



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of VETERINARY
at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences

Expert panel:

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Veterinary Medicine</i>	<i>Veterinary Medicine*</i>
State code	6011HX001	6011HX001
Type of studies	University studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Integrated studies	Integrated studies
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 6 years	Full-time, 5.5 years (change in 2017 to 6 years)
Credit volume	360	336
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master's Degree of Veterinary Sciences, Qualification of Veterinary Doctor	Master's Degree of Veterinary Sciences, Qualification of Veterinary Doctor
Language of instruction	Lithuanian and English	Lithuanian and English
Minimum education required	Secondary school education or its equivalent diploma	Secondary school education or its equivalent diploma
Registration date of the study programme	19 05 1997	19 05 1997

**Study programme termination date - 2022.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No.V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 24 May, 2022.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Wittek, *University Clinic for Ruminants, Vetmeduni Vienna, Austria;*
Prof. Dr. Peter Holm, *Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen;*
Prof. Dr. Jaroslaw Kaba, *Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw;*
Mrs. Dr. Eglė Svaldenienė, *UAB Baltic Agro, representative of social partners;*
Ms. Kristina Kundrotaitė, *Vytautas Magnus University, students' representative.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the documents
1.	Document containing additional information (video material on learning facilities and resources, Veterinary master theses as examples)
2.	Document on the previous evaluation

1.4. BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FIELD STUDIES AT LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

- 1) The online-site visit took place the 24th May 2022 at the Lithuanian University of Health Science. The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) is the largest higher education school for health science specialists in Lithuania, consisting of a Medical Academy and Veterinary Academy (VA).
- 2) The evaluated Veterinary (H01) study field is an integrated first and second cycle university study. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (VMF) is the only faculty in LT that has been training veterinarians for 85 years and the second-largest faculty at LSMU, where a total of 1,168 students study, of which 859 are in the Veterinary Medicine (VM) study programme.
- 3) EAEVE accredited the VM study programme in 2019. The previous external evaluation of the study programmes (SKVC) was held in 2011.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Veterinary study field of *integrated* cycle studies at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas:

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	5
	Total:	28

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

The aims and outcome of the study area are well defined and presented. The study programmes are attracting and have attracted in the past sufficient applicants from Lithuania and abroad. Although there is a minor decline in applications caused by demographic reasons the study programmes can be considered as very attractive. The alumni have excellent chances on the national labour market and they are fully accredited in the European Community (EC).

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

The expert panel found that the strategy and objectives of the study cycle are extensively described in the SER (p. 5).

The main objectives are provided in the SER are: “The aim of the VM study programme is to train highly qualified veterinarians who know the LT and European Union (EU) legal acts regulating veterinary activities and to provide the students with sufficient scientific knowledge and skills on which veterinary activities are based; to provide the knowledge of the body structure, functions, behaviour and physiological needs of animals and animal welfare; to develop specific clinical, epidemiological and analytical skills required for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of animal diseases, including first aid, anaesthesia and painless killing, and specific knowledge of diseases that can be transmitted to humans; to provide the knowledge of food hygiene and technology related to the production and placing on the market of animal feed or food of animal origin for human consumption, including the skills and competences needed to understand and disseminate good practice in this field; to develop the skills and competences necessary for animal husbandry, nutrition, welfare, reproduction and veterinary hygiene; to provide the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the responsible and safe prescribing, dispensing, use of veterinary medicinal products in the treatment of animals and for ensuring the safety of the food chain

and the protection of the environment; to develop a creative, scientific and critical thinking and the ability to maintain a sufficient professional competence through lifelong learning.”

The expert panel found that the objectives and outcomes of the veterinary medicine study programme are well adjusted to the general mission and strategy of the HEI and meet the requirements of the Lithuanian society and the EC.

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

The expert panel evaluated the provided information of the amount of teaching provided to the students in the study cycle according to legal requirements and found that the ECTS of the program is in accordance with the requirements. Details are provided in table No. 1.

Table No. 1. Veterinary Medicine Study Programme’s compliance to general requirements for whole study programmes:

Criteria	Legal requirements	In the Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	300 or 360 ECTS	360 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 20 ECTS	More than 20 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	More than 15 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	>20%
Individual learning	No less than 50% of learning	>50%

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

The SER (Self-Evaluation Report) reports on the use of different assessment methods according to the specificity of the classes and subjects taught without giving detailed information which methods are actually applied. During our visit none of the students or alumni had any complaints about assessments or examination; nevertheless, we like to encourage the university to review the objectivity and fairness of the assessment methods.

