The improvement of the university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

Case of Vytautas Magnus University.

Project Master’s Thesis submitted by
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ABSTRACT

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This Final Diploma Thesis aims to improve university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development. For this research, the case of Vytautas Magnus University was chosen.

The first part is theoretical analysis, which provides a link between the principle of Sustainable Development and universities. Firstly, the principle of Sustainable Development, the triple bottom line concept, and its relation to the 17 Sustainable Development goals were analyzed. After, the Sustainable University model was presented, as well as initiatives universities could implement into their practices.

In the second part, the analysis of the level of Vytautas Magnus University's commitment to Sustainable Development was provided. Several gaps for improvement were identified.

Based on these gaps, the solutions for improvement of the performance of Vytautas Magnus University towards the principle of Sustainable Development were presented in the third part.
Šiuo baigiamuoju diplominiu darbu siekiama pagerinti universitetų veiklą darnaus vystymosi principo link. Šiam tyrimui pasirinktas Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto atvejis.

Pirmoji dalis yra teorinė analizė, kuri pateikia ryšį tarp darnaus vystymosi principo ir universitetų. Pirmiausia buvo išanalizuotas darnaus vystymosi principas, triguba esminė koncepcija ir jo ryšys su 17 darnaus vystymosi tikslų. Po to buvo pristatyta tvaraus universiteto modelis, taip pat iniciatyvos, kurias universitetai galėtų įgyvendinti savo praktikoje.

Antroje dalyje buvo analizuojamas Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto įsipareigojimas siekti darnios plėtros. Buvo nustatyta kelios tobulinimo spragos.

Remiantis šiomis spragomis, trečioje dalyje buvo pateikti Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto veiklos tobulinimo darnios plėtros sprendimai.
INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the selected topic. The main idea of Sustainable Development is meeting the needs of today and ensuring that there will not be problems to meet the needs of the future generation (WCED, 1987). In recent decades the importance of the Sustainable Development (SD) concept increased dramatically. Despite the high technological growth people achieved in the 21st century, we are still dependent on nature. Any innovation cannot replace the resources, which the ecosystem gives us. People tend to forget the facilities, which are essential for our lives, we receive from nature. The air we breathe, the plant-based food we eat, the energy we consume, etc. The world statistics show that 1/3 food produced is not being consumed every year (UN, n.d.). Meanwhile, more than 700 million people live in extreme poverty and 821 million people did not have sufficient food in 2017 for their health maintenance (UN, n.d.). Besides, in the century of high-tech, many women still experience genital mutilation, many kids still do not have access to education, in many countries, there is still no punishment for domestic violence.

Today the education systems are improving strategy according to the national and international strategies targeting the principle of Sustainable Development and its goals. The principle of Sustainable development is based on the balance between three dimensions economic, social, and environmental. These three dimensions are strongly correlated with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to these goals’ health improvement, quality education, gender equality, poverty reduction, and oceans and forest preservation must go hand-in-hand.

Public inclusion is important for sustainable development. Talking into account the principle of SD and Sustainable Development Goals, universities should develop the ways of being “sustainable”, which is important for responsible and prosperous life in a limited world. Peoples’ awareness about Sustainable Development and this knowledge implementation are fundamental for our future. Based on the Annual SDG Accord Report the numbers of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), including universities, seeking to integrate SDGs, increase (The SDG Accord Report, 2019).

However, many universities are still unaware of SD and confuse it with environmental sustainability. Indeed, the integration of the principle of Sustainable Development in the education system of the university might be challenging as it requires the implementation of innovative ways. Also, this relatively new principles integration could face resistance from inside and outside stakeholders (Lozano, 2006 a).

Therefore, the problem raised in this Final Master Thesis (FMT) is presented in the question form: how to improve the university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development?
Consequently, the **object** of the FMT is the improvement of the university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

The paper **aims** to provide the solutions for improvement of university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

The **objectives** of this Final Master Thesis are:

1. Theoretically analyze the principle of Sustainability Development and its link to the university.
2. Analyze the performance of the Vytautas Magnus University in the Sustainability area.
3. To provide practical solutions for improvement of Vytautas Magnus University's performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

**The sequence of investigation:** The Final Master Thesis consists of 3 parts. The first part represents the theoretical background for developing a link between the principle of Sustainable Development and university strategy. Firstly, it provides a general insight into Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals, and its relation to the Triple Bottom line. After, the principle of Sustainable Development is considered in terms of its integration into university practice.

The analysis of scientific publications revealed that several areas should be considered for the improvement of university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development. They are going to be presented in a Sustainable University model.

In the second part, the performance of the Vytautas Magnus University in the area of Sustainable Development was analyzed. The research revealed the approximate level of university commitment towards the principle of Sustainable Development. Gaps for improvement were identified. Based on these gaps, the third part provides the solutions for improvement of the Vytautas Magnus University's performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

**Methods and techniques of investigation:** In the first part of the thesis the link between the principle of Sustainable Development and the university was built though the scientific literature analysis. After, the theoretical and empirical analysis of university commitment level towards the principle of Sustainable Development was conducted. The empirical data of the Vytautas Magnus University was collected by analysis of the relevant documents and by surveying students and university representatives. Therefore, the qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used, secondary and primary data was obtained.
I. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPING LINK BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

1.1. The main principle of Sustainable Development.

In 1987 the Brundtland Commission defined Sustainable Development as: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).” Indeed, the term “sustainable” itself means “lasting”, which explains the main idea of the definition (Pearce et al., 1994). People should use and distribute the planet’s resources wisely, so they could last longer. Since that time, this definition remains as one of the most well-known and best describing the Sustainable Development concept. However, this definition focuses more on the wants and needs and do not include environmental and social aspects. The balance of these three dimensions is crucial for peoples’ well-being.

Many people confuse the Sustainable development term with Sustainability. However, these two terms have a different meaning. Sustainable development is considered as a process of achieving Sustainability. Whereas, Sustainability acts as a target for Sustainable Development (Diesendorf, 2000).

To integrate the principle of Sustainable Development, the triple-bottom-line (TBL) approach should be applied (Harris, 2003). The TBL (Figure 1) implies a focus on economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social justice (Elkington, 1997). Every activity people do, creates a certain effect on the economy, environment, and society. People go to work, contribute to the economy of the country, they use transport, which emits pollutants, and by communicating with people they could create a social impact. Ideally, these 3 interconnected dimensions should become the basement for the people's’ decision making, because it brings them only benefits. The natural resources being preserved, no environmental damage, and a stable economy makes people live in peace and respect the planet making their social life better (Kaivo-oja et al., 2013). The integration of the principle of SD in international policies and agendas is fundamental. This could allow building the connection between people and nature in the way which will not harm the environment.
The first is the economic pillar. It says that people should produce enough to satisfy the needs of the nation, but without creating problems to satisfy the needs of the future. Initially, economists thought that economic resources are unlimited, and the main problem was how to distribute those resources. Moreover, they expected to achieve economic growth by new technology integration, which could replenish those resources, which were used for production purposes (Cooper & Vargas, 2004). Later, it has been found that not all resources are renewable, and economic growth requires more resources. This fact made people change their minds regarding the traditional economic system (Du & Kang, 2016).

The limited amount of natural resources is essential to support people's well-being. Since the population is constantly growing people's needs respectively grow as well. People need more food, more cloth, and other items to satisfy and maintain their level of life, but natural resources cannot be expanded to fulfill all these demands. Due to high economic growth, people forget about environmental problems, since all their concerns are related to the growing demand for production, which stimulates environmental destruction (UN, 2017).

Another important action needed to be taken is the replacement of old accounting methods to the new, corresponding to the triple bottom line concept. Despite fixed and variable costs inclusion, the cost related to the damage on the planet should be evaluated as well (Shezi, 2013).

Figure 1. Sustainable Development — Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework.

Source: Gupta& Racherla,2016
The second pillar is **social inclusion**. Social inclusion is about people's’ rights, equality, access to opportunities, and their well-being in general. Poverty eradication is one of the aims that social sustainability is willing to achieve. But this struggle with poverty should not damage nor environment, nor economic stability (Mensah, 2019). The aim should be accomplished within the existing foundation of the society related to the environmental and economic system (Kumar et al., 2014).

Social sustainability does not imply to meet the needs of everyone. It is more about creating a favorable condition to allow people to satisfy their needs when they need it (Kolk, 2016).

The third pillar is **environmental performance**. This dimension is related to the preservation of natural resources, pollution reduction, a decrease of emissions, environmental footprint reduction, waste management, etc. (Galamadien, 2011).

Nowadays, successful companies need to position themselves as environmentally caring companies. According to Okanga and Groenewald (2017), ecological damage can bring companies at least three negative consequences. The first is reputational damage. One of the well-known examples is the Volkswagen diesel case in 2015 when the company was convicted for its cheating on the emission tests. Therefore, the company admitted its first quarterly loss of 2.5 billion euros, which was a consequence of its drop-in sales (Hotten, 2015). Profitability reduction is the second negative implication company can receive. And the third one is the cost of compensation. Volkswagen spent 6.7 billion euros to cover the cost of damages they created (Hotten, 2015).

The VW case is more related to ethical issues. For the fair companies willing to avoid ecological damage there are several measures should be implemented. Raushan (2015) highlighted that most directors invest in technology, which allows reducing environmental impact. Indeed, in the period of the 4th industrial revolution, technology can be the solution to many problems. Nevertheless, the lack of skillful and competent workers can be the reason of the occurring mistakes, which lead to huge environmental damages (Galamadien, 2011). Environmental impact assessment is one of the most important activities companies should apply because it allows us to clearly understand which areas for improvement the company has.

1.2. The link between the Sustainable Development Goals and Triple Bottom Line.

**Sustainable development goals.** One of the most important documents related to SDGs is “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” signed by United Nations Members States illustrates
the united plan of prosperity for the planet and people (UN, 2015). It includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which act as an engine for action for countries all over the world in a global partnership. According to these goals, health improvement, quality education, equality, poverty reduction, oceans and forest preservation must go hand in hand. Visseren-Hamakers (2020) proposed in his article the 18th SDG goal, which is related to animal protection. However, the UN has not announced possible changes in the SDG list yet.

