

Vytautas Magnus
University
in 2023



Vytautas Magnus University in 2023



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VYTAUTAS MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY



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Rector's foreword

2023 was a special year for us: by offering the widest range of studies in Lithuania, we strengthened our academic uniqueness, fostered an inclusive academic culture and built relationships with Lithuanian and global communities. At the same time, we worked together to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for all members of our community.

We also saw how supportive and united we can be when there is a need for support and solidarity. In the academic year 2022–2023, we accepted more than three hundred students from Ukraine to join our community, which made them feel part of a big academic family. Some Ukrainians studying at VMU devoted their free time to volunteering at the Centre of Ukraine, which has become an important centre for cultural diplomacy, working to support Ukraine's Euro-integration processes and developing its academic potential. VMU teachers also participated in the activities of the Centre, organising language, music and other training courses.

In autumn 2023, we opened Mariupol State University Centre, which aims to ensure that Mariupol University has the opportunity to continue its activities not only in Kyiv but also here at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. We have plans to develop educational, research, and cultural relations; to support the exchange of teachers, researchers, students, and administrative staff; to encourage the sharing of educational materials; to support joint events related to Lithuanian studies; and to promote the educational programmes of Mariupol State University and the prospects for research opportunities for Ukrainian youth in Lithuania.

We continue to strengthen our relations with the partners of Transform4Europe, the European University Alliance. Not only teachers and students, but also all other structures of the University are involved in joint activities. We have started to work on joint doctoral schools, joint programmes, and joint applications for European projects.

In the academic year of 2023–2024, VMU community grew even more: in September, we admitted 6.6% more first-year students to the first cycle studies and integrated studies, thus maintaining our position as the largest university in Kaunas and the second largest university in Lithuania in terms of the number of students. VMU also ranked second in Lithuania in terms of the number of the study fields in which the University was awarded the first place.

The highest number of the first-year students showed interest in our pedagogy studies, which suggests that the recently opened Teacher Training Centre, the largest in Lithuania, the systematic work in preparing the next generation of teachers, and the consistent cooperation with municipalities and schools in Lithuania have helped to build trust in the University.

In the results of the evaluation of research and experimental development (R&D) published by the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL) in November, the quality of research in the History and Theory of Arts at VMU was among the six highest scored. Education Sciences at VMU, which have an impact on educational organisations and systems in Lithuania and the regions, also received almost the maximum score from the experts. Other areas of science at VMU were also quite highly rated. Such achievements show that VMU has significantly improved the quality of its research, developed new research directions, and joined strong international networks.

The year 2023 was also a successful year for our athletes: VMU was ranked among the top ten European universities in terms of the number of medals won, and VMU men's trio won gold medals at the European Universities 3-on-3 Basketball Championship. VMU has always been a prominent leader in basketball, but with the expansion of the sports infrastructure in 2021, the opening of the multifunctional President Valdas Adamkus Sports Centre, and the launch of Sports studies in 2022, VMU has become a leader in the field of student sports not only in Lithuania, but also in the Baltic States. We welcomed a large number of first-year students of Sports Studies offering them a sports base that is constantly being improved to meet the highest standards, a newly equipped multifunctional hall, beach volleyball courts, and the only baseball field in Kaunas.

We can be proud that the international community of VMU is also growing, and the number of foreigners is now almost one fifth. We continue to move successfully in the direction of internationalisation, not only as a member of Transform4Europe, but also by establishing collaboration with universities around the world. Our aim is to have a Centre of Lithuania at VMU, similar to Taiwan Centre, which has been in operation at the University for ten years. We have close collaboration with Ukraine, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and all European countries, and the time is coming when quantity is going to become quality, as we already have such agreements with hundreds of universities and educational institutions around the world.

I would like to reiterate once again that the strength of VMU is its community. Free, creative, and critical fellowship strengthens and broadens our world view, enriches academic discourse, and creates a dynamic cultural exchange.

VMU Rector

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "prof. Juozas Augustis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Vytautas Magnus University: cohesive, creative, community-minded

Vytautas Magnus University Annual Report for 2023 has been prepared in accordance with VMU Strategic Plan for 2021–2027.

Vision

We are one of the strongest, wide-ranging universities in the Baltic region, fostering the principles of *artes liberales*, bringing together a community to build the future of Lithuania and Europe.

Mission

To be the community institution of science, arts, and studies which continues the mission of the University of Lithuania, established in Kaunas in 1922, creating liberal learning conditions for an individual, developing partnerships and taking an active part in the life of Lithuania to advance its future and contribute to the global cultural and academic development.

Values

Personal and Academic Freedom, Democracy, Openness, Responsibility, Creativity, Sense of Community, Harmony, Academic Excellence.

Strategic objectives are objectives that ensure the implementation of the University's vision and express the prerequisites for the implementation of strategic goals:

- community in harmony and consolidation;
- international research University;
- “studies 360”;
- integrity of self-governance and responsibility;
- University impact on societal development.

Founder

The founder of the University is the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania. Pursuant to Paragraph 3 of the Resolution No. 1832 of 22 December 2010 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the investment of State assets, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania has been entrusted with the implementation of the property and non-property rights and obligations of the State as the owner (shareholder) of the public institution Vytautas Magnus University. The equity value of the shareholders as of 31 December 2023 was EUR 24,277.90 thousand (EUR 24,277.90 thousand as of 31 December 2022).

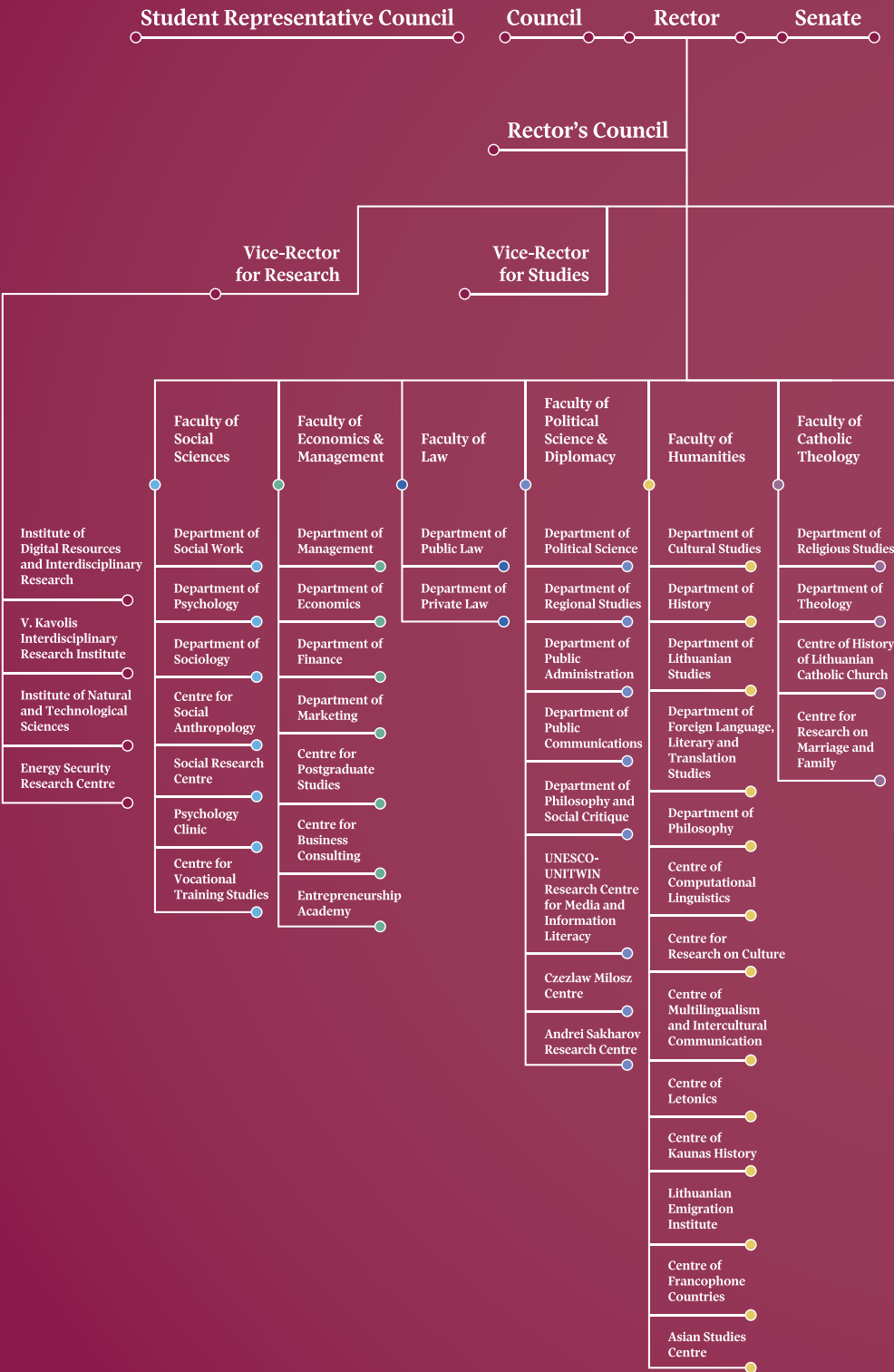
Most important changes in the University management in 2023

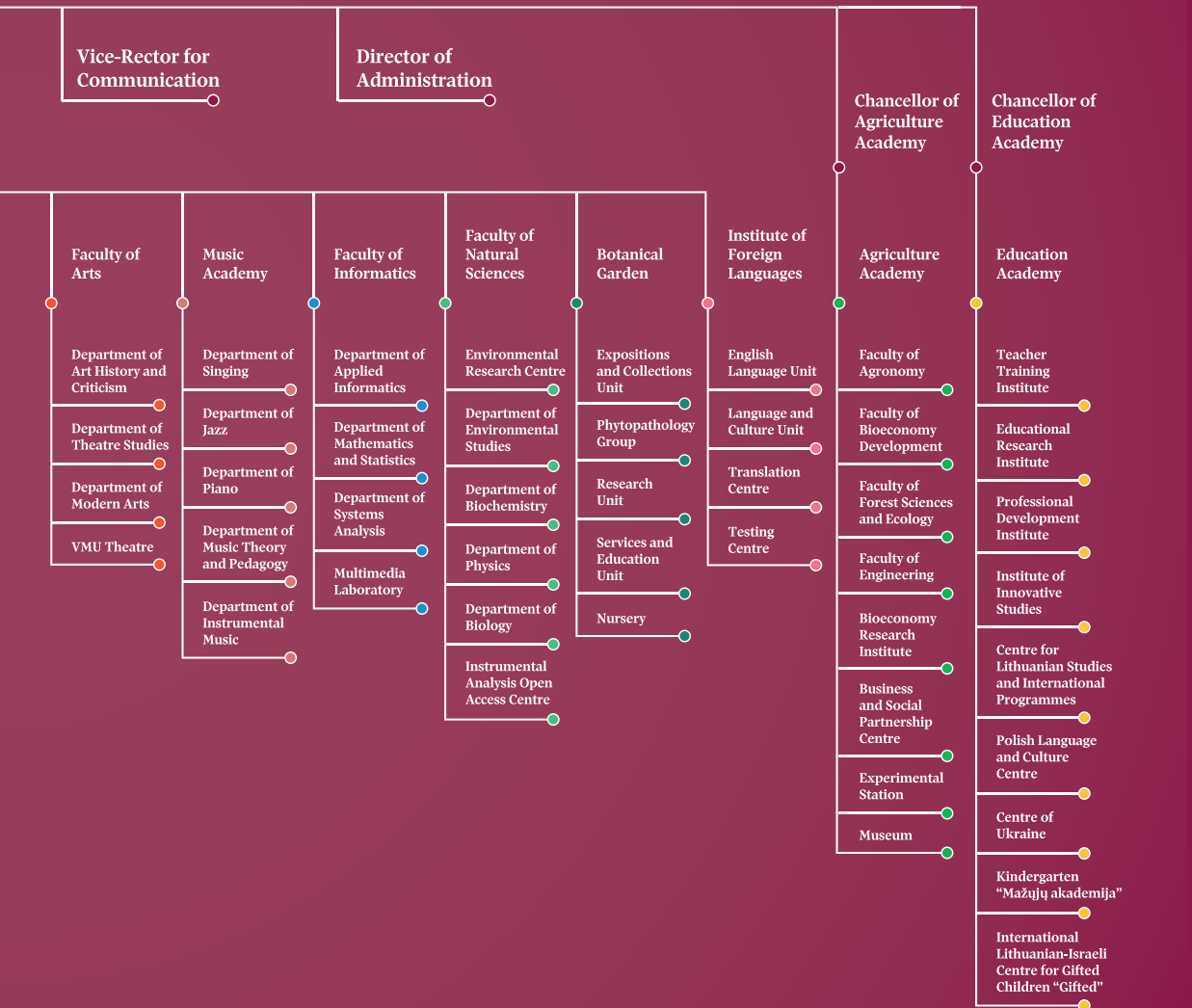
The following was approved at the meetings of VMU Senate:

- The new composition of the Certification Commission for Teachers and Research Workers.
- It was decided to appoint Judita Žukauskienė as the Director of the STEAM Didactics Centre.

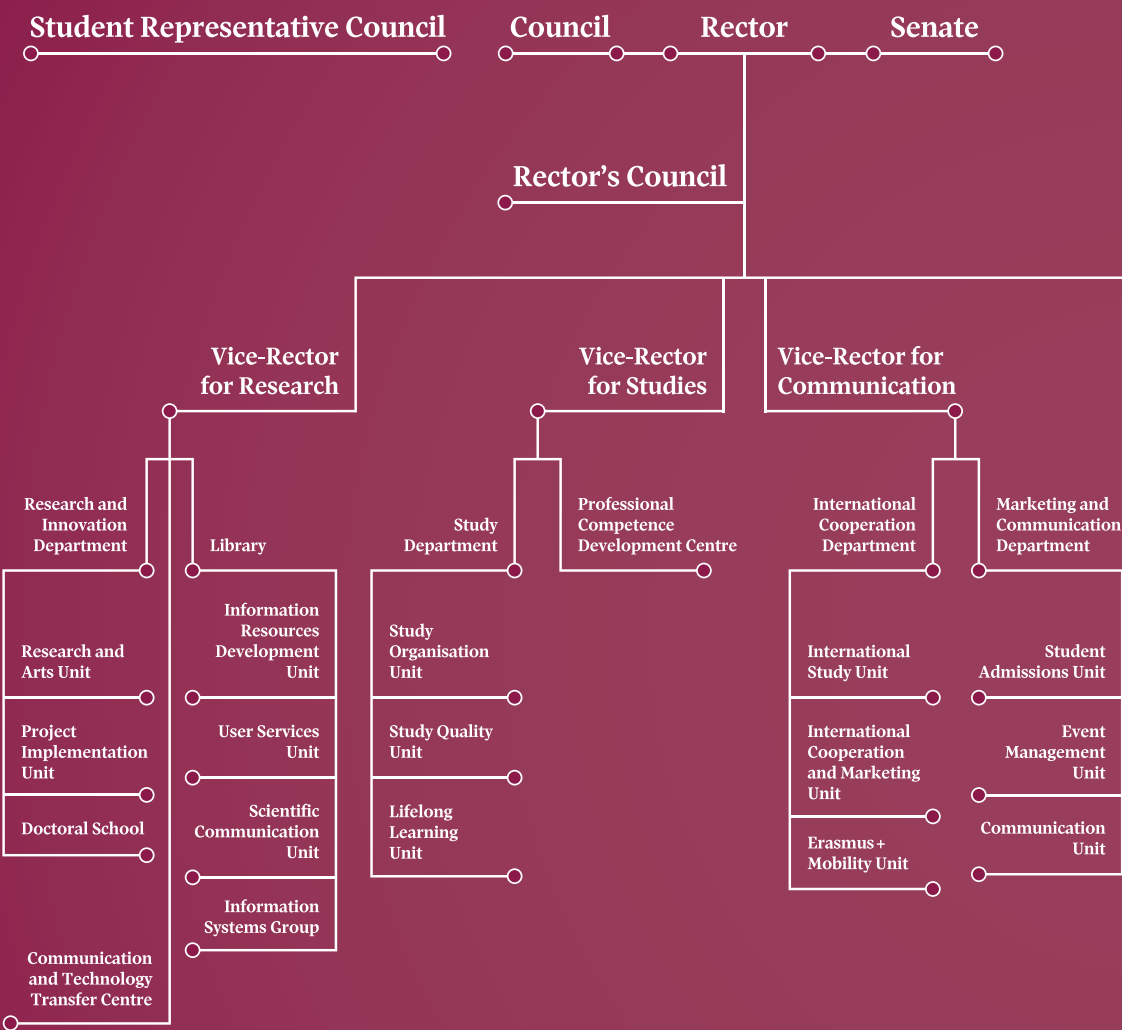


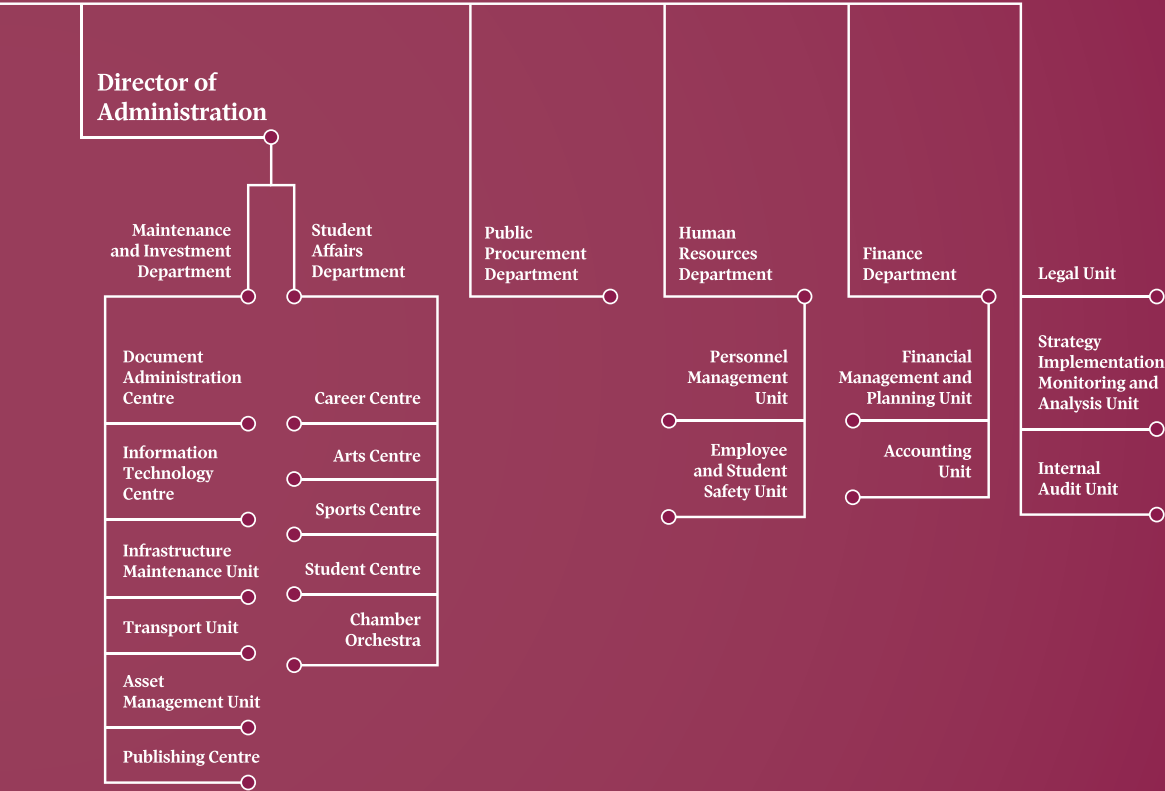
Structure of Academic Units of Vytautas Magnus University





Structure of Non-Academic Units of Vytautas Magnus University





Key Indicators of VMU Strategic Plan for 2021–2027



KEY INDICATORS OF VMU STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021–2027 KEY INDICATORS*	Baseline value of the indicator (or 2020 value)	In 2021		In 2022		In 2023	
		Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator	Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator	Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator
I. COMMUNITY IN HARMONY AND CONSOLIDATION							
1. EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (%) A positive change in the employee diversity and inclusion indicator, as measured by the surveys, is 4% within 2 years.	N/A**	N/A	N/A	6955%	-	N/A	N/A
2. At least 5% annual increase in the salaries for the academic staff.	EUR 2,028	EUR 2,137	100%	EUR 2,353	105%	EUR 2,610	112%
3. The annual growth of the fund of financial support provided by patrons and sponsors is not less than 3%.	EUR 32,860	EUR 69,786	206%	EUR 92,651	266%	EUR 96,004	268%
II. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY							
4. The increase in the number of articles in scientific publications in the Q1-Q2 quartiles (at least 10% annually, compared to the 2020 indicator).	268	361	122.5%	343	105.8%	384	107.7%
5. The growth of the budget for applications in funded projects is on average 3% annually.	EUR 35,741,300	EUR 56,457,500	153%	EUR 46,842,100	124%	EUR 64,914,900	165%
6. The increase in the state budget funds for R&D in the University budget per researcher over three years is at least 10%.	EUR 9,901	EUR 10,417	102%	EUR 11,022	105%	EUR 13,189	122%
7. The annual increase of the research fund is not less than 5%.	EUR 1,727.59	EUR 2,008.56	111%	EUR 2,167.7	114%	EUR 2,428.3	122%
III. STUDIES “360”							
8. The total number of students each year is at least 7,000.	7,000	8,210	117%	8,218	117%	8,381	120%
9. The percentage of students' satisfaction with study resources is 85% annually.	85%	90%	106%	90	106%	91	107%

KEY INDICATORS OF VMU STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021-2027 KEY INDICATORS*	Baseline value of the indicator (or 2020 value)	In 2021		In 2022		In 2023	
		Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator	Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator	Actual value of the indicator	Achievement of the target value of the indicator
10. The total employability of graduates per year, after 1 year after graduation is not less than 90%. (According to the Employment Service).	90%	97%	108%	98%	109%	97	108%
11. Student dropout number does not exceed 15% per year.	15%	12.4%	121%	11.5%	130%	12.9	116.3%
12. The share of admitted foreign students is at least 10% each year.	10%	13.1%	131%	14.5%	145%	12.1	121.0%
13. The number of outgoing teachers is 15% each year.	15%	4.7%	31%	19.9%	133%	24.6%	164%
14. The number of teachers participating in in-service training activities is at least 25% each year.	25%	17.9%	72%	33.06%	132%	32.49%	130%
IV. INTEGRITY OF SELF-GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY							
15. EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (%) A positive change in the employee diversity and inclusion indicator, as measured by the surveys, is 4% within 2 years.	N/A**	N/A	N/A	69.55%	-	N/A	N/A
16. Infrastructure efficiency index is not less than 80%.	80%	82%	103%	81%	101%	82%	103%
V. UNIVERSITY IMPACT ON SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT							
17. The number of international and national projects for the public is at least 5 each year.	5	10	200%	15	300%	12	240%

* approved by Decision No. 4 of 27 May 2021 of VMU Council; revised by Decision No. 1A-N-5.1 of 12 January 2023 of VMU Council.

**The Employee Well-being Survey was launched in 2022 using the innovative, validated science platform “UNLOCK tests”, making 2022 the baseline year for employee well-being indicators. The Employee Well-being Survey is carried out every two years. In 2023, the Survey was not carried out.

***The share of implemented project budgets allocated to VMU.



The University's role in the development of society



An institutional evaluation by a panel of international experts rated the University's impact on regional and societal development in the national context and internationally as very good. The experts noted in their conclusions that VMU analyses national and regional needs and identifies the potential impact it can have on national and regional development, and that various actions and new initiatives are taken to address regional and national needs. The University maintains close relationships with businesses and social partners, who are actively involved in quality management and provide recommendations for new activities and curriculum development. The University also engages with civil society and local communities through dedicated channels, such as social media, press releases, and commentary on topical issues by VMU experts. The University benefits greatly from its membership in the Transform4Europe alliance. VMU offers a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities (Vytautas Magnus University Performance Assessment Findings, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education).

Events, cooperation and strengthening socially responsible activities

Various activities of Vytautas Magnus University focus on the individual, his/her personal dignity, merits and uniqueness, and each person is encouraged to seek opportunities for self-fulfilment through various activities, to reveal his/her creative ideas, and to be a responsible citizen.

