other universities with international ambitions from countries with relatively uncompetitive wages to learn which strategies may be effective to attract highly qualified foreign staff.

95. **Good practice examples:**

- The Panel commends the University for implementing its competence framework for academic and non-academic staff and students.
- The Panel commends the University for its investments in simulation labs, which are considered to be among the international best practices in the field.

3.2. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system: 3

2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;

2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;

2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;

2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;

2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;

2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

96. The LSMU Quality Assurance Policy defines the framework and principles of quality assurance of operating results and is oriented towards the development of an institutional quality culture. This Policy has been implemented in application of a continuous improvement cycle model. The Policy is available on the University's website.

97. The procedures necessary for the functioning of the quality assurance system are defined in the Regulations of Study Quality Assurance at LSMU and integrated into the regulations and procedures describing individual activities. The provisions for quality assurance of the study process are described in the LSMU Study Quality Guide and the Regulations of Study. The scientific process is implemented in accordance with the Regulations of Research.

98. The Panel considers that the internal quality assurance system has gained maturity since the previous external review and that all core elements of the quality assurance system have been set up. Nevertheless, the Panel concurs with the University indicates in its self-evaluation report that the overall level of quality culture (perception of the procedural approach and the implementation of continuous improvement) at the activity level is not high, yet, and that it should be further improved, as indicated under paragraph 52.
99. The University indicates that its internal quality assurance approach is based on the provisions of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG2015). Overall, the Panel recognises that all elements of the ESG are taken into account in the activities and procedures of the University. Nevertheless, the Panel was surprised that the concept of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3) is only used to a limited extent in the University's documentation. In SDG2026 action 2.1.4 refers to the concept and refers to actions related to several aspects of students-centred learning such as creating possibilities for students with disabilities and the inclusion of inter-university optional study programmes and a diary of student's practical skills, but it does not refer to systematic implementation of such concept in all teaching practices at the university. Nor does the plan refer to student-centred assessment. This lack of an overarching didactic concept has been witnessed by the Panel in its meetings with teaching staff during the site visit. A common understanding of such a didactic concept is clearly missing; although the Panel did recognise learning practices which contain student-centred elements in several examples which were given by staff, students and graduates during the site visit.
100. The University applies three key principles to ensure that the effectiveness of quality assurance is sufficient:
- a. involving students and social partners in decision-making;
 - b. collecting, analysing, and making evidence-based decisions on information relevant to assessing the quality of processes and outcomes;
 - c. collecting feedback from the academic community and providing feedback on quality assurance and improvement to the academic community.
101. The planning, implementation, monitoring and periodic evaluation and improvement of the University's activities follow a continuous improvement cycle model. The University-wide improvement cycle is linked to the implementation of strategic management as detailed in the SDG, and each of the University's processes and activities has its own improvement cycle. The interaction between different improvement cycles has improved recently, but further efforts are needed to reduce fragmentation in the system.
102. The strategic objectives set out in the SDG initiate the improvement cycle. These objectives and the related performance indicators are set at the institutional level. Positive is that the University defined both satisfaction and performance-based indicators. As indicated above, the Panel considers the number of performance indicators to be very high, and lacking clear prioritisation, but they do provide detailed guidance for the academic community. The Panel values it positively that performance indicators are attributed to structural units, and in case several units contribute, performance indicators are set for the separate entities which contribute to the achievement of the performance indicators.

103. The University's Procedure for the Organisation of Feedback for the Improvement of the Quality of Studies regulates the procedures for the organisation, conduct, analysis, evaluation, and publicity of feedback from social partners (students, teachers, graduates, academic and administrative staff, employers, parents of students, NGOs, and other stakeholders). Overall, the Panel learned that the number of satisfaction surveys is high, while response rates for surveys are often low. The Panel recommends to make a thorough analysis of the current set of surveys, considering which surveys are essential for the internal quality assurance process, and subsequently develop a strategy to achieve better response rates. A crucial element in this analysis is to check whether students experience that they can provide all relevant feedback completely anonymously and safely without any risks of repercussion.
104. The achievement of the objectives is monitored and evaluated periodically. At the beginning of each calendar year, each impact indicator in the SDG Plan is monitored and the result is assessed. Achievements are recorded in the monitoring system of the Strategic Development Guidelines and their Implementation Plan and summarised in the University's annual activity reports. Having assessed the level of achievement of the performance indicators, decisions are made on how to proceed with the measures set out in the SDG Plan. At the end of the cycle, the entire strategic development period is evaluated, presenting the results thereof in the University's last annual activity report.
105. At the programme level, self-analyses are performed in the year preceding scheduled external evaluations. Internal institutional performance analyses are carried out annually and the results are published in performance reports. Once a year, each Study Programme Committee carries out an internal analysis of the programme and is responsible for the implementation of improvement measures.
106. The outcomes of satisfaction surveys, annual improvement plans and activity reports are communicated to students. However, the Panel observed substantial variance in the level of detail of the reports on how the University dealt with student feedback.
107. Stakeholders are directly involved in the drafting, development, and approval of procedural documents, and participate in all other management and decision-making processes at the University and the faculties, but, as indicated above, the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement may be further improved. The Panel learned that social partners are structurally involved in the decision-making bodies of the university, but that also a lot of valuable feedback is received through regular contacts with external stakeholders. The informal feedback gathered during such occasions, may be integrated more systematically into the internal quality assurance processes of the University.
108. The Rector of the University is responsible for the quality assurance of the University's performance. Responsibility for receiving and analysing feedback is assigned to the Study Quality Monitoring and Assurance Commission. The Commission is composed of representatives of the Faculties, the Research Centre, the Study Centre, the Student Affairs Office, the Postgraduate Study Centre, the International Relations and Study Centre, the Student Affairs Office and the Student Representation.
109. At the process level, the University sets quality-oriented objectives and measures for their implementation in the SDG implementation plan. As indicated above, a clearer prioritisation among the performance indicators in the SDG Implementation Plan may be helpful to provide

clear guidance to the academic community on University's key priorities. The University monitors the implementation of the SDG according to the set indicators, and adjusts the plan or activities as necessary. The University indicates in its self-evaluation report that the continuous improvement cycle as a quality assurance tool is systematically applied at the strategic planning and process level. However, its application needs to be improved.