Sustainable Development Goals should be implemented across all areas, disciplines, countries, and stakeholders. By working together, people can move forward faster. The main focus should be concentrated on rural areas because the most hungry and poorest people in the world live there. To do this, we must show strong political will, paying particular attention to the main drivers of change: small and family farming, women, living in the rural areas, fishermen, indigenous communities and other vulnerable or marginalized groups.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SDGs</th>
<th>Main targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No poverty</td>
<td>Diminish extreme poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Zero hunger</td>
<td>End all forms of malnutrition and to provide people nourishment, especially for those who are in need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good health and well being</td>
<td>End the epidemic of diseases and to provide access to essential medical provision for everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Quality education</td>
<td>Guarantee equivalent access to all degrees of education and increase the number of grants for developing and least developed countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>Stop discrimination and violence of all different aged women all around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Clean water and sanitation</td>
<td>Provide access to clean and drinkable water and sanitation means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Affordable and clean energy</td>
<td>Provide common access to low-cost stable energy services and improve energy efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Decent work and economic growth</td>
<td>Improve economic productivity, keep economic growth, and ensure productive employment and decent work for everybody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Industry, innovation, and infrastructure</td>
<td>Create a sustainable and stable infrastructure and provide it for the least developed countries. Provide financial access for small industrial businesses and enlarge scientific research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reduced inequalities</td>
<td>Ensure people’s involvement in politics or social and economic areas no matter which gender, age, status they are and decrease outcome inequality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable cities and communities</td>
<td>Provide people affordable and safe housing; and transport systems and keep safe the heritage of culture and nature all around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Responsible consumption and production</td>
<td>Ensure the wise distribution of natural resources and build up the food waste management system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Climate action</td>
<td>Build up a strong climate and natural catastrophe protection system all over the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Life Below Water</td>
<td>Decrease the percentage of water pollution and adverse effects on the water ecosystem. Stop overfishing by constraining fisheries subsidies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Life on land</td>
<td>Guarantee the protection of the earthbound and inland freshwater ecosystem and implement sustainable management of all forms of land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
<td>Stop all kinds of violence everywhere and provide everyone access to justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Partnership for the goals</td>
<td>Provide financial aid for developing countries from different sources and promote international cooperation in technology, innovation, and science areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the United Nations official website (https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/)

Based on the literature review the Sustainable Development goals could be distributed according to the Triple Bottom Line (Table 2).

### Table 2.

#### The distribution of SDGs following TBL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tipple Bottom Line</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation; SDG 13 Climate action; SDG 14 Life Below Water; SDG 15 Life on land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>SDG 2 Zero hunger; SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 4 Quality education; SDG 5 Gender equality; SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy; SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth; SDG 9 Industry, innovation, and infrastructure; SDG 10 Reduced inequalities; SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from The Global Goals official website (https://www.globalgoals.org/)

Based on the previous table, the distribution of the Sustainable Development Goals is illustrated in Figure 2.
To sum up, Triple Bottom Line and 17 Sustainable development goals are two integral parts of Sustainable Development. The TBL implies the balance between economical, social, and environmental aspects of life. Whereas SDGs act as triggers for the solutions to the problems our world faces today. The combination of these two provides a solid foundation for achievement of the Sustainable Development.

**1.3. University and sustainable development.**

Higher education institution is the first place, where leaders, intellectuals in social, political, economic and academic areas and other outstanding people were grown professionally. It helps to shape our mindset and vision of different problems. Despite all differences that universities have, all of them have the same basic system, where the principle of Sustainable Development can be built on.
The integration of the principle of Sustainable Development into the university’s strategies is a relatively new topic. During the analysis of the literature sources about the SD in the higher educational institutions, published between 2005 and 2017, it was found that more than 50% of sources were published between 2013 and 2017 (Lozano et al., 2019).

Lozano (2006, a) has defined three main stakeholders in universities, that play an important role in sustainable principles integration: academic directors, the professors, and the students. The author notices that it is impossible to integrate SD principles into the policies and learning of all members of these stakeholders on the initial stages of SD integration into university strategy.

According to Cortese, there are four strategies for sustainable development principles integration into the university system. The combination of these dimensions is presented as “A Fully Integrated System Model” in Figure 3. They are education (curricular), research, campus operations, and community outreach (Cortese, 2003). Cortese says that universities should integrate sustainability in the operation, planning, design of the facility, curriculum creation, and research conduction. They also should be responsible for the involvement of locals and communities. Husaini and Jusoh (2017) found out that education, research, operation, and relationships with local communities are connected and have an impact on each other. Cortese has also noted that to achieve sustainability in our century it is important to integrate interdisciplinary systemic thinking, dynamics, and the analysis of disciplines (Cortese, 2003).

![Figure 3. A Fully Integrated System Model.](source: Cortese, 2003.)

The same literature review conducted by Lozano et al. (2019) revealed that most of the content of the literature sources about the SD in the HEIs is focused on outreach and assessment.
Besides four dimensions described by Cortese, Figure 4 shows that “Assessment and Reporting” was a popular element, which was included in the university strategies towards SD implementation.

As illustrated in Figure 4, 31 articles described the partnerships HEIs have with external stakeholders, such as local communities. Some studies show the collaboration between HEIs and rural businesses for knowledge sharing. Moreover, the implementation of different initiatives to help society, only positively influence the HEIs to work on Sustainable Development problems and helped to integrate education courses related to SD (Lozano et al., 2019).

28 articles have shown that there are several assessment tools HEIs integrated to maintain its SD related indicators. Literacy test, assessments related to the life cycle, greenhouse gas emissions, and different frameworks and models to estimate the economic impact and community outreach level.

24 articles are related to the influence of research, which was more focusing on its impact on the polices, business practices, and society in general.

Regarding education, only thirteen articles provided data related to this topic. Most of them described the effect of studies, related to SD, on student’s behavior towards Sustainable Development. It has also evaluated how entrepreneurship studies impact on students’ entrepreneurial mindset. Moreover, distance learning was also included in the education topic, as one of the tools of the studying process. By this, students do not need to take any transport, which has a positive impact on the environment due to greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Due to the COVID-19 situation, today's e-learning tool is essential for the maintenance of a sufficient level of education.

Besides eleven case studies about campus operations, the literature review highlighted 3 articles related to the campus experience.

Regarding campus operation, most of the studies focused on the environmental impact, caused by different activities. For example, the consumption of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is related to university purchases, usage of GHG by internal stakeholders, and individual behaviors. The interesting studies were related to cafes and canteens. They included water usage and waste management related issues. Considering healthy choices, that canteens of the HEIs can provide, Chen et al. (2016) pointed out that the inclusion of lacto-vegetarian diets may have both positive and negative effects on the environment, saying chicken could bring more benefits rather than eating cheese. He claimed that for cheese production there are higher water consumption, land usage, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Articles related to the campus experience provided the connection between campus-related activities towards being green and students’ quality of life. Also, it included policies related to alcohol consumption, training of the employees, and community engagement towards the promotion of good drinking habits.
The other 30 studies did not provide information related to the core concepts and were named by the authors as “generalist” (Figure 4). This study includes more economic-related indicators, such as employment, demographics, and supply chains (Lozano et al. 2019).

![Figure 4. Distribution of the articles among core elements.](source: Lozano et al., 2019.)

Within the same study, Lozano et al (2018) have provided the framework of the impact of the mentioned above HEIs dimensions on the society, environment, and economy (Figure 5). They distinguished two types of impact which dimensions can create: direct and indirect. For example, the improvement of campus operations by creating online programs could cause a direct impact on the amount of greenhouse gases emission and indirect impact on climate change. Constant assessment of the impact is an important aspect for improvement of the strategy of the HEIs towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

![Figure 5. The SD impact framework of Higher Educational Institutions.](source: Lozano et al., 2018.)
1.4. Sustainable university model.

Four phases Sustainable University Model (Figure 1) was developed by Velazquez et al. (2006) based on the best strategies universities implemented to improve its performance towards Sustainable Development. The literature (Annex 2) and the empirical studies of 80 HEIs (Annex 3) all over the world were conducted. A list of HEIs can be found in Annex 2 and Annex 3. The four phases are presented in a coherent structure starting from strategic practices to operations (Velazquez et al., 2006).

![Figure 6. The Sustainable University Model.](source: Velazquez et al., 2006)

**Phase 1. Vision.** First step towards sustainable development starts with the envision of the future. Besides the future, vision should represent shared hopes and dreams (Haines, 1995). It is important to be a specific university’s philosophy oriented. The literature analysis conducted by Velazquez et al. (2006) of 40 HEIs has shown that only 8% of the portfolios embedded sustainability concepts in their vision. Meanwhile the results of the survey of respondents from different universities all over the world present that 52% of them declared that they integrate the principle of Sustainable Development into their university's strategy. Nevertheless, thirty-nine of the people surveyed claimed that their universities provide the document which is related to sustainable development principles, for example, environmental guidelines or environmental statement.

The envision of the future should act as a basement for mission statement development. It should communicate the inspiration and motivation of the vision. According to Haines, a mission statement should answer three main questions: who, what, and why (Haines, 1995).

The universities, willing to be sustainable, should establish sustainability value as a core in their mission statement. In the same literature analysis, which was examined for phase 1, only 8% of the HEIs integrated sustainability concepts in their mission statement. At the same time, 57% of the respondents of the survey said the concerns and responsibilities regarding sustainability are presented in their university mission statement (Velazquez et al., 2006).

Phase 3. Sustainability policies, targets, and goals.

The integration of particular policies along with the formation of the means, required for mission realization, could help to show that the university is responsible for promotion Sustainability concepts. The created committee in the presented model acts as a facilitator for campus-wide policies, targets, and goals establishment. It helps to coordinate initiatives, obtain required funds, and ensure the effective implementation of the policies, but it does not take the initiatives. The committee should be, preferably, formed by the representatives of all main stakeholders of the university including students, professors, staff, unions, and, ideally, the representative of honorable members of the society. The literature review of the 40 universities does not provide any information about university representatives. However, 55% of the people surveyed claimed that their universities have departments that coordinate initiatives regarding sustainability on their campuses (Velazquez et al., 2006).

Different departments of the university may become the initiators of sustainable principles integration into university. If there are no campus-wide established policies, the leaders of the initiatives should create their specific guidelines, targets, and programs.

One of the most important responsibilities for the sustainable committee should be the establishment of sustainability policies. Nevertheless, the established sustainability policies do not guarantee their effectiveness. Sixty percent of the universities from the literature analysis implemented sustainability-related guidelines. Whereas, the percentage of the universities from the survey which have sustainability initiatives supporting policies is 52. The results of the survey have also shown that for 47% of the projects, related to Sustainability, separate policies were established. The authors of the survey claimed that the actions of these policies are short-termed compared to the variety of actions of a university-wide policy (Velazquez et al., 2006).
**Phase 4. Strategies for fostering sustainability**

According to the model, the sustainability initiatives in universities could be divided into four strategies. They are education, research, outreach and partnership, and sustainability on campus. The first three could be performed inside and outside the campus. Whereas sustainability on campus is aimed to be carried out on the campus itself. It is noted that there are two main tools used for achieving the goals of these four strategies. The first is increasing the awareness of the sustainability problems among those who are related to the initiative. Another means is the usage of technology, which could reduce the harm to the environment on the local or global level.

**Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)**

“The PDCA Cycle is a systematic series of steps for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product or process (Patel&Deshpande, 2017)” The Plan step includes the analysis of the university performance towards sustainable initiatives. The analysis helps to reveal the areas for improvement. Based on the found gaps, a plan for action could be created. During the “Do” action, the university representative, responsible for the sustainable initiative integration, could start the realization of that plan. Later, the plan could be extended to not only fill the gaps but to take a new level towards sustainability. The Check step implies implementation of the new processes. The achievement of targets does not mean the end, it should be an ongoing process. The standardized approach should be created to maintain the efficiency of the ongoing process. That is what the “Act” stands for (Patel&Deshpande, 2017).

**1.5. Additional initiatives towards Sustainable Development integration into university practices.**

There are several initiatives universities could adapt to their operation to develop its strategy towards Sustainable Development.

The first initiative is Sulitest. As was mentioned earlier people’s awareness of the current problems is the first step towards their solution. Moreover, the general understanding of the principle of SD is not enough, people should always be seeking to improve the knowledge they have. Sustainability Literacy Test (Sulitest, n.d.) is the first international online evaluation tool on sustainability literacy. It helps people to improve their Sustainability literacy and could impact their decisions to motivate them to be the change-makers and build a sustainable future.

