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DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE FOR STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Description of Procedure for Study Quality Assurance at Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter – the Description) shall govern quality assurance during the process of designing, implementation and development of first and second cycle, integrated and professional studies at Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter – the University or VMU).
2. The Description is an integral part of the University's internal study quality assurance system, and it shall include study quality assessment and quality improvement based on the assessment outcomes.
3. The Description has been prepared in accordance with the documents of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), national and institutional documents governing studies: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Procedure of the External Assessment and Accreditation of Studies, VMU Statute, VMU Study Regulations and other legal acts.
4. Study quality assurance shall be based on the University's responsibility for study quality and its improvement, systematically performed assessment data, involvement of all stakeholders (students, teachers, administration, alumni, employers, etc.) into study quality development processes, clear and transparent sharing of responsibility, and creation of favourable environment for quality assurance.
5. If the study programme is carried out remotely, it shall also comply with the requirements provided in VMU Description of Procedure for Distance and Blended Study Organisation and documents related to it.
6. The concepts used in the Description shall comply with the concepts used in the aforementioned documents.

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE PROCESS OF STUDY PROGRAMME DESIGNING

7. New study programmes shall be designed at the University in accordance with legal acts of the EHEA, the Republic of Lithuania and the University for each cycle and form.
8. The preparation of new study programmes may be initiated by the University's researchers, teachers, students, alumni or employers.
9. Initiators of the idea regarding a new study programme shall address the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy (if the study programme is intended to be implemented not by

one Faculty – to the Deans of those Faculties, Chancellors of the Academies) with a request to include the issue of the intended to be implemented study programme in the agenda of the nearest meeting(s) of the Faculty, Academy Council meeting (-s).

10. Initiators of the new study programme shall present the Faculty(-ies), the Academy (-ies) Council (-s) the conception of the programme, which shall include the following main parameters:
 - 10.1. The need for the intended to be implemented study programme based on research of the programme initiators, employers, social partners or other institutions, survey results and labour market demand forecast. It is essential to present perspective insights of the study programme and compare it with similar study programmes in the same field in the national and international context. Compliance of the study programme with the strategic VMU goals shall also be justified.
 - 10.2. A preliminary project of the learning outcomes and the study plan of the study programme (including duration, volume in study credits, subjects necessary to achieve learning outcomes).
 - 10.3. Estimation of resources (material and human) necessary for the implementation of the intended study programme and a plan of their development.
11. Having evaluated the presented information, the Faculty (-ies), Academy (-ies) Council (-s), in the presence of study programme initiators, shall make an argumentative decision by open voting to approve or disapprove the idea of the new study programme.
12. After the Faculty (-ies) , the Academy (-ies) Council (-s) approves (approve) the conception of the new study programme, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy shall form a study programme development group and oblige them to prepare a study programme description in compliance with the methodology by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). If the study programme is intended to be implemented by some academic divisions, the study programme development group shall be created by the Vice-Rector for Studies. The members of the study programme development group shall be the representatives of the initiators of the idea of the study programme, teachers, students and employers. The Chairperson of the group shall be appointed to lead the work of the group. Study programme development group shall terminate its work when the study programme is registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications, and also if the decision is taken by SKVC not to accredit the study programme or if the University makes a decision not to submit the programme for evaluation and/or registration.
13. The Study Programme Development Group shall be consulted and advised on the issues regarding the preparation of the description of the new study programme, receive comments and recommendations by the VMU units coordinating study organisation and programme quality, International Cooperation Department, Innovative Studies Institute and other University units responsible for studies
14. Having developed the intended to be implemented study programme description and its annexes, the Study Programme Development Group shall submit them to the unit which monitors the study programme quality (hereinafter – Study Quality Unit). The latter shall evaluate the study programme description and present written comments to the Rectorate meeting, ascertaining that the study programme description meets the requirements for study programme preparation and complies with institutional, national and international legal acts governing studies. Study programme description and its annexes shall be submitted to the

Study Quality Unit no later than 2 weeks before the Rectorate meeting where the new study programme shall be discussed.