According to the SER and to the present ESEVT/EAEVE accreditation status, the veterinary programme is in compliance with the Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by

Directive 2013/55/EU and the European veterinary Education Standards as defined by ESEVT SOP 2019 as amended in 2021. The expert panel can confirm that the study programme contains the veterinary subjects dictated by the EU directive and that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme are aligned and in apparent compliance with EU standards.

The university applies a variety of teaching methods in the programme including lectures, online and blended learning activities, practical and theoretical exercises including a skills laboratory to train routine clinical procedures. Students are also engaged in direct hands-on practical clinical work under supervision at the university clinics and during external practical training at farms, in private veterinary clinics, slaughterhouses and state service laboratories that are contracted by the university.

The practical exercises and the intramural clinical training are carried out as small group teaching in alignment with the practical learning goals and allowing individual students to obtain necessary practical veterinary Day one skills.

Summarising the expert panel found that the aims, outcomes, teaching and assessment methods are generally compatible for the study field of Veterinary medicine.

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

The curriculum is well balanced and enables the students to continuously develop their knowledge and skills. The theoretical subjects are provided to the students to enable them to continue their studies in practical teaching in a suitable manner.

The previous changes (2017) were made to improve and increase practical teaching and first day competencies. However, these changes were associated with an increase of the study duration of one semester (from 11 to 12). Although the expert panel appreciates the increase of practical training, we were rather sceptical about the change from 11 to 12 terms binding additional resources of the university and time of the students. We would like to encourage the university to scrutinise the study programme and identify content, which might be shortened or deleted allowing the return to 11 semesters.

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

Currently the curriculum offers only very limited opportunities for students to individualise their study. This is partly unavoidable caused by legislation which requires that

all students take the essential mandatory courses. However, even if the VMF does not plan to implement a full undergraduate track system we would encourage the University to offer more elective subjects for the students especially in the final two years.

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

The expert panel was not able to assess individual final theses in depth; however, we had the chance to look at the topics of the theses. The topics varied widely but were within the study area. They are assigned by the teachers to the students with limited opportunities to suggest or adjust topics for the students. It was positively noticed that the students have the possibility to join research groups to improve their studies for the theses. Generally, the students felt well mentored doing research and writing the thesis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The study programme is well structured, and the Intended Learning Outcomes are well defined and aligned to the needs of the Lithuanian society;
2. The curriculum offers a high percentage of practical training to develop first day competencies;
3. The study programme is attractive to the public allowing the best students to be selected for the programme;

(2) Weaknesses:

1. (Minor) Although the expert panel supports the recent increase of practical training for the students, we were rather sceptical about the change from 11 to 12 terms binding resources and time.
2. (Minor) The expert panel had the impression that currently the further development of the curriculum is mainly directed towards companion animals and horses.
3. (Minor) The curriculum does not allow students to choose subjects they are especially interested in.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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

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

According to the SER, veterinary research at LSMU is regarded as part of the Agricultural Science research area, thus following the strategic research directions 2017-2020 laid down by LSMU for the latter scientific area.

In 2018, the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) recommended a stronger focus on One Health research strategy as well as increased internationalisation of the research. These recommendations are partly reflected in the present emphasises of veterinary research within the One Health including zoonosis and antimicrobial resistance, (production) animal health and welfare and food safety and quality.

According to the SER annex 2.1, the veterinary departments have carried out 32 research projects related to the veterinary medicine study programme within these research areas. However, no research collaboration on One Health research projects with human medical research are mentioned in the SER, e.g. translational medicine including neither animal models, nor it seems to be a specific strategy of LSMU.

The number of submitted veterinary scientific publications was 37, 20 and 42 in 2020, 2019 and 2018, respectively, which is 42%, 43% and 70%, respectively, of the total number of agricultural science publications from LSMU in these years. According to the SER, the Research Council of Lithuania has classified 25 of the scientific veterinary papers in 2020 as “Top 10 works”, which is a marked raise compared to 2018 and 2019.

Since the MOSTA - evaluation, the VMF - LSMU has had extra emphasis in internationalisation of the research and has succeeded in both an increasing number of published articles, number of citations per article as well as number of VMF articles written in collaboration with foreign researchers.

The veterinary research output from VMF - LSMU is of good quality in line with the LSMU agricultural research strategy, and the research output is assessed to be adequate within the given financial possibilities. VMF - LSMU has successfully created conditions promoting more international research collaborations, which their researchers have engaged in with success.