By proposing students to take part in this initiative, the university could raise students’ awareness of sustainable development in a lifelong learning perspective and could teach how to act
responsibly and in sustainable ways. Also, acquired results could help researchers and professors to formulate the approach for embedding the principle of SD into curriculums. Currently used by more than 130,000 people from more than 800 universities and corporations in 68 different countries, this multiple-choice test of 50 questions is a tool to help students to self-assess what they know about the economic, social and environmental sustainability challenges facing the world. It assesses what the United Nations believes is “the minimum level of knowledge in economic, social, and environmental responsibility for students all over the world (UN, n.d.)”. Besides, questions linked to SDGs, which allows getting a picture of the knowledge related to 17 SDGs. Thus, the results of 29,151 participants (Figure 7) from all over the world, who took the test between 2018 and 2019 years has shown that nobody has lower than 10% awareness of each goal (Sulitest, 2019).

![Figure 7. Average score on the 17 SDGs.](source)


Another initiative, which could be taken by the university to improve its strategy towards sustainable development is the **Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)**. This questionnaire was designed particularly for the HEIs to evaluate levels of their Sustainable Development. SAQ consists of 25 questions in 7 different sections (Annex 7). They are:

1. Curriculum.
2. Research and Scholarship.
3. Operations.
4. Faculty and Staff Development and Rewards.
5. Outreach and Service.
6. Student Opportunities.
7. Institutional Mission, Structure, and Planning (ULSF, n.d.).”

Most of these dimensions are embedded in the “Sustainable university model”. Exceptions are “student opportunities” and “staff development and rewards”. The questionnaire includes topics related to the economy, environment, and society. It could allow universities to integrate SD related courses into all academic disciplines and to encourage students and professors to start research activities related to SD concepts. Moreover, it could be the start to integrate the policies and strategies related to environmental footprint reduction. Also, the contribution to the development of the teaching staff and students towards SD could be created by providing different opportunities and scholarships. University could start collaborating with different partners and stakeholders on the local or global level, which could help to involve the society towards the growth of the SD level.

The main difference between SAQ and Sulitest is that Sulitest aims to develop only the knowledge and general understanding about Sustainable Development, whereas SAQ provides a clear picture of the initiative’s universities could integrate to include the concepts of sustainable development into their practices. Also, SAQ does not have a scoring system to not provide the result in numbers early, which could be found difficult to work on improvements without deeper research. Whereas Sulitest provides the result in the percentage to make it comparable, for example, between students in one class or students from different universities all around the world.

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards are considered one of the best for the assessment of the Suitability related criteria, covering social, environmental, and economic dimensions. However, GRI is not designed for university assessment. Lozano (2006, b) proposed the Graphical Assessment of Sustainability in Universities (GASU), based on the GRI guidance but with embedded educational dimension. It was updated in 2011. GASU consists of six sections for assessment, which are profile, economic, environmental, social, educational, and interlinked dimensions. Each section has several indicators for assessment: forty-three for the profile, nine in the economic dimension, thirty in the environmental section, forty for the social category, twenty-nine in the educational, and twenty-three for the interlinked dimensions. Some of the criteria presented in Figure 8. The list of all dimensions can be found in Annex 4. The percentage of results is presented in graphics form.
Figure 8. Graphical Assessment of Sustainability in Universities (GASU 2011) dimensions and categories.

Source: Lozano et al., 2013

Based on the data available about each criterion and its performance evaluation, this holistic approach for measuring University activity towards the principle of Sustainable Development could help to find the areas for improvement. It could also help to decide on the strategy university will build to improve its performance towards SD.
II. ANALYSIS OF THE LEVEL OF VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

2.1 Research methodology

The theoretical analysis revealed that integration of the principle of Sustainable Development requires an integrated approach and involvement of all the main stakeholders of the university. The integrated approach implies that all dimensions including curriculum, research activities, outreach, campus operations should be analyzed. Besides, it is important to integrate students’ and university representatives’ “voices” into research to have a better understanding of their attitude towards the principle of Sustainable Development and their perception of the activities, the university provides in the area of Sustainability.

This research aims to analyze the performance of Vytautas Magnus University in the area of Sustainable Development. Hence, the object of empirical research is Vytautas Magnus University.

The objectives of this part of this thesis are:
1. To conduct a survey among VMU stakeholders.
2. To analyze the VMU official documents.
3. To find out the gaps for improvement.

To be able to reflect all dimensions and stakeholders’ opinions in this research, the structure of the second part of the Final Master Thesis paper was divided into three parts. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied.

The first part is focused on the students’ awareness of Sustainable Development Goals. Students are important stakeholders of the university and the driving force of changes. Their awareness of the current problems could play an important role for the university, willing to integrate the principle of Sustainable Development into their practices. To find out the level of their understanding of the problems our world faces today and the awareness of the SDGs' goals, students of Vytautas Magnus University were surveyed. Thereby, primary data was obtained. The main body of the survey consists of the 17 multiple-choice questions related to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Besides personal information, the survey starts with the question of asking whether they have heard about SDGs before or not. The questions were composed based on the facts related to SDGs, published on the official website of the United Nations. The full list of the questions is presented in Annex 6. The main idea of the survey is borrowed from the Sulitest, which was described in the
Theoretical part. The difference between the questions in my survey and Sulitest is the nature of the question. This survey mostly consists of the numerical data with a big difference in the variants. For example, for the question related to SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation” I asked, “How many people worldwide do not have access to toilets or latrines around the world?” and the variants were 10 million, 208 million, and 2.4 billion. The variants were formed in the way it could help to reveal whether students understand the size of the problem or not.

The second part consists of the Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire, which was described in the first part of this FMT. To integrate the opinion of one of the most important stakeholders of university and obtain primary data, an anonymous questionnaire was sent to 22 representatives of 4 faculties: Faculty of Economics and Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Politics and Diplomacy, including faculties administration and lecturers, whose areas of research includes some elements of the principle of Sustainable Development. The choice of the faculties is based on the content of the provided study programs, which has more relation to the principle of Sustainable Development. Hence, the faculty representatives have a better understanding of SD. The questionnaire was transferred from pdf version, provided on the official website of the “Association of the university leaders for Sustainable future”, to the online format by using Google Forms application. In the original version of the questionnaire, there are 25 multiple choice and open questions in total from 7 sections. I decided to expand the number of open questions, thereby, 32 questions both multiple choice and open were presented in my research (Annex 7). It is important to note that open questions were answered voluntarily, and multiple-choice questions were mandatory.

The third part is the analysis of all available data, including official reports, policies, and information available on the official website of the university, related to the Vytautas Magnus University performance in terms of its commitment towards the principle of Sustainable Development. Thereby, secondary data was obtained. The two other universities, which were merged with VMU a few years ago, were not considered. Dimensions for analysis are taken from the Graphical Assessment of Sustainability in Universities (GASU), which has been described in the first part of this thesis. The main difference between GASU and the assessment in this research is that GASU provides the numerical assessment of each dimension. The aim of this part is not to give a specific grade for university performance. This part aims to analyze all possible data resources and to find out is there any gaps for improvement. Also, GASU assesses university based on the six sections: Profile, Social dimension, Economic dimension, Environmental dimension, Educational dimension, and Interlinked issues and dimensions. For my research, the section “Interlinked issues
and dimensions” is omitted, because it was not that necessary to find out the links between all dimensions. It worth noting that GASU is designed for assessment of those universities, which have already implemented the principle of Sustainable Development into their practices. In the case of VMU, which does not position itself as a “sustainable university”, the obtained data was not enough to conduct a complete assessment. Nevertheless, the secondary data, obtained during this analysis, provides an overall picture of the level of Vytautas Magnus University's commitment towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

2.2 VMU students’ Sustainability Literacy.

There are 58 respondents from 8 faculties participated in the survey. 7 replies from Faculty of Social Sciences, 12 from Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, 10 from Faculty of Humanities, 8 from Faculty of Natural Sciences, 8 from Faculty of Economics and Management, 6 from Faculty of Informatics, 4 from Faculty of Arts. Students from Faculty of Catholic Theology, Music Academy and Faculty of Law did not take part in the survey. Few participants preferred not to clarify their personal information. The average age range of the respondents is between 19-27. A prevailing number of the participant, namely 70.6%, are females. An almost equal percentage of the students, who have heard about the SDGs (51.7%) before and who have never heard about SDGs (43.1%). 5.1 % of the respondents preferred not to answer.

Figure 9 presents the distribution of the correct answers about 17 SDGs. It was found that the highest number of correct answers were related to the SDG 16 “Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions”. The question was about the most corrupted institutions and 47 respondents chose the right answer, which is “judiciary and police” (UN, n.d.). In contrast, the question related to the SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth” gained the least amount of right answers. The question was about the global unemployment rate in 2019 and 53.4% of respondents decided that it was 12%. In reality, the global unemployment rate in 2019 is about 5% (World employment Social Outlook, 2019). Also, the question related to the SDG 13 Climate action received the same number of correct answers.

To sum up, the acquired results show that there only three questions with an accumulated sum of correct answers are 10 or less (Figure 9). However, based on the awareness of the students of Vytautas Magnus University about SDGs implies that there are not that many courses, covering topics related to SDGs.
Figure 9. The results of the survey about the facts related to SDGs.

2.3 Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire for VMU representatives.

Unfortunately, the participation rate in this questionnaire is only 22%. 5 representatives from 3 faculties agreed to take part in this questionnaire, 2 from Faculty of Economics and Management, 2 from Social Sciences, and 1 from the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Nevertheless, important information was obtained through the open questions. It is worth noting that the obtained results are not distributed among faculties because this research aims to analyze university as one unit. However, in some parts, only faculties having courses with integrated elements of SD were taken into account.

The first section “Curriculum assessment” consists of 5 questions. The first was about respondent’s opinions about the extent of the courses, covering topics related to SD, presented in VMU programs. 3 respondents agreed on the “quite a bit” option. Whereas 2 other respondents have opposite answers: “a little” and “a great deal”. All the respondents provided the list of the courses, which are implemented on their faculties with the elements related to Sustainable Development. They are:

- Innovation economics.
- Welfare economics.
- Sustainable development.
- Principles of industrial ecology and sustainable development.
- Environmental policy and law.
- Environmental economics.
- Energy economics.
• Green economy and policy.
• Environmental science.
• Gender sociology.
• Global social work.
• Human rights and social work.
• Economic sociology.

One of the respondents has pointed out that most of the courses taught at the Faculty of Economics and Management are led by the understanding of the principle of Sustainable Development, including gender sociology, human rights, economic sociology, etc.

Answering the question about the courses, which respondents think are important to be taught, but are not included in their faculty’s program, there are different answers were obtained. One respondent thinks that there should be a separate “sustainability” compulsory course for everybody. Another respondent answered that it would be good to have such a course which could provide a general understanding of sustainability to the students. Also, there is an “eco-philosophy” course among answers, which is important to be mentioned, because it has a direct impact on the people’s responsible behavior.