15. Having evaluated the presented Description of the intended to be implemented study programme and taking into account the comments of the Study Quality Unit, the Rectorate shall take a decision to approve or disapprove the implementation of the new study programme. In case of approval, the Rectorate may commit study programme developers to make amendments in its description according to the submitted comments.
16. If the Rectorate approves the intended to be implemented study programme, the Chairperson of the Study Programme Development Group shall present the study programme description to be discussed by the Senate and Study Quality Unit no later than 2 weeks before the Senate meeting. The Study Quality Unit shall review the Description according to the fields of external assessment and submit comments to the Senate Committees.
17. The Senate shall make decision to approve or disapprove the implementation of the new study programme, having evaluated the description of the study programme and regarding the comments of the Senate Committees.
18. After the Senate makes the decision to approve the new study programme and signs the declaration, the Chairperson of the Study Programme Development Group shall submit the study programme description and accompanying documents to SKVC to be accredited and registered.
19. If the Senate disapproves the new study programme, the Study Programme Development Group shall be obliged either to take the comments into account and improve the description of the study programme or terminate the process of the new study programme designing.
20. After the study programme has been accredited and registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy shall appoint the Study Programme Committee (hereinafter – the Committee), consisting of at least 1/3 of the Study Programme Development Group members. If the new study programme is an interdisciplinary, dual degree or joint one and is intended to be implemented by more than one academic unit, the composition of the Committee shall be approved by the Vice-Rector for Studies.
21. The Committee shall provide information to Marketing and Communication Department, International Cooperation Department and the unit responsible for the study organisation to make the programme publicly available and organise the admission of students.

III. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE IMPLEMENTED STUDIES

22. The University shall implement only the study fields and study programmes which have been accredited by the procedure regulated by the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.
23. The Council of the Faculty, the Academy shall be responsible for the quality assurance of the study field, and during the spring semester it shall discuss the issues of the study field and make decisions on the improvement of the field, mentioned in paragraph 32 of the Description (summarizing them in the scope of the study field) and requirements for external study quality assessment. If study field studies are carried out in more than one Faculty, Academy, a joint Council Meeting shall be organized to discuss the field. The decisions of the meetings shall be

made public to the study field stakeholders (intranet or other means) and shall be stored in the Academic Unit conducting the studies.

24. The Faculty, the Academy and the Committee implementing the study programme shall be responsible for the quality assurance of the study programme. The Faculty, the Academy shall be responsible for the organisation of the programme study space, technical administration, dissemination of information, calculating the teachers' workload, students' registration, study documentation, etc. The main activity of the Committee shall be to coordinate the implementation of the study programme and assure study quality. The Committee shall monitor the study programme implementation, perform internal study programme quality evaluation, renewal and improvement, set study programme development plans and implement them.
25. The Committee shall consist of at least 5 members: study programme teachers, students, and the representatives of the employers, who divide responsibility areas among themselves. The composition of the Committee shall be published on the website of the Faculty, the Academy. The Committee activity shall not be terminal; however, taking into account the activity results, under decision of the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy or the Vice-Rector for Studies (when the programme is under more than one Faculty, Academy) the composition of the Committee shall be updated and changed. The motivation and enhancement of the Chairperson of the Committee and its members shall be performed on the basis of their activity results under the Order of Rector of Vice-Rector for Studies. Student representatives shall delegate student representatives to Committees in accordance with the procedure established by the Student Union.
26. Each member of the Committee shall act according to his/her responsibility area. Each person's activity and suggestions shall be discussed in the Committee meetings and decisions regarding further activity shall be made. Minutes shall be taken of all Committee meetings and records shall be kept in the Academic Unit which implements the studies and in the information system of the University study programmes.
27. The decisions taken during the Committee meetings, the Chairperson of the Committee shall publicize for all teachers and if needed, for other stakeholders (the Head of the Department, the Director of the Institute, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy, etc.). The Student representative in the Committee shall publicize the decisions taken during the Committee meeting to other students of the study programme.
28. The Chairperson of the Committee shall organise meetings when needed but at least one per semester, i.e. at least twice per year. The representatives of all the groups of the Committee, i.e. teachers, students and employers shall attend the meetings of the Committee. Participation can also be done remotely. If a representative of a group is not able to attend a meeting, he or she shall delegate to the Chairperson of the Committee another member of the same group who may represent the group in the meeting.
29. Each semester, the Committee shall discuss the results of teaching quality, based on data from the student survey "Teaching and Learning Evaluation" (the Student Survey) and other information sources. The Committee shall review the reasons why students positively or negatively evaluated teaching and learning, and take the following actions:
 - 29.1. The Committee shall initiate the sharing of good teaching examples at the Faculty, Academy meetings at least once per semester.