- The Centre of Ukraine at VMU was included in the agenda of the Vilnius NATO Summit. The Centre hosted a meeting between the First Ladies of Lithuania and Ukraine, Diana Nausėdienė and Olena Zelenska, as well as the spouses and partners of the leaders of the NATO countries, with the Ukrainian community. Attendees were acquainted with the Centre's activities and objectives, and attentively listened to Ukrainian women's accounts of war atrocities.
- VMU Senate conferred the title of Honorary Doctor on the President of the Republic of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, for his outstanding leadership in the struggle for Ukraine's freedom, democracy, and humanistic values, and for the example of generosity, determination, and moral strength that he has set for the younger generation.
- Two international conferences were organised on the objectives of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula and on Ukraine's aspirations for European integration. The events were attended by top Lithuanian and Ukrainian leaders, policy makers, and experts from VMU, other European universities and EU institutions (see more details in "Support to Ukraine").
- The 6th National Human Rights Forum (NHRF) was organised. The annual event, held at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania and co-organised by VMU, brings together various social groups, provides a platform for different voices and aims to ensure a better quality of life for all Lithuanian citizens, regardless of nationality, race, religion, gender, social status or views.
- Implementing VMU Disability Policy "University of Inclusive Opportunities", the event "Disability Forum: Inclusive Higher Education 2023" was organised for the second time. The Forum was attended by Lithuanian and foreign higher education experts with experience in creating appropriate conditions and increasing the accessibility of higher education for students with various disabilities or individual needs.
- The annual Romas Sakadolskis International Academic Forum on Journalism, jointly organised by Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius University, was held. For the third year in a row, this Forum brought together Lithuanian and foreign journalism professionals and the university community to discuss journalism issues. In order to draw attention to the genres of journalism, the quality of journalists' work and outlook, the event for the third time presented awards for outstanding factual, opinion, entertainment and investigative journalism, and for the first time – for cultural journalism.
- The 13th Andrei Sakharov Conference, "How to Win a Lasting Peace?", was held. The conference is traditionally organised by VMU Andrei Sakharov Research Centre for Democratic Development, marking the anniversary of the birth of Nobel Prize winner Andrei Sakharov. The Centre also hosted the sixth Leonidas Donskis Conference, "Will Russia Survive 2024?", bringing together international experts.
- The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Lithuania, Jack Robert Twiss Quarles Van Ufford, visited VMU and invited the community to a public lecture-discussion on "Challenges of Ensuring Human Rights and Security in the Contemporary World".
- The 11th International Scientific Conference "Rural Development 2023: Bioeconomy for the Green Deal" took place at VMU Agriculture Academy. The international forum for business and science, "Connecting the Dots: a Roadmap for Lithuania's Bioeconomy Development", was held as part of the conference. The conference opened a series of events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of VMU Agriculture Academy.
- VMU participated in Life Sciences Baltics, the largest life sciences forum in the Baltics. The Amber Pulse electroporator developed by Prof. Saulius Šatkauskas, Dr. Mindaugas Visockis and Justinas Baranauskas was featured at the international event.
- VMU, in cooperation with the association LithuaniaBIO, the cluster AgriFood Lithuania DIH and other partners, organised the Lithuanian Bioeconomy Innovation and Business Development Forum. The patron of the Forum was the Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, Aušrinė Armonaitė.
- The European research and innovation programme, Horizon Europe, held a forum in Vilnius to discuss the latest developments in Horizon Europe, and to review the results and achievements of the past year at the international level. The national forum presented a VMU success story: Prof. Kristina Juraitė discussed a

Horizon Europe –coordinated by the University, “Strengthening Civic Resilience and Participation Capacities: Ethics and Accountability in Dialogue Communication” – DIACOMET.

- VMU Education Academy and the Lithuanian Association of Distance and e-Learning (LieDM) organised the conference “Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Education”.
- The annual award ceremony “Lithuanian Teacher 2023” took place at VMU Great Hall, during which the winners in eight categories, chosen by the combined votes of readers and a competition jury, were announced. The jury consisted of Ramūnas Skaudžius, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Sport responsible for general education, Prof. Lina Kaminskienė, Chancellor of VMU Education Academy, Assoc. Prof. Sigita Burvytė, founder of the Positive Parenting Laboratory, and others.
- One of the No-Fly Zone open-air gallery's works was flown on 16 November aboard NASA's Space X Falcon 9 spacecraft to the Moon, to Lunaprise, the first art museum located beyond Earth. The work, initiated by members of VMU community and created by Scott Hattox (USA) for the gallery in Lithuania, was selected, along with other of his works, to be among 222 works of art from around the world that best reflect the spirit of the times and the creativity of humanity. This museum – an indestructible time capsule – will become a special cargo for future generations during NASA's first return to the lunar surface in more than 50 years.
- A new laboratory initiated VMU was presented in the University of Trieste (Italy) and in the University of Primorska (Slovenia), where researchers will work together with students, entrepreneurs, public figures and other social partners on projects focusing on cultural heritage. The new laboratory, Critical Heritage LAB, is one of the “Transformation Labs” implemented by VMU together with its partners, the other members of the Transform4Europe Alliance: the Estonian Academy of Arts, Jean Monnet University of Saint-Étienne (France), the University of Trieste, and the University of Primorska.
- The student conference “Freedom to Create”, held for a second time, aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Analysing sustainable solutions for the future, VMU students made scientific presentations and put on artistic performances.
- The international conference “Turning Points: Values and Conflicting Futures in the Baltics” was held at VMU. The biennial conference, focused on research on the Baltic region performed in Europe, brings together hundreds of academics from all over the world to explore a wide range of issues affecting this part of the continent.
- The Institute of Foreign Languages organised the 7th international scientific conference “Sustainable Multilingualism 2023”. The conference brought together more than 150 multilingualism researchers, scholars and students from all over the world.
- VMU Agriculture Academy held the Future of Regions Forum 2023, now in its third year. The Forum focused on a Green Deal theme: environment-friendly political, social and economic solutions that enhance the vitality of regions.
- A block of Lithuanian postage stamps with the theme “100 Years of VMU Botanical Garden” was officially unveiled at VMU Botanical Garden, in celebration of its centenary.
- The 27th international agricultural exhibition “Ką pasėsi... 2023”, attended by 480 companies, organisations and small traders, was held at VMU Agriculture Academy. During the fair, 46 seminars were organised and 70 B2B meetings took place. The exhibition received around 68,000 visitors.
- The tradition of organising the international festival of writers and books “Kaunas Literature Week” continued. The main event of the autumn programme was a meeting with internationally-acclaimed Nora Ikstena, one of the best-known Latvian writers at this time, and an advance screening of the film “Soviet Milk” (2023, directed by Ināra Kolmane), which is based on the author's novel.
- There was a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the President Valdas Adamkus Sports Centre for the first baseball field in Kaunas and the second such field in Lithuania meeting European standards.
- The final conference of the IDEA LAB project “Lithuanian Regional Youth Active Citizenship Education”, organised by MINDED VMU and the Psychological Support and Counselling Centre, was held. During the event, participants and guests discussed why entrepreneurship and citizenship can be important for young people to realise themselves in any field of interest.
- The Valdas Adamkus Presidential Library-Museum hosted the third seminar on the preservation of the historical memory and heritage of Sąjūdis, the presentation of the exhibition “Sąjūdis Lithuania: The Power of Green Grass” and the discussion “The Future of Eastern and Central Europe Amidst Russian Military Aggression” to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Prague Spring, to remember and honour the memory of VMU Prof. Leonidas Donskis by continuing the discussion of topics in which he took an interest.
- The scientific conference “Visionaries of the Republic of March 11th” was organised to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Algimantas Petras Gureckas, a prominent Lithuanian émigré, lawyer and economist.
- The exhibition “Into Europe: Ireland and the EU 1973–2023”, curated by the Embassy of Ireland in cooperation with VMU, celebrated the 50th anniversary of Ireland's membership in the European Union.
- For the seventh time, the Faculty of Arts organised the public art and culture festival “VMU Culture Days”. According to the event organisers, the idea of the annual art and culture festival was born out of the need to break the myth of academic isolation that is sometimes encountered among the public and to involve the city community in the creative activities of the University.

- The exhibition “Floating Identity: Between a Recognisable Image and Abstraction”, curated by Prof. Remigijus Venckus of the Department of Contemporary Arts in the Faculty of Arts, attracted attention at the 7th Biennial of Painting in Zagreb (Croatia). The exhibition featured 18 Lithuanian artists, including Prof. Rimantas Plungė, a media artist as well as a professor in the Faculty of Arts.
- A Centre of Excellence was set up at the Bioeconomy Research Institute of the Agriculture Academy. The project “Development of the Bioeconomy Research Centre of Excellence (BioTEC)” was launched, funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania under the R&D measure “Improving the Research and Study Environment” of the programme “Excellence Initiative for Universities”.
- The socially inclusive art exhibition “Bridging the Gap” of the art residency platform “Magic Carpets” and the Centre for People with Disabilities “Korys” was opened at VMU Art Gallery “101”. The exhibition aimed to highlight the processes of bridging the social divide and changing cultural consciousness.
- The Academic Political Science Club invited the community to a public lecture by the Ambassador of Finland to Lithuania, Arja Makkonen, on “Finland’s Security Policy and NATO” and a meeting with the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen.
- VMU research cluster “The Church’s Relations with the State and Society in Lithuania”, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the establishment of Kaunas Benedictine Monastery, organised an international scientific conference to present new historical research on monastic life in Lithuania and its prospects.
- The Faculty of Law organised three photography exhibitions to commemorate the Baltic Way – a significant historical fact demonstrating the unity of nations and the road to democracy. The exhibitions were part of the EU project “Remember Bacha”, which aimed to scientifically analyse the activities of outstanding citizens in the fight against totalitarianism as an example of Europeanism and intensive work for a better society, a memory of the struggle for freedom and a balanced society.
- VMU Communication and Technology Transfer Centre organised its second hackathon “KTPC InnoHack’23”.
- The Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy hosted an international research seminar on “NGO participation, local governance, and reforms” for Belarusian activists. The programme was aimed at former civil servants, political activists in Belarus and abroad, career professionals, and active citizens from ordinary communities interested in the study and analysis of political processes.

Recognition and awards

- In May, Vytautas Magnus University was visited by an international team of experts from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC, in Lithuanian), who evaluated the activities of Vytautas Magnus University. VMU received high marks in all categories and was accredited for the maximum period of seven years. The experts recognised that the University not only stands out in Europe for the flexibility of its study offerings, but also for its extensive international activities and the high quality of its research and infrastructure. The experts awarded VMU a “very good” rating in the categories of governance, studies and science/arts and impact on regional and national development, and a “good” rating in the category of quality assurance.
- The quality of VMU’s art studies research was awarded the highest marks in the evaluation of research and development (R&D) published by the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL). The expert study, which involved 28 state and non-state universities and research institutes, evaluated the quality of research carried out in 2018–2022 in an international context, as well as the economic and social impact of these activities and their potential.
- VMU student-managed startup “Lonely Sock” won third place in the “Entrepreneurship” hackathon in the Greek port city of Patras. The social exclusion-reducing board game “Kondigno” representing VMU at Kaunas Startup Awards impressed the competition jury, earning a place among the top three in the “For a more sustainable, better world” category.
- Vytautas Magnus University was ranked 8th in the European University Sports Association’s ranking of sporting achievements.
- The Chancellor of VMU Agriculture Academy, Prof. Astrida Miceikienė, was awarded one of the highest awards of the Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts – the bronze “Work Star” for her contributions to Lithuanian agriculture.
- Prof. Dalia Leinartė’s book “Unplanned Life. Family in Soviet Lithuania” (publisher “Aukso žuvys”) competed in the “Book of the Year” contest. The book was nominated in the category of journalism and documentary. The book had already been recognised by the Ministry of Culture as among the most beautiful books published that year.
- On the occasion of the State Restoration Day, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, presented state awards for contributions to Lithuania and for making its name better known around the world. Among the awardees were Assoc. Prof. Andžej Pukšto of the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Assoc. Prof. Rytis Zemkauskas of the Department of Public Communication, and Dr. Virginija Vitkienė, teacher at the Department of Art History in the Faculty of Arts.
- At a ceremony held at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius, Dr. Žydronė Kolevinskienė, a literary

scholar and Associate Professor at the Department of Lithuanian Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, was awarded the Justinas Marcinkevičius Prize.

- Prof. Eugenija Kupčinskienė of the Department of Biology in the Faculty of Natural Sciences was awarded the Tadas Ivanauskas Prize (environmental protection) for the series of papers "Environmental Phyto-Indication".
- The Vice-Chancellor of the Agriculture Academy, Prof. Aušra Blinstrubienė of the Faculty of Agronomy, was awarded one of the highest awards of the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists – the "Knight of the Profession" badge for her active and sincere work and for the promotion of the profession.
- Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis of the Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities won the Philosophy Prof. Stasys Šalkauskis Prize. The Prof. Stasys Šalkauskis Prize is awarded every three years for the promotion and development of the nation's cultural, artistic, philosophical and pedagogical thought to persons who carry on the work and ideas of Stasys Šalkauskis.
- VMU Education Academy in Vilnius hosted a festive event where Prof. Kastytis Barisas, the choirmaster of the Education Academy's academic mixed choir "Ave vita", was awarded the "Golden Bird" Award, the highest honour given to non-professional artists in Lithuania.
- Prof. Dainius Steponavičius of the Department of Agricultural Engineering and Safety in the Faculty of Engineering at the Agriculture Academy was elected a Full Member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (academician); Prof. Abdul Mounem Mouazen, Senior Research Fellow of the Department was elected a Foreign Member of the LAS; and a teacher Dr. Giedrius Pašakarnis was appointed a leader of two working groups of the UN FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation).
- Dr. Rasa Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė, a teacher at the Education Academy, became a member of the Young Academy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.
- Assoc. Prof. Rasa Pakeltienė became the Chairperson of the European Committee of the Association for European Life Sciences Universities (ICA) and a member of the Bioeconomy and Biodiversity and Climate Leadership Groups of the European Commission's European Economic and Social Committee.
- Prof. Vytautas Levandauskas, architectural historian and teacher at the Faculty of Arts, was awarded Kaunas City Science Prize for his achievements in the fields of the humanities and social sciences.
- Prof. Aušra Marcinkevičienė of the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agriculture Academy was awarded the title of Honorary Member of the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists; Prof. Algirdas Juozas Motuzas was awarded the title of Meritorious Agronomist of the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists; Prof. Vaclovas Bogužas was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania; and Assoc. Prof. Irena Pranckietienė was awarded the title of Meritorious Agronomist of the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists.
- Prof. Auksė Balčytienė was invited to become a member of the Research Board of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The Research Board consists of internationally renowned researchers who provide guidance on the Academy's research programme and determine guidelines for academic quality control.
- Prof. Šarūnas Liekis was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas of Lithuania for his many years of scientific, pedagogical, civic and public diplomacy activities, focusing on national minorities and protection of human rights.
- The Lithuanian Basketball Federation awarded Jonas Okunis, Director of the University Administration, and Vladas Juknevičius, Head of the Sports Centre, with "For Contributions to Lithuanian Basketball" badges of appreciation.
- Dr. Mantas Rubežius, teacher at the Faculty of Engineering of VMU Agriculture Academy, was nominated in the "Light of the Year" category at the annual national awards "Lithuanian Honour" organised by the TV3 channel. The young scientist, a specialist in hazardous waste management and biogas production as well as co-founder and co-owner of the start-up Biovala, has developed together with his team a technology capable of purifying soil by applying the unique properties of plants.
- Assoc. Prof. Evelina Bendoraitienė of the Faculty of Economics and Management is one of five teachers who won the year's Innovative Methods Award of the Transform4Europe alliance. The aim of the award is to recognise innovative teaching practices, exchange best practices and promote cooperation among European higher education institutions.
- Prof. Jurgita Staniškytė of the Faculty of Arts was elected to the CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe) Programme Committee.
- Assoc. Prof. Linara Dovydaitytė of the Faculty of Arts was elected the Chairperson of Kaunas City Museum Council.
- Prof. Jurgita Staniškytė of the Faculty of Arts became a member of the SKVC Study Assessment Commission, and Assoc. Prof. Rūta Mažeikienė became a member of the SKVC Higher Education Assessment Commission.
- Among the winners of the best dissertation competition sponsored by the Lithuanian Society of Young Researchers were representatives of VMU – Dr. Birutė Vitytė, a teacher at the Education Academy, and Dr. Lina Lauraitienė, a researcher at the Department of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting at the Faculty of Bioeconomy Development of VMU Agriculture Academy. Dr. Birutė Vitytė and Dr. Lina Lauraitienė were recognised for the best dissertations in the fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences and Arts. Dr. Birutė Vitytė won for her dissertation "LIBERTÉ vs SECURITÉ and AUTOCRATIE: Grounded Theory on Stereotyping as a Challenge for the Digital Game-Based Learning of Visual Arts" (Education), advisor Prof. Ona Monkevičienė.

Dr. Lina Lauraitienė won for her dissertation “Assessment of Environmentally Sustainable Growth in Agriculture across the European Union Countries” (Economics), advisor Prof. Vladzė Vitunskienė.

- The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson awarded VMU Professors: Milda Ališauskienė, Dalia Leinartė, Jonas Ruškus, Artūras Tereškinas and Dainius Žalimas with personal acknowledgements for their long-time work in the field of human rights. Vytautas Magnus University was recognised as an organisation that aims to ensure equal opportunities for all members of the community.
- The Teaching Farm of VMU Agriculture Academy was awarded Kaunas District Mayor's Award “For the Application of Digital Solutions”, for the digital interactive map of the Teaching Farm, which provides detailed information about the technologies used for crop rotation in the fields, and for the live video surveillance system installed on the farm.
- Prof. Elvyra Jarienė of the Faculty of Agronomy of VMU Agriculture Academy was awarded the Medal of Merit by the Warsaw University of Life Sciences.
- Prof. Gediminas Brazaitis of the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology of VMU Agriculture Academy and Prof. Egidijus Šarauskis of the Faculty of Engineering were elected as experts to the Natural and Technical Sciences Committee of the Research Council of Lithuania and the newly-established Committee of Experts on Science and Studies Policy.
- Dr. Artūras Kibiša, a teacher at the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology of VMU Agriculture Academy, was awarded the “Medeinė” Medal of the Lithuanian Association of Hunters and Fishermen for his contribution to the promotion of hunting culture and traditions.
- The regalia of the late VMU Honorary Professor Adolfas Laimutis Telksnys (1930–2022) were presented to his daughter, Audra Telksnytė.
- The Executive Committee of the Lithuanian Basketball Federation (LKF) held a meeting at the House of Lithuanian Basketball in Kaunas, where representatives of VMU 3x3 basketball team were honoured. Awards were presented to players (Augustinas Mikštas, Gabrielius Čelka, Eimantas Žilius, Nojus Lebskas) and coaches (Dainius Novickas, Algirdas Stuknys) for the impressive results achieved in 2023. The three-player team sparkled with impressive performances in the international arena: the three-player team won the European University 3x3 Basketball Championship and the World University 3x3 Basketball Championship.

Agreements, cooperation

- In order to promote mutual cooperation in the development of artificial intelligence solutions for the security and defence sector, the Rector of Vytautas Magnus University, Prof. Juozas Augutis, signed a cooperation agreement with UAB Baltic Amadeus.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the Bank of Lithuania to promote mutual cooperation in the development and improvement of study programmes, lectures, student internships, and joint projects.
- For the first time in the history of Lithuanian pharmacy, a universal Code of Professional Ethics for Lithuanian pharmacists was signed, in a ceremony held at the Ministry of Health. The Code was signed by the Lithuanian Pharmaceutical Union, represented by its President, Prof. Ona Ragažinskienė, and the Lithuanian Pharmacists Union, represented by its President, Dr. Liubov Kavaliauskienė.
- Four Kaunas higher education institutions and the economic development agency Kaunas IN signed an agreement to join forces in inviting prospective students to study in Kaunas. This is the first time in Lithuania that higher education institutions in one city have worked together to increase the attractiveness of study there.
- Cooperation agreements were signed with the municipalities of Trakai, Širvintos, Pakruojis, Pasvalys, Vilkaviškis, Elektrėnai, Kaišiadorys, Kėdainiai, Panevėžys, Plungė, Šakiai and Utena. The agreements stipulate that the University and the municipality will cooperate in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals in the field of teacher training, ensuring sufficient demand for teachers in the municipality's educational institutions. Obligations undertaken by VMU include the sharing of information about the educational programmes offered by the University, study opportunities and conditions, and educational activities.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with Santara Gymnasium in Kaunas, to strengthen school learners' IT training. A classroom named in honour of VMU SMART IT will be established at the gymnasium.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the A. Baranauskas and A. Vienuolis-Žukauskas Memorial Museum (represented by its director, Antanas Verbickas), with the aim of further developing the University's partnership with Lithuanian museums.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the Lithuanian Esperanto Association to further strengthen cultural support for the language.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the Nature Research Centre.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the Financial Crime Investigation Service (FCIS), aiming at building synergies, potential internship solutions, training and competence development in the financial field.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with the e-sports arena GG Arena, committing to cooperate and jointly develop e-sports culture at the University and in Lithuania.

- The volunteering-mentoring project “Kelrodė žvaigždė” (Guiding Star) entered its fourth year, in cooperation with Vilnius University, the Embassy of Israel, VMU Atžalynas Pro-Gymnasium and VMU Ugnė Karvelis Gymnasium. The main aim of the project is to encourage students to become volunteers and help school learners in the 3–6 classes who are experiencing learning difficulties.

International cooperation

- The Rector of VMU, Prof. Juozas Augutis, together with Gitanas Nausėda, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, and representatives of science and business organisations in Lithuania, visited Melbourne, Australia, to attend the first Australia-Lithuania Business and Science Forum.
- In Lublin, Vytautas Magnus University and twelve other European universities signed a declaration that led to the establishment of the Three Seas Universities Network (3SUN). The declaration was signed during the Three Seas Local Government Congress.
- VMU representatives visited National Taiwan University (NTU), one of the country’s strongest higher education institutions. NTU’s Vice-Rector for Communication and International Relations visited VMU at the end of November to discuss further cooperation. The visit also included a visit to the National Chengchi University (NCCU), with which VMU has had an active relationship for more than a decade. According to the Rector, discussions are underway on the possibility of establishing a Lithuania Centre at NCCU, similar to the Taiwan Centre at VMU.
- The Dean of the Faculty of Law, Prof. Dainius Žalimas, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Yaroslav the Wise National Law University in Kharkiv (Ukraine), represented by its Rector, Prof. Anatoliy Getman. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed with a view to further cooperation between the two universities and strengthen their friendly relations.
- A cooperation agreement was signed in South Korea with Pohang Technopark, Bioapp, Genecell Biotech, Lart-Bio, UAB Nando and UAB Caszyme.
- The European Commission approved an application for EUR 14.4 million to further develop the Transform4Europe Alliance. The funding enables the partners to further strengthen international cooperation, develop the skills of students and staff, find and apply sustainable solutions in the universities, and promote innovation in higher education.
- VMU representatives participated in an international event in Valencia, Spain, with the aim of discussing what has already been done and planning the next steps in the further development of the successful “Donation Opportunities for Newcomers (DON@)” project. The project involves the development of a digital platform for exchange students to exchange or donate items, organise exchange events and share guidelines to help put similar projects into practice in other institutions of higher education.
- A delegation from Japan visited Vytautas Magnus University. The delegation consisted of the Honorary Consul General of Lithuania in Japan, Mr. Shigehiro Komaru, the Rector of Fukuyama City University (FCU), Mr. Toshiyuki Sato, and the Secretary General of the Shibuya Ikueikai Foundation, Mr. Hideki Anai. The delegation was accompanied by the Ambassador of Lithuania to Japan, Aurelijus Zykas. During the meeting, participants discussed possible future prospects for cooperation between VMU and FCU, as well as continuing activities such as summer schools and Japanese language competitions.
- Prof. Rimantas Plungė, Prof. Titas Petrikis and Assoc. Prof. Tomas Pabedinskas, teachers at the Department of Contemporary Arts of the Faculty of Arts, took part in the international symposium “Focus on Europe 2023” in Graz, Austria. Organised by Augustinum, a private university’s College of Teacher Education, the event brought together more than 20 speakers from 8 countries. VMU representatives were invited to the symposium to share their views on Russia’s war in Ukraine, analysing it from the perspectives of political science, artistic research and ideological perspectives.
- The Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, together with the Strategy International think tank, organised the conference “Cyprus and Lithuania. Challenge and Necessity for European Unity in the Shadow of the War in Ukraine”. The conference took place in Cyprus.
- For the first time, a joint intensive mixed programme on “Languages in Higher Education: Plurilingual Approaches and Informal Learning Formats” was implemented by the Institute of Foreign Languages of VMU, the Faculty of Humanities of VMU and Transform4Europe. The programme brought together language teachers and researchers from all over Europe. The event’s wide-ranging programme included lectures, workshops, visits to language and cultural centres and a cultural programme.
- Applications were submitted for Erasmus+ funding for mobility with higher education institutions in Programme countries (EU, EEA and candidate countries) and partner countries (outside the EU/EEA). The 2023 application for mobility in partner countries (outside the EU/EEA) submitted by VMU was rated as excellent (earning 97 out of a possible 100 points) and funding was awarded for mobility of 181 students and staff in 40 partner countries, the highest amount in comparison to other Lithuanian universities and colleges.
- VMU has Erasmus+ cooperation agreements with partners from 76 countries (32 EU/EEA countries and 44 non-EU/EEA countries, up from 73 in 2022). The number of cooperation agreements with non-EU/EEA countries increased to 118 (112 in 2022). The total number of agreements with EU/EEA partner institutions

has evolved over the last three years from 484 (32 countries) in 2021 and 417 (33 countries) in 2022 to 440 (32 countries) in 2023.

- VMU has 251 (219 in 2022) bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements with universities and organisations in 41 countries. In 2023, 32 new cooperation agreements were signed with universities in Azerbaijan, the United States of America, Kazakhstan, Taiwan, Ukraine, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia, including 15 new agreements with Ukrainian universities.
- The University continued its successful cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia through the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) programme. VMU is the only higher education institution from Lithuania participating in this programme. In 2021, 5 students were admitted to VMU for a semester, in 2022 – 8 students, and in 2023 – 49 students.
- VMU has 38 double-diploma study agreements (34 in 2022) with universities in Belgium, Germany, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. In 2023, new proposals for double-diploma agreements in the Transform4Europe alliance of universities were drafted in the fields of politics, social sciences, arts, natural sciences and informatics. The first of these was signed with Saarland University in Germany in the field of informatics.