One of the questions was related to the topics taught in VMU, which are related to the social and ecological systems. There was a list of 5 topics presented, and respondents should have chosen as many topics as they found VMU attempts to teach. The most frequently chosen topics are the sustainable economy and sustainable local communities; and the basic values and core assumptions. Other variants related to the campus functioning, sustainability in the regions, and employees’ treatment were selected once only.

The next section was “Research and Scholarship”. 60% of respondents agree that there is quite a bit amount of faculty research and scholarships were done and received related to the area of sustainability. The following examples of the faculty research topics in the area of sustainability participants aware of were provided. They are:
• Sharing economy.
• Value creation.
• Improving access to housing.
• Environmental behavior, attitudes, energy-related research.
• Demographic survey.
• Gender policies.

The same question was asked about the number of students’ research and scholarships
were done and received related in the area of sustainability. 2 responses were “quite a bit”, 2 “a little” and one participant responded that he does not know because he/she is not a student. Some examples of the student’s research related to sustainability topics, such as “Development towards the sustainable brand” and “Long-lasting value creation” were provided.

The next question was related to the percentage of the faculty members already teaching and who would like to teach sustainability-related courses. 2 opinions that there are 20% of faculty members, who teach or do research about sustainability topics, 1 opinion is 10% and 1 is 5%. Responding to the question of how many faculty members you think would be interested in teaching sustainability-related topics, 2 respondents think that it is 50%. Answering these two questions one of the faculty members claimed that it is hard to say, but he/she would like to teach sustainability-related topics. At the end of the “research and scholarship” section, there was a question related to the existence of any VMU center or institution working on sustainability issues. 3 participants think that there is such a center, one claimed there is no, and 1 person does not know about any. Those respondents, who said “yes”, provided such examples as research cluster and regional development.

Going to the “Operation” section, the list of different practices was provided to choose as many practices as the respondents think VMU has integrated. All the respondents agreed that university integrated energy conservation practices. Indeed, throughout the whole university, there is an automatic on and off the light system. Another 2 most popular answers among faculty representatives are waste reduction and waste recycling. Supposedly, the answers are based on the three-bin system, for plastic, paper, and organic waste VMU has. And the third popular answer is “University building renovation based on green design principles”. To make sure why respondents choose those answers, the next question was about the objects, which respondents noticed on the university campus, which make them think that it is committed to sustainability. The following variety of objects faculty members noticed:

1. Green policy.
2. Lots of green.
3. Aim to have well-preserved buildings that do not waste energy resources.
5. Asking not to print or use electricity when there is no special need for this.
6. Trash bins.
7. Labels at the electricity switches.

The main aim of the section “Faculty and Staff Development and Rewards” is to reveal whether the contribution of faculty members to sustainability is being considered by the head of the university or not. Most of the respondents (4) do not agree that the contribution to sustainability is
being considered for hire. The same number of respondents claimed that this factor has no impact on the faculty member’s tenure and promotion. Answering the questions related to the extent of the opportunities university provides to the faculty staff for their development in the area of sustainability, 2 respondents’ answered that there are no opportunities at all. Whereas, two other opposite answers were “quite a bit” and “great deal”.

The section “Outreach and Service” was designed to find out the level of university involvement in the activities related to the principle of Sustainable Development through the partnership at local, national, or international levels. 3 respondents think that there is little involvement and 2 others think it is “quite a bit”. Answering the question about the sustainability-related service Vytautas Magnus University provides, one of the respondents mentioned that due to the Covid-19 situation, the university proposes to use its digital premises in favor of society at large.

The “Students opportunity” section implies the variety of specific opportunities and settings related to the principle of SD, students of Vytautas Magnus University could take. 3 respondents think that there are no such opportunities, 1 thinks there is an orientation program on sustainability, and one believes that there are student groups with a focus on sustainability topics that exist. Regarding the graduates’ choice of the future career, 3 respondents do not agree with the statement that VMU motivates students for a career path related to the issues SDGs tackle to solve. One respondent claimed that the knowledge university provides is based and directed towards sustainability, encourages responsible attitudes. 2 respondents think that VMU encourages students to choose SD related careers through the pledge of social and environmental responsibility it gives. Also, most of the respondents do not know about any students group, which actively participate and promote the SD related topics and initiatives.

The last section of this questionnaire is “Administration, mission, and planning”. This section is related to the written statements, policies, which are integrated to the university, and its management structure, showing its commitment towards the principle of Sustainable Development. 60% of respondents think there is a little official document, showing VMU’s commitment. Few respondents chose “quite a bit” and “big deal” options. Providing the list of 10 possible initiatives or positions VMU provides for its commitment reinforcement, 3 respondents did not find any appropriate option. Whereas one of the respondents chose several options presented in Figure 10. Another respondent noticed that there is no need to enlarge bureaucracy. Asking respondents about any events taking place at VMU for the promotion of the principle of SD, respondents replied that University held conferences, guest speakers’ lectures, and international collaborations, without specification.
At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked about the strengths and weaknesses VMU has on the way towards integration of the principle of Sustainable Development. Among strong sides, respondents highlighted green policy, all-round education, and social responsibility. Among weak sides- no comprehensive attitude, little involvement of the community, and that sustainability is not integrated at managerial level.

Regarding the possible steps university could take to show its commitment to the Sustainable Development, respondents proposed to integrate the policy, regulating sustainability-related questions and another recommendation for staff is to be more responsible.

To sum up, the representatives of the 3 faculties participating in this questionnaire believe that VMU has taken several steps to show its commitment to the principle of SD. According to their responses, many courses include some elements related to SD and there are many teachers, who are willing to teach SD related courses. In terms of operations, there is plenty of initiatives university integrated on their campuses. However, academic staff’s contribution to SD related topics is not being considered for their promotion. Also, VMU does not pay much attention to the partnership for sustainability promotion and only little activities organized for student’s involvement. Despite the mentioned above weaknesses, the results of the questionnaire show that VMU has a big potential for the full integration of the principle of Sustainable Development in its practice.
2.4 Assessment of the official documents and data of Vytautas Magnus University related to the principle of Sustainable Development.

1. Profile analysis

a. Statement from the rector about the relevance of sustainability to the VMU and its strategy.

The VMU Annual Report 2019 starts with the Rector’s word. He highlighted that Western and Scandinavian countries apply a democratic and united approach towards common goals, such as quality education, human rights, social well-being, and global issues by promoting the power of the communities and social groups. Indeed, the individual approach will not be able to solve the problems our world faces today. Also, Juozas Augutis, the VMU rector, has pointed out that communication and networking are crucial for the world’s harmony. Thereby, VMU is not just an educational institution, it’s a socially active and responsible community. The integration with other universities helps VMU to expands its opportunities towards better social, economic, and cultural impact (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

b. University description.

Established in 1922, VMU is a Lithuanian public University, mainly funded by the government. Following a break, in 1989, the activity of this institution was re-established afterward, now being one of the top institutions in Lithuania (VDU, n.d).

According to the official website VMU position itself as a global university. 360 degrees education approach, that university applies, enables students to better understand the global issues and develop their critical thinking skills. Promoting democratic and liberal principles, VMU aims not only to provide quality knowledge to its students but also to grow confident members of the society, sharing their opinion (VDU, n.d.).

As a general structure, the University has 9 faculties (Faculty of Arts, Catholic Theology, Economics and Management, Humanities, Informatics, Law, Natural Sciences, Political Science and Diplomacy, Social Sciences). The structure of each faculty consists of several departments, providing overall around 90 different study programs. The list of departments of Natural Sciences, Economics, and Social Sciences faculties are presented in Table 2. The departments of other faculties could be found in Annex 5.
Table 2.

The departments of three VMU faculties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Natural Sciences</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Economics and Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Sciences;</td>
<td>Education Sciences</td>
<td>Economics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biochemistry &amp; Biotechnologies</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Management &amp; Marketing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Social work</td>
<td>Business Consulting &amp; Continuous Education Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the VMU official website (www.vdu.lt).

Today Vytautas Magnus University has around 10,000 students. These numbers can suffer some modifications, though, considering that in 2019 this institution merged with Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU) and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LUES) (VDU, n.d.).

Being a globally-oriented university, VMU welcomes students from all over the world. In 2019 there were more than 660 foreign full-time students from more than 60 countries. VMU degrees are in demand among students from countries such as China, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, India, etc. Moreover, 460 international students are coming by the exchange programs for partial studies (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

Table 3.

Number of full-time students accepted students and graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Full-time students</th>
<th>Accepted students</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4326</td>
<td>5670</td>
<td>6274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>2719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorial studies</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6456</td>
<td>8269</td>
<td>9739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the VMU Annual Report, 2019.
c. The scale of the VMU.

There are 1613 employees, working at Vytautas Magnus University. 820 of them are academic staff (78% with a degree), 793 nonacademic. Besides, there are 216 guest lecturers (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

The amount of expenses university spent in 2019 is around 51000 euros, which is around 25000 euros more in comparison with the expenses in 2018 (VMU Annual Reports, 2018,2019).

Table 4.

The percentage of the distribution of the expenses of 2019 among categories in comparison to 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>↑ 75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>↑ 11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>↑ 148.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material bases</td>
<td>↑ 96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and building renovation expenses</td>
<td>↑ 140.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social insurance and guarantee fund</td>
<td>↓ 140.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalties</td>
<td>↓ 140.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological assets</td>
<td>↓ 140.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>↑ 140.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from VMU Annual Reports, 2018-2019.

d. Awards received.

In 2019, the VMU representatives and members have received a big number of awards, but only a few of them are relevant to my research paper.

First, the prior rector of VMU was awarded the name of an honorary citizen of the city for its big contribution to the cultural, economic, and social well-being of people living in Kaunas (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

Also, the professor of VMU Dalia Leinarte was proposed to become a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UN (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

e. The governance structure of the VMU.

The top management of the university consists of three main bodies.
The first is the collegial body Council consisting of 11 representatives from different university’s stakeholder groups. The main responsibility is to approve the vision, mission, strategy, restructuring plan, which Rector suggests. Moreover, it has the right to assignment and reassignment of the rector and the right for approval of the election procedure. The management of financial and nonfinancial assets of Vytautas Magnus University is under the Council’s duty, too (VDU, n.d.).

Another collegial body is Senate, consisting of 71 students and scholars. The main responsibility of this body is to manage the academic affairs of the Vytautas Magnus University.

The third is a managerial body Rector, who can be selected for being the head of the university for 5 years maximum 2 times in a row (VDU, n.d.). Rector is the main representative of the university and his duties cover the regulation of the performance of the university in compliance with the law and university policies, orders issuing, control of the financial activities and proper usage of the university property, and control of providing a high level of education.

Rector is the part of the rectors' council, which consists of the heads of different academic divisions, including faculty deans (VDU, n.d.). This council oversees the preparation of university development plans, reports; coordination of the faculty activities; problems discussion related to the study, etc. (VDU, n.d.).

![Governance Structure Diagram](source: www.vdu.lt)

**Figure 11. The governance structure of the VMU.**

Besides all faculty presented in the previous section, there are 3 Academies (Music, Education, and Agriculture) and more than 10 different centers (including botanical gardens and other institutes) and extensions in Kaunas and Vilnius (VDU, n.d.).
**Mission, vision, codes of ethics, and principles relevant to economic, environmental, and social performance.**

**Vision**

The vision of the VMU is to be the modern university, standing by their liberal study system and opening the students’ creativeness. The liberal study system was integrated into the university to provide students all-round education and to give them a space for their personal choice. There are three categories of subjects for undergraduate students, named A, B, C (VDU, n.d.). The A category consists of fundamental subjects, divided into the 4 groups based on the nature of science. It also includes foreign language group. During students’ first 2 years of studies, they should choose one subject from each category. Category B consists of the subjects students choose based on their preferences. And C category consists of mandatory subjects, related to the major student take.