- 29.2. In cases of unfavourably evaluated teaching (when the average score in the Student Survey on at least one question in the course is *weak* and worse, and it is influenced by student dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching or student complaints have been received by other sources of information), the Committee shall discuss the reasons of such evaluation together with the teachers. Recommendations and actions shall be planned to improve the quality of teaching.
- 29.3. If unfavourable evaluation is repeated in the next semester, and the reasons are related to the insufficient quality of teaching, such cases shall be discussed at the Faculty, Academy Council meeting in the presence of the Chairperson of the Committee, the Committee representative of students and teachers. Decisions shall be taken to ensure that the causes of poor-quality teaching are eliminated.
- 29.4. If the teaching quality is poorly evaluated over three semesters (in the Student Survey, the overall teaching evaluation per semester is *weak* and worse), an extraordinary teacher certification may be initiated.
30. When discussing the results of teaching quality at the Institute of Foreign Languages (hereinafter - the Institute), the provisions of paragraph 29 shall be applied to the structure of the Institute.
31. Each academic year, the Committee shall conduct a study programme analysis, identify shortcomings highlighted during the academic year, evaluate the results of internal and external quality assessment and recommendations made by international experts, the Study Quality Unit, employers and other interested parties, how previous improvement decisions are implemented. In the year when the external evaluation of the study programme is planned, a self-assessment shall be prepared according to the methodology of SKVC.
32. The aim of the annually performed study programme analysis shall be to provide a timely response to the emerged study organisation problems, implement innovations and improve study quality. On the basis of the outcomes of the performed analysis, a plan of measures to improve the areas identified during the study programme internal quality evaluation shall be designed and implemented (Annex 1). While performing the analysis of study programme implementation, the following areas are recommended to be evaluated:
- 32.1. Compliance of the study programme to the latest tendencies of science (art) – the analysis shall aim at investigating if the study programme outcomes, curriculum and methods reflect the latest tendencies of science (art).
- 32.2. Compliance of the study programme to labour market demand and the needs of society – alumni employment indicators shall be evaluated as well as strengths and weaknesses of practice organisation; employer survey results and their application for the renewal of learning outcomes and curriculum shall be analysed.
- 32.3. Marketability of the study programme – student admission to the study programme indicators shall be evaluated, as well as efficiency of the study marketing activities; employer survey results which reveal the demand for the programme shall be analysed.
- 32.4. Suitability and sufficiency of the study programme facilities and learning resources – it shall be evaluated if there is enough literature, software and laboratory equipment to implement the study programme and analysed if these resources are appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- 32.5. Professionalism of the study programme teaching staff – teaching quality evaluation results shall be analysed as well as teachers' preparation and compliance of their research (art) interests with the content of the taught course, etc.

- 32.6. Student progress – students’ learning achievements shall be evaluated, dropout indicators and reasons analysed together with students’ research, social and other achievements; difficulties which arise during the final thesis preparation and defence processes shall be explored.
- 32.7. Student and teacher mobility – the statistics of the incoming and outgoing students and teachers as well as conditions for mobility shall be analysed.
- 32.8. Other relevant study programme criteria – the criteria shall be identified and analysed if the programme organisation and implementation processes comply with them.
33. Statistical information for study programme analysis shall be provided by the unit that organises studies, Study Quality Unit, International Cooperation Department, Marketing and Communication Department and other units
34. The analysis of the study programme and decisions of the Committee shall be recorded, and the minutes taken shall be kept in the study implementing unit. Analysis results shall be presented, improvement plans discussed and approved by the Faculty, Academy Council. At the end of each academic year (before June 30), the Committee shall submit to the Study Quality Unit an improvement plan for the current academic year, in the form set out in Annex 1. It shall also include a plan for the improvement of the previous year and information on the implementation of the plan for the current academic year, using the form in Annex 1. The Study Quality Unit shall summarize the information received and provide insights to the Vice-Rector for Studies, who shall initiate proposals for study improvement.
35. At the end of each academic year, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy shall present the Rectorate the results of the analysis of the currently implemented study programmes at the Faculty, in the Academy as well as the approved developmental plans and shall recommend the continuation or termination of the students’ admission to the study programme. The Rectorate shall evaluate suggestions of the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy by approving the plan of admission to the University and make decision on the study programme implementation perspectives.
36. The study programme renewal and development shall be performed in compliance with national and international documents governing studies, VMU Study Regulations and Description of Procedure for Study Course Attestation.
37. The change of the study programme title, study field (branch), awarded qualification degree, professional qualification, study duration or study programme structure regulated by the Study Regulations shall be discussed in the Faculty Council, discussed and approved in the Rectorate and Senate. According to the Procedure determined by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport and SKVC, after the Senate approves the changes in the study programme, the unit which monitors study organisation shall apply the administrator of the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications with regard to legitimation of changes.
38. The changes performed during the study programme renewal and development shall be made publicly available by posting them in the University’s study programme information system.
39. While performing the monitoring of the study programme implementation and development, the Committee shall be assisted by the Study Quality Unit, which shall perform various internal quality evaluation surveys, acquaint the Committee with research results and provide recommendations on the development of study programme quality.

40. In the spring semester of each academic year, the Study Quality Unit shall present the Rectorate the results of the University study programme internal quality evaluation, insights and recommendations on the improvement of study programme quality.