110. The Panel positively values the ambition of the University to further improve quality in the study process, the University plans to develop and implement a system of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators, setting up a functional team of researchers for educational research and an international coordination group for R&D strategy in the research process, implementing a number of direct (and indirect process improvement measures.

111. The University offers a lot of programmes in which clinical practice is an essential part of the training. Most of the clinical practice is performed in associated institutions with which the University has structural collaborations, but there is also an increasing collaboration with a high number of regional hospitals, in order to implement the national legislation which requires that residency students also get to know the contact of regional hospitals. The quality management of the learning process in all those partner institutions, however, poses a substantial challenge to the University. The Panel learned that there is a generic ex-ante assessment of external partner institutions, as well as an obligatory survey for each rotation within residency programmes, but the Panel considers that there is room for improvement in order to close the quality assurance cycle for the clinical practice, especially in those institutions which are not structurally associated with the University.

112. The Panel considers the University's efforts to offers students access to financial, academic, and psychological support as a good practice. Additional support is available for socially vulnerable groups. Students can find information on the available support on the LSMU website. Both national and international students confirmed during the site visit that they receive effective support and that information is available in Lithuanian and English.

113. The University aims to ensure that all students receive the financial aid they are entitled to. Target groups are informed about the provision of financial aid through the publicity of ongoing financial aid activities. The University has designated responsible persons, and students can find their contact details on the LSMU website.

114. Since September 2021, students who agree to self-identify can submit documents confirming their special educational needs and an online application form for alternative learning and assessment methods. Nineteen students applied for special educational needs in 2021 and 20 students – in 2022.

115. The Student Affairs Office ensures equal opportunities and non-discrimination on the basis of disability for students enrolled, considering their needs and the University's capabilities, in cooperation with other units and commissions by area of activity. The University's buildings where activities are carried out have been adapted for people with special needs. New buildings are built according to the principle of universal design, while the renovated ones have been adapted to the needs of persons with special needs by means of lifts, ramps, staircases, call bells, etc. Equipment and furniture are being purchased to provide specialised workplaces for disabled members of the community, and infrastructure is being adapted.

116. The Career Centre provides career guidance, career counselling and career-monitoring, administration of additional internships, promotion of student entrepreneurship, and coordination of relations between the University, alumni, and external institutions. Every February, LSMU Career Days “Plan your future today” are organised for students to interact with the University’s social partners and future employers. Regular meetings are also held with social partners to discuss students’ internship and employment opportunities. Nevertheless, students and alumni indicated during the site visit that the communication of the Career Centre could be more effective.
117. The University has 9 dormitories, which can accommodate 1,714 students studying in various study programmes, accounting for 22.2% of the total number of students studying at LSMU.
118. LSMU students and staff can receive professional psychological support from the LSMU MA PHF, the Department of Psychology and the LSMU Family Medicine Clinic. Psychologist consultations are provided in Lithuanian or English, remotely or face-to-face. Students may attend psychological resilience group meetings. Although the University makes efforts to guarantee a safe space for students to ask for psychological support, the Panel learned that students from the Psychology Department sometimes do not feel sufficiently assured that they will not meet the staff who is also involved in teaching or practical training.
119. The University is committed to improving the working conditions of its staff. It provides support to employees in accordance with the Labour Code and grants extended and/or unpaid annual leave to vulnerable groups. The University also provides appropriate working conditions for employees with disabilities.
120. LSMU has a Sports Centre, whose vision is to enable the LSMU community to engage in sports and wellness physical activity following science-based practices. Employees and students can participate in a wide range of wellness activities.
121. Openness, which includes a diversity of opinions, beliefs, religions and cultures, internationality and equal opportunities for all, is stated as one of the University’s core values in the SDG2021 and SDG2026. The Senate has approved a Code of Ethics, which addresses all members of the academic community and defines the basic principles of ethics: respect for a person; dignity; autonomy; moral responsibility; equality; justice; fairness; solidarity; publicity; confidentiality; and tolerance. Following the recommendations of the 2014 external evaluation, the LSMU Code of Ethics was reviewed and in October 2014, the Senate approved the updated LSMU Code of Ethics incorporating best practices in clinical research.
122. The Law and Ethics Commission of the University receives and considers allegations of possible violations of the Code by members of the academic community. The Law and Ethics Commission received 12 complaints in 2018-2022. In 7 of them, breaches of the Code of Ethics were identified. The Panel considers the fact that a number of complaints have been submitted as a positive indication of the fact that there is an effective way for students or staff to complain when there is a reason to do so. Students confirmed during the site visit that they are well aware of the ways to file any complaints.
123. The LSMU Rules of Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Stalking and Violence state that the entire academic community of the University (students, residents, doctoral students, teachers, and other employees) must actively participate in the creation of a friendly working environment. To report discrimination, harassment, violation of equal opportunities or any other violation, employees or students may contact the University’s administration, coordinator for

equality directly or complete a report form on the website. The Panel learned that there were cases reported, which indicates that the system works. Students also indicated they are aware that they may report harassment and how this could be done. Nevertheless, the University should stay cautious to keep this important topic on the agenda in order to guarantee a safe space for students and staff to report any case of harassment. Furthermore, the Panel advises the University to also focus on prevention.