**Mission**

The VMU’s mission is to create a contribution to the local, state, and global culture and science development levels (VDU, n.d.).

It is important to note that the university highlights the importance of a socially active and responsible community and a sustainable environment for its mission and vision realization.

**Code of ethics**

All members of Vytautas Magnus University including academic and non-academic staff, students, and others should follow ethical norms, written in the Code of Ethics, which was updated and approved in 2017 (VMU Code of Academic Ethics, 2017). Code consists of three main principles and each of the principles is divided into 3 groups of norms and violation.

The first principle is Academic Freedom and Responsibility. It implies that everyone can share their opinion, participate in the researchers related to sustainable development principles, and academic staff should be qualified and seeking improvement. It is also noted how important it is to stay loyal to the university and be respectful towards the community. The university’s assets should not be damaged, as well as its image. In case of any arising problems, they should be first discussed inside of the university.

The second principle is academic integrity. It refers to the plagiarism prevention, avoidance of the position of the authors, who did not contribute to the research and inclusion of those who did. It also highlights the importance of personal and public interest’s division. For example, the misuse of the staff’s position or usage of university assets for personal benefits. Also, this principle implies fair assessments and fairness in general. The grades should be given based only on the students’ performance and the quality of their work and engagement, but not on the personal relation to the
student. Any kind of fraud, including cheatings on the exams or providing someone’s work as your own, is prohibited.

And the third principle is a personal relationship based on ethics, which is against any kind of discrimination, including language, race, beliefs; sexual harassment, etc. University assures the confidentiality of personal information and restricts the spread of someone’s personal information, without his/her permission.

In the case of arising infraction, the Commission of Ethics is responsible for regulating any issues with compliance to the Code of Ethics.

**Socially Active and Responsible Community**

The first objective of the VMU Strategic Plan for 2012–2020 is Socially Active and Responsible Community. To meet this objective university understands the importance of building a pleasant environment for students, where they can express their individuality, and which inspires them for creativity and personal growth. Moreover, this objective implies the development of ethical values, strong community integration, and plan of environment-friendly university implementation. It also includes the achievement of academic leadership by broadening horizons for students’ development; fostering VMU partnership with the community and taking part in government policy development, providing proposals for improvement (VMU Strategy, 2012).

**g. Precautionary approach or principle.**

In the official document of Vytautas Magnus University named “Manual for quality and the environment” dated by September 2013, is written that quality and environmental management system of the university is based on the international standards LST EN ISO 9001: 2008 and LST EN ISO 14001: 2005. The Code LST means that standards were harmonized according to the requirements of the Lithuanian government (Manual for quality and the environment, 2013). The ISO 9001 standard assures the quality of the services and knowledge provided by Vytautas Magnus University. While international standard ISO 14001 is designed to contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainable development (ISO, n.d.). However, after 2013 there were no updates and it remains under question whether university performs with compliance to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 or not.

**h. VMU stakeholders and their roles.**

According to the official VMU document “Manual for quality and the environment” the stakeholders are those people, participating in the process of value creation and influencing the activities of the university. There are several categories of stakeholders that have been defined. They are:

1. Students and their parents.
2. Alumni.
3. Academic staff.
4. Non-academic staff.
5. Business entities.
6. Lithuanians from all over the world.
7. Communities, government, and other organizations.

Ideally, all of the stakeholders participate in the universities’ practice towards Sustainable Development. In the same documents, it is noted that all VMU employees should be involved in quality and environmental management. Besides them, there are 2 main actors are defined. The first person, who is responsible for quality management and another responsible for environmental management. The list of their duties is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. The duties of the managers of quality management and environmental management.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Environmental management | Assuring that university staff understand the requirements of the environmental management and environmental policy and meet them.  
Controlling and preventing environmental dereliction  
Analysis of the performance and identification of the gaps.  
Control the integration of objectives and programs related to the environment.  
The organization of the internal training in compliance with ISO14001. |
| Quality management     | Internal audits control.  
Eliminating the non-compliance of the quality management system and the creation of prevention actions.  
Notifying top management about the areas of improvement.  
Stakeholders understanding.  
Communication with external stakeholders regarding problems related to quality management. |

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the VMU Manual for quality and the environment, 2013.
i. Memberships in associations or organizations and partnerships.

VMU is a partner of various local, state, and international organizations, such as Energy Security Centre, Global Lithuania’s leaders, AISEC, etc. (VDU, n.d.).

As a result of the networking between VMU, Embassy of Israel, Vilnius University, and VMU “Atžalyno” school students’ volunteering program named "Guide Star" was created. The project aims to motivate students, who have skills of social worker and psychologist, to become volunteers and help socially excluded children, studying in 3-6 grades (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

VMU needs to provide its graduate with the job, thereby contributing to the employment of Lithuania. For this reason, VMU signed an agreement with the Employment Service (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

Another international agreement was signed with the IP Capital Group. This cooperation aims to create a study program on the national level for education for children with disabilities. Also based on this program the teachers should be taught how to work with them, in the way everyone could be able to receive quality education (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

Vytautas Magnus University takes part in The European GreenLight Programme, which aims to minimize energy usage generated from inside and outside resources all over Europe, which could be one of the triggers for global warming prevention (VDU, n.d.).

2. Economic dimension

a. State financial support.

In 2019 VMU received around 31000 euros from the state budget to provide scholarships for social support and University name promotion. Moreover, the Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania has provided financial support for 114 students with disabilities for around 71367 euros. At the same time, for 48 students with disabilities, the Department of Disability Affairs partly covered the tuition fee for 8147 euros (VMU Annual Report, 2019).

b. Scholarships provided by the Universities’ fund.

University provided 102 scholarships for 12691 euros overall in 2019 from its funds. Other private investors and legal entities invested about 22658 euros for student’s support (VMU Annual Report, 2019). Also, 33 students with disabilities got financial aid from the University’s fund, 8 of them got a reduction of study cost, and 25 students with disabilities received a reduction of the accommodation fee (VMU Annual Report, 2019).
3. Social Dimension

a. Number of employees.

In the Annual reports, the only data is presented on the number of all employers and the percentage of academic staff having a Ph.D. degree. The information regarding an employment contract, region, gender division is missing.

![Employers](image)

**Figure 12. The number of employees in 2015-2019 yr.**

![Academic Staff With PhD Degree](image)

**Figure 13. The percentage of academic staff with a Ph.D. degree in 2015-2019 yr.**
b. Career development reviews.

All academic staff, who is giving lectures and seminars for the students receive feedback based on the survey, which the university conducts every semester. The numerical data regarding the results and measures for improvement was not found.

c. Diversity and Equal Opportunities.

This section of GASU could be assessed in the case the data about employees’ age and gender are provided. The annual reports of Vytautas Magnus University do not contain such information. It was found that on the university website the list of the faculties administration and heads of the departments is provided. Based on this information following results were obtained (Table 6). For the faculties of Informatics, Catholic Theology, and Arts the information was not found. For the faculty of Economics and Management, the information about heads of the departments was not found that is why only administration staff was considered.

Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Economics and Management</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Natural Sciences</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Social Sciences</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Humanities</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Law</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the VMU official website (www.vdu.lt).

From the table, it can be seen that there is no preference for a particular gender in the top management of the faculties. Overall, there are 4 faculties, who have a privileged number of women, and 3 faculties have more men.

d. Non-discrimination.

In the university code of ethics, it is mentioned that it prohibited to discriminate against
someone based on language, nationality, color, etc. (VMU Code of Academic Ethics, 2017).

e. Violence and intolerance.

GASU does not include this indicator, but due to existing data related to the violence and intolerance in the university and its relation to human rights, this indicator was included in my research.

VMU Student Representative Council, which is a part of the university structure, surveyed 499 students, studying at Vytautas Magnus University. The survey aimed to find out how do students feel themselves in the university environment and is there any negative situations they experienced. The results have shown that around 10% of the respondence experienced psychological violence from the VMU administration or lectures and 16.6% experienced bullying (VDU SA, n.d.).

4. Educational Dimension

a. Sustainable Development (SD) incorporation in the curricula.

Vytautas Magnus University study programs do not have separate courses particularly devoted to the principle of Sustainable Development. Going through the courses, which are taught in English, it was found that courses from 4 faculties (Economics and Management (FEM); Social Sciences (FSS); Political Science and Diplomacy (FPSD); Natural Sciences (FNS)) include elements related to SD. The following table presents the distribution of the courses, which includes elements of SD, based on the faculty and the SDGs, which are courses related to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Bachelor courses</th>
<th>Master courses</th>
<th>SDGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEM</td>
<td>• Economic Systems</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth; SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualification Practice in European Economy and Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Macroeconomics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Microeconomics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNS</td>
<td>• Environment and Development</td>
<td>• Environmental</td>
<td>SDG 6 Clean water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list of courses, containing elements related to SD.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPSD</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>SDG 13 Climate action; SDG 15 Life on land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population and Ecological Genetics</td>
<td>• Experimental Ecotoxicology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights and Democratization; International Communication and Global Perspectives; Conflict Resolution in Developing Countries; NGO and Philanthropy</td>
<td>Global Economy and International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO and Philanthropy</td>
<td>SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution; SDG 17 Partnership for the goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSS</td>
<td>Occupational Health Psychology</td>
<td>SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology of Deviance</td>
<td>SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender sociology</td>
<td>SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicts Management and Negotiation in Organization</td>
<td>SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Social Work: Reflective Practice for Justice and Peace</td>
<td>SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the table has been created by the author, based on the data from the VMU official website (www.vdu.lt).

5. **Environmental Dimension**

Most of the indicators in GASU, related to the environment, require numerical data, such as the amount of paper used at university, the amount of energy consumed, CO emissions indexes from car trips and other information. There is no such information in the VMU official documents and websites. After contacting the VMU academic staff, researching this area, it was found that there is no information available.

Nevertheless, on the VMU official website, it was found that there is a “Go green” project launched. It provides several simple initiatives, which could help students to be more attentive towards the environment.

The first initiative is related to the usage of personal cars. VMU highly encourages students to use public transport or personal bikes. The parking places are available for bikes right next to the
Another action, which Go green project supports is the usage of the personal cups for a drink. Paper recycling is another action university member could start. There are lots of printed materials, which could be recycled. Also, it has been noticed that downsizing the margins of the documents, could help to use less paper. By pointing out that more than 50% of Lithuania’s do not do sport, university members can improve this statistic by using stairs instead of the lift. The energy consumption could also be reduced if university members could always switch off the light when they do not use it (VDU, n.d.).

However, there is no information does this project still exists, and is there anybody responsible for the results measurement. That is why for the Environmental dimension there is a complete lack of information.

**2.5 Limits of the research and summary**

One of the limits of this research is the participation rate in the survey and questionnaire, which does not allow to get a broader picture of the university involvement in the practices related to SD. The reason could be their length and complexity. Some survey respondents have pointed out that the main difficulty they faced during the survey is the numerical questions, which require a longer time to think. Also, if the students’ emails will not be confidential data, the participation rate could be higher.