The expert panel noted that the VMF research is - in alignment with the LSMU strategy - focused on production animals' health and welfare and food safety aspects of One Health, while research projects within companion animal and equine health and welfare are apparently absent, though there is an increasing demand for veterinary expertise within these areas. Furthermore, collaboration with human medical researchers on One Health projects, e.g. zoonosis, antibiotic resistance and translational medicine are not part of the present VMF - LSMU research portfolio.

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

The veterinary education at VMF - LSMU is a research based education. It has adequate infrastructure and funding to support veterinary research. LSMU has both Large Animal and Small Animal Clinics (which are being renovated), well equipped diagnostic/scientific research laboratories and physical as well as online library facilities. Furthermore, according to the SER LSMU received the funds of 342,540 EUR to implement R & D projects and contracts of international research programmes in agricultural sciences in 2020, and comparable amounts of funds in 2019 and 2018.

The teaching materials and learning goals of the veterinary basic science subjects, clinical subjects as well as subjects concerning veterinary public health issues presented to the expert panel in the Self-evaluation report and annexes are in compliance with the latest scientific knowledge. Furthermore, more teachers are offered adequate educational courses supporting modern pedagogical teaching and didactic, including online and blended teaching.

The curriculum is in compliance with the Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/EU and the ESEVT standards (2019 as amended in 2021); of present ESEVT accreditation status), which require “*adequate knowledge of the sciences on which the activities of a veterinarian are based and of the Union law relating to those activities*”. Students participate directly under supervision in practical veterinary work at the clinics, at private farms, slaughterhouses etc. using the modern diagnostic and production technologies available at these. Students are also invited to take part in the research projects at LSMU as extracurricular activities and/or as part of their master thesis work. Information from the interviews confirmed the students' participation in research.

The expert panel finds that the link between the content of studies and the latest modern veterinary science and technology are satisfactory and ensure a research based veterinary education at LSMU.

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

The veterinary students are introduced to the basic requirements of modern medical sciences within the first year of the curriculum through the compulsory course “Development of General, Information and Communication Competences of the Profession”, including use of the library facilities and databases of scientific literature. Later the compulsory course “Veterinary Biostatistics” teaches statistical methods necessary in medical research. An optional course “Research Methodology” are offered to fourth year students

prior to the fifth year compulsory course „Research Basics“, which provides students with skills necessary for the preparation and presentation of their master thesis, which according to information at the interviews, must either contain an experimental part or analyses of relevant veterinary scientific raw data. According to the SER, around 10% of a student year cohort engages themselves directly in research projects as part of their thesis work and a similar number of students are members of the LSMU Student Scientific society. Information from the interviews indicated that students' engagement in present research projects was very dependent on the invitation and engagement of the individual teachers. LSMU encourages students to organise annual international seminars for the veterinary medicine students and support this event financially, including costs for invited speakers.

The veterinary students at LSMU have good conditions for getting involved in research throughout their study, and all students must do their own small research work in relation to their master thesis. LSMU actively supports students' engagement in research both by offering optional courses on research methodology, encouraging students to take part in present research projects - and supporting this financially if necessary, as well as supporting student scientific initiatives, e.g. the annual international meeting. However, it was unclear from the SER and from the interviews why only around 10% of the students actually got to participate in actual ongoing research projects as part of their thesis work.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. LSMU has succeeded in enhancing the number of international research collaborations;
2. All students must do a master thesis that includes a small scientific research project.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Research projects within companion animal clinical sciences seems absent or very few, despite this is a major veterinary work field that even seems to increase in the future;
2. Apparently no collaboration with human medical researchers on One-Health projects, including translational medicine;
3. Only around 10% of students get involved in departmental research projects.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

Student admission requirements and process are comprehensive and definite. The General admission is organised and coordinated by the Association of Lithuanian higher

education institutions for general admission (hereinafter - LAMA BPO), which is authorised by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania after revision and approval by the Senate of Lithuanian University of Health Science (LSMU). All the information about students' admission order and requirements is available on the internet webpage of LSMU (<http://www.lsmuni.lt>). The main admission criteria is a competition score calculated assessing the grades of state maturity examinations of Biology, Lithuanian Language and Literature, including the grades of state maturity examinations or annual grade averages of Chemistry or Mathematics and of one freely chosen subject. By the Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (LR MESS) the minimum competitive score is set annually. Admission applications and all documents are submitted only electronically. The University Council, on the proposal of the Deans, approves the total number of students planned to be admitted each year, and the order of the LR MESS Minister approves the preliminary number of state-funded places.