124. The Dispute Settlement Commission operating in accordance with the regulations and the procedure approved by the LSMU Senate hears disputes arising between students and the administration or other staff in relation to education and research activities. In 2018–2022, the Dispute Settlement Commission received 26 complaints relating to students' disputes with administrative and other staff. 24 complaints were investigated, and three complaints were partially upheld. Two complaints were lodged after the deadline set out in the procedure for lodging complaints. As no extension of the deadline was requested, the Commission decided not to hear these complaints.
125. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania declared that in the period of 2018 – 2020 the Office adopted 4 decisions related to the actions of the academic community of LSMU. In one decision, a violation of academic ethics and/or procedures was established.
126. The University's administration and the Student Representation promote and uphold the principle of academic integrity. Since the 2013-2014 academic year, first-year students sign an academic integrity pledge before they start studying at the University, and senior students sign an academic integrity pledge before each examination. For dishonest behaviour during the evaluation process, studies of the dishonest student at the University shall be terminated at the recommendation of the Dean of the Faculty and decision of the Rector's Office. The Regulation of the LSMU First Cycle, Second Cycle and Integrated Study Programmes includes a provision on plagiarism checks.
127. The Regulation of Studies stipulates that students are obliged to observe academic ethics and general moral standards, to comply with the general principles of research ethics, and to obtain the approval of the Centre for Bioethics for preparing research projects for the purpose of the student's final thesis or student research activities. In 2023, the Research Ethics Committees (Committee on Medicine and Health, Natural Sciences and Technology; Committee on Veterinary, Animal Science and Other Agricultural Sciences; Committee on Social Sciences and Humanities) will start operating in the Bioethics Centre to assess the compliance of research outside the scope of national legislation with research ethics principles.
128. Academic integrity in research activities is ensured in accordance with the Guidelines for the Assessment of Compliance with Research Ethics, the LSMU Code of Ethics and the LSMU Regulation on Scientific Activities. The Code of Ethics enshrines the provision that clinical, epidemiological, and social research carried out must have a biomedical research permit and/or a personal data processing permit (if required), while experimental research with animals may only be carried out with the permission of the Lithuanian Ethics Committee for the Use of Laboratory (Experimental) Animals under the State Food and Veterinary Service.
129. The Regulations of Doctoral Programmes of LSMU provide that, after the doctoral student's work plan has been approved, the supervisor and the doctoral student shall, if necessary, apply to

the Lithuanian Bioethics Committee or to the Regional Ethics Committee for Biomedical Research Ethics for a permit to conduct a biomedical study, or (and/ or) to the State Food and Veterinary Office – for a permit to use animals in research.

130. The LSMU Programme for the Implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy and Monitoring of its Implementation sets out the provisions for the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the procedure for monitoring the implementation at the University. The aim of the Programme is to ensure that the principle of equal opportunities is ensured in conducting education and research activities at the University, in the recruitment process, in the course of the validity of employment relationships and at the time of their termination.

131. The Panel considers that the recommendations of the previous external evaluation have been sufficiently integrated into the Strategic Development Guidelines and implemented through them. E. g. the University invested in revising study programmes and the development of a network of regional hospitals for the implementation of practical training. The University also puts more effort into the communication of measures taken as a result of student surveys, but has not managed to improve response rates.

132. **In summary**, the University has developed a publicly available internal quality assurance model, which applies to the whole University. The University has successfully applied the individual elements of quality assurance to its activities. The Panel notes that quality improvement is high on the agenda of many internal stakeholders within the University. It is obvious that internal and external quality assurance processes help the University to identify strengths and weaknesses and to act upon those findings. Nevertheless, as the University has identified itself in the self-assessment report, the overall level of quality culture (perception of the procedural approach and the implementation of continuous improvement) at the activity level is not high enough, yet, and it should be further improved. The satisfaction of beneficiaries is measured regularly, although response rates are often low. Also, performance indicators are measured. Results of annual internal quality assurance processes are shared with relevant stakeholders. Students and staff are well supported and structures are in place to encourage academic integrity and ethical behaviour.

133. **Judgment**: the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

134. **Recommendations for the area**:

- The Panel encourages the University to work further on the development of its quality culture, making sure that the internal quality assurance processes are fit for purpose and implemented systematically across the whole University.
- The Panel recommends to make a thorough analysis of the current set of satisfaction surveys, considering which surveys are essential for the internal quality assurance process, and subsequently develop a strategy to achieve better response rates.
- The Panel encourages the University to further close the quality assurance cycle of learning activities during clinical practice, especially in those institutions which are not structurally associated with the University.

135. **Good practice examples**:

- The Panel commends the University for its extensive financial, academic and psychological support provided, in Lithuanian and English to all members of the academic community.

3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

Studies and Research (Art) area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:

3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;

3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;

3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);

3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.

136. In 2018–2022, LSMU ran over 120 study programmes at all levels and non-degree (residency) programmes. To increase the accessibility of master’s degree studies, one-year supplementary studies are organised in 6 study programmes of the University. In 2022, LSMU offered 51 one-year postgraduate traineeship programmes (48 – in Medicine and 3 – in Veterinary Medicine) for foreigners in English and 3 short-term courses. On average, 7 trainees come each year for postgraduate traineeships.
137. LSMU offers doctoral studies in Biology, Biochemistry and Biophysics in the field of Natural Sciences; Medicine, Odontology, Pharmacy, Public Health and Nursing – in the field of Medicine and Health Sciences; Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science – in the field of Agriculture. The number of PhD students decreased from 271 to 243 in 2018–2022, which was due to the fact that the EU Structural Funds-funded project “Development of Doctoral Studies” ended in 2020.
138. LSMU aims to attract the best students from Lithuanian schools. The target for the share of students with a competition score above 7 (60%) set in the SDG2021 was achieved and increased during the assessment period from 70 (2018) to 79.1% (2021). The SDG2026 sets the target of 80%. For doctoral studies, the SDG2021 established that enrolments in PhD studies with an average score of 9 or above in all academic levels should account for at least 50%. This target was achieved at 69%.
139. The total number of pre-degree students decreased slightly by 3.4% during the period under review (6,669 in 2018 and 6,375 in 2022). The Panel values positively that more than 80% of students graduated on time and about 10% are one or more years behind between 2018 and 2022. The number of students dropping out in the first year remained largely stable at 11.9% in 2022.
140. On average, 80.6% of all employed graduates were employed in their speciality. Around 80% of 2017-2021 graduates had a positive perception of the competencies acquired at the University. Correspondingly, 90% or more of employers rated the University’s graduates’ work readiness positively. The Panel considers this as a strength of the University.