The low participation of the academic staff in the questionnaire could be due to the workload they have at the end of the academic year.

Overall, the obtained information cannot provide a full assessment of the performance of the Vytautas Magnus University in the area of sustainability. Even though GASU was designed for assessment of the university, several indexes were taken from the GRI standard, such as product responsibility, and were not relevant to the case of VMU.

The Profile dimension contains more complete information in comparison with four other dimensions. In the Economic dimension, there is a lack of information about labor wages, procurement policy principles, and the local hiring policy. For the social dimension, GASU provides many indexes to assess, which were not found among VMU official documents and on its official website. For example, for the employment index, there was no data regarding an employment contract, labor agreement, or collective bargaining agreement. The information about the responsible committee for health and safety at university, as well as data regarding the amount of time and number of employees, who did not work due to their health issues, is missing, too. Also, the data regarding the training programs dedicated to staff and the amount of time, they spend on the training is not available. For the Educational dimension information regarding the monitoring of the SD in the
content of the course, the amount of research dedicated to the dimensions of SD and money distribution for SD related research was not found. Also, the distribution of the courses, containing elements of SD was based only on those courses, which are taught in the English language, cause the translation of the content of courses taught in the Lithuanian language may not be accurate enough. The environmental section has a complete lack of required data.

The absence of the data in my research does not mean that it does not exist. The fact that most of the official documents are provided in the Lithuanian language could be the reason for the lack of some data. This limit leaves space for future research.

Based on the results acquired from the three parts, the following SWOT analysis was made (Table 8).

### Table 8. SWOT analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All-round education.</td>
<td>• Lack of data related to environmental impact collection and analysis system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interest to SD related initiatives among students and academic staff.</td>
<td>• Lack of information related to SD in the annual reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regular reporting system (annual reports).</td>
<td>• “Manual for quality and the environment” document is not updated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research conditions.</td>
<td>• No fosterage for the research in the area of SD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic staff with qualifications related to SD.</td>
<td>• Lack of separate courses and study programs devoted to SD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initiatives implemented on the campus.</td>
<td>• Lack of partnerships in sustainable development work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Courses with SD elements.</td>
<td>• Lack of written statements, showing VMU commitment to sustainability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Become the trigger to develop solutions for global problems.</td>
<td>• Complexity for assessment of all three integrated universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government financial aid for the integration of the principle of SD into university practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the variety of strengths the university has, the number of weaknesses is still big. In the next part, the solutions to transform these weaknesses into strengths will be provided. One of the important opportunities, which performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development could bring is to become the trigger to develop solutions for global problems. By providing the knowledge and facilities in the area of Sustainability, students and professors may implement this knowledge on practice and introduce projects, aligning with SDGs. Also, the image of the sustainable university could bring the perception of Vytautas Magnus University among the external and internal stakeholders as the university, creating a positive impact on the economy, environment, and society. The threat is that collection and assessment of the data from the three merged universities may be a complex process, requiring a big amount of time.
III. THE SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT THE PERFORMANCE OF VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The analysis of the VMU commitment level towards the principle of Sustainable Development found out several areas for improvement. In this part of the thesis, solutions to fill the revealed gaps are provided. The solutions are grouped into 7 sections: management approach; data transparency; operations; education and research; facilities for students; partnership and community outreach; assessment and improvement.

The process of solutions development for improving the performance of Vytautas Magnus University towards the principle of Sustainable Development is presented in Figure 14.

Figure 14. The process of solutions development for VMU performance improvement in the area of SD.
3.1 The management approach

Although Rector highlighted the importance of building a socially active and responsible community and it is one of the universities’ strategic goals, the means of achieving this goal are still blurred.

The documents named “Manual for quality and the environment”, clearly shows that VMU performs in compliance with international standards ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Moreover, the duties of the people, responsible to control this compliance, has been described in the same document. The issue is that “Manual for quality and the environment” has been updated 7 years ago and it still unknown whether it is still valid or not. Based on this fact, the first solution is to update all relevant documents or if the document is not valid anymore, the university management should solve this issue by aligning the VMU strategy with international standards, ensuring its stakeholders that VMU provides quality service with the effective environmental management system.

The integration of the principle of Sustainable Development into the vision and mission of the university is also highly important because it represents the sustainable direction of the university’s strategy. The more expressions, related to SD, will be mentioned in the university mission, the higher ranking it will have in terms of its commitment towards sustainable Development (Lopez & Martin, 2018). Besides the promotion of honesty, democratic principles, and the rise of socially active citizens, the VMU mission and vision do not include other terms related to SD. Thereby, incorporating sustainability in its vision and mission approved by its Council could become the first step towards VMU's sustainable strategy development.

Besides, VMU can devote a column in its Annual Reports for the achievements in the sustainability area.

The analysis of university documents revealed a lack of information for the environment dimension. The Rector and academic staff of the university could prepare the Declaration of Commitment to Environmental Responsibility and appoint the Sustainability Council, consisting of the same members from the Rector’s Council; the academic staff, whose qualification is relevant to sustainability; and non-academic staff, responsible for sustainable operations, for instance, green purchasing coordinator (Figure 15). Thereby, top management of the university, faculty administration, the representative of the Student’s Council, and others could build a solid foundation for the integration of the principle of Sustainable Development into Vytautas Magnus University practice and its maintenance. This Council could coordinate all initiatives VMU takes for the improvement of the level of its commitment towards the SD and the efficiency of the implemented policies. It could also be responsible for the requesting fund for the projects, related to Sustainability, and ensure that these projects run smoothly. The representatives of the council could become the
academic staff engaged in the work related to SD. After the board of Sustainability Council will be defined, the first initiative this Council could start with is embedding the vision and mission with the focus on Sustainability.

The orientation program on sustainability for new members of the Sustainability Council could be developed as well.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 15. The governance structure of VMU with embedded Sustainability Council.**

Also, the special button could be created on the VMU official portal for submitting any concerns or advice for improvement for all university stakeholders. For instance, if a student experience any psychological violence and would like to stay anonymous he/she can post everything in detail there.

Besides, to control and collect data related to the impact of VMU on the environment, the Environmental Coordinator for each faculty could be appointed.

### 3.2 Data transparency

The analysis conducted in this thesis revealed a certain level of VMU commitment towards the principle of SD. However, the lack of some data prevents to provide an exact numerical extent
to which VMU is committed to SD. To acquire the complete result from Graphical Assessment of Sustainability in Universities VMU should provide the following data, which it could have.

**Economic dimension**
- The average salary of the staff and the payroll basis.
- The principle of procurement policies and rules.

**Social Dimension**
- The proportion of the staff based on their age and gender.
- Information about the programs related to employees’ health and safety.
- The data regarding the absence of employees due to health issues.

**Educational Dimension**
- The number of courses with embedded elements of the principle of SD.
- The number of researches related to Sustainable Development.
- The number of students engaged in research related to Sustainable Development.
- The number of academic staff carrying out research related to Sustainable Development.

### 3.3 Operations

To improve its performance in the area of Sustainable Development, VMU could implement water conservation practices and green purchasing from the companies committed to the principle of Sustainable Development. For instance, buying recycled items for efficient office operations or buying from local producers, reducing environmental impact. For this reason, a Green Purchasing Coordinator could be appointed.

To fill the gap in the availability of the data related to the environmental dimension, certain operations could be integrated. Each faculty could control the amount of the office paper used and provide a particular shelf for the collection of those papers, which has been used from one side only. Thereby, academic staff could print the materials for students on those papers, and anyone, who needs to print for their own needs could use that paper. Another initiative the university could implement is a measurement system of the total amount of waste produced and the percentage of recycled one. This could be achieved by a particular agreement with the waste company, which could weight waste produced at VMU. These indexes will be useful not only for the GASU assessment but also to control the progress of the amount of recycled waste. For the same reasons, the energy conservation program could be implemented with the measurement system for energy consumption control.
The environmental impact caused by the transportation of any items for the university needs could be estimated as well. Moreover, it often happens that VMU academic staff traveling for business or academic purposes. The CO2 emissions from these trips could be estimated as well.

3.4 Education and Research

The analysis revealed that there are many courses which include elements related to Sustainable Development. However, there was not found a course dedicated entirely to Sustainable Development. This course could be added for the list of introductory courses (group A) and become one of the compulsory subjects to take. The survey among students showed that there are many of them, who have never heard about Sustainable Development Goals. This course could raise the students’ awareness of the problems our world faces today, which could become a trigger for their solutions. In addition, before and after this course the knowledge of the students could be assessed via Sulitest. Also, the Sulitest results of the VMU students could be compared with students’ results from other universities from all over the world.

Besides a course related to SD, the university could launch an entire program devoted to the principle of Sustainable Development. Being the partner of Louvain Catholic University, which has an integrated program devoted to Sustainability, VMU could apply the same program model. The name of the program related to Sustainability at Louvain School of Management is “Corporate Sustainability Management” and it consists of the core managerial courses, such as value chain, finance, human resources management, marketing, entrepreneurship, etc., with integrated Sustainability concept (UCLouvain, n.d.). Considering that at the Faculty of Economics and Management at Vytautas Magnus University all these core courses are taught, the study program related to Sustainability could be launched there.

Moreover, the results of the questionnaire among academic staff have shown that many teachers would possibly like to teach courses related to Sustainability. There are 2 main preconditions for the realization of the study program related to Sustainability at VMU. First, the willingness of the professors teaching those core concepts at the Faculty of Economics and Management to enhance their knowledge in the sustainability area. For this reason, university management should develop a recognition system for faculty members, contributing to the principle of Sustainable Development. For instance, engagement in activities related to SD could be considered for staff promotion. Secondly, the VMU should provide them with all the necessary means for their knowledge enhancement. For example, the university could launch a special teacher exchange program between university partners. Under this program, the professors with a qualification in the sustainability area could become mentors for VMU teachers. Also, the establishment of the research
center dedicated to sustainability issues could motivate professors to be more engaged in the topics related to SD. The easier way is to hire teachers with qualifications in the Sustainability area.

In addition, VMU could include the data related to the number of courses with integrated elements of SD and the number of researches conducted in the same area in its annual report.

### 3.5 Facilities for involving students in the initiatives related to SD.

The analysis has shown that VMU does not pay much attention to encourage its students to participate in SD related initiatives. The encouragement could motivate them to contribute more to the development of the solutions for the problems, which SDGs aim to tackle. For this, Vytautas Magnus University could consider students’ achievements in the SD related area for the scholarship provision, tuition fee reduction, or for the exchange program participation. Besides, the university could encourage the graduates to choose their future workplace based on the company’s relation towards Sustainable Development by organizing job-fairs with sustainable companies or by providing the list of the career or internship opportunities in the companies with sustainability principles on the VMU career center website.