International students are admitted, if they provide a high school or college certificate with its official translation in English. Foreign students are admitted to the VM (Veterinary medicine) studies (in EN) according to the similar principles and criteria as the national students, i.e., using an analogous admission platform and applying the same admission rules approved by the LSMU Senate.

Generally the admission system was found to be functional, fair to the applicant and comprehensively described.

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

The evaluation and recognition of the qualifications acquired abroad at the University is carried out according to the Order of the LR MESS Minister. Credits of partial studies are evaluated according to the Provisions of the LSMU Regulation of Studies. The qualifications and study results obtained abroad are evaluated and recognized on the basis of the LSMU's Internal Procedure for Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and the Quality Assurance System for Decision-Making. The LSMU grants students who have participated in international exchange programmes partial study results. The expert panel finds the evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application to be clear.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Good conditions for academic mobility of students are ensured. The information about mobility programmes is available in the LSMU weekly newspaper "Ave Vita", moreover every year a 2 day Erasmus Days information event is organised to give students more knowledge about Erasmus+ possibilities. The students have a lot of opportunities to participate in the international mobility programmes and projects (Erasmus+) and leave to study: for the period of 3-12 months at the European and other world higher education institutions. The list of higher education institutions for international part-time studies or internships are provided to the students.

During the meeting, the students confirmed that they are well-informed and greatly encouraged by the teaching staff to participate in the international mobility programmes and projects (e.g. Erasmus +). During 2018-2020, under the *Erasmus +* programme, in total 30 of the VM students went to study at universities abroad and 76 – for an internship. Although under the Erasmus+ programme, in total came to study at LSMU - 20 foreign students, for an internship only 10 students, during the same period. The expert panel finds evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students to be clear.

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

The VM students are provided sufficiently with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. The students are given the opportunity to improve their academic results by retaking failed examinations. The students who cannot continue studies due to special circumstances can be granted an academic leave. There is a possibility to return after the academic break and resume their studies. Students are eligible for the social and incentive scholarships. Accommodation is provided for students, the applications for accommodation are submitted through LSMUSIS website. The students have the opportunity to receive psychological support from experienced psychologists. A system of psychosocial adaptation for the LSMU international students is being implemented, in which national students can also participate in: Ambassador Programme, Mentor Programme, Tutor Programme, Parent Programme, coordinators, psychologist counselling, and psychological adaptation research for better psychosocial adaptation. The students have the opportunity to implement their ideas and initiatives by participating in the activities of student organisations.

The expert panel finds assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field to be good.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

The detailed information about the study aims and the objectives of taught subjects is provided in the subject descriptions, published and periodically updated in the LSMUSIS. Students get enough information and support from administration and mentors. First-year students are assigned a curator, at least once per month the curator meets with his/her student group and advises helps to overcome appeared issues. The students can communicate with the curator all the time by e-mail or in person. The expert panel finds Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling to be good.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Well-organised the admission system of national students;
2. Motivation and provided useful information about the international mobility programmes for students;
3. Strong students' academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support system.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low number of exchange students incoming to the VM study programme to do an internship.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

Traditional theoretical teaching methods are combined with active teaching/learning methods in the previous VM study programme but now the renewed programme is paying more attention to practical skills development with the Veterinary medicine implemented study programme (extended from 5.5 to 6 years). Students can develop their practical skill in the University animal clinics and the University farm or using

external practices, cattle/sheep/swine/poultry farms and slaughterhouses. Evaluation methods of student achievements and competencies are clearly defined and understandable for the students. Support of academic staff is provided to students during their self-study work. Employers are overall satisfied with the professional knowledge and practical skills of the graduates.

However, visits to poultry and swine farms were limited to zero due to the Covid 19 and specific epidemiological situation (ASF, AI) and only this year they were re-started. Some students might have missed these parts of training. However, we have been told that they were offered video material, case studies and discussions instead.

Some students are more active and trying to get skills/knowledge when they are working/practising in groups while others are less active. Even teaching staff should ensure all students gained all necessary skills. We had the impression that the process, how to achieve this, is not clearly defined. On the other hand, there are no graduates yet from the prolonged study programme (6 year) so further and close monitoring should be established evaluating the readiness for the labour market of the graduates from this new programme.

Although the study programme was prolonged for 0.5 year and we were told during the visit that no additional funding has been received from the government. It seems that practical skills are acquired mostly with the help from external stakeholders' kindly providing places for practical work for students. Considering the very sensitive global/business situation more funding for the extended study programme should be acquired.