141. At the time of the preparation of the review, all study programmes at LSMU have been accredited for the maximum period of 7 years. In the 2020–2021 period, LSMU was evaluated for the studies in the field of Oral Care, Food Studies, Genetics and Veterinary Medicine. In 2022, the Veterinary Medicine study programme was evaluated not only by the SKVC but also by the EAEVE (European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education) expert group and received the maximum 7-year accreditation for the second time. In 2022, LSMU went under external evaluation and accreditation of the studies in the field of Medicine and Rehabilitation.
142. In 2021–2022, the Research Council of Lithuania assessed the performance of all LSMU doctoral study programmes. The doctoral programmes of Biology, Biophysics and Biochemistry in the field of Natural Sciences and Medicine, Odontology, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Nursing programmes in the fields of Medicine and Health Sciences were evaluated in 2021, and the Research Council proposed to extend the right to deliver PhD studies. The evaluation of the doctoral studies in Veterinary and Animal Sciences in the field of Agricultural Sciences, which was being carried out in 2022, would be completed at the end of the first half of 2023.
143. In order to create opportunities for students to combine studies with practical activities, work and individualise the study process, four out of thirteen first-cycle programmes (Veterinary Food Safety, Food Science, Animal Science, Animal-Human Interaction) and seven out of fourteen second-cycle programmes at LSMU (Nursing Leadership, Art Therapy, Public Health Management, Veterinary Food Safety, Food Science, Animal-Human Interaction, Animal Science) are organised in two forms – full-time and part-time.
144. The Panel has discussed the didactic approaches applied in the University’s study programmes with various stakeholders. The University applies problem- and competence-based learning and a lot of attention to simulation exercises and clinical training. The Panel commends the University for its implementation of EPA’s (Entrustable Professional Activities) in several programmes. The Panel encourages the University to further implement this approach in all relevant study programmes. Although the Panel is impressed by the good didactic practices which are applied in several programmes, the Panel found that the University lacks an explicit didactic concept which provides a framework for all educational activities. The Panel recommends to develop such an explicit common didactic concept for the whole University. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is an approach which is expected by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and which may be a relevant framework to develop such a didactic concept. Many of the educational practices are already in line with the concept of student-centred learning and teaching, although the sense of autonomy of the learners to design their own learning path is still relatively limited.
145. Although there are clear examples of competence-based and formative assessment, the Panel considers that there is also room for improvement to develop a university-wide understanding of student-centred assessment, including the development of a portfolio with evidence (products) that show that intended learning outcomes are met and graduates are fit for purpose consistently over all study programmes. Positive is that employers’ representatives are involved in the evaluation of practical training and in thesis defence committees.
146. One of the strengths of the University lies in its broad range of study programmes in the area of human and animal health. Although some examples of interdisciplinary collaboration among students within their study programmes were given, the current practices are often limited to

relatively obvious collaborations, such as the collaboration between medical doctors and nurses. The Panel challenges the University to actively implement a strategy for interdisciplinary learning, by developing more courses in which students from different fields need to collaborate and learn from each other to solve interdisciplinary challenges. A positive step is the possibility that has been created to access elective courses in other departments and even at other higher education institutions. Students remarked during the site visit that most of the study programmes are pre-defined by the University, and they have only a limited of credits for elective courses.

147. The concept of the virtual and open university has been developed through scientific and technological innovation and new teaching methods, such as the introduction of simulations into study programmes. This ambition and the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the rapid development and integration of distance learning into study programmes, which has persisted in the post-pandemic period.
148. The Panel learned that the University aims to further develop research on evidence-based education. The Panel supports this ambition and encourages the Innovative Education Division to play an active role in the further development of the educational practices within the University, as well as within all associated hospitals and institutions where students complete a part of their clinical education.
149. The range of qualifications and research activities of the University's study programmes are in line with the University's mission and the strategic objectives formulated in the SDG2021 and the SDG2026. The main areas of research at LSMU include: medicine and health sciences (medicine, odontology, nursing, pharmacy, public health), natural sciences (biology, biophysics), and agricultural sciences (veterinary medicine, animal sciences). The main research areas of the University are in line with the fields of study, providing the basis for science-based studies. Research is an integral part of the academic career of LSMU teachers.
150. A clear strength of the University lies in the interaction between fundamental research and development and its clinical activities. Although there are examples of interdisciplinary collaboration among research groups, the Panel considers that the University may further encourage interdisciplinary research, both within the University and with other regional, national and international universities. Although the University is developing some collaborations with regional Universities that have complementary expertise (e. g. technology and humanities), extending such collaborations may further strengthen the interdisciplinary quality and relevance of research. Furthermore, the Panel considers that the University may develop its international profile by choosing some interdisciplinary focus areas in which the combined strengths of its human and animal health research may create a unique profile at the national and international levels.
151. A comparative peer review of LSMU's scientific activities was conducted in 2018. Overall the quality of the research performed by the University is considered to be of good quality, although with significant differences between disciplines. While the research in some areas is competitive at the international level, the research in others is considered to be satisfactory or good, and sometimes unique, at the national level.
152. The annual evaluation of research activities carried out by the Lithuanian Research Council assesses the dissemination of research results. The results of dissemination of formally assessed research results improved every year between 2018 and 2021. The increase in this score was not

only due to an increase in the number of publications, but also due to an improvement in the quality of the publications. Also, the acquired R&D programme funds increased. It should be noted that in 2016–2020, LSMU’s participation in Horizon 2020 was rated as poor compared to other Lithuanian universities, especially technology universities. In recent years additional the University has been successful in attracting more Horizon grants.