The result of the questionnaire has also shown that VMU dormitories are not sustainable. They could be renovated with the principle of Sustainable Development. The simplest thing that could be done is the three-bin system for the separation of waste. The research conducted by the office for Sustainability of Western Michigan University revealed that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption are the main factors of sustainable dormitories (wmich.edu). VMU could incorporate a green building rating system called LEED. The LEED certification system provides a variety of solutions, including design, construction, and maintenance for buildings, which are planned to be built or renovated based on green principles. However, the price for such pleasure is high. It depends on the type of service and the size of the building. For the design and construction certification review the price for the building with a size of less than 23000 m² is a minimum 3500$. Besides, there is a registration fee and a precertification fee, which is in total 6500$ (USGBC, n.d.). Considering that university is mainly funded by the government and the Lithuanian government is highly interested in the initiatives related to Sustainable Development, VMU has all potential to incorporate LEED building systems for their dormitories. Ideally, all VMU campuses could be renovated based on the LEED certification system.

### 3.6 Partnership and Community outreach

Throughout previous sections, different initiatives for internal community involvement have been presented. They are orientation programs on sustainability for new members; recognition system
for faculty members, contributing to the principle of Sustainable Development; development of the encouraging system for students' participation in the initiatives related to SD, etc.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, there is a little involvement of VMU into work related to external community outreach. This could be achieved through collaborations or relationship development at the local, national, and international levels.

Considering partnership on the regional level, VMU has all potential to collaborate with schools by providing interesting presentations about the principle of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals. Thereby incoming freshmen will have an understanding of the principle of SD.

On the national level, VMU can become a platform for collaboration of Lithuanian enterprises committed to the principle of Sustainable Development. Events, conferences, such as the Ted conference, and guest lectures with the representatives from Lithuanian enterprises, which strategy is aligned with SDGs, organized on the campuses of Vytautas Magnus University could be beneficial for both, students and businessmen. Inspired by the company’s stories and mission, students would consider them for their future workplace. Besides getting qualified workers, enterprises could make connections with other companies for future partnerships.

The Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) is a great opportunity for Vytautas Magnus University for international cooperation with more than 300 partners, which are united by one aim to promote the principle of SD and the work towards the fulfillment of 17 SDGs. HESI was developed by the UN agencies to provide Higher Education Institutions the space for collaboration towards the achievement of SDGs by exchanging knowledge and experiences (UN, n.d.). This membership will allow Vytautas Magnus University to align its performance with the Sustainable Development goals, develop a plan for incorporating courses related to SD into study programs, encourage students for a contribution towards the principle of SD, networking with other universities and taking best practices from them.

### 3.7 Assessment and Improvement.

The last, but not least step for integration of the principle of Sustainable Development into VMU practices is the constant assessment of the university performance in the area of Sustainability and its continuous improvement. Without assessment it is hard to identify the areas for improvements, hence, the continuous approach is unlikely to be achieved.

After the analysis of 19 Sustainability assessment tools, Lozano et al. (2018) came up with the conclusion that the main limitations of these tools, except GASU, is that they do not assess the impact of the higher education institution outside institutional borders. Nevertheless, the GASU
assessment tool is quite complicated to be implemented for the Vytautas Magnus University at the beginning of its journey, because it requires a big amount of data. Vytautas Magnus University has several options to decide whether is it better to choose one of the existing tools, develop its own tool, or to adjust the existing tool to the VMU conditions. On the initial stages of its work towards integrating SD into VMU practices, the SWOT analysis could be developed.

Apart from the assessment, it is crucial to implement the PDCA approach described in the first part of this thesis. This approach ensures an ongoing process of continuous improvement and successful performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

4.8 Summary

To sum up, all mentioned above sections for improvement could be integrated into the Sustainable University Model (SUM) (Figure 16), which has been described in the theoretical part. Two phases “Vision” and “Mission”, presented in SUM, are merged into one phase “Management approach”. Sustainability Committee has been replaced by the Sustainability Council, which responsibilities have been described in the “Management approach” section. The “Data transparency” and “Assessment” phases have been added.

![Figure 16. Transformed Sustainable University Model.](image)

All solutions from these sections could be divided into short-term and long-term goals based on the time duration for their implementation (Table 9).
Table 9. The goals for integration the principle of SD into VMU practices

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<td>• The study program dedicated to SD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The establishment of the research center dedicated to sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The recognition system for faculty members, contributing to the principle of Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ opportunities</strong></td>
<td>• The development of the system for students’ encouragement to participate in initiatives related to SD.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sustainable Dormitories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership and Community Outreach</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Assessment and improvement</strong></td>
<td>• Development of own assessment tool</td>
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<td>• Incorporating existing assessment tool</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>In terms of the Management approach, the 3 goals require a longer time for implementation, and 4 could be achieved in a shorter period. If VMU still operates following ISO standards, the update of the “Manual for quality and the environment” could be done shortly. However, if this document is not valid anymore, the compliance procedure may take much more time. The development of the</strong></td>
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Declaration of Commitment to Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability Council are long procedures as well. In contrast, the integration of SD into VMU’s mission and vision and appointment of a qualified person for the Environmental coordinator position does not require a big amount of time. Also, the creation of the button on the VMU portal for submission of concerns and advice related to the principle of SD is easily achievable for university IT specialists. It is also easy to dedicate a special place for achievements in the area of sustainability in the VMU annual reports.

Regrading data transparency, the available information described above, which is required for a full sustainability level assessment for the Social, Economic, and Educational Dimensions, and is not presented in VMU reports, could be analyzed and added in a short time. Whereas, obtaining all data related to the Environmental dimension may require much more time.

In terms of operations, water conservation practices and green purchasing initiatives require a big amount of work and time. The green purchasing coordinator could be appointed in a short time.

In the education and research area for improvement, the establishment of the entire study program and research Centre dedicated to Sustainability is a complex process, which is hard to achieve in a short period in comparison to the integration of just one course. The development of a recognition system for faculty members, contributing to the principle of Sustainable Development requires a longer time as well.

The development of an encouragement system for students’ participation in initiatives related to SD requires a certain work and investigation, which cannot be done in a short time. The dormitories' renovation for making them sustainable is a labor-intensive process, which requires not only a big amount of time but a huge financial investment as well.

Building partnerships on the regional and national levels requires less time rather than building partnerships on the national level. To become a member of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative VMU should prove a certain level of its commitment towards Sustainable Development Goals.

Assessment and Control are ongoing processes, which a priori cannot be short-term.
CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, the concept of Sustainable Development is vital to be implemented at Higher Educational Institutions, because this a powerful platform for increasing students’ awareness and their understanding of the principle of Sustainable Development. The universities’ involvement in the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals is important for responsible and prosperous life in a limited world.

The theoretical analysis revealed that the principle of Sustainable development requires a balance between economic, environmental, and social aspects, which is crucial for peoples’ well-being. The economic pillar implies that people should use resources wisely to satisfy the needs of the next generations. The environmental pillar assumes the reduction of the negative impact on the environment. And social aspect covers such topics as human rights, equality, access to opportunities, and well-being in general. All these dimensions are strongly correlated to 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which act as a trigger for the solution to the problems our world faces today.

It was found that there are four dimensions, the university should stress its attention on while implementing the strategy towards Sustainable Development. They are education (curricular), research, campus operations, and community outreach. The same dimensions were used for the development of the Sustainable University Model, which consists of 4 phases plan for the creation of strategy towards sustainability. The model emphasizes the continuous improvement approach, which is crucial for efficient performance towards being sustainable. Besides, several initiatives university could implement for its strategy development towards the principle of Sustainable Development, were presented.

In the second analytical part of this thesis integrative approach was applied by collecting primary data from the VMU main stakeholders and the collection of the secondary data from the VMU official sources. The results have shown that even many VMU students, who took part in the survey were not aware of SDGs, they understand the sizes of the problems SDGs tackle to solve. Considering questionnaire results, despite that VMU provides little opportunities for research and development in the area of sustainability, the academic staff believe that VMU has all potential for integration of the principle of Sustainable Development into its practices. The analysis of the official data revealed that there is a complete lack of information related to the impact of Vytautas Magnus University's performance on the environment. According to the academic staff’s opinion from the center of Environmental Research, this data was not monitored and collected. Besides, for other sections, some information is not available.
Based on the findings from the second part, the third part provides solutions for the gaps that analysis has identified. The solutions were grouped into 7 sections:

- Management approach;
- Data transparency;
- Operations;
- Education and research;
- Facilities for students;
- Partnership and Community Outreach;
- Assessment and improvement.

They have been integrated into the Sustainable University Model. From these solutions, several goals have been identified and distributed based on the length of their accomplishment. Considering these goals, Vytautas Magnus University has all potential to increase its commitment level towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

As it was mentioned earlier, the lack of data in the analysis part does not mean its absence. That is why the provided analysis cannot reveal a certain level of VMU commitment towards the principle of SD. Therefore, not all gaps were found out. This limit leaves space for future research. This research could be made faster if the solutions proposed in the third part of this thesis will be implemented in practice.

To improve the university performance towards the principle of Sustainable Development the integrated approach should be applied. It means a university should improve its all-round performance towards SD. The first step, a university should start with, is the development of mission and vision, reflecting its intentions towards being sustainable. Also, it is important to appoint the Sustainability Committee, responsible for setting up policies, targets, and goals related to the principle of Sustainable Development. The ongoing assessment is crucial for understanding whether the university performs following its new strategy or not. In-depth analysis can help to reveal the current level of university commitment towards the principle of Sustainable Development and find out gaps for improvement. Identified gaps could become the basement for the improvement of the university strategy towards the principle of Sustainable Development.

Sustainable strategy is a long-lasting strategy that is why only constant assessment and continuous improvements could allow the university to maintain its direction towards the principle of Sustainable Development.
REFERENCES


ANNEXES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Graphical Assessment of Sustainability in Universities - “a graphical assessments of a HEI sustainability efforts, facilitating their analysis, longitudinal comparison, and benchmarking against other HEIs, with respect to: Profile; Economic dimension; Environmental dimension; and Social dimension, as well as the Educational dimension and Inter-linking issues and dimensions (Lozano et al, 2013).”

ISO - “an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 164 national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges (ISO, n.d.).”

Mission - “a pursuit of a goal that is unique to an organization’s competitive advantage—its specific strengths and offerings relative to competitors—while again emphasizing its values (Bowen, 2018).”

Stakeholder - “a party that has an interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business. The primary stakeholders in a typical corporation are its investors, employees, customers and suppliers. However, the modern theory of the idea goes beyond this original notion to include additional stakeholders such as a community, government or trade association (Chen, 2020).”

Sustainability Council - “the body, responsible for stimulation and coordination of the sustainable development projects, and for link the dissipative activities of departments, as well as strengthen collaboration between them (Lukman&Glavic, 2007).”

Sustainable Development - “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).”

Sustainable Development Goals - “a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice (UN, n.d.).”

Sustainability Literacy - “the knowledge, skills and mindsets that allow individuals to become deeply committed to build a sustainable future and that help them to make informed and effective decisions to this end (Sulitest, n.d.).”

Sustainable University - “a higher educational institution, as a whole or as a part, that addresses, involves and promotes, on a regional or a global level, the minimization of negative environmental, economic, societal, and health effects generated in the use of their resources in order to fulfill its
functions of teaching, research, outreach and partnership, and stewardship in ways to help society make the transition to sustainable life-styles (Velazquez et al., 2006).”

**Triple Bottom Line-** “an approach, focusing on economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social justice (Elkington, 1997).”