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

Conditions to ensure studies for students with special needs are in place in the University even though currently there are no students with disabilities in the Veterinary Medicine programme. As students spend essential parts of studies in external practices more details should be provided on the conditions for students with special needs to be ensured during these externships.

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

The university has system/procedures in place to monitor study progress and students are getting feedback via different ways (email notifications, evaluation in LSMUSIS

system, face to face meetings with the dean, administration staff and lecturers). First year students also have curators who provide more support/explanation/feedback on all studies processes. For the mainly English speaking students support is very similar, just feedback mostly given in verbal form by Dean and international studies coordinator. The rate of student drop-out is 3.1% and very few students are excluded due to academic performance. There are procedures in place enabling us to improve studying achievements e.g. retake the exam if failed, further we were assured that individual help and advice is provided and additional courses can be taken to improve study results.

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

University monitors employability of VM graduates *via* surveys and/or official statistics provided by the Employment Centre. According to the data the employability rate is very high reaching 78-100%. The number of graduates corresponds to the society needs for veterinarians. Even though most students plan to work as small animal and/or equine practitioners, an increasing number of graduates are employed in large animal sector/farms and the need for veterinarians in this sector is satisfied as well.

Alumni actively shared information and participated in the discussion during the meeting and formed the impression they are supporting the VM study programme very actively, providing places for practical work for the student and sharing information about possible employment places. Analysing data of surveys performed for employers the expert panel got the impression that the rate of answers is quite low. The university should think how to encourage alumni/employers to take part in the survey providing answers as currently the survey done is not ensuring the correct picture of labour market needs.

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

University is forming study and work environment ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. No cases of discrimination were identified. Students sign academic integrity pledges starting their studies. Upon the need the commission is formed to investigate each case separately. Also, a psychologist is available for students and they can consult each case privately and separately. First course students also can escalate any situation to their curator.

Generally the expert panel had no concerns according academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

Transparent procedures of appeals are integrated in university life. Students may appeal to the Dean and the Boards of Appeal takes the decision that is electronically communicated to the appellant. This decision could be secondarily appealed at the University Dispute resolution commission. The number of appeals is quite low (3 appeals during the last 3 years). Students mentioned during the online visit that they are satisfied by the appeal system and those complaints and appeals are handled fair and respectfully. Caused by a low number of complaints no general assessment can be made by the expert panel but no concerns were raised.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Well working system in place for the submission of appeals and complaints;
2. The evaluation system of the students' study progress is adequate and enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The extended study programme is not secured by appropriate additional funding that upon certain circumstances may lead to less quality study services for students.
2. Quite a low rate of answers from employers to the surveys, this might not allow a correct picture of graduates skills and employment situation.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

Procedures and requirements for qualification and competencies of teaching staff are in place ensuring all lecturers and teachers are able to fulfil their job descriptions. Teaching staff is evaluated in 5 year intervals assessing the qualification and recent progress.

Lecturer/teacher to students ratio is 1:5.7 and efforts to reduce this number were successful (e. g. ratio was 1:6.3 in 2018/2019 and 1:5.9 in 2019/2020 accordingly).

Each lecturer/teacher supervises on average 2 students during the preparation of the master theses per year. Most of the lecturers (79.25%) are full time employees. Among the lectures are 33 full professors (22%) and 29 associate professors (19%); only 17 (11%) of the lecturers do not hold a PhD. The formal experience and qualification of the lectures/teachers are clearly above requirements.

Also, the University invites visiting lecturers and researchers. Due to change in the number of students and funding of studies, fixed-term employment for a maximum of 2 years is applicable. 47 veterinary doctors-practitioners work with the students facilitating that students achieve appropriate level of practical competences. Qualification and number of teaching staff corresponds to legislative requirements. It should be mentioned that the VM study programme has changed in 2017 and curriculum adjustments were made in 2020: VM study programme was prolonged from 5.5 years to 6 years to strengthen the practical part of the studies and move from the classic teaching model to novel integrated teaching model. Lecturers/teachers had to adjust their teaching modules as well. Every teacher can be evaluated by the students (“quality thermometers” or comments).