Scholarships and student achievement

- Simona Šomkė, a graduate of VMU Agriculture Academy, was awarded a prize for her thesis “Spatial Analysis of Agricultural Land Prices and Its Determinants in Lithuania” in the field of Agricultural Sciences in the “Best Master’s Thesis in Lithuania 2023” competition organised annually by the Lithuanian Society of Young Researchers. The supervisor was Prof. Vladzė Vitunskienė.
- Aušra Česnulevičienė’s thesis for the Master of Arts in Curating programme, “The Čiurlionis Family: Their Life in Music” (supervisor Prof. Rasutė Žukienė) was recognised as the Best Master’s Thesis 2023 in the field of Arts (LSYR).
- Danielius Mažeikis’s thesis for the Master of Arts in Creative Industries, “The influence of the European Capital of Culture “Kaunas 2022” on the development of communities in Kaunas District: the cases of Kačerginė and Zapyškis” (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Ina Pukelytė) won 1st place at the “Best Master’s Thesis on European Union Policy Formation and Implementation” competition.
- The Lithuanian Academy of Sciences awards prizes to students in higher education for the best research work. Prizes were awarded to Marius Bytautas, a second cycle student at VMU Education Academy, for his research paper “Teacher Training for School Learners’ Sexuality Education in Lithuania”, and to Raimonda Kurauskienė, a second cycle student at VMU Education Academy, for her research paper “Development of Social and Emotional Skills in a Music School: the Experience of Teachers and Students”.
- Monika Pociūtė, a fourth-year student of Public Communication at the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, was presented an award at the Romas Sakadolskis Journalism Forum – she won in the category of video expression for her report “Pesticides and Pollution Poison the Bees. Farmers Warn of Colony Collapse”.
- Vydūnas Youth Foundation’s Bronius Kviklys Scholarship (Chicago, USA) was awarded to Andrius Bečius, a second cycle student in Educational Management.
- Scholarships established by Thermo Fisher Scientific were awarded to: Soham Sameer Gupte, a third-year student in Biotechnology; Haroldas Sakavičius, a first-year student of second cycle programme in Biochemical Analysis; Kathiravan Murugesan and Heydar Aghakishi, first-year students of second cycle programme in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology; and Giedrius Galvanauskas, Deimantė Narbutaitytė, and Armantas Ramoška, second-year students of second cycle programme in Applied Biotechnology.
- Scholarships in the name of the Lithuanian diaspora were awarded to students in the Humanities: Prof. Bronius Vaškėlis scholarship was awarded to Beata Starodubova, a first-year student of second cycle programme in Literature Creation, Criticism and Communication; Liūtas and Francoise Mockūnas scholarship was awarded to Martynas Butkus, a doctoral student in the History and Archaeology programme; Vanda Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė scholarship was awarded to Dalius Surmilavičius, a fourth-year student in the History programme; Bronius Bieliukas scholarship was awarded to Andrius Milinkevičius, a first-year second cycle student in the Comparative Cultural Studies programme, and to Kotryna Serapinaitė, a first-year second cycle student in the East-Central European and Lithuanian Historical Studies programme.
- Ausma Sakalauskaitė was awarded the Lithuanian Choral Union Prize for productive creative activity in the field of choral culture.
- The Lithuanian Foundation (USA) awarded named scholarships to students in the Public Communication Department at the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy for the best theses: Gintarė Žukauskaitė in the Public Communication programme was awarded Romas Sakadolskis Memorial Fund scholarship, and Inesa Sadlauskaitė in the Public Communication programme was awarded Zenonas Rekašius Fund scholarship. Future Media and Journalism second cycle students Rimgailė Kasparaitė and Laima Ladyšaitė were awarded the Ignas and Alina Skrupskelis Commemorative Fund scholarship.
- Rugilė Špaukauskaitė, a second cycle student in Diplomacy and International Relations at the Faculty of Political

Science and Diplomacy, and Eitautas Čurovas, a second cycle student in Contemporary European Politics, were awarded scholarships from the Lithuanian National Foundation (USA) for their high academic achievements.

- Indrė Muraškaitė, a student of second cycle programme in Health Psychology, was awarded a scholarship in the name of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas. Gustė Abromavičiūtė, a student in the Social Work programme, was awarded an honorary scholarship in the name of VMU. Gintarė Kučiauskaitė, a student in the Psychology programme, was awarded the I. Bielevičius scholarship.
- The Drs. Vaclovas and Stefanija Čepukėnas scholarships, which aim to promote the French language and Francophone culture, were awarded to Irma Jokštytė-Stanevičienė, Karina Korsakova and Brigita Misevičiūtė.
- Three named scholarships were awarded to students in the Faculty of Arts: Ugnė Kulbokaitė, a student in the Art History, Criticism and Media programme, and Gabrielius Kavaliauskas, a second cycle student in the Theatre Research and Stage Art Management programme, received the Prof. Bronius Vaškelis scholarship, while Tomas Genevičius, a second cycle student in the Art Curating programme, received the Prof. Bronius Bieliukas scholarship.
- The CMA scholarship programme is carried out in partnership with the IMA (Institute of Management Accountants) and is globally recognised. The value of the scholarship is about USD 2,000. This scholarship was awarded to 9 students and 1 faculty member in the Faculty of Economics and Management.
- Four Jonas Smilgevičius scholarships were awarded to students in the Faculty of Economics and Management.
- Paulina Inkrataitė won the competition for the Prof. Birutė Cipliauskaitė scholarship. This scholarship is awarded annually to a VMU student who is successfully studying Spanish at VMU and who has demonstrated diligence, excellent academic performance, and participation in social and cultural activities.
- Povilas Stankūnas, a student of second cycle programme in Ecology and Climate Change in the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology at the Agriculture Academy, was ranked among the top ten Lithuanian student athletes (4th place). He is a member of the national academic rowing team, and in 2023 became the World Youth Rowing vice-champion and won the bronze at the European Youth Championships.
- Patrikas Stankevičius, a student of second cycle programme in Agricultural Economics in the Faculty of Bioeconomy Development at VMU Agriculture Academy, became a 2023 European Student Volleyball champion and won the title of MVP at the championship. Representing Lithuania, the athlete won 9th place in the Elite16 stage of the World Cup and took the first bronze medal in Lithuania's history in the BPT Challenge tournament in the Philippines, along with 17th place in the European Championship.
- The President Algirdas Brazauskas scholarship was awarded to Indrė Muraškaitė, a second cycle student in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the President Antanas Smetona scholarship was awarded to Marius Bytautas, a fourth-year student at the Music Academy.
- The following students at the Education Academy received Signatories of the Act of Independence of February 16th scholarships: Saulė Balsytė (fourth year); Ieva Nemiraitė (fourth year); Agnė Staupelytė (third year); Orinta Šlušnytė (third year); Arnold Voznialis (fourth year); Markas Černiauskas (first year) and Emilija Verbickaitė (first year).
- For scientific, educational, musical, artistic, creative or civic activities, the University awarded honorary scholarships to the following students: Gustė Abromavičiūtė, a fourth-year student in the Faculty of Social Sciences; Emilija Bagdonaitė, a third-year student at the Music Academy; Ugnius Ginelevičius, a fourth-year student in the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agriculture Academy; Milita Songailaitė, a first-year second cycle student in the Faculty of Informatics; and Artūr Vincėlovič, a first-year second cycle student at the Education Academy.

Institutional evaluation

In 2023, during the external institutional evaluation of VMU, a panel of international experts from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) rated the activities of VMU as “very good” and accredited the University for the maximum period, seven years. In their assessment, the experts recognised that the University not only stands out in Europe for the flexibility of the studies it offers, but also for its extensive international activities, high quality of research and infrastructure. According to the panel, the merger with Aleksandras Stulginskis University and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences resulted in the broad application of efficient management processes and the University's strategic plan appropriately reflects its mission. As an active member of the Transform4Europe alliance of European universities, VMU has been successful in gaining recognition as an international research university.

The experts gave VMU a “very good” rating in the categories of governance, studies and science (arts) and impact on regional and national development, and a “good” rating in the category of quality assurance. VMU was commended for its clear governance structure, which allowed it to respond effectively to the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and other unexpected events, for its human resources management policy, which maintains a culture of participation, and for its continuous upgrading of its infrastructure, such as facilities meeting the highest standards: the Sports Centre, Library, Teacher Training Centre, etc.

The extensive services/benefits for staff and students, effective quality assurance based on national and international priorities, the Code of Academic Ethics and the Centre of Ukraine, which was visited by 24,000

Ukrainians during the year, were also highly commended. The experts assessed that VMU offers flexible studies based on a liberal arts model, which distinguishes the University from others not only in Lithuania but also in Europe. The University provides excellent international opportunities for the whole community. The impact of VMU on regional and national development was also assessed as very good, highlighting the University's close cooperation with social partners in activities and studies, such as the National Human Rights Forum.

University external communication

In 2023, the admissions campaign “VMU | Broader Perspectives” marked its third year. The campaign was supplemented with new visual illustrations and associative slogans. The campaign aims to strengthen the University's identity: VMU is the University with the widest coverage in Lithuania, conducting research and studies in the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, arts, biomedical sciences, technology and agriculture in Kaunas and Vilnius.

The University has a recognised competence as the University providing comprehensive education for the creators of the future, with a global orientation, a free spirit and a liberal mind, where research and studies are carried out at the intersection of several disciplines, and where identity is purposefully shaped in the dimensions of civic awareness and active public and cultural life.

Although the market share of universities in total media has declined (3.6% in 2021, 3.3% in 2022, 3.2% in 2023), VMU maintains its position as a player in the university market. According to the quantitative and qualitative analysis carried out by “Mediaskopas”, VMU maintains a strong second position in the media among the country's major universities. Although the number of VMU's messages has slightly decreased compared to 2,022 (8%), the effectiveness of external communication has improved and VMU ranks second among Lithuanian universities in terms of the number of messages, the audience reached, the effectiveness of communication and positive communication.

The sources generating the most news about VMU in 2023 were lrt.lt, delfi.lt, lrytas.lt, kl.lt, kauno.diena.lt, diena.lt, BNS, 15min.lt and others. VMU was most talked about on the internet (73.3%) and in regional publications (13.2%). Looking at the distribution of mentions in portals/newspapers assigned to a specific region, it can be said that VMU is most visible in Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys and Vilnius.

The most popular positive news items about VMU in 2023 were: 1. The Stasys Šalkauskis Prize, awarded to Professor Gintautas Mažeikis (25 reports); 2. Kotryna Teterevkova, who improved her personal best, winning gold at the Universiada for the third time (23 reports); 3. The once-in-a-lifetime blooming of the “century plant” in Kaunas Botanical Garden (19 reports).

In the opinion leadership market in 2023, the most-cited VMU figures were: Ignas Kalpokas, Dainius Žalimas, Gintautas Mažeikis, Juozas Augutis, Egdūnas Račius, Lauras Bielinis, Viktorija Tauraitė, Mindaugas Jurkynas, Andžejus Pukšto, Astrida Miceikienė, Juozas Skirius, Vilma Leonavičienė, Simona Pilkienė, Vilma Bijekienė, Arvydas Kumpis, Šarūnas Liekis, Aušra Maslauskaitė, Lina Kaminskienė, Arūnas Balsevičius, and Gintaras Šumskas.

Among the stories attracting attention and media coverage were topics that popularise science, comments by the University's experts, topics about higher education policy, funding and studies.

The most popular VMU news posted on Facebook in 2023 included the above-mentioned story about Kotryna Teterevkova, a school learner's march from Šiauliai to Kaunas to honour the memory of Stasys Šalkauskis, the importance of the visit of USA President Biden to Lithuania, and the NATO summit in Vilnius.

In 2023, as in previous years, the main media coverage of the University was through expert commentaries, which increased by more than two hundred (3,095 in 2022, 3,336 in 2023). The most frequent coverage of VMU was also in the areas of events and culture (1,378), sport (980), management and organisation (623) and research production and achievements (318).

Each year, taking into account the strategic goals of VMU, general national and regional trends, the results of the previous year, and the available financial and human resources, the International Cooperation Department at VMU prepares and implements a plan for the promoting of VMU studies in English and the attracting of international students.

In 2023, first cycle and second cycle programmes taught in English were publicised to foreign markets on 6 different international study portals: studyin.lt; masterstudies.com, bachelorstudies.com, educations.com, study.eu, and univero.cc. Since 2020, a strong focus has been placed on digital advertising and its channels: taking advantage of Google ads, on-demand advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

Since 2022, the peer-to-peer platform Unibuddy, integrated into the University's website (<https://www.vdu.lt/en/studies/meet-our-students/>), has been successfully used as a tool to raise the profile of the international programmes and the University and to improve the integration of new students. The Unibuddy platform has 72 ambassadors – international students and alumni – who have created around 65 unique blog posts on various topics related to study and integration at VMU. In 2023, 608 foreign nationals received consultations on the Unibuddy platform to learn more about studying at VMU.

In 2023, VMU study programmes were presented at international fairs: representatives of the International Cooperation Department participated in 4 virtual fairs (Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, India/Nepal) and 8 in-person fairs in Azerbaijan, Egypt, South Africa, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. In Indonesia and Vietnam, VMU participated for the first time in a new format for attracting students – the Student Counsellor Workshop, which engages with representatives of secondary schools in these countries to attract more potential candidates for full-time study.

There is also ongoing work with international student recruitment agencies. VMU currently has more than 20 contracts with agencies in Azerbaijan, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, China, Sakartvelo (Georgia), Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Of the total number of foreign applicants to VMU in 2023, more than 23% were foreign students recruited through agencies.

In 2023, for the first time, VMU Open House Days were organised virtually for potential foreign students, and presentations about study opportunities were made to Ukrainians attending Lithuanian schools.

Support for Ukraine

In the context of VMU's civic and humanitarian initiatives, VMU's support to Ukraine plays an important role. Most of the support is provided through the Centre of Ukraine, established at VMU Education Academy in Vilnius at the initiative of the First Ladies of Lithuania and Ukraine, in cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine. In 2023, the Centre implemented 2,069 events and activities, 984 of which were organised by the Ukrainian community itself, demonstrating its growing cohesion. In 2023, the Centre recorded 23,111 visits from Ukrainians, for a total of 35,273 since its launch in June 2022. The Centre has a Saturday school for children, non-formal education activities in the evenings, psychological support, children's and women's choirs, a summer school and the involvement of Ukrainian students who attend VMU. Celebrations and commemorations of important Ukrainian dates are organised, such as Vyshyvanka Day, Independence Day of Ukraine, Day of the Defenders of Ukraine, and Holodomor anniversary observances. Centre activities are organised by 4 Ukrainian employees at the Centre.

On 24 February 2023, an international forum on "Pursuing President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula: Joint Actions of Ukraine and Lithuania for a Lasting Peace" was held at the University. The Forum was welcomed in-person by the President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, and virtually by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Prominent Lithuanian and Ukrainian politicians, experts and scholars discussed energy security, human rights and the restoration of justice. In July 2023, VMU conferred the title of Honorary Doctor on the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in recognition of his extraordinary leadership in the struggle for Ukraine's freedom, democracy, and humanistic values, and for setting an example of dignity, determination, and morality to the young generation.

The Mariupol State University (MSU) Centre was opened on 9 October, with the aim of ensuring that the MSU will be able to continue its activities not only in Kyiv, but also at Vytautas Magnus University. At the initiative of VMU, MSU has been admitted as an associate partner to the Transform4Europe Alliance of European Universities, to which VMU belongs. On the occasion of the opening of the Centre, Prof. Mykola Trofymenko, Rector of MSU, visited VMU, meeting with students from Ukraine and taking part in a discussion with VMU community.

On 16 November 2023, an international conference organised by the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Embassy of Ukraine in Lithuania, "Higher Education in Turbulent Times: Towards European Networking and Integration", was held at VMU. During the conference, experts and scholars from Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Finnish, and Swiss higher education institutions and the European Commission shared experience and discussed how European networks and programmes could help to integrate Ukrainian higher education institutions more smoothly into European education and research.

A teacher Aistė Žemaitytė, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, together with the U.S. Embassy organised a screening of the documentary "Freedom on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom" for the University and Kaunas communities. The filmmaker Evgeny Afineevsky attended the screening and spoke with the audience, answering questions. The documentary tells the story of Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014 and invites viewers to see the humanitarian crisis caused by the invasion through the eyes of Ukrainian journalists, soldiers, doctors, artists, volunteers, clergymen, children and mothers. Featuring an introduction by Oscar-winner Helen Mirren, the documentary won awards at the Hamptons International, Savannah, Mill Valley and Bragacine film festivals, and received a Kineo Award and a nomination at the Stockholm Film Festival.

Other noteworthy VMU initiatives:

- In May, Prof. Dainius Žalimas, Dean of the Faculty of Law and former President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, visited various cities in Ukraine, providing assistance to soldiers, giving lectures, and establishing cooperative relations with various universities there.
- On 26 August, a run-in solidarity with Ukraine took place in the Botanical Garden of VMU. The symbolic event was held to mark two important dates – Ukraine's Independence Day (24 August) and the Day of Remembrance

of the Defenders of Ukraine (27 August), attracted about fifty students from Ukraine, Lithuania and other countries.

- The Centre of Ukraine at VMU, in cooperation with the Government of Flanders, has launched a project called "Community Accelerator", organising training for Ukrainian and Lithuanian community leaders. The training provides them with the competences needed to promote civic participation and empower communities. The first training took place on 7–9 December 2023, the second was scheduled for January 2024, and a conference is planned for the end of the project.
- On 23 May, together with Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis and Ambassador Algirdas Kumža, VMU opened the first Think Tank event in Kaunas, "Europe and Ukraine – Today and Tomorrow". Regular meetings of the Youth Think Tank took place at the Centre of Ukraine at VMU in Vilnius, in cooperation with the British Council.
- VMU Research and Studies Centre hosted a Youth Think Tank on "How to be pluricultural and preserve your cultural traditions?", where the Ambassador of Canada to Lithuania, Jeanette Sautner, and VMU Vice-Rector for Communication, Assoc. Prof. Vilma Bijėkienė, had a discussion with students from Ukraine and Lithuania as well as other international students attending VMU.
- To mark International Children's Day, the Centre of Ukraine hosted a discussion, including participation by young people from Ukraine and Lithuania, the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk, the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, and the First Lady of Lithuania, Diana Nausėdienė. The importance of Ukrainian youth learning in Lithuania was discussed during the event.
- An open online lecture was delivered by Yaroslav Zhalilo on Ukraine's resilience, "Sources and Drivers of Ukraine's Resilience in Withstanding Full-scale Russian Aggression". Yaroslav Zhalilo is a Doctor of Economics, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine, and Head of the Centre for Economic and Social Research.
- A screening of Mantas Kvedaravičius's film "Mariupol 2" was held in the Great Hall. The screening and discussion were part of the programme of the international conference "Turning Points: Values and Conflicting Futures in the Baltics", which took place at VMU.
- Marianna Gladys, Associate Professor at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, delivered a lecture on "Russia-Ukraine War: Prehistory and Lessons (Not) Learned" in the general University course on Political Science.

As the war started by Russia in Ukraine has continued, Vytautas Magnus University has continued to invite Ukrainian citizens to apply for first cycle and second cycle programmes at the University, and to receive up to 100% funding for studies. In 2023, 105 Ukrainian citizens were admitted to full-time first cycle and second cycle programmes at VMU (7 admitted from the spring 2023 semester, 98 admitted from the autumn semester). Of these, 85 students were granted 100% scholarships to cover the tuition fees and 63 students who met the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport were granted funding to cover part of the tuition fees. All students were provided with free accommodation in a VMU dormitory.

In 2023, VMU intensified its cooperation with Ukrainian research and study institutions and carried out student and staff exchanges, in order to provide assistance to the war-impacted Ukrainian academic community. In 2023, Erasmus+ funding was granted to 21 students from Ukraine to come to VMU for study exchanges, to 1 student for a mobility internship, to 10 staff members from partner universities in Ukraine to come to VMU to teach, and to 10 staff members to come to VMU for learning/experience exchange.

From the very beginning of the war in Ukraine, the staff of the International Cooperation Department have paid particular attention and provided support to the Ukrainian students studying at VMU. In 2023, various events and efforts were organised to encourage students to get involved in the life and community of the city and the University, such as running competitions, free climbing training, public discussions, watching or attending basketball matches, etc.

Developing the potential of Transform4Europe – T4EU

Transform4Europe (hereinafter referred to as the T4EU), an initiative bringing together an alliance of European universities, launched at the end of 2020 and accelerated in 2021-2023 to become one of the University's priority areas of activity. Due to the wide range of activities of this initiative, many academic and non-academic units of the University are now involved in the implementation of international activities.

The T4EU aims to transform and progressively integrate all universities in the T4EU network into one sustainable European alliance, with a common governance structure, supporting systems and centralised services. The T4EU's key objectives include joint study programmes, entrepreneurship, multilingualism, student and staff mobility as a norm, development of regional partnerships, and an empowered European knowledge and innovation ecosystem, etc.

The first year of the T4EU European University Alliance saw a lot of work of a strategic nature, whereas the last few years have been dedicated to the active development of activities, the drafting and implementation of guidelines and strategic documents, and the organisation of joint Transform4Europe events.

A key event for 2023 in strengthening T4EU cooperation was the European Commission's decision to extend the funding for the Alliance. In July 2023, the European Commission approved the application for the further development of T4EU with EUR 14.4 million from the Erasmus+ programme, which will fund the Alliance's activities for at least another four years. This will allow the Alliance to consolidate and extend the good practices over the next four years, making them accessible to as many students, researchers and University staff as possible.

The Alliance also goes into 2024 with an enlarged membership. In the autumn, the following European universities became official partners of the Alliance: Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal), the University of Primorska (Slovenia) and the Jean Monnet University of Saint-Etienne (France). In the autumn of 2023, as an expression of support for Ukraine, with mediation assistance from Vytautas Magnus University, the Mariupol State University of Ukraine officially joined the Alliance as an Associate Partner. The Mariupol State University Centre was established at VMU. Although the above-listed universities have been previously involved in the Alliance's activities, they are now full members of T4EU, expanding not only its geographical boundaries but also adding their experience, competences, human resources, etc. to the range and potential of the Alliance's activities.

The project "Strengthening the International Competitiveness of VMU in the Transform4Europe Alliance of European Universities", developed by VMU and approved by the Central Project Management Agency (CPVA), was launched in 2023. Funding of EUR 1,844,768.11 was allocated for the implementation of this project.

Another Horizon Europe 2020 project closely linked to T4EU is "Transform4European Research and Innovation", which aims to develop a common long-term research and innovation agenda for T4EU universities. The Alliance partners are looking for sustainable and long-term cooperation opportunities and have therefore started to expand and complement existing activities and initiate new EC or national projects. First of all, these include Erasmus+ KA2 projects such as "Activating Students in Online Classes", "Cross-disciplinary Academic Offer", "Stronger Together", etc. With several new applications also in the pipeline, the range of T4EU activities and opportunities will only grow and strengthen in the near future.

Strategic T4EU activities. Most of the T4EU activities are included in the 2021–2027 Strategic Plan of VMU and were actively implemented in 2023.

T4EU partners were actively involved in the development of three international challenge-based second cycle programmes. In addition, joint T4EU doctoral study programmes in the Alliance's main fields of action are under discussion, namely digital, sustainable and societal transformations. An agreement was signed defining the rules for automatic recognition of study courses and diplomas.

In 2023, the T4EU Bachelor's tracks for T4EU European University students (T4EU BA Tracks) were developed, tailored to T4EU's key operational guidelines. The courses offered by VMU attracted exceptional attention and participation from students of partner universities. Students and doctoral students had the opportunity to join various other learning initiatives offered by the T4EU partners: a summer school on EU institutions and policies, a course on programming basics, a conference for doctoral students on cities and urbanism, a lecture on sustainable tourism, etc.

This year, three T4EU Transformation Labs were set up in the areas of digital, sustainable and societal transformation. Researchers from the T4EU university networks, together with social partners from different European countries in different fields, are intensifying their work there.

The T4EU Professional Development Academy activities were actively developed and implemented, with 19 T4EU European University distance learning professional development courses organised for academic and/or non-academic staff. The Transform4Europe Innovative Teaching award was also organised for the second time, with 30 teachers from T4EU partner universities submitting applications and taking part in the event. At total of 4 winners were announced and prize money was awarded during the T4EU Conference at the University of Trieste.

Key events and meetings of the T4EU European alliance:

- T4EU European Culture Festival, held in two Polish cities – Katowice and the border town of Cieszyn. Participants took part in a range of workshops on film-making, music, theatre, dance, poster-making, ceramics, comics, game design, etc.
- Seven T4EU Mobility Weeks were organised, including lectures, courses for students and doctoral students, collaborative research projects, professional development training, seminars, excursions and artistic events, and other interaction.
- At the Strategic Assembly, university representatives discussed the results of the first phase of T4EU 2020-2023 and made plans for the second phase of the Alliance for the next four years, taking part in workshops and discussions. The event also saw the launch of the rotation of the presidency of the Alliance, which was handed over to the University of Silesia for one year. During the Assembly, meetings of the Alliance's governing bodies and expert groups took place.
- The second T4EU Conference on Innovative Teaching and Learning Methods stimulated the exchange of ideas on innovative approaches to teaching and learning in higher education, bringing together the capacities of all T4EU Alliance partners.
- The T4EU Entrepreneurship School for students focused on challenges to improve their entrepreneurial skills. The programme included various activities such as teamwork, presentation of prototypes to solve challenges, lectures, etc. T4EU activities will continue in the coming year.