153. Funds earned from R&D and other contracts with economic operators increased significantly in the area of medical and health sciences. In Agricultural Sciences, R&D contracts with economic operators showed a decrease in earnings but other contracts increased.
154. Furthermore, the University invests in supporting researchers to file patent applications, to conclude license agreements with companies and to create spin-offs.
155. The University already share expertise on innovative teaching methods, but also wants to invest more in research into medical and health education. The Panel considers this very relevant in order to further increase the innovation and quality of education.
156. One of the guiding principles of LSMU is the unity of education, research, and practice. Therefore, the University considers research and innovation as an integral part of studies and practice. Research groups are encouraged to involve students in their research activities.
157. The University’s study programmes are regularly updated in the light of scientific evidence. The integration of education and research is carried out in all study programmes. Generally, the nexus research-education is well-developed. The only remark students made was that some study materials are not always updated regularly.
158. In most programmes, students prepare their final thesis, but also opportunities are offered to participate in the research carried out by the University’s institutes. Nevertheless, the Panel considers that there is still room for improvement to realise enough research skills for all students to perform small research projects. The Panel values the opportunities for students to practice their research skills outside the study programmes.
159. Furthermore, the Panel considers that the University still has growth potential by searching strategic partnerships in the region, nationally and internationally, in order to further realise the nexus between teaching, research and social service by choosing a transformational approach to teaching and learning and deliver graduates fit for purpose which can act as “change agents” in the society. The Panel already saw good practices in this direction in the programmes of nursing and public health.
160. LSMU has developed processes for the recognition of qualifications, part-time studies and prior non-formal learning acquired abroad after studying at the same or another higher education institution or at a foreign higher education institution. The crediting of study results is regulated by the LSMU Study Regulations and the Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition of Competences Acquired in the System of Non-formal Adult Education at LSMU. The University also participates in the EU Structural Funds co-financed project “Preparation and implementation of the system of formalisation of informally acquired competencies in the network of higher education institutions”.
161. During the admission process of foreign students, LSMU evaluates the submitted documents, verifies their authenticity and accuracy, and, if necessary, refers them to SKVC for further clarification. The LSMU Senate approves the procedure for recognition and quality assurance of

qualifications obtained abroad. The recognition process has been improved by participating in the project KAPRIS-2: Strengthening the System of Academic Recognition, coordinated by SKVC.

162. During the annual assessment of LSMU recognition practices, SKVC has advised LSMU that further improvements could include quality assurance of the recognition process and the use of the learning outcome as a criterion for recognition. The panel agrees with the SKVC suggestion that LSMU consider a clearer vision of the recognition of non-formally acquired competencies and how it fits into the overall lifelong learning strategy and its practical implementation.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):

3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);

3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

163. The University indicates in its self-evaluation report that the main goals of its internationalisation policy are to foster the University's openness to different cultures and traditions, and to maintain and develop international relations and cooperation with foreign partners and alumni in the fields of education, research, and practice. Long-term goals include building a stable international reputation, competing to attract international students from economically advanced countries, expanding master's and doctoral studies, developing qualified international staff, and fostering synergies between research and business.

164. The LSMU SDG2021 strategic development direction "International University" was achieved only in part because mobility and events were significantly limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–2021. In the SDG2026 international ambitions are not grouped together under one overarching goal, but spread over the separate strategic objectives.

165. The University has achieved very good results in attracting international students. The University consciously plans the number of foreign students it wants to allow, taking into account the budgetary and capacity consequences. The most successful study programmes among international students are Medicine, Odontology and Veterinary Medicine. Over the last 5 years, the number of full-time foreign students at LSMU grew by 2.4 percentage points annually and reached 25% in 2022. The increase in the number was due to the increased admission quota for the study programmes of Medicine and Odontology, and more foreign students enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's study programmes. In 2022, the number of students enrolled in full- and part-time studies at LSMU accounted for almost 29% of the total number of students enrolled in first-cycle, second-cycle and integrated study programmes at LSMU, and was the highest throughout the period under review.

166. In order to attract highly qualified teachers and researchers from abroad additional funding was sought alongside the Erasmus+ programme. Altogether, 47 teachers and experts from foreign universities and research institutes have been invited from the University Guest Teachers' Fund to give lectures and presentations at international conferences, conduct joint research, mentor PhD students, etc., according to the needs of the academic units. Attracting permanent foreign staff is, as indicated above, more difficult. The University aims to double its percentage of foreign

researchers compared to the total of number of researchers from 1% to 2%. The Panel considers this target to be a little ambitious compared to the overall research and internationalisation ambitions of the University. .