**Vision-** “a goal state embodying along-term ambition of where an organization would like to be in the future relative to its competitors (Bowen, 2018).”
## Table 1

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Source: Velazquez et al., 2006
# Annex 4

## Table 3

**GASU guideline overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Source: Lozano et al., 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
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<td>Market presence</td>
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<td>“Tuition fees and Income”</td>
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<td>Water Biodiversity</td>
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<td>Emissions, effluents, and waste</td>
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<td>Labor Practices and Decent Work</td>
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<td>Child labor</td>
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<td>Forced and compulsory labor</td>
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<td>Bribery and Corruption</td>
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<td>Political contribution</td>
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<td>Research in general</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Community activity and service learning</td>
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<td>Relations among all dimensions”</td>
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### Annex 5

#### Table 4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Catholic Theology</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Art history&amp; Criticism</td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Foreign Language, Literary and</td>
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<td>Theater Studies</td>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Translation Studies</td>
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<td>Contemporary art</td>
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<td>Cultural Studies</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Lithuanian Studies</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Informatics</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Politics Science and Diplomacy</th>
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<td>Applied Informatics</td>
<td>Public Law</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
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<td>Mathematics &amp; Statistics</td>
<td>Private Law</td>
<td>Regional Studies</td>
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<td>Philosophy and Social Critique</td>
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<td>Public Communication</td>
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Source: VDU, n.d. (www.vdu.lt)
Annex 6

The results of the survey about the facts related to SDGs

How many people in the world still live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US$1.90 a day?
38 / 58 correct responses

- More than 5 million people: 2 (3.4%)
- More than 50 million people: 18 (31%)
- More than 700 million people: 38 (65.5%)

How many percent of deaths of children under five, caused by poor nutrition, happen each year?
21 / 58 correct responses

- 9%: 7 (12.1%)
- 15%: 30 (51.7%)
- 45%: 21 (36.2%)
How do you think maternal mortality has increased or decreased since 2000?
34 / 58 correct responses

- Increased: 24 (41.4%)
- Decreased: 34 (58.6%)

How many youths worldwide lack basic mathematics and literacy skills?
21 / 58 correct responses

- 13 million: 6 (10.3%)
- 125 million: 31 (53.4%)
- √ 617 million: 21 (36.2%)

In how many countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working?
19 / 58 correct responses

- 5: 11 (19%)
- 11: 28 (48.3%)
- √ 18: 19 (32.8%)
How many people worldwide lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines?
21 / 58 correct responses

- 10 million: 7 (12.1%)
- 208 million: 30 (51.7%)
- √ 2.4 billion: 21 (36.2%)

How many people rely on wood, coal, charcoal, or animal waste for cooking and heating?
26 / 58 correct responses

- 51 million: 8 (13.8%)
- 700 million: 24 (41.4%)
- √ 3 billion: 26 (44.8%)

The global unemployment rate in 2019?
6 / 58 correct responses

- √ around 5%: 6 (10.3%)
- around 12%: 31 (53.4%)
- around 20%: 21 (36.2%)
Basic infrastructure like roads, information and communication technologies, sanitation, electrical power, and water remains scarce in many developing countries. Is this statement true or false?

38 / 58 correct responses

- True: 38 (65.5%)
- False: 20 (34.5%)

How many times more likely children to die before their fifth birthday living in poor regions than children from rich areas in developing countries?

9 / 58 correct responses

- 3 times more likely: 9 (15.5%)
- 10 times more likely: 37 (63.8%)
- 50 times more likely: 12 (20.7%)

The world’s cities occupy just 3 percent of the Earth’s land, but account for 60-80 percent of energy consumption and 75 percent of carbon emissions. Is this statement true or false?

43 / 58 correct responses

- True: 43 (74.1%)
- False: 15 (25.9%)
How much percent of the world’s 250 largest companies are now reporting on sustainability?
10 / 58 correct responses

Oceans have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished and sea level has risen. Is this statement true or false?
47 / 58 correct responses

Oceans serve as the world’s largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on the oceans as their primary source of protein. Is this statement true or false?
39 / 58 correct responses
How many hectares of land are lost per minute due to drought and desertification?
16 / 58 correct responses

- 3 hectares: 16 (27.6%)
- 9 hectares: 26 (44.8%)
- √ 23 hectares: 16 (27.6%)

Which institution(s) most affected by corruption?
47 / 58 correct responses

- Educational: 3 (5.2%)
- Medicine: 8 (13.8%)
- √ Judiciary and police: 47 (81%)

How many people do not use the Internet worldwide?
13 / 58 correct responses

- More than 500 thousand people: 0 (0%)
- More than 60 million: 31 (53.4%)
- √ More than 4 billion: 13 (22.4%)
- 60 million: 9 (15.5%)
- 4 billion: 4 (6.9%)
- 500 thousand people: 1 (1.7%)
Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire for VMU teachers.

“Curriculum assessment”

1. “Indicate the extent to which your institution offers courses that address topics related to sustainability. (Such topics could include globalization and sustainable development; environmental policy and management; environmental philosophy; nature writing; land ethics and sustainable agriculture; urban ecology and social justice; population, women, and development; sustainable production and consumption; and many others.)”
   - “do not know
   - none
   - a little
   - quite a bit
   - a great deal”

2. “Please list any courses you are aware of in which such topics are taught?”

3. “What courses do you regard as essential that are not being taught?”

4. “The shift to sustainability requires critical thinking about the role of the institution in its social and ecological systems. Please choose which of the following topics VMU attempts to teach its students.”
   - “how the campus functions in the ecosystem (e.g. its sources of food, water, energy, as well as the endpoint of waste and garbage).”
   - “a sense of place: the natural features, biota, history, and culture of the region”
   - “the institution’s contribution to a sustainable economy and sustainable local communities”
   - “how the institution views and treats its employees (such as staff and faculty involvement in decision-making, their status and benefits)”
   - “the basic values and core assumptions that shape the content and methods of the academic disciplines”
   - “none”

5. “If you have any comments related to the previous question, you can leave it here.”

“Research and scholarship”

1. “Estimate the amount of faculty research or scholarship being done in the various disciplines in the area of sustainability (for example, renewable energy, sustainable building design, ecological economics, indigenous wisdom and technologies, population and development, total environmental quality management, etc.).”
2. “Please list any faculty research or scholarly activities you are aware of related to sustainability?”

3. “Estimate the amount of student research or scholarship being done in the various disciplines in the area of sustainability.”

4. “Please list any student research or scholarly activities you are aware of related to sustainability.”

5. “In your opinion, what percentage of faculty members teach or do research on sustainability issues?”

6. “In your opinion, what percentage of faculty members do you estimate would be interested in teaching and research on sustainability issues?”

7. “Does VMU have established multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary structures (such as an institute or center) for research, education, and policy development on sustainability issues?”

8. “If yes, please describe”

“Operations”

1. “Please choose those practices which you think are implemented in VMU?”

- “Building construction and renovation based on green design principles (LEED, etc.)”
- “Energy conservation practices (including lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation, windows, etc.)”
- “Waste reduction practices (such as e-communications, double-sided copying, “waste-free lunch” program, etc.)”
- “Recycling of solid waste (including paper, plastic, metal, e-waste, etc.)”
• “Sustainable food program (such as local, organic, and/or fair trade food)”
• “Water conservation practices (including efficient toilets, minimal irrigation, harvested rainwater, etc.)”
• “Sustainable landscaping (emphasizing Integrated Pest Management practices, native plants, biodiversity, minimizing lawn, etc.)”
• “Sustainable transportation program (including bicycle/pedestrian-friendly systems, carpools, bus pass programs, biodiesel projects, etc.)”
• “Green purchasing from environmentally and socially responsible companies (products are non-toxic, water and energy conserving, etc.)”
• “Reduction of toxic materials and radioactive waste”
• “Environmental or sustainability assessments/audits”
• “None”

2. “What do you see when you walk around campus that tells you this is a university committed to sustainability?”

“Faculty and Staff Development and Rewards”

1. “In your opinion to what extent do criteria for hiring recognize faculty member contributions to sustainability (in scholarship, teaching, or campus and community activities)?”
   • “don’t know
   • none
   • a little
   • quite a bit
   • a great deal”

2. “To what extent do criteria for tenure and promotion recognize faculty member contributions to sustainability?”
   • “don’t know
   • none
   • a little
   • quite a bit
   • a great deal”

3. “To what extent does VMU provide significant faculty and staff development opportunities to enhance understanding, teaching, and research in sustainability?”
   • “don’t know
   • none
   • a little
   • quite a bit
   • a great deal”

4. “Please describe recent faculty or staff development opportunities in these areas.”

“Outreach and service”

1. “A sustainable institution supports sustainable community development in its local area and in the surrounding region through projects and partnerships with primary and secondary
schools, local governments, and businesses. It may also seek international cooperation in solving global environmental justice and sustainability challenges through conferences, student/faculty exchanges, etc. To what extent is VMU involved in sustainable development work through formal partnerships or relationships at regional, national or international levels?”

• “do not know
• none
• a little
• quite a bit
• a great deal”

2. “What local sustainability-related community service, service-learning and/or internship programs exist at VMU?”

“Student opportunities”

1. “Universities committed to sustainability provides students with specific opportunities and settings. Please choose which of the following are present on your campus?”

• “Student Environmental Center”
• “Ecology House or Sustainable Dormitory”
• “Orientation program(s) on sustainability for students”
• “Student Group(s) with an environmental or sustainability focus”
• “None”
• “Other”

2. “How does VMU encourage students to consider sustainability issues when choosing a career path?”

• “job fairs and career counseling focused on work in sustainable enterprises”
• “pledge of social and environmental responsibility”
• “none”
• “other”

3. “To what extent are student groups across campus directly involved in sustainability initiatives?”

• “don’t know
• none
• a little
• quite a bit
• a great deal”

4. “Please describe which groups are most involved and how?”
“Administration, mission, and planning”

1. “In your opinion to what extent do the formal written statements describing the purposes and objectives of the VMU reflect a commitment to sustainability? (Such statements include policy and planning documents, annual reports, brochures, catalogs, etc.)”

   - “don’t know
   - none
   - a little
   - quite a bit
   - a great deal”

2. “Can you provide an example of such a statement?”

3. “Institutions committed to sustainability create certain positions and committees, as well as engage in certain practices, which reinforce this commitment. Please check (√) which of the following are present on your faculty campus.”

   - “Environmental Council or Task Force”
   - “Environmental Coordinator”
   - “Dean of Environmental Programs or Director of Sustainability Programs”
   - “Energy Officer”
   - “Green Purchasing Coordinator”
   - “Institutional Declaration of Commitment to Sustainability/Environmental Responsibility”
   - “Orientation programs on sustainability for faculty and staff”
   - “Socially responsible investment practices and policies”
   - “Regularly conducted environmental audits”
   - “None”

4. “How is a concern for, and commitment to, sustainability gave broad visibility on your campus (for example, with guest speakers, conferences, Earth Day celebrations, etc.)? Please describe key events that have happened in last years?”

5. “How do you think what is the greatest strength of VMU in terms of sustainability (if you know one)?”

6. “Please describe the greatest weaknesses of your institution in terms of sustainability (if you know one)”

7. “What “next steps” towards sustainability do you feel ought to be taken?”

Source: ULSF, n.d. (ulsf.org/sustainability-assessment-questionnaire/)