WLU (World Lithuanian University): activities for the diaspora

In line with the strategic objective of VMU, i.e., to strengthen and develop the idea and activities of VMU World Lithuanian University (WLU), and in accordance with the strategic guidelines of the Lithuanian diaspora policy "Global Lithuania", the WLU aims to gather an active academic Lithuanian diaspora, to foster the self-awareness of Lithuanians as a diasporic nation, and to foster the ability of Lithuanians to think about the future of the diasporic nation.

With these goals in mind, the WLU and its partners organised the third Lithuanian Education Forum in 2023 and declared October as Lithuanian Diaspora Month. The events of the latter project focused on the history of the Lithuanian diaspora, South American Lithuanians, and the activities of Lithuanian language schools. The discussion "From the Golden Age to the Crisis: the Fates of Venezuelan Lithuanians" and the photography exhibition "Venezuela's Golden Age through the Eyes of Lithuanians" attracted particular attention. These events allowed close contacts to be established with members of the Lithuanian-Venezuelan community living in Lithuania.

As part of Vytautas Kavolis Interdisciplinary Professorship Visits Programme, supported by the Dana Gedvilienė Fund, the University hosted Eunice Blavascunas, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Environmental Studies at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, Dr. Darius Udryns and Dr. Martín Parselis from the Catholic University of Argentina and the University of Buenos Aires.

As part of WLU's diaspora education programme, which aims to strengthen Lithuanian identity and develop the concept of Lithuanians as a diasporic nation, for the fifth year in a row, the non-formal study course "Challenges of Lithuanian Identity and Family Stories" is being implemented.

On 26 April, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the WLU, a round table discussion was organised. In this small "symposium" of the World Lithuanian University, WLU collaborators discussed what kind of images of the diasporic nation the University can/should create.

Cooperation between the diaspora and the following Lithuanian organisations and public figures was an important aspect of the WLU's activities in 2023: the Educational Council of the World Lithuanian Community, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, the Association of Lithuanian Language Schools, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Dalia Asanavičienė, Member of the Seimas, the Valdas Adamkus Presidential Library-Museum.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, VMU Vice-Rector for Communication participated in the activities of the Coordination Commission for Lithuanian Diaspora Affairs organised by the Ministry. The WLU coordinator took part in the Ministry's working group on the implementation of the Lithuanian diaspora policy.

Total support received for the activities of the World Lithuanian University amounted to EUR 14,515 in 2023.

Strengthening the reputation of the University

VMU scores highly in the QS European University Ranking. For the first time, VMU has received very high marks in the QS Europe University Rankings. It was ranked third in Europe in terms of student-staff ratio, 30th in the category of incoming exchange students, and 114th in the category of outgoing exchange students. VMU also scored highly in employer ratings (160th in Europe) and diversity of international students (167th). The University was ranked 251+ in the Academic Reputation category and 301+ in the remaining categories. Overall, the University scored 29.5 points and was ranked 284th in Europe out of 688 higher education institutions assessed, and 105th in the Northern European region. Of the six Lithuanian universities included in the ranking, VMU was ranked third.

QS World University Ranking – VMU leadership and a jump higher. VMU has significantly improved or maintained its high performance in the latest QS World University Rankings, especially in the area of internationalisation, where VMU has remained the leading university in Lithuania in terms of the number of foreign students. VMU again achieved the best result in the number of international students: in this category, VMU ranked 341st among all universities in the world, thus achieving its best result and remaining unrivalled in Lithuania. Last year, VMU was ranked 389th in this category. VMU made its biggest jump in the ranking in terms of student-staff ratio, now ranking 410th in the world, rising by 200 positions (last year, the University was ranked 601+).

VMU also showed excellent results in other categories. In terms of employers' perceptions of the University and its graduates, VMU was ranked 449th (499th in 2022) in the world. In terms of foreign teachers, VMU was ranked 666th in the world and second in Lithuania. The University was ranked 601+ in the world (second in Lithuania) for academic reputation. This year, the QS World University Rankings assessed almost 3,000 institutions worldwide (of those, 1,500 were placed in ranked order).

The QS Subject Ranking was a success for VMU for the third year in a row. VMU demonstrated success in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2023. As in the previous year, the University was ranked 50–100th in the world in Performing Arts and 300–350th in Agriculture and Forestry. This ranking assesses the world's top universities in individual subject areas. In total, the QS rankings assess 33 subject areas in which VMU carries out research and study activities. In most of these areas, the University received a score of more than 40 points. The highest scores were awarded to the University's activities in the performing arts (61.2 points), environmental studies

(57.1 points), education (53.0 points), modern languages (53.0 points), geography (52.8 points), agriculture and forestry (52.3 points), law (50.8 points), and politics and international studies (50.0 points).

VMU has risen to third place in "Reitingai" magazine's university ranking. VMU has risen to third place in the latest ranking of Lithuanian public universities published by the magazine "Reitingai", with 58.84 points. VMU was ranked highest for its scientific, artistic or sporting activities and staff achievements (9.36 points), and for the added value created by alumni and for employers' assessments (22.24 points). The University was ranked 2nd and 3rd–4th in Lithuania for these criteria respectively. The authors of the ranking singled out VMU as one of the leading universities in Lithuania in terms of research activities, as well as a leader in terms of the ratio of those who successfully defended their dissertations last year compared to those who enrolled in doctoral studies in 2017. The University is also the second largest in the country in terms of the number of doctoral study programmes offered: 24 doctoral study programmes are available at VMU. The work of VMU in the field of internationalisation also did not go unnoticed: the University ranked first in the ratio of foreign students in second cycle degree programmes compared to the total number of students in second cycle programmes (14.1%) and third in the ratio of Bachelor's degree recipients who went on an exchange placement compared to the total number of Bachelor's degree recipients (8.3%). In total, the ranking scored universities on 39 parameters, grouped into five broad criteria: scientific, artistic and/or sporting activities and staff achievements (25 points), value added by alumni and employers' perceptions (25 points), level of studies and students (25 points), internationalisation of the University (15 points), and current and future academic staff (10 points).

VMU is ranked second in the "Reitingai" magazine's ranking of fields of study. "Reitingai" magazine has published the latest ranking of universities by field of study. It ranks VMU second in Lithuania in terms of the number of fields of study in which the University is ranked first: 12 first cycle degree programmes and 11 second cycle programmes. In first cycle studies, VMU was awarded first place for 12 programmes: agronomy, environmental engineering, environmental studies, accounting, ecology, food studies, forestry, regional studies, religious studies, marketing, public administration and agriculture. The top-ranked VMU first cycle degree programmes in terms of points were: food studies (93.4), regional studies (93), religious studies (92.92), public administration (91.51), environmental engineering (87.77), marketing (87.14), media arts (86.55), accounting (83.28), communication (81.81), education (81.5), and environmental science (80.37).

Among second cycle programmes, VMU took the leading position in Lithuania in eleven fields of study: agronomy, anthropology, environmental engineering, environmental studies, ecology, communication, cultural studies, food studies, art studies, forestry and theology (religious studies). The most points were awarded to VMU second cycle programmes in the following fields: art studies (89), theology (religious studies) (87.92), environmental studies (84), environmental engineering (81.68), ecology (80.58), communication (79.18), education (77.2), political science (77.17) and journalism (74.36).

QS World University Rankings: Sustainability. VMU ranked between 771 and 780 out of 1,403 institutions in the QS Sustainability World Ranking. The University's achievements were evaluated in various aspects, including environmental protection, social impact, health and well-being, equality, employment opportunities, educational impact, knowledge exchange and governance. In Europe, VMU ranked 315th out of 493. A variety of areas were evaluated, with an emphasis on addressing environmental, social impact and other important issues. This represents the University's efforts to address global sustainability challenges. There has been a noticeable change in the area of governance, where the University is ranked 539th.

Education Sciences at VMU was highly rated by international experts. The international experts evaluated the level of quality of R&D carried out by Lithuanian research and study institutions in an international context, as well as the economic and social impact of these activities and their potential viability. Depending on the university, the rating of Education Sciences in Lithuania ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 points from the international experts, with VMU receiving the highest score among its peers in the field of Education Sciences.

The University's role/leadership in shaping and implementing the bioeconomy, the European Green Deal, and policies on climate change and rural development

Research on Bioeconomy, Biosystems Engineering and Green Deal topics is carried out in the University's priority research areas of Bioeconomy and Biosystems Engineering and Agro-, Forest and Aquatic Ecosystem Sustainability and Climate Change. In 2023, the University's researchers published 79 papers on topics related to the Green Deal and climate change in the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science database (with a citation rate). In recent years, articles on the European Green Deal and climate change have accounted on average for around 20% of all articles published by VMU in the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science citation-indexed publications. Articles published in 2022 and 2023 on the Green Deal and climate change have been cited more than 3,000 times. The most frequently-cited articles by VMU researchers are in journals in the fields of environmental science, green technologies, energy fuels, plant science, agronomy and forestry. In addition, 84 R&D projects related to bioeconomy, the implementation of the European Green Deal and rural development policy were carried out in 2023. The most common topics of the projects relate to the following elements of the Green Deal: a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly farm-to-table food system (25 projects), the zero-emission target (17 projects), climate change (10 projects), the circular

economy (9 projects), the supply of clean energy (8 projects), and the preservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity (6 projects). 8 projects are related to the bioeconomy policy.

VMU researchers are actively involved in shaping policies on the bioeconomy, the European Green Deal, climate change and rural development. They are members of and participants in the *Sustainable Uses of Baltic Marine Resources* (SUBMARINER), *Bio-based Industries Consortium* (BIC), *European Food Safety Authority* (EFSA), *European Renewable Energies Federation* (EREF), *Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases Alliance* (GRA), *European Biodiversity Partnership* (BiodivERsA) and other international organisations. In Lithuania, the researchers participate in the assessment of the potential for CO₂ capture and storage, hydrogen and other innovative technologies for use in Lithuanian industrial enterprises, the Agri-Food and Bioeconomy Committee of the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the coordination of the development and implementation of the national policy for climate change management, and other activities.

Further development of activities:

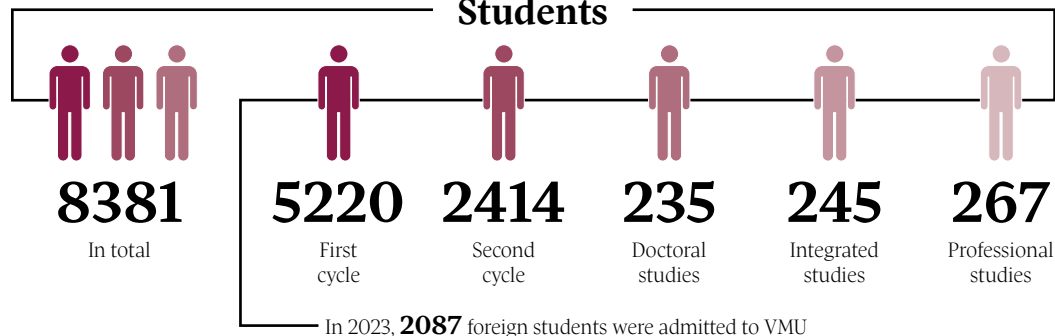
- Cultivating the University's historical memory, revitalising and creating traditions when organising national and international events that embody the University's identity.
- Creating added value for the University by publicising ongoing research, projects, and studies, and discussing current and future events, phenomena, and environments in the country and in the world, thereby consolidating VMU identity.
- Developing joint VMU and diaspora projects, publicising WLU activities involving diaspora youth and encouraging them to choose studies at VMU, establishing international partnerships embodying the University's identity, strengthening leadership in Lithuanian-language educational activities.
- Strengthening the University's international recognition in order to achieve high-quality, sustainable, and productive international cooperation.
- Developing digital and social progress, implementing sustainable environmental and societal transformations and T4E activities.
- Increasing the visibility and recognition of the University's experts in the public, national, and international media, improving cooperation with information partners.
- Actively cooperating with research organisations and enterprises on climate change, sustainable energy, smart, environmentally-friendly transport by establishing start-ups and promoting the use and development of the Green Deal innovations.
- Promoting cooperation with business organisations to increase the use of scientific potential and innovations and of innovative business creation, and the dissemination of scientific information.
- Seeking clear feedback, monitoring and evaluating the impact and results of marketing and communication projects, and anticipating the possibilities for further development.
- Strengthening cooperation among universities in Kaunas in order to increase study options for students.
- Consolidating VMU's leadership in the context of the Eastern partnership by continuing to support the Ukrainian academic community and developing the activities of the Centre of Ukraine and the Centre of Mariupol.

University community in harmony and consolidation

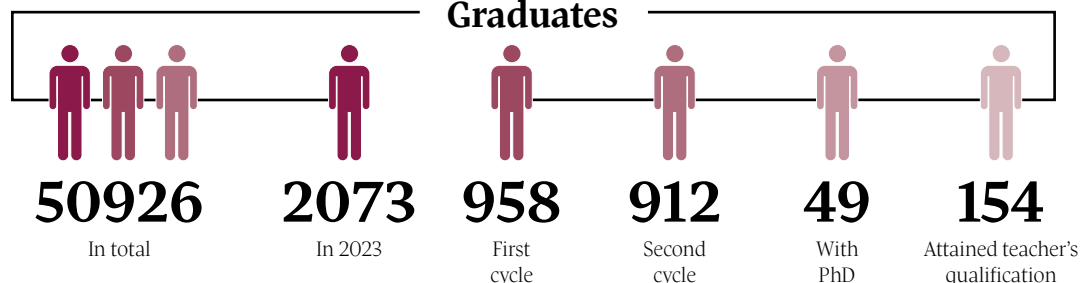
University community in harmony and consolidation



Students



Graduates

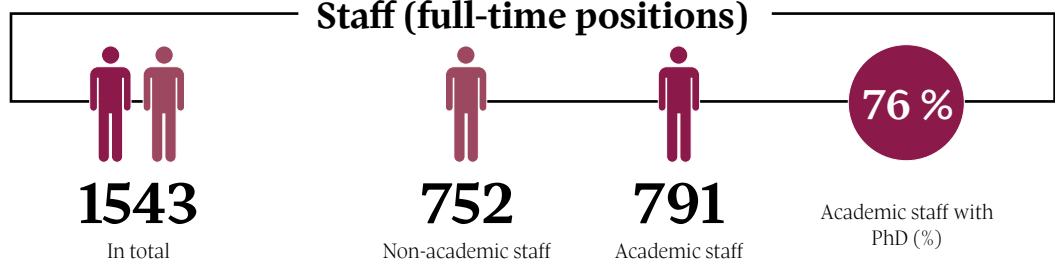


Academia cum laude students **12**

Members of the Lithuanian World Community who are involved in WLU activities **58**

Diaspora students **38**

Staff (full-time positions)



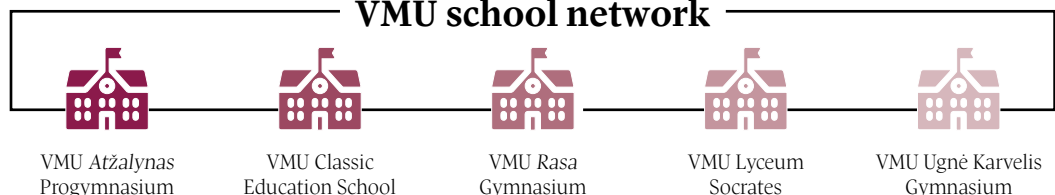
Funded by projects:

Full-time positions of academic staff: **93**

Full-time positions of administrative staff: **56**

Foreign teachers visited VMU in 2023 **339**

VMU school network



VMU-named classrooms have been established in 7 schools:

- VMU Creative Industries classroom at Kaunas Jonas Jablonskis Gymnasium
- Kaunas Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas Gymnasium – VMU Artes Liberales, VMU Bilingual Education (German) and Entrepreneurship, VMU Science (STEAM) classrooms
- VMU University Classroom at President Valdas Adamkus Gymnasium
- VMU University Classroom at Ariogala Gymnasium in Raseiniai District
- Pakruojis Atžalynas Gymnasium, Radviliškis Lizdeika Gymnasium, Šiauliai University Gymnasium – VMU Philosophy classrooms

University community in harmony and consolidation

In the evaluation of VMU's activity organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), the panel of experts noted the University's efforts to create a new culture of engagement and a focus on the well-being of the community. VMU has an effective human resource management policy that supports a participative culture with an emphasis on community well-being. All employees are given opportunities for professional development. The commitment of stakeholders to the implementation of the Strategy and to enabling creativity and community, realism and critical thinking, together with compliance, is evident at VMU. Stakeholders, including students, alumni, social partners and other representatives of the sector, are actively involved in the governance process and in the various activities of the University. Internal and external communication is well developed at VMU, and information is provided to stakeholders, including those with legal responsibility for the institution and legal entities, in a variety of formats, including formal, informal, digital and presentational. VMU monitors the professional success of its graduates, who act as VMU ambassadors, potential employers, internship providers, research partners, members of thesis defence committees, helping to create a smooth transition from academic to professional life and expanding the University community (Institutional Review Report of Vytautas Magnus University, SKVC).

Community coherence and synergy

Development of equal opportunities and diversity. In the areas of gender equality and equal opportunities, activities to prevent harassment, psychological violence, bullying or discrimination of any kind continued. Measures to promote respect for diversity and inclusion at the University were applied in accordance with the strategic documents of the University, which enshrine equal opportunities: VMU Strategic Action Plan 2021–2027, the Human Resources Management Policy 2022, the Gender Equality Plan 2021–2025, VMU Disability Policy 2021, the Procedures for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Gender-based Violence, approved by VMU Senate in 2023, the Code of Ethics of VMU, which was renewed in 2023. The Disability, Community Welfare and Equal Opportunities Coordinators participated in and delivered trainings to VMU community, organised meetings and contributed to the organisation of events, and were in regular contact with members of the community in order to listen, provide feedback and address community concerns, continue to prevent discrimination of any kind, and to create favourable working and study conditions for people with different social characteristics and individual needs (for people of both sexes, people with disabilities, people of different nationalities, religious beliefs, socio-economic backgrounds, etc.).

The cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic and racial diversity of the University community is linked to a high level of internationalisation. As of December 2023, 145 foreign nationals were employed at VMU, and 987 foreign nationals were enrolled in full-time studies. The large number of people of different nationalities and the multicultural environment within VMU community have continued to motivate additional attention to developing an inclusive organisational culture and multilingualism, to increasing the availability of information in English, and to organising awareness-raising events in both English and Lithuanian. Guidelines on Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Language and Communication are being developed to mainstream the principles of inclusion and diversity in the organisation's daily and public communication. In 2023, special attention continued to be paid to enhancing community well-being and improving organisational culture through training and capacity building by VMU teachers. A wide range of training topics covered the opportunities and benefits for VMU community welfare at the University, personal career management, work-life balance, gender equality and equal opportunity, the application of inclusive communication principles, and prevention of sexual harassment.

In 2023, the average number of staff at VMU was 1,946, of whom (62%) were women, and 235 were studying in doctoral study programmes, of whom 137 were female doctoral students. In an organisation with a high proportion of female staff and doctoral students, we can be pleased with the improving trends in representation and governance, with women's representation and participation in decision-making increasing. For example, more than half of the members of the Senate in 2023 were women, and in the University Council from 2020, five of the 11 members are women, including the Chairperson of the Council. Another indicator, the small gender pay gap, also points to a favourable working environment for women (average wage and salary data in 2023: EUR 2,229.10; for women: EUR 2,296.73; for men: EUR 2,121.28).

Vytautas Magnus University, protecting and defending human rights, continued to cooperate with national and international human rights organisations: Prof. Dalia Leinartė is a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Prof. Milda Ališauskienė coordinated the work of the organising committee for the National Human Rights Forum (NHRF) in the period 2018-2023. On 8 December 2023, the NHRF discussed issues such as protection of the rights of vulnerable persons, gender equality, ageing, systemic discrimination, reproductive rights, etc. VMU scientific community was represented by Prof. Milda Ališauskienė, Prof. Dainius Žalimas and Prof. Jonas Ruškus.

Internal communication. In 2023, the University continued to ensure smooth internal communication as part of its strategic goal to achieve community harmony and cohesion. The main communication channels remained the newsletter, the subpage for staff created in 2022, and the faculties' social networks were actively used to reach out to the faculties' communities.

Forty-four regular newsletters were sent to University staff, an additional 4 in English to better include foreign staff, and 21 for students (in Lithuanian and English). News and events of particular importance were sent in separate special newsletters, leaving the possibility to share important information directly from the departmental boxes. Regular meetings with academic and non-academic heads of units ("boss breakfasts", so to speak) continued; internal communication training with external partners was organised. The effectiveness and quality of internal communication remains an important area for improvement, with the aim of developing not only an internal communication strategy but also additional tools to measure the effectiveness of communication.

In order to empower every member of VMU community to take advantage of all the benefits and opportunities available to staff and doctoral students, a "Guide to Opportunities for VMU Community" was developed, with a description of all the opportunities offered by all VMU departments, links and contacts, and suggestions from VMU partners.

Disability, the policy of inclusive opportunities, and its implementation. In 2023, 18 (16 in 2021, 15 in 2022) different activities were organised for students with disabilities and individual needs, VMU community and society, to reflect and implement the disability policy "University of Inclusive Opportunities", including the second edition of the "Disability Forum: Inclusive Higher Education 2023". The aim of the Forum was to discuss the challenges that arise for persons with disabilities and individual needs, that arise in the process of personalising studies, that arise when adapting study programmes and materials, and to discuss academic integrity in the context of students with disabilities and individual needs.

A total of 113 enquiries were received in 2023 from members of VMU community and external organisations related to the implementation of the Inclusive Opportunities Policy at the University.

VMU is also involved in various measures and initiatives implemented by the state institutions of the Republic of Lithuania, such as "Ensuring Accessibility of Physical Infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities", the development of an information technology tool to monitor the accessibility of buildings for persons with disabilities (STASIS); the campaign "Work Here with Us. No Difference, with or without a Disability", which has been joined by major Lithuanian employers. In support of this initiative, the Rector signed a symbolic memorandum declaring that we agree that it makes no difference, with or without a disability – the most important thing is professionalism, the necessary knowledge, skills and motivation to work. VMU contributed to the preparation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the plan for priorities in the development of the social dimension in higher education.

The Disabled Students Information System (NeSIS) was launched in the autumn semester of 2023, not only for data management, but also to ensure equal access to study and learning opportunities at the University.

Ratings:

- VMU became the first Lithuanian university to join the European Network of Inclusive Universities (EUni4All-Network), which aims to promote the international mobility of students with disabilities and thus increase the capacity of the university community to recognise and respond to the diversity of individual needs;
- In October 2023, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson awarded VMU the maximum assessment for achievements in the field of equal opportunities – three "Equal Opportunity Wings". This means that the University aims to ensure equal opportunities for all members of the community, improving not only the quality and results of education and study, but also the conditions of study and work;
- On 22 November 2023, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson presented a Certificate of Appreciation to VMU for its sizeable and historically significant contribution over the last twenty years to the establishment of equal opportunities in Lithuanian society

In 2023, 133 (148 in 2021, 133 in 2022) students with disabilities and individual needs were studying at the University; their ratio in the University amounted to 1.6% (1.8% in 2021, 1.6% in 2022) of the total number of students studying at the University (8,381). The highest number of students with disabilities and individual needs in 2023 was in the Education Academy (25) and the lowest was in the Music Academy (1). The largest category of disability was of a moderate disability (work capacity 30–45%) (50 students) (71 in 2021, 48 in 2022), there were fewer students with a severe disability (work capacity 0–25%) (36 students) (33 in 2021, 38 in 2022), and the smallest category of disability was of a mild disability (work capacity 0–25%) (30 students) (44 in 2021, 47 in 2022). 17 students had individual needs.

Volunteer activity. In 2023, the University continued to successfully develop and expand its volunteering programme. A total of 134 students signed new Volunteer Activity Agreements in 2023, bringing the total number of volunteers at the University to 429 (206 in 2021 and 295 in 2022). The number of hours of volunteering by students

in 2023 reached 23,487 hours (10,079 hours in 2021, 16,697 hours in 2022), with an average of 68 hours per year per volunteer. In total, volunteers performed work at 30 (2021 – 20, 2022 – 33) University events in 2023.

On 30 November 2023, in advance of Volunteering Day on 5 December, the most active volunteers, mentors and members of organisations were invited to an informal get-together. During the get-together, volunteers participated in team-building activities, shared good practices, discussed the importance of volunteering, its development and opportunities for improvement at the University.

The volunteer-mentorship project “Guiding Star” is aimed at encouraging students to volunteer to help students with learning difficulties in grades 3–6.

Fostering multilingualism. VMU Institute of Foreign Languages is the most effective university unit in Lithuania which has been implementing multilingual competence development since 2002. It is also a leader in the field of foreign language teaching, assessment of linguistic competence and research on the development of linguistic competence, offering a wide range of 30 languages: English, Arabic, Danish, Estonian, Esperanto, Farsi, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Georgian, Chinese, Korean, Croatian, Latvian, Polish, Lithuanian Sign Language, Latin, New Testament Greek, Norwegian, Portuguese, French, Russian, Romanian, Old Hebrew, Serbian, Finnish, Modern Hebrew, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, German.