167. In its self-evaluation report, the University indicates that it was developing an Internationalisation Strategy at the time of the external review, taking into consideration the underperformance in developing strategic partnerships, international research projects and ensuring international mobility of incoming and outgoing teachers.
168. LSMU is a member of 6 international associations and has two World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centres: in the Control and Prevention of Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases and in Nursing Studies and Practice. The Panel considers this collaboration with the WHO as a strength of the University. The University also participates in 27 international networks and 23 networks of the Nordplus Higher Education Programme.
169. LSMU cooperates with 93 partner institutions in 28 countries around the world and aims to develop some of them into strategic partnerships. LSMU's partners are mainly located in Asia (53 partner institutions, including 26 in Kazakhstan and 5 in Japan), Europe (34 partner institutions, including 10 in Ukraine) and North America (5 partner institutions).
170. The University applied unsuccessfully to the European Universities Initiative with partners in the field of health promotion twice. The updated application for funding to NOSEVA (Nordic Social Design and Health Promotion Values) will be resubmitted for the 2023 call. However, in the discussions during the site visit, the University did not mention this initiative as one of the prominent priorities in its internationalisation policy.
171. Although the University has a broad network of partner institutions, the international mobility of its own students and staff are low. The University has included several performance indicators in its SDG2026, in order to increase international mobility, but the ambition level expressed in those performance indicators remains modest. The University aims for continuous improvement in exchange programmes, primarily through the use of feedback from mobility programme participants (e.g., Erasmus+ programme participant survey tools) and performance and financial report evaluations received from the national authority administering the programme funds. Publicised good practices in the implementation of exchange programmes are taken into account.
172. Students have the opportunity to take part in academic mobility programmes that involve studying or serving an internship at another higher education institution. There are three academic mobility programmes at the University: Erasmus+ Study, Erasmus+ Internship, and Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) – a new form of short-term mobility in the new Erasmus+ programme period 2021–2027). The University has 248 partners in 53 countries. Although the number of Erasmus+ students leaving and arriving for part-time studies and internships had grown consistently until 2019 (3.66% of outgoing and 2.8% of incoming students as a percentage of the total number of students) in line with and above the University's targets (2.5% and 2%, respectively), there is still room for improvement in this area.
173. In the SDG2026, the University planned the establishment of an International R&D Strategy Coordination Group for the year 2022, but it did not achieve this aim yet. The Panel encourages the University to further develop its international R&D strategy.

174. LSMU researchers are actively involved in international research activities and joint research publications with partners from foreign universities. In the 2018–2022 period, the ratio of the number of significant scientific publications with foreign partners to all LSMU scientific articles published exceeded 50%. During the period under review, 53.4% of PhD students went abroad for internships, conferences, trainings, and other scientific events to present their research results to the scientific community, to deepen their knowledge, to master new research methodologies, and to conduct research. After a substantial decrease during COVID, the number increased again in 2022 to 37%.
175. The outgoing mobility of Erasmus+ teachers, researchers and staff have grown steadily every year, with 18.75% of the University’s teachers and staff going on mobility activities.
176. LSMU’s study programmes in English cover life, health, social, veterinary and agricultural sciences. Currently, 19 study programmes are taught in English, i.e., 53% of the total number of pre-graduate study programmes at LSMU. The goal of internationalisation of study programmes in the University’s 2014–2020 Strategic Guidelines Implementation Plan to reach 50% of the number of study programmes offered in a foreign language was already achieved in 2019.
177. The Panel values positively that new courses and programmes have been developed and launched as a result of the mobility of teachers; the most notable examples of the impact of teachers’ cooperation include: the double degree programme “Governance and Leadership in European Public Health” with Maastricht University for students of the second cycle programmes “Public Health Management” and “Applied Public Health” at the Faculty of Public Health; the Faculty of Nursing Clinics and the Rory Meyers School of Nursing at New York University developed and launched the second cycle programmes “Nursing Leadership”, “Advanced Nursing Practical Training”, and the study module “Community Nursing” taught at both universities; in cooperation with Griffith University in Australia, a unique study of the Burnout Syndrome in Midwives according to the GU methodology (WHELM) was carried out in Lithuania, the first dissertation on this topic was defended at the Faculty of Nursing. teachers and researchers participating in international activities have gained recognition from foreign universities and have been invited to become editors of scientific journals and reviewers of theses of doctoral students from foreign institutions.
178. Since 2019, The University has been forming mixed groups of students in the Medicine integrated study programme delivered in English. During one study year, 2 mixed student groups are formed, where Lithuanian and foreign students study together. Otherwise, the interaction between foreign students and students in the Lithuanian thought courses, is very limited. The Panel recommends to further develop the University’s strategy on how to benefit more from the presence of international students for the internationalisation of the educational process of the national students.
179. **In summary**, in line with its mission and strategic aims, the University carries out strong research, extensive clinical activities and a broad range of relevant study programmes in diverse areas of human and animal health. The Panel is very pleased by the way the University realises the nexus between teaching and research. The Panel also values the diversity in educational methods and opportunities for practical training and competence development, which are provided through simulation exercises and clinical practice. The Panel especially values the fact that the University has started with the implementation of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) in

several programmes. The University attracts a growing number of international students, but the international mobility of its own students and staff and the interaction between national and international students may be further improved.

180. **Judgment:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 points.

181. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends to develop such an explicit common didactic concept for the whole University.
- The Panel challenges the University to actively implement a strategy for interdisciplinary learning, by developing more courses in which students from different fields need to collaborate and learn from each other to solve interdisciplinary challenges.
- The Panel recommends to further develop the University's strategy on internationalisation at home, including how to benefit more from the presence of international students for the internationalisation of the educational process of the national students.

182. **Good practice examples:**

- The Panel commends the University for its strong connection between education, research and clinical practice.
- The Panel commends the University for its low rates of drop-out and high levels of recognition of the quality of the graduates.
- The Panel commends the University for its implementation of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) in several programmes, as well as the transformational learning practices in nursing and public health.
- The Panel commends the University for its two World Health Organisation Collaborating Centres.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

Impact on Regional and National Development area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:

4.1.1. *The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;*

4.1.2. *The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

183. The University's mission and strategic development documents specify the essential sphere of influence: "To develop a healthy and educated society and, through its activities, promote the economic and cultural prosperity of the country, the competitiveness of economic activity, and social harmony. The University creates a positive impact on the region and the national society as well as the international community through its main activities: studies, research and practice".