During the meeting the majority of teaching staff communicated rather reluctantly with us. We got the impression that more time and support from university is needed for adjusting all teachers to the new study model. A certain number of teachers were quite enthusiastic; some others however seemed to be less dedicated to their job and the changes which had been made during the renewal of the programme. Lecturers/teachers have 2 or 5 years terminated contracts and despite some teachers have reported that even the system of evaluation and accreditation is well known in advance for teaching personnel this may lead to some uncertainty and frustration or less determination to their job. We would encourage the university to include the teachers in planning and career development stronger and have regular individual meetings.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility

Academic mobility was stable before Covid 19 pandemic and reached 16% of the academic staff teachers to improve their competencies abroad every year. University is also using opportunities to invite lecturers from foreign higher education institutions for a teaching visit using Erasmus plus. Due to the pandemic of Covid 19 this mobility has decreased quite significantly to approx. 30% for outgoing lecturers and 67% for incoming

lecturers comparing period 2018/2019 and 2020/2021. Academic mobility is quite low. The decline of academic mobility might be compensated by online teaching, learning and/or experience sharing opportunities.

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

University has a system in place for improving teaching staff competencies; the competency improvements are monitored. Training courses are paid by the University and minimum criteria are set for competencies improvement (training plan setting, minimum required qualification hours indicated). The university conducts training cycles for employees. Veterinarians working at the university or veterinarians who manage external practices are supposed to have training/qualification hours as mandatory to keep their veterinary licences. Also, veterinarians who manage external practice are provided with educational training by the VMF.

Although the teachers who talked to us had a good command of English, we are not able to evaluate the language skills of all teachers. Generally language courses should be offered to all teaching staff, which might be less competent.

University provides opportunities to increase lecturers/teachers competences and they use them. More detailed plans and explanations of specific educational training courses should be provided for veterinarians who manage external practices.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. University provides good conditions to raise and improve educational and professional competencies for lecturers and teachers;
2. A low teacher to student ratio facilitates individual support for the students and increased approachability of the teachers.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. A number of lecturers/teachers are still about to adjust their teaching to the new teaching models and seemed to be less dedicated to their jobs and the changes which had been made in the new curriculum;
2. A larger number of lecturers could be involved in academic mobility.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

Since the evaluation was performed as an online evaluation the panel was not able to visit the facilities personally. However, from the provided information and the discussion with the different groups we concluded that the provided resources are sufficient to allow a high quality teaching and ensure effective learning of the students. Students told the expert panel that their accommodation (dormitories provided by the university) is meeting their expectations and that the accommodations are conveniently located to get to the university. We were assured that means of transportation are provided if students have to attend classes elsewhere (e.g. University farm).

The LSMU VMF runs an on-campus library serving staff and students on site and provides remote access to literature and information material. The students also reported on enough learning space. It was also reported to us from students and staff, The VMF also runs a skills lab for training students which offers a wide variety of possibilities and is easy to use for the students.

The VMF has a University owned teaching farm (dairy cattle) in close proximity which is used for student teaching. Further we have been told that for pig and poultry external farms are visited which was however difficult or impossible recently due to Covid 19 restrictions.

The expert panel was not able to fully assess the financial situation; however considering the difficult global/business situation more funding for the extended study programme might be needed. Alternatively as already mentioned we would encourage the VMF to shorten the programme to 11 semesters and use the available resources to strengthen other teaching areas.

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

It was reported that the VMF has put substantial effort in modernising the rooms and equipment of several teaching areas and clinics. Additionally, a new small animal hospital and diagnostic centre for horses will be erected soon. Staff and students seemed generally happy with the situation and the development in recent years. The expert panel generally agrees and suggests that the VMF continues on the way developing state of the art teaching and hospital facilities. We like to encourage the VMF to constantly review the allocation of resources between different areas of veterinary teaching considering multiple parameters (not just the income of the clinics) to keep the balance. Parameters to consider are for

instance the need of Lithuanian society, animal welfare, balance between companion animals/horses and food producing animals, food hygiene, safety and the epidemiological situation.

The plans for further development seem to be mainly directed to companion animal and horse medicine/surgery. We see the danger that none or less profitable but also important teaching areas like food producing animal individual medicine and surgery, food hygiene, food safety, minor species etc. might be disadvantaged over a longer time.