As part of its mission to encourage internationality, VMU Institute of Foreign Languages contributes to putting into practice VMU’s fundamental *artes liberales* principles: fosters humanitarian values, develops students’ intercultural-dialogue competencies, conveys the distinctiveness of Lithuanian culture through foreign languages, taking into account global educational trends, applies the latest active methods of language teaching and learning as well as a flexible, technology-based language teaching system, provides opportunities for students from all VMU faculties and cycles, for the academic and the non-academic community, for the general public to learn languages, and ensures opportunities for language learning throughout life.

In 2023, a competent, multilingual, and multicultural team of 59 teachers, 27 in English and 32 in other languages, of whom 13 taught their native language, ensured the quality of language teaching. Students chose to study a total of 23 foreign languages.

Emotional and physical well-being of the community

Strengthening psychological well-being. In line with the objectives of VMU Strategic Plan for 2021–2027, a strong focus was put on enhancing the emotional and physical well-being of the University community in 2023. At VMU Psychology Clinic, 845 individual consultations with a psychologist (138 remotely, 693 face-to-face with a psychologist) were provided, a psychological support group was organised for employees, and monitoring of the psychological well-being of the University’s students and the factors relevant to their well-being was implemented. Psychological help is provided in Lithuanian, English and Russian.

Health promotion and physical activity. VMU is a member of the Health Promotion Universities Network (in Lithuanian, SSU). In 2023, the University continued to implement VMU Health Promoting University Programme 2022–2026, which had been approved on 1 March 2022.

During the reporting period, the following activities were offered by the Sports Centre to improve the health of the University community:

- *Physical health screening, assessment, consultations.* The staff of the Sports Centre, in cooperation with the researchers of the Movement Laboratory at the Education Academy, use in their practical work the scientific equipment for the assessment of the physical condition of a person, which is used to diagnose the indicators of importance to health, and, after evaluating the results, to provide appropriate recommendations to those exercising and to make the necessary adjustments to the process of training.
- *A wide choice of forms of physical activity (variety of workouts).* In 2023, students and staff were offered a choice of 18 different physical activities or workouts: 5 gyms (two game rooms, gymnastics hall, fitness hall, wrestling area); exercises in outdoor areas; functional and running workouts in the stadium. Improvements and innovations were offered to employees to bring physical activity opportunities closer to the workplace: a half-hour differential walking exercise led by Assoc. Prof. Asta Mockienė over a distance, and lunchtime yoga in a building at Jonavos street.
- *Theoretical lectures on wellness and physical activity.* The teachers of the Education Academy and the Sports Centre (Prof. Albertas Skurvydas, Assoc. Prof. Asta Mockienė) delivered lectures on human physical activity and wellness and carried out practical trainings with wellness exercises. In 2023, a total of 12 lectures were delivered, 10 of them remotely.

Events and initiatives at the Sports Centre:

- On the occasion of Lithuanian Independence Day, a chess tournament was held;
- Sport and Health Week, to mark World Health Day. Throughout the week, the Sports Centre hosted 3×3 basketball, volleyball, chess, football, badminton and bench pressing and shooting (marksmanship) competitions. On Health Day, a pop-up physical activity and wellness studio in the main building of the

Agriculture Academy offered an opportunity to consult with the staff of the Sports Centre and get advice on healthy lifestyles and other health-related issues;

- A walk-run to commemorate the 100th anniversary of VMU Botanical Garden, with a symbolic 1,923-metre route around the Botanical Garden. Before the start of the walk-run, the participants in the event had the opportunity to take various tests assessing health indicators such as body composition, vital lung capacity, hand strength and other indicators;
- VMU Botanical Garden hosted a run-in solidarity with Ukraine in honour of Ukrainian soldiers;
- VMU invited the whole community to join the #walk15 Higher Education National Mobility Challenge, the aim of which was to support one's (future) *alma mater* by walking, thus coming together as a community and fostering a healthy and positive lifestyle.

University alumni community

In 2023, 2,006 alumni joined VMU alumni community (in 2022 – 2,177), bringing the total number of VMU alumni to 51,129 persons.

Activities for alumni were organised and carried out by the University directly or in cooperation with VMU Alumni Club and other VMU alumni organisations.

Newsletters were periodically sent to all VMU graduates, providing relevant information and invitations to participate in events dedicated to alumni.

In order to bring together the alumni community of the University, the interactive VMU Alumni ID platform was launched on 28 April 2023. The aim of the platform is to maintain and strengthen the relationship with the University's alumni, who are scattered all over the world, and to provide all the relevant and necessary information for alumni in a concentrated and one-stop-shop. The interactive space enables alumni to make use of the services and benefits offered by the University. As part of this initiative, the alumni information platform alumni.vdu.lt was created in 2022 in both Lithuanian and English, and the bilingual platform was launched in 2023, which alumni use in order to make use of the University's services and opportunities. Following the launch of the interactive VMU Alumni ID platform, an active promotional campaign was launched: a 44-second "VMU Alumni ID" video was produced and shown during the graduation ceremony, along with the distribution of flyers promoting the Alumni ID platform, and 5 mobile billboards were produced and placed in VMU buildings most visited by students and other people associated with the university. A total of 679 alumni have joined the platform. On the platform, alumni can see their profile, which contains information about the studies they have completed (name of the study programme, level and year of graduation), as well as a section called "Course Mates", where they can see a list of their course mates and their contact information, where they are currently working and what position they hold (if alumni have listed such information in their profile). Alumni who log in to the platform can find a full list of benefits and opportunities offered by the University to alumni, as well as receive a generated Alumni ID card by uploading a profile picture.

The main events for alumni in 2023 were VMU Alumni Picnic and the excursion "In the Footsteps of Kaunas Students in the Interwar Years", Alumni Day, which took place during the event "VMU Career Days 2023: For the Student and for the Alumnus/Alumna". For the second year in a row, the alumni of VMU, Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) and Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) are uniting for a common goal – to do more and are inviting students, alumni, teachers, and other members of the community to join the "We Are All of One Blood" initiative, to become blood donors.

Community participation in organisations

In 2023, 37 (35 in 2021, 36 in 2022) officially-recognised VMU student organisations were active, and in 2023 they were joined by VMU Investment Club, which promotes interest in investment and financial literacy.

VMU awarded targeted support to student organisations through a project competition, which was aimed at promoting and fostering student initiatives and activities, expanding cooperation and human resources potential, creating or developing scientific, artistic, study organisation, cultural, social, sports, civic and other initiatives, promoting the name of the University. In 2023, an additional horizontal priority was added as an activity uniting all these areas, related to the inclusion of Ukrainians in order to foster dialogue and connection with the University, the city, and the country.

In 2023, the University allocated EUR 15,000 to support projects submitted by VMU student organisations. 10 (9 in 2021, 5 in 2022) applications were submitted in response to the call for projects. Based on the results of the competitive process, the amount of EUR 14,690 (EUR 14,615 in 2021, EUR 14,400 in 2022) was allocated for the implementation of 6 projects.

Activities of VMU Student Representative Council. VMU Student Representative Council is the only non-profit, non-governmental organisation representing the University's students. Its activities are based on transparency, self-governance, equality, and other democratic values. Last year, the Student Representative Council actively contributed to the well-being of the University's students in the following ways:

- A series of additional skills training sessions for students was offered, giving students the opportunity to learn water rescue and first-aid skills.
- In cooperation with VMU Disability Coordinator, meetings with students with individual needs on their thesis topics were set up and the problem of insufficient time for consultation with the supervisor was addressed; students were assured that they would have access to additional hours for consultation with the supervisor.
- Almost 50 exams were observed to ensure the academic integrity of students when taking exams.
- The project “School Learner, Be a Student” gave school learners from all over Lithuania the opportunity to come to the University for a week, attend lectures and experience elements of student life.
- The project “Experience, Feel, Understand” gave the University community the opportunity to learn about the everyday difficulties of people with hearing and visual impairments and how the community can contribute to making everyday life easier for those with such impairments.
- Representatives engaged in updating VMU Dispute Resolution Commission and VMU Code of Ethics.

Concert activities of VMU Chamber Orchestra. In 2023, VMU Chamber Orchestra, in cooperation with Lithuanian professional music festivals, Kaunas State Philharmonic Orchestra and other institutions, performed at 20 concerts (18 in 2021, 22 in 2022) in Lithuania (Kaunas, Klaipėda, Vilnius, Tauragė, Vilnius, Dubingiai, Varėna, Kupiškis), at the Pažaislis Music Festival, at the International Music Festival “Operetta at Kaunas Castle”, at the Tauragė Music Festival, at the International Music Festival in Kupiškis, at “Žalgiris” Arena together with Vidas Bareikis, and was featured on TV and radio programmes (LRT, LNK, Delfi TV, Radiocentras). The orchestral string quartet performed with the band Thundertale in a concert tour of 7 cities in Lithuania. The Chamber Orchestra not only took part in events, but also organised events, the most prominent of which was the XII International Chamber Music Festival “Avanti”.

Further development of activities:

- Striving for harmonious diversity and synergies in the community, ensuring the principles of equal opportunity, gender equality, non-discrimination, dignity, self-realisation and autonomy, maintaining and fostering the unique VMU value-based organisational culture.
- In response to the need for better integration of new staff and their smoother integration into work and community activities, a guide for onboarding new staff member(s) has been developed.
- Supporting the emotional well-being of staff and students, monitoring and researching the factors relevant to the community's well-being, addressing the needs of the community through educational activities and advice.
- Encouraging community volunteering, initiating and implementing volunteering projects, developing favourable conditions for expressing individuality and talents, providing an opportunity for any member of the University community to offer ideas, express views, and create the University of the future.
- Developing relationships with business and non-governmental organisations, creating joint social projects, organising events relevant to the whole of Lithuania, thus seeking recognition of VMU as a reliable social partner.
- Improving internal communication by creating a VMU intranet for staff, enabling more efficient exchange and dissemination of information. Developing physical activity and wellness activities and other benefits packages for community members.
- Improving the professional development system for academic and non-academic staff, encouraging them to participate in the courses offered by the Centre for the Development of Professional Competences, which will help to develop innovative teaching and learning strategies and enable all staff to benefit from the national and international experience of VMU.
- Developing measures to support VMU-based organisations and creating favourable operating conditions by encouraging greater community involvement.
- Implementing VMU disability policy, responding to the needs of people with disabilities, improving the environment for study and work, and improving educational activities.
- Mobilising and strengthening the alumni community in Lithuania and abroad through the efficient use of VMU alumni ID platform, promoting the involvement of alumni in the activities of VMU Alumni Club or other VMU alumni communities, increasing participation in the community and academic life of the University.

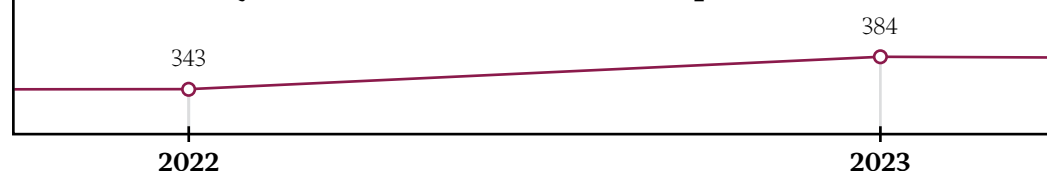


International research university

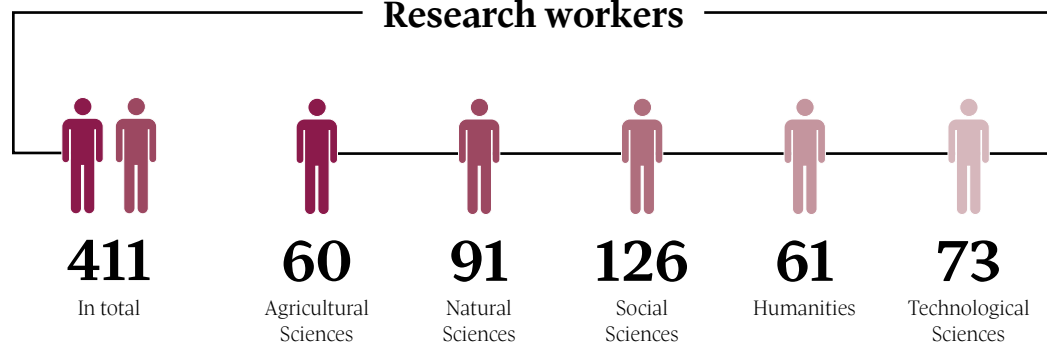


Published monographs, studies	22
Science and art prizes, other major awards	22
Number of research institutes	6
Number of priority science and arts research clusters	43
The University's Research Fund was allocated EUR	380
Number of ongoing scientific projects	290
The value of contracts for ongoing scientific projects EUR	344,9 million/VMU share – 64,9 million
Number of fields of doctoral studies	24
Number of doctoral students on 1 October 2023	235
Number of doctoral students who defended their dissertations	49
Number of dissertations defended since the start of the doctoral programme	930
Registration of plant varieties that have passed the international examination (pcs)	15
Patents	4

Number of research articles published in Q1-Q2 quartiles of scientific journals refereed in Clarivate Analytics Web of Science and/or Scopus databases



Research workers



International research university

In 2023, compared to the previous years, the University was distinguished by two external expert evaluations at the institutional level in the field of Research and Experimental Development (R&D) for the period 2018–2022. In 2023, the experts in the external evaluation of the external evaluation of HEIs' activities evaluated the University's field of studies and science/arts as an area of studies and arts that is highly rated in the national context and in the international context as well as a very good area for the link between studies and science/arts. International experts highlighted the growing performance of R&D in order to ensure science-based studies at an international level. They referred to the need for an effective incentive system in the field of R&D while maintaining a balance between science/arts and studies within the institutional ecosystem.

The conclusions of the 2023 institutional evaluation of VMU note that since the last evaluation in 2014, research has become a new priority for the institution, with associate professors and professors conducting significant research alongside students and in collaboration with other internationally renowned institutions and researchers. VMU is an active member of the Transform4Europe network, which will contribute to its goal of becoming a recognised international research university. Transform4Europe offers opportunities for further international partnerships, joint degrees, student and academic exchanges, as well as research projects with other international institutions. VMU is particularly interested in the development of international joint doctoral programmes (Institutional Review Report of Vytautas Magnus University, SKVC).

The results of the qualitative comparative expert evaluation of R&D activities carried out by international experts in 2023 showed that the level of R&D activities of VMU, comparing the periods 2013–2017 and 2018–2022, has clearly increased, and the total weighted score of the criteria of the evaluated units of the R&D activities is approaching to the evaluation score of 4 (on a scale of 5). This leads to the following conclusion: the University is conducting research at a high international level of relevance to society, business and decision-makers, and its human resources, organisation, and R&D infrastructure provide the conditions for continued high R&D performance over the next 5 years, which is also reflected in the 2023 R&D results.

In 2023, there were more than 290 international and national research projects, excluding business. The overall dynamics of projects at the University reflect the cyclic nature of project activities linked to the financial periods of international and national programmes.

In 2023, project activities focused on international science and education projects. VMU researchers actively participate in calls for proposals under the EU's "European Horizon" research and innovation programmes and are successfully involved in research project consortia. In 2023, 35 applications were submitted, and funding was awarded to 10 projects (7 projects started in 2023, and 3 will start in 2024). A new challenge for the University's academic and non-academic staff in 2023 was related to the 3 major projects won by the "European Horizon" Programme that VMU is coordinating (the last time VMU coordinated a "Teaming" project in 2017–2018).

VMU coordinates 3 projects under the "European Horizon" Programme related to smart forestry, ethics of communication technologies and migration issues. A total of 23 "Horizon 2020" and "European Horizon" projects were implemented in 2023.

The University's involvement and integration in European university alliances is a success. Following the European Commission's approval of the application in 2023 and the EUR 14.4 million funding for the further development of the Transform4Europe Alliance, the project is continuing successfully as the partners strengthen their international cooperation, develop students' and staff's skills, find and apply sustainable solutions in universities, and promote innovation in higher education.

Researchers and teachers were encouraged to strive for scientific excellence, in particular, to prepare and publish papers in recognised international journals. In 2023, science-business-industry partnerships and closer cooperation with international organisations were pursued. It promotes the awarding of research and experimental development, innovation orders and contracts with economic entities and publicises scientific work, emphasising the leadership of VMU competences. In 2023, the value of R&D projects and contracts signed with economic entities amounted to EUR 4,763 million. The University is becoming an increasingly important business partner or service provider in R&D projects, and its researchers' expertise and experience help create innovations for Lithuanian and foreign markets. In 2023, more than 30 R&D research projects and contracts were requested, and more than 40 public procurement tenders were launched. The vast majority of public procurement and commercial bids were successful, with 88 contracts signed for EUR 3,627,000 and projects for EUR 1,136,000.

Priority research areas, participation in international and national research programmes, scientific projects and commissioned research, monographs, articles and citations registered in Clarivate Analytics Web of Science and Scopus databases, patents registered with the State and International Patent Office, presentations at conferences, conferences and seminars organised and their relevance to the University's mission and strategic objectives, concerts and exhibitions, cultural awards received are essential indicators of scientific and artistic activity. In 2023, the aim was to have a more significant international, socio-economic and cultural impact on the development of the country in a global context and to focus more on unique projects with a higher scientific and artistic added value. Particular attention was also paid to finding synergies between research teams working in different units and in present and new project activities.

Research and artistic results

In 2023, quantitative annual (formal) evaluations of R&D activities (2022) and qualitative international comparative expert evaluations of R&D activities (every five years, 2018–2022) were carried out, organised by the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL). The results of the qualitative comparative expert evaluation of R&D activities showed that the level of VMU's R&D activities in terms of quality, socio-economic impact, and productivity of the R&D activities clearly improved when comparing the periods 2013–2017 and 2018–2022 – the results of the evaluation are ~1/5 higher than the results obtained in the previous comparative expert evaluation. In 12 research fields, the quality of R&D activities was rated as 4 (on a 5-point scale) or above, but in 14 research fields, the quality of R&D activities was rated below 4. The results of the qualitative comparative expert evaluation highlight the need to develop R&D improvement plans for the evaluated units in order to ensure the high international level of R&D-based university studies in all research fields of VMU.

In comparison with other Lithuanian research and study institutions, Vytautas Magnus University researchers published the highest number of research papers in the CA WoS database in 2023, thus demonstrating the uniqueness of the University's role in the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

In 2023, the University has published more than 1,800 different scientific papers, 110 new works of art, 4 patents/inventions were registered, 15 species of organisms that are new to science underwent international examination (by A. Diškus, J. R. Stonis), more than 160 scientific review articles or articles in science dissemination, art and culture professional publications were published, and more than 120 articles were published in the press. There is a tendency for researchers to focus more on higher-level research articles in journals with a high citation rate, at the expense of other less important publications.

The increase in the quality of scientific output is reflected in the growth in the number of articles published by the University's researchers in high-level international journals. The number of articles published in CA WoS and/or Scopus-referenced journals with a citation index has increased by a factor of 1.7 over the last 5 years, from 309 (2019) to 513 (2023). The upward trend in the number of articles in the Q1–Q2 quartiles of scientific publications confirms the effectiveness of the incentive system for the most significant scientific results. The number of articles in scientific publications at this level more than doubled from 183 in 2019 to 384 in 2023.

The involvement of the University's researchers in a growing network of partnerships, international programme projects, university alliances and other activities is also reflected in the production of joint research papers with foreign researchers. In 2023, 44% of the articles published in collaboration with other foreign institutions were published in scientific journals with a citation rate. In order to achieve our strategic goal of becoming an international research university, even greater international cooperation should be encouraged.

In 2023, 797 works of artistic production will be registered at the University (in 2022 – 868): 717 concerts and musical performances (643 – in Lithuania, 74 – in foreign countries: in Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Poland, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, England, the USA, Finland, Belgium, Spain), 38 art exhibitions (27 – in Lithuania, 11 – in foreign countries): 26 photo exhibitions (18 in Lithuania, 8 in foreign countries: Ecuador, Italy, Spain, Poland, France, USA), 2 design works, music for 4 films and 2 plays, 7 CDs and 1 vinyl record.

Artistic activities

In 2023, teaching staff at the Faculty of Arts held exhibitions of their work abroad. This year, an exhibition of photographs by Professor Romualdas Požerskis opened at the SLA Art Space in New York, USA. The 20th Phototriennale photography festival in Picardy, France, opened the exhibition "Victories and Defeats" by Prof. Romualdas Požerskis. An exhibition of his photographs also opened at the European Photography Festival in Castellanza, Italy.

Prof. Rimantas Plungė exhibited his works at the 7th International Biennial of Painting in Zagreb, Croatia, and Prof. Remigijus Venckus curated a group exhibition of Lithuanian painters titled "Floating Identity: between the Recognisable Image and Abstraction".

Prof. Titas Petrikis (Faculty of Arts) composed the soundtrack for Audrius Juzėnas' documentary film "Yesterday", which premiered on 8 September 2023. "Yesterday" tells the story of rock music in Lithuania in the 1970s, the era of Big-beat and Beatlemania, an era that brought extraordinary power, an endless thirst for freedom, a hunger for new ideas and a special love for music.

Alexander Paley Music Festival, held in Richmond (USA) on 27-28 October 2023, was under the artistic direction of Alexander Paley, Professor at the Music Academy.

Gabrielė Bukinė, assistant at the Singing Department of the Music Academy, won 1st prize at the 13th Klaudia Taev International Opera Singing Competition in Estonia, beating 150 competitors from 30 countries. The vocalist was also awarded the Audience Choice Award by audience vote.

The opening concert of the International Music Festival "Olympus musicus" in Prague's Zrcadlová kaple concert hall featured concerts by Associate Professors of the Music Academy– Ramutė Kalnėnaitė (cello) and Donaldas Račys (piano).

On 21 April 2023, Music Academy teacher Rimantas Vingras (piano) gave a recital at the International Music Festival at the historic Marcello Theatre in Rome.

Povilas Velikis, Associate Professor at the Department of Instrumental Music, with the music group "U'Elements", which brings together musicians from Lithuania, Latvia and Armenia, has released a CD "Blackish White". This is the band's

second album of original music. The music was inspired by Lithuanian, Latvian, Armenian and Jewish melodies.

VMU Art Gallery "101" in 2023 organised exhibitions and events in different formats in order to comply with the idea of an art gallery, which is not only to organise art exhibitions but also to actively organise other educational activities in which different arts "meet". The gallery organised meetings with the artists (photographers Agnė Gintalaitė and Jonas Petronis), 3 lectures (David Ellis, Irfan Hošić, Monika Požerskytė-Kalvelė), 6 workshops and a student Portfolio evening. During the year, approximately 47 guided tours of the Faculty of Arts students and alumni exhibition (some in the gallery) were organised. Volunteers and student interns were involved in various activities (about 25 in total). The exhibition catalogue of the Faculty of Arts "Kūryba kuria kultūrą" (by Milda Gineikaitė and Rimgaudas Barauskis) was published.

9 exhibitions at VMU Art Gallery "101": Virginija Laužadienė's "Dar ne paskutinė", Jonas Petronis' "Šimtas metų – šimtas veidų", Rimantas Šlipavičius-Šlipas, Arūnas Kulikauskas, Eugenijus Varkulevičius-Varkalis' "Nepaklusnumo ikonos" (curators Rasa Žukienė and Tomas Pabedinskas), the exhibition of the students of Creative Photography "(Dis)balansas", the exhibition of the Bachelor's final works "Kryžkelės", the exhibition of the graphic works "Gražinos Didelytės ekslibrisai: asmenybių tapatybės ženklai" (curat. Rimantė Tamoliūnienė), Ligija Žilinskienė's conceptual painting "Išpakuota sąmonė", Romualdas Požerskis and Monika Požerskytė-Kalvelė's exhibition of photographs "Netikėtas dialogas. Moterys", socially inclusive art exhibition "Bridging The Gap".

A total of 11 exhibitions were organised in the vaulted basement space, at other VMU Faculties and in cooperation with educational and cultural institutions, including "Reflections: the mythical being of nature" (curated by Sibilė Plancūnaitė), Konstantinas Klimavičius's "Lost in Fragments" (curated by Neringa Kulik), the Faculty of Fine Art students' exhibition "Structures", Martha Thomas' "Nepamišk, čia Jums ne Lietuva", and the exhibition of the International Festival of Photography and Media Arts.

Initiatives to publicise the gallery: the 15th birthday of the gallery was celebrated (a performance and a community talk), the European Night of Museums was joined (the gallery was open for 4 hours and attracted 113 visitors); the gallery was featured in Kaunas cultural community's Cultural Breakfasts on a regular basis, the Gallery was joined the "NATOstogos Kaune" initiative in July, and Kaunas Culture Fair's visit programme was used to develop links with the regions.

VMU Theatre in Kaunas is an alternative to classical theatre, a venue for educational events, an innovative, bold and exceptional environment for young people to create. In 2023, the theatre presented the work of students and graduates of the Faculty of Arts (FA) of the Education Academy (EA):

The EA students took part in the educational programme "Creative Empowerment in the Integration of Persons with Disabilities into the Professional Arts" on 16-19 May 2023 at Kaunas city Chamber Theatre.

KCC Dance Studio "Dance House" in the "Dance Day" event on 29 April 2023 in Kaunas.

Students of the Education Academy participated in VMU student conference "Freedom to Create" on 3 May 2023 in Kaunas and in the festival "Performatyvus vyksmas" organised by "Fluxus" at Kaunas Artists' House on 7 September 2023.

The students of the Education Academy successfully performed at the event "Iš gyvybės į amžinybę" in the 6th warehouse of the Central Artillery Complex of Kaunas Fortress on the Left Bank of the River Nemunas. The series of activities "Kaip ne slėptuvė: idėjų fermentas" on 6 October 2023.