IV. EXTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

41. External evaluation is the analysis of the quality of the studies and its provision in the national and international context and presentation of recommendations for its improvement.
42. External evaluation of studies shall be performed by SKVC or other quality evaluation in higher education agency which is included into the European Quality Assurance Register for higher education (EQAR). At least 12 months before the end of the studies accreditation period, the Vice-Rector for Studies, having received the Committee's application, shall make decision on the selection of external evaluation agency. Having made the decision, the Study Quality Unit shall coordinate the external evaluation process according to the Description of Procedure of External Assessment and Accreditation of Studies, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport.
43. At least 6 months before the submission of the self-assessment report to the external evaluation agency and upon the provision of the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy, the Rector shall approve the Self-Assessment Preparation Group which shall consist of active, experienced and competent administration officers, teachers, students and employers. It is recommended to set a Self- Assessment Group of 5–12 members. The monitoring of the self-assessment preparation process shall be performed by the Study Quality Unit. If needed, the Study Quality Unit shall consult the Self-Assessment Group, provide suggestions and methodological recommendations and participate in the meetings of the group.
44. The work of the Self- Assessment Preparation Group shall be organised by the Chairperson of the group. The scope and responsibility of each group member's work shall be determined by common consent and group working plan shall be designed. Self-assessment report shall be prepared in compliance with the Methodology for Assessment approved by the Order of the Director of SKVC.
45. The results of the self-assessment prepared for the Self- Assessment Group shall be presented and discussed with students, teachers, administrative staff, alumni and employers of the study programme. The Self-Assessment Group shall take into account the comments received during the discussions and make corrections in the self-assessment report.
46. At least 1 month before the submission of the self-assessment report to the external evaluation agency, the Chairperson of the Self- Assessment Preparation Group shall submit the self-assessment report to the Study Quality Unit for the revision of its compliance with the requirements set in the Methodology for Assessment approved by the Director of SKVC, and other legal acts. Within 2 weeks the Study Quality Unit shall present comments and recommendations for the improvement of the report (if necessary).
47. The Chairperson of the Self- Assessment Preparation Group, taking into account the comments of the Study Quality Unit, shall initiate the improvement of the self-assessment report and prepare the final version of the report. The Chairperson of the Self- Assessment Preparation Group shall submit the self-assessment report together with the cover letter to the external evaluation agency.

48. The self-assessment report corrections (if the necessary), the visit of experts, discussions of initial conclusions and other activities related to external evaluation shall be organised and performed by the Self- Assessment Preparation Group which shall be consulted and assisted by the Study Quality Unit.
49. Having received the conclusions of the external evaluation experts and decision of the accreditation institution authorised by the Republic of Lithuania regarding the accreditation of studies, the evaluation results shall be discussed in the Committee and studies providing academic unit. Evaluation and accreditation results shall be made publicly available by posting them on the University website and Study programme information system.
50. The Committee shall, within 3 months of the receipt of conclusions provided by external evaluation experts, prepare a plan of implementation of recommendations, and shall submit it to the Study Quality Unit. The Committee shall be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the plan.
51. Depending on the period of accreditation of the study field and cycle, the Committee shall, within 1 or 2 years after the accreditation of studies, prepare the progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the external evaluation, in the size of 1–2 pages. It lists expert recommendations, implementation results and evidence. In case the recommendations have not been implemented or partially implemented, the progress report sets out the reasons and/or the circumstances on which the recommendations have not been implemented (not fully implemented).
52. The Committee shall present the progress report to the Study Quality Unit that shall, within one week, submit to the Committee comments and recommendations (if necessary) for the improvement of the report. The Committee shall prepare the final report, and the Study Quality Unit shall submit it to SKVC and publish on the VMU website.

V. FINAL PROVISIONS

53. Analysis and improvement of studies shall be based on the data of systematically performed surveys of the University stakeholders (students, teachers, alumni, employers). Survey types and frequency shall be determined by VMU Description of Procedure of Feedback for Improvement of Quality of Studies. Study programme level research and analysis shall be performed by the members of the Committee according to their responsibility areas. University study level research and analysis shall be performed by the Study Quality Unit as well as other units according to the areas of their activity.

The form of study programme improvement plan and monitoring of its implementation

STUDY PROGRAMME ... (the title is entered)

Areas for the improvement of the study programme	Planned actions	Action links to survey results*	Responsible persons	Timeline	Implementation results: information on actions taken**

* To be completed if the actions relate to the results of a specific survey. The title of the survey and the results of the survey on which the proposed action is based shall be stated.

** For monitoring – one year after the improvement plan. One conclusion is given: completed, partially done or not completed. In the latter two cases, comments on implemented and non-implemented actions are provided, as well as an explanation of the incomplete implementation.

Date of plan preparation: ...

Date of plan monitoring: ...