184. The University conducted an analysis of national and local policy documents, such as Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" and in both the National Progress Programme 2014–2020 and in the National Progress Plan 2021–2030, Lithuanian National Sustainable Development Strategy, the White Paper on Rural and Agricultural Development of Lithuania, the National Livestock Development Programme 2014–2020 and the Strategic Development Plan 2030 of Kaunas City Municipality. The University also indicates in general terms how it contributes to those ambitions, such as its ambition to create "quality of life that meets the needs of residents for a smart, active, and healthy population".
185. Furthermore, the University analysed and evaluated European Commission's priorities for 2019–2024 in the areas of Promoting European Lifestyles, the European Care Strategy, the European Health Union, building the European Health Union where all EU countries work together in preparing for and reacting to health crises, and ensuring the best possible care for patients. The University also aims to contribute to the EU's Communication "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth" and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
186. The Panel values it positively that the University analyses a variety of policy documents, such as the European Care Strategy. The University does not point out, however, how and to which specific targets of those policy documents it contributes. Therefore, the Panel considers that there is a need for a systematic, strategically planned and proactive analysis of the specific needs to which the University may respond. Such a more specific needs analysis would allow the University to connect the actions in the SDG2026 more specifically and to foresee the potential impact on national and (or) regional development. It would also allow to set concrete indicators and monitor to which extent the actions which are implemented really contribute to meeting the identified needs of the region and the country.
187. Although the processes to identify the needs to be met and the potential impact to be achieved need to be formalised in the opinion of the Panel, it is obvious to the Panel that the University plays an important role in society and that many of the University's activities have a positive impact on the regional and national development.
188. The University has an impact on the region through science-based studies. The University trains specialists in state-regulated professions, and links students' internships to regional or national demands. The University, furthermore, aims to reduce social and regional segregation, through strengthening collaboration with schools. Most of the study programmes conducted at the University train specialists in state-regulated professions, and the linking of students' internships to regional or national needs is implemented through the development of selected internship bases and the regionalisation of the internships. During their studies, students interact directly with communities, develop community health projects, and, during their internships, they deepen their knowledge and share ideas and scientific news with the country's public, personal and animal health sectors. Over a five-year period, students served additional 5,079 internships. The topics of the students' final theses are chosen according to regional and contemporary relevance and must have a practical application. A significant regional impact is also being made in residency programmes through the expansion of the regional network of residency bases, which was an action taken as a consequence of a recommendation of the previous SKVC review.

189. Furthermore, the University invests in research development and dissemination. The University successfully manages to increase its research activities in a variety of research domains related to human and animal health. Some of the research focuses on specific health challenges in the region and intends to inform policy making. The University has also actively participated in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The University has implemented a total of 17 projects on this topic. Having conducted the research “COVID-19 infection: genomic and clinical studies”, LSMU scientists (as the SER states) were the first to provide comprehensive data on the virus in Lithuania.
190. The University publishes 48 science popularisation publications (more than 6,000 science popularisation articles published over a five-year period), thus bringing the latest scientific achievements not only to scientists and professionals in their field, but also to the Lithuanian public. Over a period of 5 years, 249 public education events were organised with more than 36,000 participants. One example is a national competition for schoolchildren and LSMU students “Recognise Public Health in Everyday Life” was organised.
191. The University’s researchers are involved in international and national projects and contract research aimed at producing results that are relevant to the economy and could be commercialised. In 2018–2022, the University implemented more than 200 projects and contracts with business partners worth more than EUR 6 million. The majority of the projects and contracts were carried out in the areas of pharmaceutical technologies and treatment technologies. The University’s researchers and scientists also commercialise and disseminate their research results by concluding licensing agreements with businesses, in start-ups and spin-offs. From 2018 to 2022, 10 startups operating in the fields of biotechnology, educational technology, health data and medical technology were established.
192. Moreover, members of the academic community actively participate in health policymaking, including the participation in expert activities and the preparation of proposals to diverse government bodies. Since 2018, 1144 expert papers have been submitted. Four LSMU representatives are members of the National Health Council. Several professors serve or have served in high-level positions in the National and Regional Governments.
193. Members of the academic community (students, academic and administrative staff) are actively involved in voluntary activities. Most of the volunteering activities are focused on active participation in professional communities and various organisations. Looking at the last five years, University’s staff is becoming increasingly involved in volunteering activities, which is reflected in the increasing number of volunteering hours each year. Members of the academic community volunteer in various camps, societies and other institutions and organisations conducting voluntary activities. University’s teaching staff give lectures and perform laboratory work to schoolchildren from Lithuanian schools from different regions on a voluntary and unpaid basis. The Panel appreciates this active involvement in society. It encourages the University to systematically gather feedback from students and staff involved in those volunteering activities in order to use this input in its analysis of the needs for regional development.
194. Furthermore, the University aims to contribute to the European Green Deal. The Panel has learned that the University takes different measures to reduce its own negative impact on the environment, especially where it concerns the use of renewable energies. In its research, the University aims to contribute to a more sustainable agriculture and livestock. The Panel values

these steps, but it considers that a more holistic approach would be beneficial to further increase the University's positive contribution to the European Green Deal in particular, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in general.

195. The SDG2026 includes a series of output indicators on the diverse activities related to the impact on regional and national development. However, little evidence is provided on the monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and regional development. The Panel, therefore, recommends the University to formalise its processes for monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;

4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;

4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.

196. The University indicates that the need for lifelong learning is assessed in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania on professional development and in light of global and national advances in health sciences. The individual needs of health professionals are considered based on feedback from the associated hospitals. The Veterinary Continuing Education and Consultation Centre collects and analyses information on regional and national training needs, especially through contacts with sector organisations and their own graduates. Furthermore, informal and formal feedback from graduates and social partners, both public and private sector representatives, includes suggestions on the needs for lifelong learning.