Graduates of VMU Acting Programme and students of the Education Academy prepared and presented the play "Jautra" (conceived and directed by A. Aleinikovas), the play "Tai ko nebėra", which had its premiere on June 10, 2023 (theatre "Alternatyvi scena"), and the sensory play "Anykščių šilelis" from 20 September to 25 November 2023.

Students of Dance and Theatre Pedagogy of the Education Academy had their successful debuts in professional theatres:

- Student Karolina Jablonskytė successfully debuted in the play "Auksinis drakonas", which premiered on 8-9 June at Kaunas City Chamber Theatre (KCCT), directed by A. Jankevičius.
- Students S. Zuokaitytė, G. Balčiūnaitė, E. Kisieliūtė, I. Birškutė, L. Andriuskevičiūtė, K. Jablonskytė, G. Bartkutė successfully debuted in the play "Snow White", premiered on 1-3 December at the NKDT, directed by G. Minelgaitė (Dr. GoraParasit).

G. Bartkutė successfully debuted in the play "Snow White", premiered on 1-3 December at the NKDT, directed by

Students of the Education Academy and graduates of the Acting Programme prepared and presented educational programmes for the event "Drama LAB" (KCCT/VMU theatre), educational programmes for the youth festival "Problema (NE) BĖDA" (KCCT/VMU theatre) and took part in the international interactive theatre festival "Nerk į teatrą" (NKDT/VMU theatre).

Every year, VMU Theatre hosts a closed evening, "Persona grata", which has become the theatre's brand card and is successfully established in the repertoire and attracts a large audience. On 21 April 2023, the event was attended by E. Jakilaitis, producer, journalist, public figure, founder of the public movement "Stiprūs kartu", and on 10 November 2023, E. Mikulionytė, actress of the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, the National Kaunas Drama Theatre and the cinema, made a guest appearance.

The play "Atsitiktinis žmogus" (directed by J. Vaitkus, actors G. Piktytė and A. Dapšys), a favourite of the audience and visitors of VMU theatre, was staged several times in 2022 at the request of the public.

VMU PSDF and the Embassy of Italy in Vilnius organised an exhibition, "Italy and Lithuania: a strong link. Italian diplomacy in Lithuania" at VMU Multifunctional Research and Studies Centre (V. Putvinsko g. 23). Visitors to the

exhibition had the opportunity to get acquainted with historical documents revealing the diplomatic relations between Italy and Lithuania at the beginning of the 20th century. The opening of the exhibition was attended by J. E. Diego Ungaro, Ambassador of the Italian Republic (org. A. Žemaitytė).

Recording, compiling and disseminating the results of research and artistic activities

The results of the University's research and artistic (hereinafter referred to as Research) activities are continuously registered, collected, stored, managed, evaluated, and published in the University's research management system (VMU CRIS; <https://www.vdu.lt/cris>). Its objectives are to improve the visibility, dissemination, and integration of the University's research output and activities and the achievements of its researchers, to increase the availability of the University's research output in the open access system, to collect and ensure the preservation of the University's scientific output and activities in the long run, and to optimize the administration of the University's research activities. The main advantages of the system, which enables the effective collection and dissemination of the University's research results:

- The open design of the system, with access to all system functions via a REST API, provides good possibilities for integration with the University's and other systems;
- the system's data is compatible with key international standards, principles, recommendations: CERIF, FAIR, COAR, OpenAIRE, etc. This ensures efficient data exchange with other analogue systems;
- integration and interfaces with key resources such as ORCID, CA WoS, Scopus, PubMed, CrossRef, etc. (including the Lithuanian Academic eLibrary (eLABa)) – enables fast and efficient cataloguing and archiving of scholarly output;
- the content of the system is integrated as an integral part of the content of the University's website, enabling effective dissemination of information and assessment for web-based external assessment systems;
- flexible configuration options allow the system to be efficiently tailored to the needs of the University and maintain independence from suppliers;
- advanced design, a fast-developing open-source software platform – very promising for the future.

In 2023, the following research units (entities) will be registered in the system: researcher profiles, units, scientific publications, data, theses and dissertations, projects, scientific events. Cross-interactive links between the entities allow the entities to be interlinked and reveal the totality of the University's research output and activities. For instance, a publication is linked to its author (researcher profile), to scientific data (if submitted for publication), to a project (if based on a project), to the affiliation of the publication, to the scientific event at which the publication was presented, and so on. The system also includes value-added services such as statistics on publication views and downloads, the ability to export/import information in various formats, generate an open content licence (Creative Commons) for a publication file, and create lists of publications and reports. Publication records are accompanied by bibliometric data from Scopus and CA WoS, and altimetric indicators.

In 2023, users of VMU CRIS system had access to over 124,000 (in 2022 – 116,000, in 2021 – 109,000) metadata records of the University's publications, journal articles, theses, doctoral dissertations and other publications.

The Publications Database (PDB) contains almost 75,000 scientific publications (72,000 in 2022, 69,000 in 2021). VMU collection of peer-reviewed journal articles and books comprises almost 18,000 (16,000 in 2022; 13,000 in 2021), while the collection of theses and doctoral dissertations (ETDs) comprises more than 25,000 (23,000 in 2022; 21,000 in 2021) records.

The growth rate of content published in VMU CRIS is one of the University's quality indicators. The science content development value achieved in the reporting year is 6.4%, similar to 2022 and higher than the annual target of 5%.

VMU CRIS repository is expanded annually with full-text documents. In total, the repository already holds almost 47,000 (39,000 in 2022, 35,000 in 2021) full-text documents (716 e-books, 54 e-journal archives, almost 17,000 articles, over 25,000 ETDs, 66 datasets). 84% of the full-text documents stored in the repository are accessible online. The reporting year enriched the repository with 8,000 full-text documents (59 eBooks, 2,200 e-articles, 2,000 ETDs, 31 research data).

In order to increase the number of open-access full-text resources, the Library organised a digitisation activity in 2021 of retrospective scholarly content published at the University. In 2023, all issues of *Soter*, the journal of religious studies of the Faculty of Theological Sciences, were made freely available in VMU CRIS – 113 issues and 1208 articles. A total of 40 issues and 484 articles were digitised. The total digitised content in VMU CRIS is 80 journal issues and 1248 articles.

More than 7,000 researcher profiles were created in VMU CRIS, including 1,170 active members of the University staff, 1,003 of whom are academic staff. Around 75% of researchers' profiles (80% in the University's strategy monitoring indicator) are populated with detailed information on their professional and scientific teaching qualifications, recognition, participation in organisations, teaching courses and other activities. Researchers' profiles are accompanied by science metrics (citation rates, h-index) from the Scopus and CA WoS databases.

In the reporting year, VMU CRIS system provided access to information on 1007 (837 in 2022) projects implemented/underway at the University, as well as information on 176 units (including 45 research clusters). In

2023, a total of 772 University scientific events (conferences, seminars, debates, etc.) were covered.

In the reporting year, users performed 1.4 million actions (886,000 record views, 509,000 full-text downloads) in VMU CRIS, similar to 2022.

The introduction and development of VMU CRIS content dissemination channels such as Google and Google Scholar, OpenAIRE, and eLABa contributed to the growth of dissemination of the University's scientific output and activities worldwide. As many as 64% of users access VMU CRIS through these tools. VMU CRIS can also be found through the OpenDOAR index of open-access repositories and the ROAR registry.

Significant improvements to VMU CRIS made in 2023: creation of a stand-alone patent search, a new model for efficient dissemination of VMU journals, creation and/or improvement of import of publications from VMU CRIS, PubMed, CA WoS, eLABa, introduction of the possibility of inserting the SDGs in the publication record, improvement of export of publications in the Bibtex format, creation of a new system of publisher and database listings, and updating of the PDB reports that use these listings. CA WoS citation data import was improved, and a sub-system for searching and reviewing personnel database data was developed for the registration of publications. Information for publicising VMU Science Management System solution (<https://portalcris.vdu.lt/vdu-cris-sprendimas>) in Lithuanian and English was prepared in 2023. Synchronisation of VMU CRIS with ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) was established. VMU CRIS research management system solution was shared with Mykolas Romeris University in the reporting year. In previous years, VMU CRIS solution was implemented at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Klaipėda University.

VMU CRIS interface to ORCID. Almost all researchers at the University have an ORCID, an internationally unique researcher identifier, which serves as a personal link, an online profile of the researcher, linking the research activities and results of the researcher and creating interfaces with institutions that collect and use ORCIDs, such as publishers, databases, repositories, research organisations, universities. In 2023, VMU CRIS became a dissemination channel for ORCID. VMU CRIS has developed the possibility to export a researcher's profile to the ORCID researcher's profile so that the University's researchers do not have to manually fill in and update the ORCID profile with the same information about themselves, scientific publications and other scientific activities already filled in VMU CRIS. Thus, in the reporting year, the integration of the two open science infrastructures and the possibility to export researchers' profiles to the international science infrastructure was implemented, which leads to a higher international visibility of the University's researchers and to an easier and more accurate identification, collection and evaluation of the results of the scientific activities of VMU researchers. This functionality is only available in VMU.

Dissemination of peer-reviewed journals and books published by VMU. The journals published and issued by VMU are stored in VMU CRIS for long-term preservation. 45 journals are archived in the system. The library website provides access to regularly updated information on VMU journals in various sections: 22 journals (and other continuing publications) published only by VMU; 9 journals (and other continuing publications) published in cooperation with other institutions; 13 journals (and other continuing publications) from CA WoS and Scopus; 16 diamond open-access journals; journals by field of study, by Faculties, and a catalogue of 29 journals published in the past, with a total of 60 journals in publication and those that have appeared previously.

In 2023, a new homepage for the Open Access Journal Publishing Platform (OJS, <https://ejournals.vdu.lt>) was redesigned, presenting information on journals in a uniform structured format.

In 2023, the dissemination of VMU journals in the open-access journal index DOAJ and other databases was taken care of. A total of 11 VMU journals are registered in DOAJ. A total of 7 VMU journals were submitted to Sherpa Romeo, which compiles and presents the open-access policies of publishers and journals worldwide. In total, Sherpa Romeo features 14 of the University journals. After evaluation, 8 journals were indexed in the reporting year in the European Humanities and Social Sciences Index (ERIH PLUS). A total of 12 journals of the University are listed in this index. 18 VMU journals are indexed in the EBSCO database. Open Access books published at the University are published in the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB) with permission from the authors. 33 books published by VMU are available on DOAB.

Fixed identifiers. The DOI Digital Object Identifier system at VMU is used to identify, easily locate, cite, link, evaluate and use digital intellectual property objects such as articles, books and datasets. Most of the DOI links lead to VMU CRIS, a repository for long-term storage. In 2023, a total of 216 DOIs were granted: for 12 VMU journals, 166 articles, 40 books, and 10 scientific datasets. The World Wide Web can be searched by DOI for 3607 information resources published by the University.

Funding and promotion of research and artistic activities

Salaries for academic staff increased by 10% to 30% in 2019, by 10% from autumn 2020, and by a further 10% each year from 2021.

Under the current flexible bonus methodology, teachers and researchers are rewarded for high levels of research output, research and didactic performance with monthly research (for research output) and academic (for other academic and didactic activities) bonus on top of the teacher's or researcher's salary, ranging from 0.9 BMS up to a maximum of 13.8 BMS per full-time equivalent.

The University's competitive research promotion fund for 2022 was EUR 380,000. The Research Fund was used for the development of the University's cluster activities, departments and institutes of the Agriculture Academy, cluster,

institute and equivalent unit project competitions, the doctoral students' trips competition, the promotion of top-level output, the dissemination of science and the publicity of priority areas, and the promotion of doctoral students' research activities.

EUR 277,000 was awarded to 390 teachers, researchers, and doctoral students for the production of top-level scientific output, the execution of R&D orders from businesses, the most significant research projects, international patents and plant varieties that underwent international expertise. Funds for staff and doctoral students were transferred to research clusters, institutes and AA units. These funds can be used in a variety of ways: for research trips and other research-related needs, for teachers' and researchers' bonuses, and for doctoral student scholarships.

A single one-off promotion of 1.5–2 BMS per month was awarded for 26 original science promotion articles.

EUR 100,000 were allocated to support the development of research clusters, departments and institutes of the Agriculture Academy. Clusters and other research units used these funds to reimburse the costs of organising and participating in scientific conferences, publishing scientific publications, publishing research papers in recognised scientific journals referenced in the Scopus and CA WoS databases, and carrying out research.

EUR 40 000 in financial support from the University Research Fund was granted to first- and second-year full-time doctoral students and first-, second- and third-year part-time doctoral students enrolled in state- and EU-funded doctoral programmes. This financial contribution aims to improve doctoral students' scientific qualifications, disseminate research results, and increase regional and international mobility. In 2022, the update of the Regulations on the Promotion of Doctoral Research Activities for Doctoral Students increased the amount of the promotion funds available to doctoral students over the entire duration of their doctoral studies, from EUR 600 to EUR 1000 in the humanities and social sciences, and from EUR 1 500 to EUR 2 100 in the life sciences, agriculture and technology.

EUR 20,000 was allocated from the University's Research Fund for doctoral students' research trips. In 2023, 28 doctoral students submitted applications for the competitions: 16 in the social sciences, 4 in the humanities, 4 in the natural sciences and 4 in technology. Applications were evaluated in accordance with the rules of the competition. Funding was awarded to 26 doctoral students.

National and international projects

The total number of VMU projects in 2023 remained similar to that of each year, with the start of the new 2021–2027 period. More than 290 international and national research projects are ongoing. The overall dynamics of projects at the University reflect the cyclic nature of project activities linked to the financial periods of international and national programmes.

In 2023, project activities focused on international science and education projects. VMU researchers are actively participating in the EU Research and Innovation Programme “European Horizon” calls and are successfully involved in research project consortia. In 2023, 35 applications were submitted, and funding was awarded to 10 projects (7 projects started in 2023 and 3 projects will start in 2024). A new challenge for the University's academic and non-academic staff in 2023 was related to the 3 major projects won by the “European Horizon” Programme that VMU is coordinating (the last time VMU coordinated a “Teaming” project in 2017–2018).

VMU coordinates 3 projects under the “European Horizon” Programme related to smart forestry, ethics of communication technologies and migration issues. A total of 23 “Horizon 2020” and “European Horizon” projects were implemented in 2023.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education and Science launched a call for applications for the “University Excellence Initiative” programme under the measure “Improving the Research and Study Environment” (measure code 12-001-01-01-01 (PP)). VMU Bioeconomy Research Institute and Vytautas Kavolis Institute applied for and received EUR 5.93 million in funding.

Following the European Commission's approval of the application in 2023 and the EUR 14.4 million funding for the further development of the Transform4Europe Alliance, the project is continuing successfully as the partners strengthen their international cooperation, develop students' and staff's skills, find and apply sustainable solutions in universities, and promote innovation in higher education.

In 2023, VMU researchers launched 3 new COST activities. For this European Intergovernmental Cooperation in Science and Technology programme, researchers represented VMU in 25 thematic activities in 2023.

A total of 6 Erasmus+ projects started in 2023. 37 Erasmus+ projects were ongoing in 2023.

In 2023, the University implemented more than 100 projects administered by the Research Council of Lithuania (LRC). Researchers were actively involved in calls for proposals launched by the Research Council of Lithuania. Active participation in traditional measures was complemented by the results of a new call for proposals – the war against Ukraine caused by the Russian Federation led to the creation of a new measure by the Research Council of Lithuania (State Orders) – support for Lithuanian research and study institutions employing researchers from Ukraine. In 2023, 8 researchers from Ukrainian universities, funded by the Research Council of Lithuania, started working at VMU under this measure.

As every year, VMU researchers actively participated in call for proposals by the Research Council of Lithuania. 36 applications were submitted for funding and 9 projects were successful (475 applications in all were received by the Research Council of Lithuania).

In 2023, 9 doctoral candidates started their independent research activities at VMU under the call for applications for funding postdoctoral internship projects announced by the Research Council of Lithuania. With this programme,

the Research Council of Lithuania promotes the development of a system of post-doctoral traineeships for young researchers and improves the scientific qualifications of trainees.

The European Union LIFE project 101112894, "Green Farm" (LIFE22-GIC-LT-GFarm for LIFE) was launched in 2023. In total, the University carried out 3 LIFE projects in 2023.

VMU AA was active in submitting applications to the National Paying Agency calls for proposals, with 6 projects launched in 2023.

5 projects were launched under the call for proposals for the measure "Support for Applied Research" of the promotion of agri-food and rural development programme.

Analysing the number of projects to be carried out in 2023 by academic units of VMU, the largest number of projects was carried out by AA, EA, FNS, FH.

Commercialisation of R&D

The Communication and Technology Transfer Centre (hereinafter referred to as the CTTC) implements the University's strategic objectives for the commercialisation of research activities. The CTTC team develops R&D services and fosters synergies between science and business in developing innovative solutions. The activities of the CTTC team, such as training, meetings of the Innovation Potential Working Groups and ongoing advice (on intellectual property, search for funding, marketing, communication and technology transfer and commercialisation of innovations), continue. The experience gained by the CTTC led to an increase in revenues from new products, innovative technologies and methods developed at the University in collaboration with economic operators.

The CTTC provides expert advice at knowledge and experience transfer events, developed the "Inovatorių akademija" programme (eight pieces of training a year) and opened the first prototype demonstration space "InnoSpace". The opening of the "InnoSpace" prototype room is a significant event, as it is the first of its kind in the University, showcasing as many as 16 unique prototypes developed by scientists. The Prototype Room is open to the public and to University researchers who wish to demonstrate newly developed products or technologies. These activities also encourage the entrepreneurial career of researchers and the wider dissemination of R&D results. The CTTC team has become an active participant in R&D promotion events, actively presenting research results, patents, prototypes and other innovations to the public and private sectors as well as to the general public. The commercialisation of the University's academic and non-academic achievements was presented at exhibitions and international events with foreign participants. Participation in exhibitions such as "Ką pasėsi", "VDS Valencia Digital Summit", "Hanover Messe", "Agritechnica", "Central Agricultural Fair", "AWE EU" showcased the technologies, products and services developed by the researchers, and established contacts for developing further cooperation.

The CTTC continues its activities in the Lithuanian Social Innovation Cluster, the University Industry Innovation Network, Europe's premier association of Knowledge Transfer professionals (ASTP), "TTO Lithuania" and "TTO Baltic". A total of 16 companies were active in the Business Incubator in 2023. This year, MB "Innovative Care of Dementia", UAB "Simneka", UAB "Nanologistics" and MB "Deko Labs" are new members. The creators of the board game "Kondigno" gathered in the community of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), and they won the sustainable solutions category of Kaunas Startup Awards 2023. The game helps to reduce social exclusion for visually impaired people. This is the first example of a board game where the rules, storyline and tasks are presented in a mobile app.

Two hackathons ("CTTC InnoHack'23" and "HACK4PLANET") took place in 2023 and developed innovative ideas in the fields of sustainability, biotechnology, digitisation and the Green Deal. In "CTTC InnoHack'23", one of the winners, "Haha teams", was selected to participate in an international hackathon in Greece, where they won 3rd place. The team is developing the idea further with CTTC and hopes to create a successful start-up. The winners of "HACK4PLANET" will travel to Spain next year for a hackathon to present their sustainable packaging ideas (without using plastic).

In order to promote more active cooperation between researchers of the association "Santakos slėnis" and research and study institutions and to develop the competences of young researchers, VMU, together with other universities in Kaunas, launched a call for applications for funding joint research projects. A total of 11 applications were submitted and 2 were funded.

In order to achieve one of the priorities of the University, commercialisation of scientific production and development of R&D activities with business, the initiatives and support for researchers implemented at the University are yielding positive results. In 2023, more than 30 R&D projects/contracts were requested for support, and more than 40 public procurement tenders were launched for more than EUR 2.5 million (the value of the tenders amounts to EUR 1.8 million, EUR 970,000 are noted separately as the tenders were won for services other than R&D, but for the provision of other services to businesses). More than 50 meetings with businesses were also organised, during which commercial proposals were submitted. The vast majority of public procurement and commercial bids were successful, with 88 contracts signed for EUR 3,627,000 and projects for EUR 1,136,000. The total value of R&D projects and service contracts with businesses amounted to EUR 4,763 million. The overall increase in the number of signed R&D and service contracts is due to the University's active participation in public procurement as a service provider. However, 2023 was a transition year for the new EU Structural Funds funding period (2021-2027), therefore, calls for joint science-business projects were launched on a small scale or at the end of the year, and results will only be visible in 2024. University researchers actively participated in the "Inobrandā" and "Inopāžanga" calls and, together with CTTC, submitted six "Inopāžanga" proposals for EUR 861,000 and four "Inobrandā" proposals for EUR 1,059 million. In preparation for the upcoming calls, the CTTC team developed six commercialisation strategies that would help be more successful and

accelerate your participation in the 2024 R&D commercialisation measures. It is important to note that four patent applications by University researchers were approved in 2023.

Doctoral studies

The University has the right to doctoral studies in 24 science fields and cooperates with 17 Lithuanian higher education and research institutions. VMU's membership in the Transform4Europe consortium allows an increase in the internationalisation and quality of doctoral studies. The consortium partners plan to develop joint doctoral study programmes, promote doctoral students' internships, organise an annual conference for doctoral students from the partner universities, to organise summer and winter schools, seminars, and refresher courses for doctoral students and their supervisors. The details of the inter-institutional cooperation on doctoral studies with the consortium partners are currently being finalised, and a cooperation agreement was drafted. VMU is an active participant in this debate.

In 2023, the University was awarded 51 doctoral study places financed by the state budget – 8 of them were won by researchers, their themes won in competitions announced by the Research Council of Lithuania, and 1 doctoral place was won together with a business enterprise. Seven first-year doctoral students from Lithuania and abroad finance their doctoral studies with their own funds.

In 2023, 8 foreign doctoral students started their doctoral studies: citizens of Indonesia and Pakistan in the field of agronomy, citizens of the USA and China in the field of political science, a citizen of India in the field of ecology and environmental science, a citizen of the USA in the field of ethnology, a citizen of Ukraine in the field of communication and information science, a citizen of Azerbaijan in the field of sociology. The share of foreigners in the total number of doctoral students enrolled was 14%.

1 twin-degree partnership agreement (cotutelle) signed in 2023 with St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Bulgaria.

A total of 235 doctoral students were enrolled in the autumn semester.

In 2023, 74 doctoral students participated in internships, seminars, conferences and other scientific events at universities and research institutions abroad, 9 of them remotely. The University hosted 6 doctoral students as visitors, and 25 doctoral students took part in the Erasmus+ student exchange programme.

48 doctoral dissertations were defended at the University: 5 in the natural sciences, 6 in the humanities, 21 in the social sciences, 7 in technology and 9 in agriculture. Doctoral programmes in the fields of art studies, mechanical engineering, theology, and law (100% of graduates) are highly rated in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

1 doctoral dissertation in Educational Sciences defended under a cotutelle agreement with the University of Verona (Italy).

Since the launch of the doctoral programme, the University has trained 930 researchers.

Since 2012, when the procedure for granting the status of Visiting Professor was established and approved, 25 foreign researchers have already been awarded this honorary status.

Partnerships

The University cooperates with Lithuanian and foreign higher education and other institutions by publishing scientific journals. Cooperation is established with the following institutions: Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuanian Energy Institute, LCSS Institute of Economics and Rural Development, Lithuanian Emigration Institute, Klaipėda University, Institute of Lithuanian Language, Lithuanian Institute of History, Vilnius University, Lithuanian Olympic Academy, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava", Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Universidad de los Andes, Dublin City University, University of Illinois at Chicago, Riga Technical University, and other research and study institutions.

VMU started a collaboration with "Startup Wise Guys", one of the most active accelerator funds in Europe and Africa, which has invested in more than 400 early-stage B2B startups in SaaS, Fintech, Cybersecurity, XR, Sustainability, Web3 and PropTech in over 60 countries.

VMU is a member of the open platform "CrowdHelix". Crowdhelix is an open innovation platform that builds international networks between researchers and innovating companies to initiate pioneering projects, notably in the EU's "Horizon Europe" programme.

VMU AA scientists participate in the activities in International Research Infrastructure – Infrastructure for Analysis and Experimentation on Ecosystems (AnaEE).

VMU participates in the CLARIN-LT Research Infrastructure Network, a research infrastructure for researchers, teachers, and students in the social sciences and humanities for a wide range of digital language resources and technologies. CLARIN-LT activities include conducting applied and interdisciplinary research, promoting the international mobility of researchers, providing information about the language data and tools stored in CLARIN repositories; organising high-level national and international scientific events, providing advice to researchers; and collecting Lithuanian language resources and language research tools.

VMU researchers also participate in the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) network, which was set up by the European Commission to foster innovation in the

agriculture and forestry sectors and to bring research and practice closer together. EIP-AGRI was created as a new way to help the agriculture and forestry sectors become more productive, more sustainable and more able to deal with existing challenges such as tougher competition, volatile market prices, climate change and stricter environmental rules. Within the EIP-AGRI network, VMU is implementing a project funded by the European Commission.

VMU participates in the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) and is implementing the project “Implementation of the Plan for Lithuania’s Membership in the European Research Infrastructure Consortium for Social Research in Europe” (No. VS-3).

VMU scientists are experts on the committees of “Europos Horizontas”: Prof. Audrius Sigitas Maruška, Assoc. Prof. Jūratė Žaltauskaitė, Assoc. Prof. Zita Kriaučiūnienė.

Researchers from VMU AA participate in the Network of European Capitals of Culture Universities (UNECC).