Generally however, the expert panel had the impression that the VMF has developed a comprehensive plan for keeping the current status working and for further development according to the needs of the Lithuanian society.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. LSMU VMF is generally well equipped, and provides enough learning space;
2. The VMF has a University owned teaching farm
3. The VMF runs a skills lab for training students

(2) Weaknesses:

- 1 The plans for further development seem to be mainly directed to companion animal and horse medicine/surgery.
2. (temporary) Although we acknowledge that the current situation (Covid, ASF and AI) makes it rather difficult to provide appropriate pig and poultry teaching, these areas are important and new teaching approaches might be necessary.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

The internal quality assurance system is covering four areas: (a) the study programme; (b). The competencies of teaching staff; (c) Learning resources and (d) student environment and needs, and includes both internal and external stakeholders as part of the administrative and procedural activities. It is regulated by a series of legal LSMU documents, which are described in detail in the SER. These include underlying LSMU strategic documents, e.g. LSMU Statute, the LSMU strategic development guidelines and LSMU Study Regulation, and the related operational documents as the LSMU Study Quality Assurance Manual, Procedure for development, improvement and management of study programmes. The QA-

system (QA- Quality Assurance) is according to the SER and information from interviews in compliance with ESG2015 standards.

At university level, the international QA system is decided by the University Senate and governed by the Rector and coordinated by the Commission for monitoring and study quality assurance, which consists of vice-rector for studies , representations from VMF, staff and students. The LSMU Study Centre assists in the QA-work both at LSMU and faculty levels. At faculty level, the Faculty Council decides on the specific veterinary QA-system through the Dean, who receives all QA-data and reports for evaluation, analyses and commenting. The two vice-deans, the administration of the Dean's office and the international studies coordinator assist the Dean in coordinating the quality assurance of the studies, including the preparation of reports and study administration.

The QA of the veterinary study programme itself is overlooked by the Study Programme Committee chaired by the vice-dean for education and consisting of professors from the veterinary clinics and departments, veterinary students and an external stakeholder ("social partner"). The committee is aided by the LSMU Study Centre and the Career Centre, who manages the regular QA-surveillance and monitoring of the programme and the output, the committee reports every semester on the quality and development of the programme to the Dean and vice-rector for studies.

Though the expert panel found that the QA-system and procedures are rather complicated and difficult to overview, it was clear from the interviews that both administrators, teachers, students (though only 6 students participated in the interviews) and external stakeholders were very satisfied with the QA-system. Both teachers and students announced that suggestions regarding improvements as well as complaints about the study programme or related matters were handled according to the QA-procedures resulting in changes and improvements.

The expert panel found the internal QA-system for the veterinary faculty and studies worked very efficiently at all internal levels resulting in an efficient adaptation of the programme to needs of teachers, students and society within the present economical and legal framework of the university.

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

Students, teachers and external stakeholders are involved directly in QA policy decision making via participation in LSMU and VMF commissions and boards (University

Senate, Commission for monitoring and study quality assurance, Faculty Council and Study Programme Committee, Biosafety committee etc.), as well as being asked to take part in biannual or annual internal surveys (students, teachers and external supervisors) or surveys among alumni and employers. All teachers and external supervisors must give feedback, while feedback from students and alumni is voluntary.

At the interviews it was pointed out that even though it was generally less than 50% of students who participated in the QA study programme surveys, all responses were taken into consideration by administration and teachers, resulting in changes and improvements of the programme.

The expert panel found the involvement of stakeholders in the internal quality assurance system was efficient. Furthermore, it was clear from the interviews that stakeholders value both the direct involvement in the university commissions and committees and the possibilities of giving feedback on students' performance, courses and the programme outcomes very highly.

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

The collection, monitoring, use and analyses of QA-information on the studies and subsequent actions, reporting and publication of results are regulated by LSMU legal documents and managed by specific university and faculty commissions and units (see 3.7.1). All QA-documents, including strategies, manuals, procedures and biannual/annual reports and minutes from formal meetings are published, either online on the university/faculty website, intranet or the LSMU study information systems, or sent to stakeholders by e-mail or other publicity channels. All major strategic and legal documents are published both in English and Lithuanian.

Procedures for processing the collected information on a regular and timely basis are in place and are seemingly carried out as described in the SER, resulting in subsequent actions according to the decisions of the governing commissions and councils. The information gathered from the interviews confirmed this.

Based on the SER and interviews, it is the expert panel's opinion that LSMU and VMF have implemented and manage a very efficient system for collection and use of study information, and results are published to stakeholders by many means and to their satisfaction.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

Since 2019, the programme surveys among students in relation to courses and teaching modules have been distributed online via the LSMU study information in order to facilitate and enhance students' feedback. These surveys are open all year long and the results are analysed twice yearly depending on the course.