197. The LSMU Centre for Postgraduate Studies ensures the coordination, administration, monitoring, analysis, and quality of LSMU professional development studies. The University has also established the Veterinary Continuing Education and Consultation Centre which specifically focuses on professional development in the veterinary field. Those two departments organise all kinds of professional development events provided for by laws regulating the development of professional qualification, including courses, internships, lectures, presentations at development events, practical scientific conferences, conferences, seminars, congresses, etc. Participation can take place both remotely and in person.

198. In October 2022, 29,745 users from more than 2000 medical, veterinary, odontology and pharmaceutical institutions from all over Lithuania were registered in Medas, the information system of the university. A total of 14,500 health professionals took part in the University's conferences and seminars in 2022, which was substantially lower than the previous years (ranging from 26,596 to 39,951). In 2022, a total of 6,443 health professionals participated in professional development courses and internships at the University's clinical bases and theoretical departments, a number which has continuously increased since 2017 (1,667 participants). In 2018–2022, the Veterinary Continuing Education and Consultation Centre organised 735 knowledge dissemination events in different parts of Lithuania, attended by 11,289 participants. So, the University clearly meets the needs of its own graduates and other professionals. The University may consider to which extent international developments on micro-credentials may affect the offer

of lifelong learning (e.g. integrating this more explicitly in the national qualification framework and assigning ECTS credits for participation in lifelong learning activities).

199. Furthermore, the University has established a primary school and a gymnasium, which offer a context where the University may test approaches for high-quality education and the development of children's sense of citizenship. While the value for pupils to receive a good quality education is clearly relevant, the Panel encourages the University to articulate more explicitly the added value and the impact, beyond its own pupils, which it wants to achieve by operating its own primary and secondary schools in relation to the core missions of the University in higher education, research and clinical practice.

200. The Panel values positively that the assurance of the conditions for lifelong learning is evaluated by means of anonymous surveys of the participants in residency, training courses and other events. The results of the survey are analysed at all levels, starting from the unit delivering the course and ending with the Centre for Postgraduate Studies. Furthermore, social partners are actively involved in the development and continuous improvement of lifelong learning activities in order to meet the changing needs of society and the labour market. Based on the results of the feedback analysis and considering the recommendations, the programmes and the content and organisation of the training are updated and improved. At the end of the year, the Centre for Postgraduate Studies submits a report to the Rector of LSMU.

201. **In summary**, the University plays an important role in Lithuanian society and clearly contributes positively to the regional and national development through its educational, scientific and clinical activities. It also provides a large variety of continuing education activities to contribute to lifelong learning. The Panel has given more weight to the real impact than to (the weakness of) the underlying processes for identifying needs, as well as monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures to meet regional and national needs, which need to be formalised.

202. **Judgment:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given 4 points.

203. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends to perform a deeper and more systematic analysis of the specific regional and national needs to which the University may respond, and to formalise its processes for monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development.
- The Panel recommends the University to adopt a more holistic approach to its contribution to the European Green Deal in particular, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in general.
- The Panel recommends to develop a more proactive and systematic approach in its development of new partnerships within the region, both with other Universities and other actors in society.

204. **Good practice examples:**

- The Panel commends the University for its active role in society and its contribution to regional and national development through its educational, scientific and clinical activities, especially by performing medical research in the region and providing input for regional health policies.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice:

Management:

- The Panel commends the University for implementing its competence framework for academic and non-academic staff and students.
- The Panel commends the University for its investments in simulation labs, which are considered to be among the international best practices in the field.

Quality Assurance:

- The Panel commends the University for its extensive financial, academic and psychological support provided, in Lithuanian and English to all members of the academic community.

Studies and Research (Art):

- The Panel commends the University for its strong connection between education, research and clinical practice.
- The Panel commends the University for its low rates of drop-out and high levels of recognition of the quality of the graduates.
- The Panel commends the University for its implementation of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) in several programmes, as well as the transformational learning practices in nursing and public health.
- The Panel commends the University for its two World Health Organisation Collaborating Centres.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The Panel commends the University for its active role in society and its contribution to regional and national development through its educational, scientific and clinical activities, especially by performing medical research in the region and providing input for regional health policies.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- The Panel recommends to indicate more clearly what are the main priorities among the long list of performance indicators.

- The Panel recommends the University to make sure that student representatives are fully enabled to take up their role effectively and to structurally involve international students, who represent over 20% of the student population.
- The Panel recommends to benchmark with other universities with international ambitions from countries with relatively uncompetitive wages to learn which strategies may be effective in attracting highly qualified foreign staff.

Quality Assurance:

- The Panel encourages the University to work further on the development of its quality culture, making sure that the internal quality assurance processes are fit for purpose and implemented systematically across the whole University.
- The Panel recommends to make a thorough analysis of the current set of satisfaction surveys, considering which surveys are essential for the internal quality assurance process, and subsequently develop a strategy to achieve better response rates.
- The Panel encourages the University to further close the quality assurance cycle of learning activities during clinical practice, especially in those institutions which are not structurally associated with the University.

Studies and Research (Art):

- The Panel recommends to develop such an explicit common didactic concept for the whole University.
- The Panel challenges the University to actively implement a strategy for interdisciplinary learning, by developing more courses in which students from different fields need to collaborate and learn from each other to solve interdisciplinary challenges.
- The Panel recommends to further develop the University's strategy on internationalisation at home, including how to benefit more from the presence of international students for the internationalisation of the educational process of the national students.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The Panel recommends to perform a deeper and more systematic analysis of the specific regional and national needs to which the University may respond, and to formalise its processes for monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development.
- The Panel recommends the University to adopt a more holistic approach to its contribution to the European Green Deal in particular, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in general.
- The Panel recommends to develop a more proactive and systematic approach in its development of new partnerships within the region, both with other Universities and other actors in society.

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