Researchers from VMU AA participate in the Central and Eastern European Initiative for the Development of a Knowledge-based Bioeconomy in Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry (BIOEAST).

Researchers from VMU AA participate in the Bioindustry Consortium (BIC).

Researchers at VMU AA participate in the Ecosystem Analysis and Experimentation Infrastructure Network (AnaEE).

Researchers from VMU AA participate in the Nordic Forest Research Network (SNS).

Researchers of VMU AA participate in the Global Research Alliance on Greenhouse Gases from Agriculture (GRA).

VMU became the first Lithuanian university to join the international European Network of Inclusive Universities (EUni4All-Network), which aims to promote the international mobility of students with disabilities and thus increase the capacity of the university community to recognise and respond to the diversity of individual needs.

There is also active participation in crucial Lithuanian business cooperation organisations: the Lithuanian Responsible Business Association, Kaunas Chamber of Commerce and Crafts, the Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists, the “Infobalt” Association, the Energy Digital Innovation Centre, the Lithuanian Biotechnology Association, the Lithuanian Food Exporters Association, Hydrogen Energy Association and so on. Another vital part of research partnerships is participation in research infrastructures, which are growing in number every year. Currently, the most important ones are: “Slėnis Nemunas”, “Santakos slėnis”, Kaunas Science Technology Park, Transform for Europe, CLARIN, EIT HEI, etc.

Further development of activities:

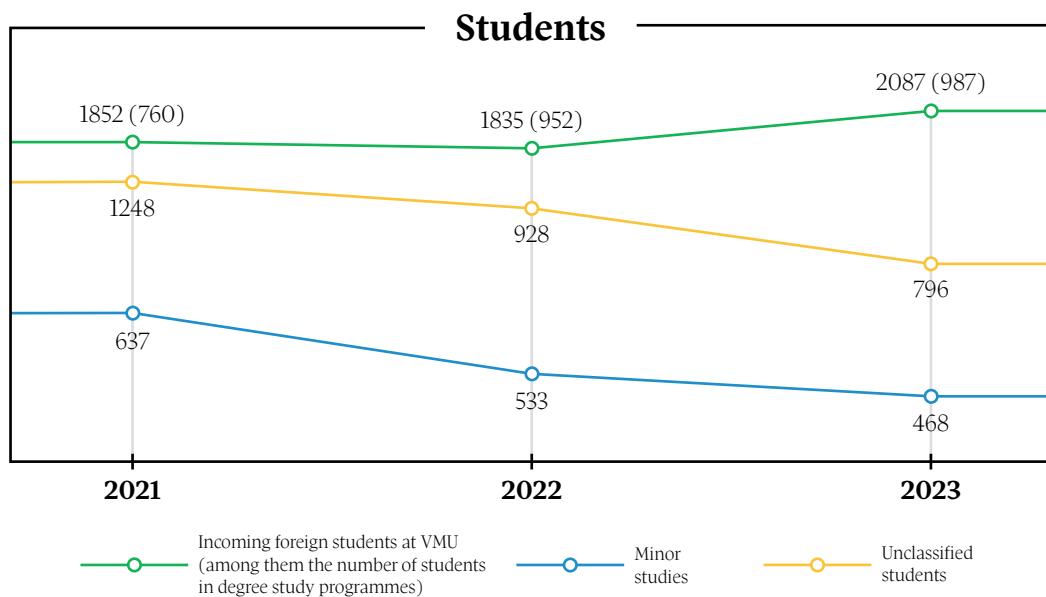
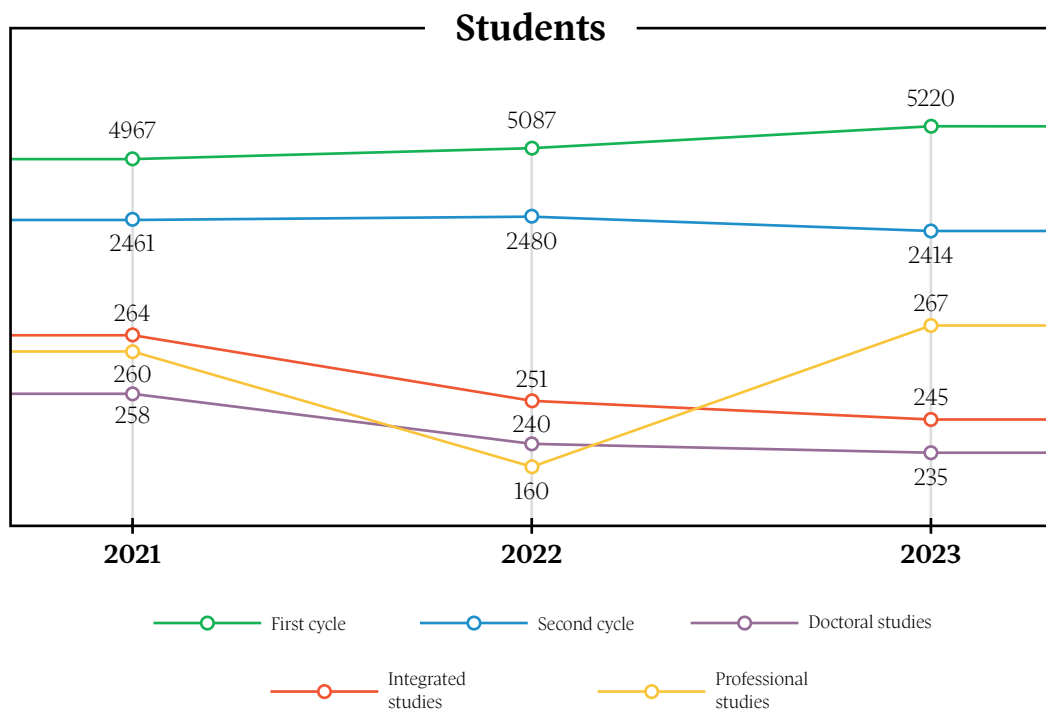
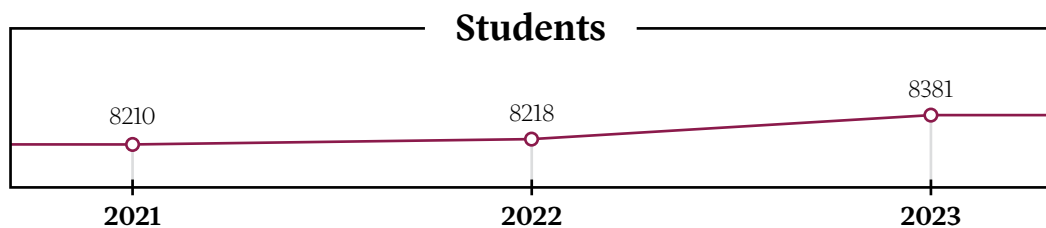
- The 2023 comparative expert R&D assessment provided expert recommendations for each of the University’s R&D assessment units. International experts stressed the importance of a clear R&D evaluation unit strategy, a scientific culture (regular meetings, etc.) in their recommendations and summary of results. The results obtained and the recommendations of international experts oblige VMU R&D assessment units to revise/prepare **plans for the improvement of R&D activities of the assessment units**, for the increase of internationalisation, for the attraction of talents in order to achieve the international recognition/dominance of R&D activities. Expert recommendations for improving R&D performance and increasing internationalisation should be taken into account in the preparation of the follow-up plans of the R&D evaluation units, such as:
 - Ambitious strategic plans for R&D assessment units are essential, including clarification of the research profile, the creation of strong research teams with the potential to take the lead in high-level international projects, the internationalisation of doctoral studies, the development of a science culture, talent attraction, leadership development programmes, and plans for the development of R&D infrastructure (important to attract the attention of industry and other public entities, and of frontline and young research talent). It is important to maintain a balance between scientific areas, while strengthening the weaker ones. The different levels of assessment of the quality of R&D performance in the science fields point to the need for a more balanced strategy. Maintaining gender balance in the R&D evaluation unit.
 - Exploiting the potential for collaboration, including collaboration within the R&D evaluation unit, between research teams, between research fields. It is important to harness the potential of international cooperation, university alliances, R&D networks (including R&D infrastructure and human resources). Analysis of the impact of international cooperation of the evaluated unit on the results of R&D activities (publication in the best international scientific journals, participation in the best international conferences, co-authorship with leading foreign researchers), synergy between groups of researchers, strengthening of the cooperation with other institutions in Lithuania and abroad, strengthening of the interdisciplinarity, increasing the “critical mass” of researchers in the field of science;
 - The R&D incentive scheme should give greater encouragement to articles in the most recognised scientific journals in the field (in which case the contribution of the institution’s authors is not evaluated), to the representation of the R&D assessment unit at the most prestigious conferences in its field, as invited plenary speakers, as members of the organising or scientific committee, and to leadership in international R&D projects. Promoting open science (including opening up research data) for international visibility and increased citation;
 - It is important to use doctoral studies, research and postdoctoral traineeships to increase international visibility/recognition, to facilitate the careers of promising researchers, and to plan long-term international internships for doctoral students, research trainees. Attracting researchers, talents, doctoral students and

research trainees from abroad to create an international environment and scientific culture in the unit. Most doctoral students are graduates of the same Master's degree programme at the same university, thus benefiting from exchanges between students and doctoral students (from other Lithuanian or foreign institutions). It is important to recruit doctoral students in R&D projects and other research activities so that they do not have to work outside academia;

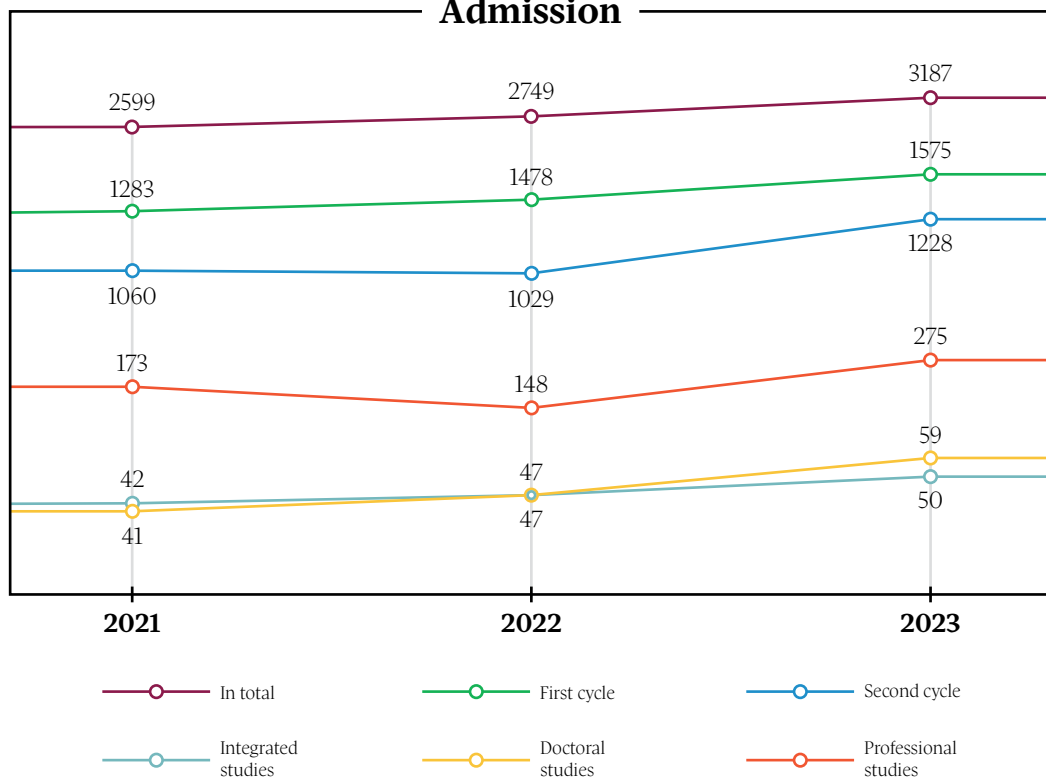
- To strengthen the socio-economic impact of the R&D activities of the evaluation units, to develop citizen science through public engagement, to ensure the dissemination of researchers to other organisations, to monitor alumni leadership and other cases of excellence in the training of researchers for the society, other institutions, etc.
- Harnessing the potential of the Transform4Europe – T4E partnership of the European University Alliance to promote the training of joint doctoral students with universities in Europe and beyond, to build entrepreneurial, open science knowledge and innovation with and for regions, in collaboration with a wide range of non-university stakeholders, and to strengthen inter-institutional and interdisciplinary cooperation and networking, links with business associations and companies, NGOs, public sector institutions, schools.
- Encouraging the development of research projects and the joining of VMU researchers in consortia being formed in “Horizon Europe”. In 2024, particular attention will be paid to the coordination and execution of the winning large Horizon Europe projects.
- Developing potentially patentable research based on the concept of open innovation by encouraging active participation in international open innovation platforms, such as Crowdhelix, NineSigma, and thus engaging in research activities and the development of new technologies or products in collaboration with international companies and academic partners.
- Encouraging commissioning and contracting of R&D and innovation with Lithuanian businesses and closer cooperation with NGOs and other organisations.
- Actively pursuing the commercialisation of products developed at the University, either through creating new companies or licensing developed products to new start-ups.
- In 2023, 5 interdisciplinary/intersectoral institutes became fully operational at the University. In 2024, the aim will be to develop the activities of these institutes by engaging and initiating new national and international projects.
- Optimising resources by identifying key representative events and focusing on unique projects with greater added artistic value and significance.
- Promoting the internationalisation of doctoral studies through the mobility of doctoral students in long-term traineeships and the awarding of European Doctoral Certificates.
- Promoting the internationalisation of doctoral studies through active participation in “Horizon Europe” Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) projects for doctoral studies and post-doctoral research.
- Supporting young researchers and doctoral students to actively participate in the joint research project competitions of the Association “Santakos slėnis” by submitting interdisciplinary project proposals together with their colleagues from KTU, LSMU, LEI.
- Encouraging researchers, teachers, and students to strive for research excellence, particularly by preparing and publishing articles in the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science (CA WoS) and Scopus databases.
- Optimising the activities of artistic groups, taking into account their purpose and representativeness, without duplicating activities, creates appropriate conditions for the expression of amateur artistic activities of the University community.

Studies “360”

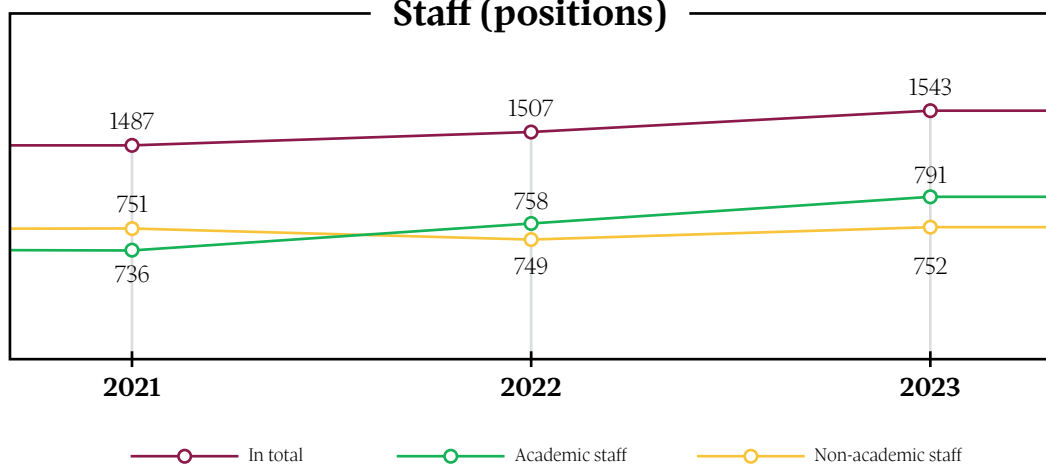




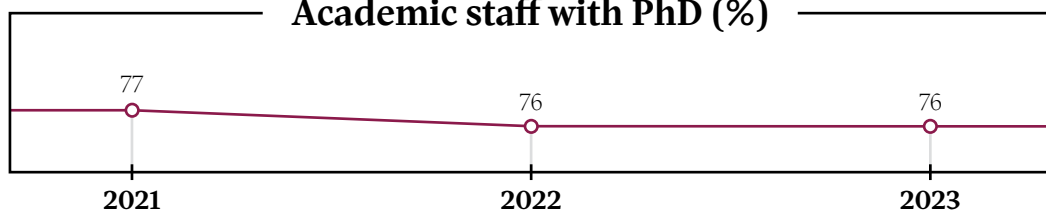
Admission

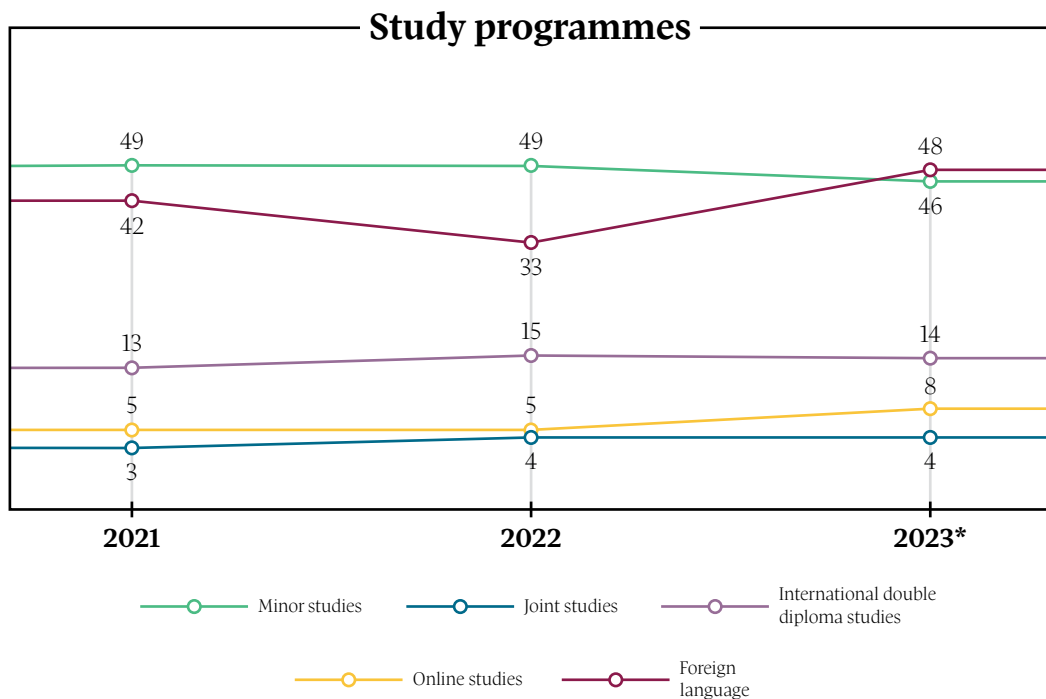
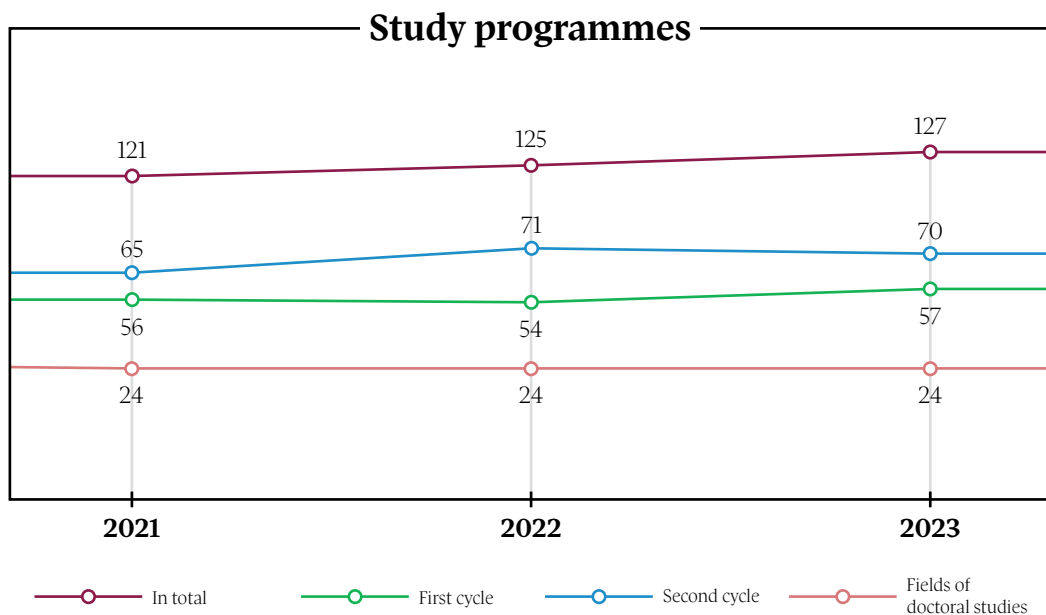


Staff (positions)



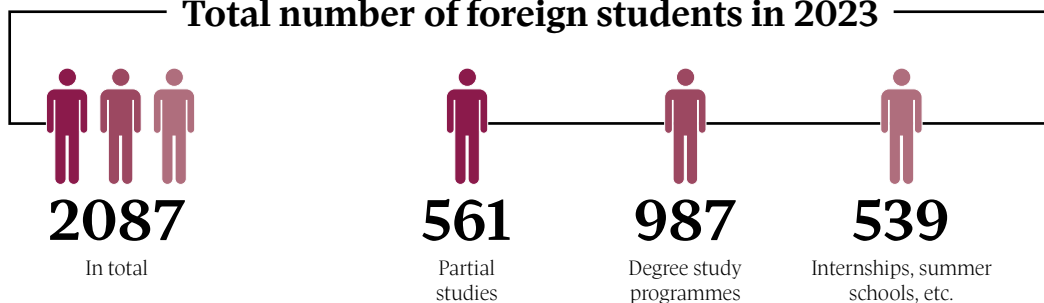
Academic staff with PhD (%)



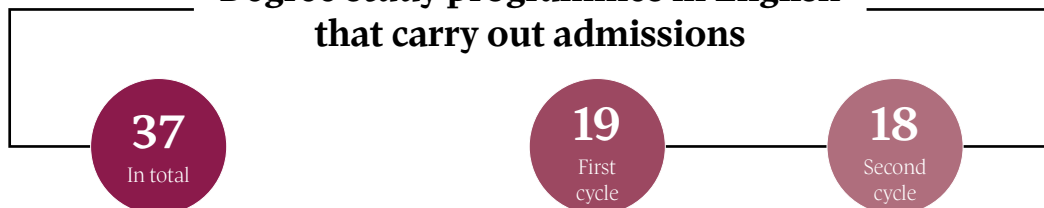


*In 2023, one integrated study programme and one professional study programme were carried out.

Total number of foreign students in 2023



Degree study programmes in English that carry out admissions



81

Number of countries
from which incoming
foreign students
study in degree study
programmes

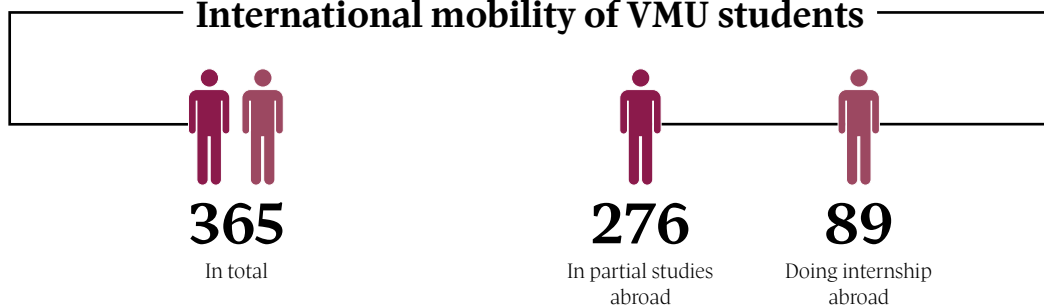
31

Number of
foreign language
courses available

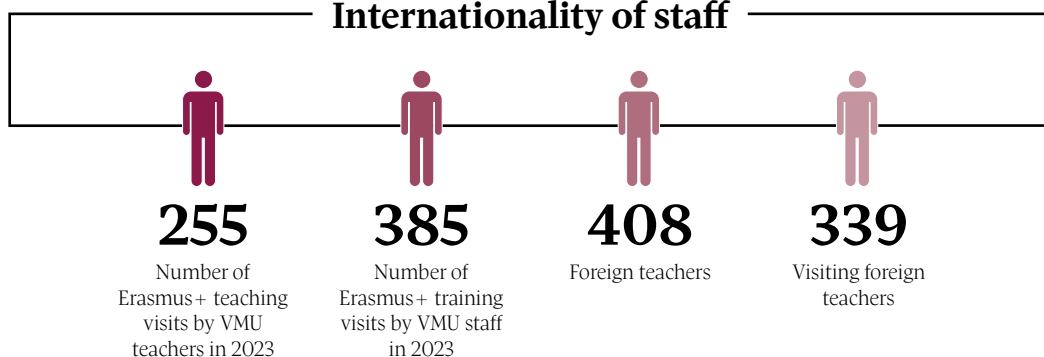
81

Number
of partner
countries

International mobility of VMU students



Internationality of staff



Studies “360”

According to the evaluation conclusions of VMU institutional evaluation experts, VMU is effectively fulfilling its mission to provide flexible and dynamic studies based on the principles of *artes liberales*, enabling students to develop unique personalities and ultimately become fully prepared and adaptable graduates for the workplace. VMU graduates are characterised by their multi-skilled, foreign language skills, which enable them to adapt well to changing economic situations. The model of customised and flexible studies has been implemented with great success and distinguishes the Institution from other national and even European institutions. The links between studies and research are evident at the University, demonstrating that studies are purposefully grounded in research (art). Opportunities for students, teachers, researchers and specialists to operate internationally (Institutional Review Report of Vytautas Magnus University, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education – SKVC).