Via the LSMU Study Information System, students are able to give their inputs and feedback to LSMU at any time and anonymously if they like. A so-called "Study Thermometer" is displayed at all times at the Study Information System expressing students' satisfaction with the study programme and its elements, based on students' inputs and results of surveys. According to the SER, 2095 students have responded to surveys regarding overall satisfaction with the programme, specific satisfaction with learning materials, assessment, learning outcomes, quality of teaching etc. (from SER, page 46). The average satisfaction score was +0.99 points on scale from -2 to +2, and +0.86 - +1.12 on the same scale, indicating that students are generally happy with their teachers and the study programme. At the interviews, none of the 6 students participating contradicted the conclusion above, but expressed a general satisfaction with the study programme including the QA-system and possibilities of giving feedback on the course teaching and teacher performance.

Teachers/administrators referred positively to the "Study Thermometer" system as an effective way of monitoring students' satisfaction with the programme hence initiating improvements when necessary.

Based on the SER and interviews, it is the expert panels' opinion that LSMU and VMF have implemented and manage an efficient system for collection and proper use of study information in relation to QA, and that results are published to stakeholders by many means and to their satisfaction.

However, the VMF should carefully evaluate the number of surveys and which qualitative and quantitative response data is needed to: 1. monitor and make proper improvements of the academic and professional quality of teaching and learning outcomes; 2. support better response rates from students (and other stakeholders); 3. to avoid that surveys primarily serve as measurement for quantitative satisfaction rates among a minority of stakeholders.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. An efficient and well-accepted QA-system at all levels.

2. The QA-system covers all areas of educational importance and includes internal as well as external stakeholders at both decision, administrative and survey levels

(2) Weaknesses:

1. None.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The expert panel considered the implementation of the easily accessible survey system including the “Quality Thermometer” module as part of the LSU Study Information System as an example of excellence.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reconsider the prolonged study period and reconsider if some areas of the current curriculum could be streamlined and shortened to improve efficacy of teaching which may allow a reduction by 1 semester; ● Consider if it is possible to increase the number of elective classes and choice for the students .
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active support of research projects within companion animal clinical sciences, if necessary by internal funding; ● Enhance collaboration with medical researchers on One-Health issues, including translational medicine; ● Enhance the number of master thesis projects that are part of or support the departmental research.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep active communication with other universities and students to attract more incoming exchange students to the VM study programme to do an internship.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try to find governmental/additional funding to ensure prolonged programme financial security and learning Thank; ● Develop the system allowing to increase the collection of answers from employers.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide the help for teaching staff adjusting themselves to new study model; ● Encourage lecturers/teaching staff to participate in academic mobility.
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep constantly updating and renewing your facilities, constantly review the allocation of resources between different areas of veterinary teaching considering multiple parameters (not just the income of the clinics) like the need of Lithuanian society, animal welfare, balance between companion animals/horses and food producing animals and, food hygiene and safety, epidemiological situation.
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider reducing the numbers of (quantitative) QA-surveys and survey questions to what are needed to have in order to monitor and make proper improvements of the academic and professional quality of teaching and learning outcomes and avoid surveys becoming a “satisfaction index” for responding stakeholders.

VI. SUMMARY

The online-evaluation took place the 24th of May 2022 at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. The evaluated study field is Veterinary (H01) which is an integrated first and second cycle university study at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (VMF).

Caused by the current Covid 19 pandemic situation the evaluation had to be done exclusively online which resulted in a different way of assessment in comparison to the site-visit evaluation. It was not possible for the expert panel to verify the information on the equipment and resources and we could not assess the factual situation in the facilities. However, the panel hopes we were able to conduct a fair and honest evaluation producing valuable information for further improvement within the University. Additionally, we like to thank all staff members and students who have prepared the SER and took part in the discussion rounds.

Overall, we got a positive impression of all assessed areas, which is reflected in the marks. Although there are always further improvements possible we did not identify problems which would substantially threaten the study programme or study success of the students.

We were especially impressed by efforts which the university is taking support students, by the admission procedures and guidance especially for younger students. Further we noted very positively that a quality assurances system has been installed which is well working and accepted by staff and students. We realised that the university has put substantial resources in the improvement and refurbishment of the infrastructure. We had further the impression that the university is willing and prepared to adjust their teaching to the changing requirements on the veterinary profession in Lithuania and improving employability of the graduates focusing on first day competencies. Implementing these necessary changes however the university higher management should consider to facilitate the synchronic development of the teaching and administration staff to ensure identification with the tasks and employer and finally of high quality teaching. Further we like to reconsider the prolongation to the study programme from 11 to 12 semesters binding university resources which could possibly be used in other areas more efficiently.

We like to congratulate the university VMF on their achievements and wish them good luck at further development of the programme and facilities.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Thomas Wittek

(signature)