In the field of studies, 2023 was a year of international, national and institutional evaluations, self-evaluation, assessment and recognition of the results of a coherent implementation of activities based on strategic objectives. The international experts of the Institutional Evaluation clearly identified that the concept of *artes liberales* studies and the success of these activities clearly distinguish the University at the international level. The student enrolment results, which exceeded expectations, enabled the University to maintain its status as the largest University in Kaunas and the second largest in Lithuania in terms of student numbers. The quality of the University's studies and the public recognition of the University's achievements were also evaluated, with the University ranking second in the national rankings. Particularly surprising were the results achieved by the students in the field of sports – the students at Vytautas Magnus University won a gold medal at the FISU World University 3x3 Basketball Championships, the student swimmer Kotryna Teterevkova won two gold medals at the World University Games in China, and other student achievements. The University is ranked among the European TOP10 universities in terms of sports results. Innovation in the study process was also recognised – in the Transform4Europe Teaching Innovation Competition, teacher Evelina Bendoraitienė was awarded for teaching innovation and recognised as one of the top 5 innovators among the 9 teachers of the Alliance's European Universities.

Innovativeness, flexibility and accessibility of studies

Admission to studies. In the 2023 admission, 27547 students applied, but only 16012 (58%) met the requirements for higher education and were eligible to participate in the competition. However, better results in the national mathematics exam led to a 6% increase in university enrolments. The most significant increases were in universities dominated by computer science, engineering, and technology sciences, where public funding was targeted to increase, directly affecting the number of entrants. For instance, at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, the increase was 7.7%; at Kaunas University of Technology, it was 10%, but at Vilnius University, it was only 2.34%, and at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences – 3.4%. Some universities also saw a decrease in enrolments, e.g. at Mykolas Romeris University (5.4%) and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (9.1%). Compared to the largest, non-specialised universities, Vytautas Magnus University had the most significant increase in the number of enrolments – 6.7% – and exceeded the average of all universities.

Having evaluated the admission results of the national and other universities, it can be stated that the strategic actions of Vytautas Magnus University to become a university of the broadest coverage and to secure the public evaluation as a reliable university providing high quality, interdisciplinary studies based on the principles of *artes liberales* were successful, and the targeted and comprehensive marketing of the studies were successful. The level of enrolments in the first cycle and integrated studies were not only managed to stabilise, but they grew for the second year in a row. The number of people choosing the University as their priority also increased (6.5%). Vytautas Magnus University did not lose its position regarding the number of enrolled students and was ranked second in the country for the third year in a row.

Vytautas Magnus University offered admission to 44 first cycle and integrated study programmes; 1,366 students were admitted during the centralised LAMA BPO admission. The most popular programmes of the University with the highest number of admissions of state-funded students are Psychology (90), Subject Pedagogy (82), Special Educational Needs (58), Public Communication (36), Agronomy (32), Primary Education Pedagogy and Early Foreign Language Teaching (30), Creative Industries (28), English Philology (27), Sports Studies (26) and Law (26).

In 2023, Vytautas Magnus University conducted admissions to 42 fields of study and 63 second cycle study programmes. In terms of academic performance and efficiency, the University has secured 557 state-funded second cycle study positions (an increase of 6.5% compared to 2022). The number of state-funded study places increased in Business and Public Management (21.0%) and Educational Sciences (6.1%). The number of students enrolled in second cycle programmes was 1,228 (19% more than in 2022).

866 people were admitted to full-time studies (443 to state-funded studies and 423 to non-state-funded studies), almost 26% more than last year. As a result of the implementation of the project, the number of students enrolled in the Education Academy's Educational Management study programme has increased significantly – as many as 137 students (37 students enrolled in 2022). Enrolments were also high for the Performing Arts (34), Health Psychology (33), Marketing and International Commerce (31) and Applied Informatics (30) degree programmes.

In 2023, 114 state-funded places were available for second cycle studies in the Extended Form at the Academies of Education and Agriculture. Enrolment in part-time second cycle programmes increased by more than 6%. The most significant number of students enrolled in the following study programmes: Health Psychology (38), Business Logistics (28), Marketing and Sales, Accounting and Finance (23 each) and Land Management (22).

102 foreign nationals were admitted to second cycle programmes (37 % fewer than in 2022). The largest number of admissions were to the Faculty of Economics and Management (25), the Faculty of Bioeconomic Development of the Agriculture Academy (19) and the Faculty of Humanities (17).

In 2023, 275 students (86% more than in 2022) were enrolled in full-time professional studies in Pedagogy: 125 students were enrolled in state-funded study programmes, 93 students were enrolled in studies funded by other sources, and 57 students were enrolled in studies not funded by the state. In 2023, 308 applications were submitted to the competition for admission to professional studies.

In 2023, 214 students were enrolled and studying in complementary programmes designed to prepare graduates with a Bachelor's degree from colleges or other fields of study for study in the second cycle. The number of students opting for complementary studies at the University decreased by almost 12.2% in 2023. In 2022, 533 students were enrolled in complementary study programmes and in 2023, 468 students. The Pedagogy minor study programme (granting a professional qualification as a teacher) with 94 students remained the University's most popular minor study programme. The Entrepreneurship Academy is also a popular minor study programme offered by the Faculty of Economics and Management, with 60 students. Other popular minor study programmes are Marketing (52), Sports Studies (32), Business Administration (23) and Psychology (23). A total of 46 minor study programmes were offered to students, of which 43 were attended by students.

Internationality of studies. *Admission of international students to degree courses.* In 2023, 343 international students were admitted (360 in 2022), a decrease of 4.7% compared to last year due to a decrease in the number of Ukrainian students and changes in Lithuania's migration policy regarding visa issuance. Enrolments in second cycle programmes dropped significantly by 37% (102 in 2023, 162 in 2022), but enrolments in the first cycle programmes increased by 21.7% (241 in 2023, 198 in 2022). The largest number of students enrolled in first cycle studies is in the Faculties of Informatics (56), Political Science and Diplomacy (46) and Bioeconomy Development (46). The largest number of admissions to the second cycle programmes is also in the Faculties of Bioeconomy Development (17), Political Science and Diplomacy (16) and Economics and Management (16).

Although enrolments decreased, the total number of all incoming (exchange, short-term and full-time) international students increased by 14% to 2,087 (1,830 in 2022). In 2023, 987 foreign nationals from 81 countries studied in the first and second cycles and doctoral study programmes (947 students from 78 countries in 2022).

In 2023, 675 academic recognition decisions were taken for qualifications obtained in 72 different countries (774 in 2022). The 12.7% decrease in the number of assessments is due to the high number of entrants from Ukraine in 2022, which accounted for 51% of all qualifications assessed.

In 2023, by order of the Rector, 85 scholarships were allocated to cover up to 100% of the tuition fees for the most talented international students admitted to the first and second cycle programmes. Additional support and concessions were granted to victims of the war in Ukraine, to citizens of Kazakhstan under an agreement with the IQANAT Foundation in Kazakhstan, and to students from the Yazidi ethnic group under an agreement with the NADIA Foundation. 167 Ukrainian citizens received partial support from the Republic of Lithuania for full-time first cycle studies at the University. In 2023, 17 international students (in 2022 – 18 students) received state support from the Educational Exchange Support Fund of the Republic of Lithuania for the second cycle of full-time studies at the University.

At the end of 2023, 44 international students and graduates received funding for internships in Lithuanian companies. The project will be implemented in 2024 and will, we hope, contribute to the greater integration of international students and graduates into the Lithuanian labour market.

Student exchange. In 2023, 365 students went on various exchange programmes, which is 13% more than last year (323 in 2022). 1,090 international students came under various exchange programmes, 27% more than last year (856 in 2022). Under the Erasmus+ programme, 276 students from 19 countries came from EU/EEA partner universities in the Programme countries for part-time studies, an increase of 3.37% in 2022 (267 students). In 2023, the highest number of Erasmus+ students coming to VMU was from Spain (56 students), Turkey (54 students), Italy (52 students), and France (43 students).

In the spring and autumn semesters of 2023, 72 students from non-EU/EEA partner universities came to VMU for Erasmus+ part-time studies (26 in 2022). The increase in arrivals in 2023 was driven by increased Erasmus+ funding and the possibility of using the additional funds to host Ukrainian students through Erasmus+ scholarships. The most significant number of students studying at VMU in 2023 came from Ukraine (21), Kazakhstan (8) and Kenya (6).

In 2023, 48 students from Japan (20), Kazakhstan (10), Georgia (5), Taiwan (4), Hong Kong (4), South Korea (3), Ukraine (2) were admitted to VMU under bilateral agreements for partial studies.

Since 2022, students have the possibility to go on short-term (5 to 30 days) study and practice mobility. In 2023, the number of students going on Erasmus+ short-term study and practice mobility has increased sixfold compared to 2022. In 2023, 84 students left, compared to only 14 in 2022.

Six Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) were organised in 2023 (5 for students and 1 for staff), bringing together 106 students and 15 staff from 7 foreign countries. The most active mixed intensive programmes were organised by VMU Agriculture Academy – 5.

In 2023, 133 VMU students (138 in 2022) went to Erasmus+ partner universities for partial studies, 15 students (17 in 2022) through bilateral exchanges. A total of 77 students completed Erasmus+ student placements in 19 different Programme countries. A total of 58 graduates took advantage of internship opportunities.

Number of students. As of 1 October 2023, 8,381 students were studying at the University. Compared to 2022, the number of students increased by 2%. Vytautas Magnus University remained the second University in Lithuania in terms of total number of students. The number of students enrolled in first cycle studies in 2023 was 5,220, an increase of 2.63% compared to 2022. The number of first cycle students studying part-time decreased by more than 42% compared to 2022. The number of students enrolled in full-time undergraduate studies increased by 5.24%. The number of students enrolled in the full-time law programme in 2023 was 245, a decrease of 2.39% compared to the number of students in 2022. In 2023, there were 2414 second cycle students, a decrease of 2.66% compared to 2022, but the University ranks second in Lithuania in terms of the number of second cycle students. Vytautas Magnus University ranks first in Lithuania in terms of the number of students enrolled in professional pedagogical studies, with 267 students.

In 2023, the University achieved good results in the field of studies: it remained the second largest University in the country in terms of student enrolment, with a higher number of students enrolled in first cycle studies, a higher number of students enrolled in second cycle studies, and a higher number of students enrolled in the state-funded professional studies in education. The University's position as a leader in the country has been strengthened by the successful achievement of its strategic goals, the continuous improvement of the quality of studies, and the enhancement of the University's credibility by developing the values of artes liberales studies. In the field of studies, cooperation with other Kaunas universities was expanded, inter-university exchanges of study courses were carried out in Academic Kaunas, with about 200 Academic Kaunas students participating each semester, the most popular study course chosen being VMU Group A study course "Psychology". The Academic Kaunas initiative also continued the development of an interdisciplinary inter-university module, actively participated in the Transform4Europe Alliance of Universities in the field of studies and provided students with the opportunity to integrate the courses offered by Coursera into their studies.

In 2023, 958 first cycle and 912 second cycle diplomas were awarded. 154 study certificates granting teaching qualifications were also awarded. In 2023, 2,024 graduates were awarded diplomas and certificates from the University, which is 8.9% less than in 2022.

Developing virtual learning at the University. There was a total of 4,582 study courses in VMU virtual learning environment. At the end of 2023, the University had a total of 950 certified (blended) distance learning courses across all study programmes. 1,299 courses in the first cycle programmes and 487 courses in the second cycle programmes were taught by distance learning. 6,221 students and 1459 teachers used VMU virtual learning environment. 105 study courses were offered to members of the public and organisations through open distance learning. In 2023, 1,065 people were studying non-formal education study courses by distance learning.

In 2023, the updated version of Moodle 4.1.4+ had an improved reporting functionality. In the updated version of Moodle, the administrator can allow each user to choose the text editor they prefer and find most convenient. The Moodle activity plugin EdPuzzle was installed and launched. This plugin is designed to create interactive and easily editable video content by integrating different types of questions into videos. In 2023, the SMART research project "Digital Microcredentials in Higher Education (MiCrocredentials)" was carried out in order to justify the need for and launch the process of issuing digital microcredentials in higher education.

Lifelong learning activities. In 2023, activities at all levels and target groups were fully developed, creating a unique and comprehensive lifelong learning system that stands out nationally and internationally in its scope and level of development. Lifelong learning activities start with VMU Kindergarten "Mažųjų akademija", VMU Schools and Classrooms Network, VMU Gifted and other programmes aimed at the youngest lifelong learners. A second level was also developed, where lifelong learning activities are offered to the general public in a wide range of fields. VMU Professional Competence Development Centre, the Institute of Foreign Languages, the Institute of Innovative Studies, the Institute of Professional Development, the Business and Social Partnership Centre, the Communication and Technology Transfer Centre, and other units operate in this field at VMU. The Transform4Europe alliance also brings together the activities of higher education institutions. Lifelong learning activities are oriented towards the oldest generation, i.e. cooperation with the University of the Third Age, activities of VMU World Lithuanian University.

The University shares its knowledge, research results and experience with the public through training, retraining, information dissemination and other activities. For the past four years, professional development activities have been partially centralised in order to ensure the monitoring of the activities, to increase the quality of the services

provided, and to improve the efficiency and accessibility of the organisation of the activities in the academic units of the University.

In 2023, 287 non-formal adult education activities were carried out at the University (344 in 2022), representing a 17% increase. This is lower than in 2022, but it should be noted that the number of participants in the activities was much higher: in 2022, 12,000 participants took part in the activities, while in 2023, non-formal adult education activities attracted 15,931 participants. Non-formal adult education activities cover a comprehensive spectrum: seminars, trainings, courses, education, workshops, lectures, conferences, masterclasses and other activities organised by the University's academic and non-academic units. In 2023, non-formal activities were carried out for 7402 academic hours. The AIKOS system administered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport registered 48 non-formal adult education programmes run by VMU units.

Non-formal adult education activities in 2023 were carried out for the general public (100), for the agricultural sector (68), for educationalists (45), for business and the public sector (42), and for higher education institutions (32). The Institute of Foreign Languages, the Botanical Garden, and the Faculty of Humanities offered the most significant number of non-formal adult education activities to the general public, for representatives of the agricultural sector – the Business and Social Partnership Centre, for educators – the Institute of Professional Development, for representatives of the business and public sector – VMU Professional Competence Development Centre, for representatives of higher education institutions – VMU Professional Competence Development Centre, the Music Academy, the Institute of Innovative Studies.

Participants in non-formal adult education activities could choose from a wide variety of activities covering a broad spectrum of areas. The public turned out in large numbers for the Botanic Garden's educational activities: learning by experimenting (2091), orienteering games (473), flower arrangement workshops (169). The Centre for Lithuanian Studies and International Programmes of VMU Education Academy offered Lithuanian language and culture courses for refugees from the war (340), and the Institute of Foreign Languages hosted a language education event (160). Representatives of the agricultural sector participated in various specific training courses, such as Processing of Fruit, Berries, Vegetables and Medicinal and Herbal Plants – an Alternative Activity in Rural Areas, attended by 390 participants. A total of 1,947 participants participated in the various training courses organised by the various units of the Agriculture Academy. Many non-formal adult education activities are offered to educators by the Professional Development Institute of VMU Education Academy. Top activities in 2023: Workshop on "Applying the Global Reading Approach to Designing a Learning Process for Children with ASD" (155), "Media Literacy and Information Technology: Challenges and Solutions for the 21st Century" (186), and "Research-based Innovative Practices in Early Childhood and Pre-School Education" (141). Business and the public sector had a much wider choice of lifelong activities in 2023. The most popular topics were applications of artificial intelligence technology. Higher education representatives could choose from a range of short workshops to improve didactic, digital and learning competences.

For the first time, VMU staff and students were offered a unique opportunity to study courses of different lengths for free on the Coursera platform. Students were keen to take advantage of this opportunity, with 343 students gaining additional competences and receiving Coursera certificates for their courses. Students chose courses in various areas – personal development, improving language skills, developing entrepreneurial competences, ensuring personal psychological well-being, developing competence in data analytics, etc. In addition, as many as 16 study courses in 2023 had Coursera course material integrated into their studies and 360 students were able to count the courses they took as part of their course studies. Staff also had the opportunity to study on the Coursera platform and attended 328 training programmes. Main areas of interest were artificial intelligence, psychological competence development, intercultural communication, training in the use of the Microsoft suite of applications, and specific training required for certain areas of professional activity.

In 2023, 17 students (33% fewer than in 2022) participated in the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal competences, but the number of credits awarded increased by 170 credits (15.6% more than in the previous year). The most credited competences were public relations, journalistic and pedagogical practice, and language competences. A digitised competence recognition process was developed for the public via the training platform of VMU Professional Competence Development Centre mokymosiakademija.vdu.lt.

The promotion of lifelong learning at the University is carried out by VMU Professional Competence Development Centre and other units. The public is invited to take an active part in the seminars, trainings and courses offered. For the first time, VMU Coaches Course programme, developed together with the teachers of VMU Education Academy, invited students to enrol in four programme areas: high-performance coaches, high-performance trainers, physical activity coaches, physical activity instructors. A total of 64 participants chose the course.

In order to develop the accessibility of lifelong learning activities for business and the public sector, the project "Digital Transformation of the Industry, Agriculture and Energy Sectors in Lithuania ("EDIH4IAE.LT")", together with its partners, will offer 5 modules for business and public sector organisations in December 2023: on Artificial Intelligence (91), Cybersecurity, Digitisation of Processes (20), Digital Marketing Solutions (56), and Digitalisation of the Agriculture (25). These activities will continue in 2024 and 2025. VMU Professional Competence Development Centre platform mokymosiakademija.vdu.lt has opened a special part of the E-DIHLT training platform for representatives of the business and the public sector, where everyone can register and then follow the learning grid and find their certificates in one place. A total of 825 unique participants created their profiles on the platform.

The lifelong learning platform kursuok.lt, launched by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, has attracted

a great deal of interest, as it offers training and funding of up to EUR 500 for anyone interested. VMU teachers prepared 7 programmes for the public, which will be made available on the kursok.lt platform. The following training programmes will be available: conflict mediation, improve English B1.1, improve English B1.2, Norwegian language and culture A1, Danish A1.1, public speaking, leadership.

Lifelong learning activities involve partnerships with other organisations in presenting VMU's lifelong learning opportunities and collaborating in project activities. Business and public sector organisations were invited to a business breakfast (40 participants), and for the first time, presentations of higher education institutions' value propositions for business took place at the event "Present and Future of the Labour Market" (70 participants) organised by "Kaunas In". Cooperation is also established with Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the Lithuanian Innovation Centre, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and other organisations. VMU alumni business breakfast, "Towards cooperation between science and business" (20 participants) was organised.

Internal and external evaluation of study quality

The consistent growth of Vytautas Magnus University in quantitative and qualitative terms results from a systematic effort to provide the highest level of studies at the national and international levels. The quality assessment results and ranking of the fields of study only confirm that our significant contribution to the quality of internationally recognised and student-centred studies is appreciated. In 2023, we not only maintained our leading position in specific fields of study for several years, but we also saw a significant improvement in the performance of specific fields of study. For instance, political science, social work, finance, economics, business, marketing, media arts, biotechnology moved up to second place, art studies to first place, and communication to 1-2. In total, VMU ranked 1-3 in 71 fields of study and for the first time, ranked 2nd in the Lithuanian rankings in terms of the quality of fields of study.

In 2023, 10 fields of study were accredited and 14 accreditation decisions were taken, all of which (100%) mark a 7-year accreditation period. It shows that the results of the 2023 external evaluation exceeded the strategic target, with more than 75% of accreditation decisions covering a 7-year period. The average score for all the fields of study at VMU participating in the 2023 external evaluation is 26 out of 35 (72%).

International experts gave the highest scores to the material resources of studies, while the lowest scores were given to the objectives, results and content of studies, as well as to the links between science (arts) and studies. Many areas of study were rated as good: student enrolment and support; studying, study performance and graduate employment; teaching staff; and quality management and publicity.

In 2023, the development of the internal quality assurance system focused on reviewing the documents governing the quality of studies, updating the assessment and improvement tools, and improving the way and content of publicising information to internal and external social stakeholders. In preparation for the institutional evaluation of the University in 2023, the review of study quality processes and communication was the focus of attention, and significant contributions were made to the improvement of processes, and measures to implement the experts' comments are currently being developed.

The internal evaluation of the quality of studies was purposefully based on feedback from social stakeholders. The 2021-2023 teacher questionnaire survey results show that teachers rate their work organisation as very good. Teachers rate their preparation for introductory lectures, their communication with students, and the presentation of information in a distance environment as the best. The evaluation of the quality of studies from the point of view of teaching staff and students' satisfaction with the quality of studies exceeds the set strategic indicator of 85%, while the evaluation of the quality of studies from the point of view of teaching staff is 89%. Student satisfaction with the material resources for studies reached a very high 91%, demonstrating a particularly favourable view of the study infrastructure, which has seen significant investment in recent years.

70.21% of students participated in the graduation survey in 2023 (64.54% in 2022 and 66.46% in 2021). Summarising the results of the last three years, the overall assessment of the quality of studies remains similar, with a score of 3.42 on a 4-point scale in 2023 (86% of graduates are satisfied with the quality of the study programme), and a score of 3.44 in 2022 (about 87%). International students rated the quality of their studies higher than Lithuanian students, with a score of 3.52 (3.66 in 2022).

In 2023, the first cycle programmes with the highest scores were Pedagogy of Religion (average score of 4 out of 4), Pedagogy of Primary Education (3.83) and Agronomy (3.74). The top-ranked second cycle programmes were Quality and Safety of Plant Food Raw Materials, Marketing and Sales, Art Curatorship, School Psychology, Applied Mathematics, Applied Sociology (average score of 4 out of 4 in 2023).

The majority of graduating students would recommend others to study the study programme of their choice: 3.3 on a 4-point scale in 2023 (83%) and 3.32 in 2022 (83%).

In the first-year student survey (updated in 2023), students indicated their reasons for choosing their studies, expectations, opinions on the study induction week events, the mentoring programme, and student employment. The most common reason for choosing to study at the University is the study programme of interest, and first-year students ranked this as the most important reason for choosing their studies. The second reason for choosing to study at VMU is the artes liberales model of study, the freedom of the student to plan and choose his or her study

courses. This confirms that students choose their studies after being exposed to the uniqueness of the study programme and the University. Students also choose to study at VMU based on recommendations from friends and family, the good image of VMU, the location of the University and the internationality of the University.

The results of the semester-long student survey on the quality of teaching and studying show that students rate the quality of teaching very highly, with a mean score of 9.1. In this survey, the response rate was around 23% in the spring semester of 2023 and 22% in the autumn semester. The teaching score in 2023 was 9.2 and the study score 8.8. The high evaluation of the quality of teaching is also confirmed by the strengths of the studies identified by the students, such as the links between the study material and the practice examples, the participation of guest experts in the lectures, the summarisation of each session and the whole course highlighting the most critical aspects of the study, the timely provision of lecture recordings, background and supplementary information in the Moodle environment, and the respectful communication with students.

In order to measure the comprehensive student experience at the University, an innovative student survey, "Studentpulse", developed on an international platform, was purchased and used. It is also sought to discover different study experiences, perceptions of the environment, relationships with peers and the academic community, the possibilities of combining studies with other activities or leisure time, and expectations to the administration and teaching staff. More than 4000 students responded to the survey.

In order to monitor study improvement activities consistently across the University, curriculum improvement plans are prepared and analysed. They are prepared once a year to cover the areas of curriculum improvement, the planned actions and their links to the results of surveys and external evaluations, the allocation of responsibilities and time resources, and the assessment of the implementation of previously planned improvement actions. Among the plans submitted during the academic years 2022–2023, 72% of the improvement plans were fully implemented, 22.54% were partially implemented and 5.4% were not implemented. Reasons that prevented the implementation of the action include student passivity, lack of time, high occupancy rates, and the fact that the action became irrelevant after the academic year.

Help and support for students

Student career planning and monitoring of graduates. The Career Centre provided advice to students on targeting career goals, career planning (for jobs, internships, related studies, choice of further (Master's) studies), and changes in the study programme; it assisted in preparing CVs and cover letters for internships, jobs, and nominal scholarships. In 2023, the Career Centre provided 115 (55 in 2021, 100 in 2022) individual career counselling sessions (23 for international students; 7 for graduates; 1 for a pupil; 26 for career specialists).

The Career Centre launched 2 virtual seasonal bilingual (English and Lithuanian) Internship and Volunteering Catalogues (No.18, May 2023; No.19, December 2023), which provide brief information in a standardised way about the company, Institution or organisation offering the traineeship or volunteering placement, the title of the traineeship or volunteering position offered and the conditions of performance to be fulfilled by the future trainee or volunteer.

In 2023, the Career Centre staff delivered a wide range of career-related workshops, of which 16 were aimed at VMU community (students, staff, alumni, teachers), attended by 270 participants. 54 workshops for 1,597 students and 9 training sessions for 33 career specialists were organised.

In 2023, the Career Centre organised 25 events, including the informal lecture series "Towards Yourself 2023", consisting of 5 seminars (155 students attended); the remote event "Summer Season Opportunities Fair 2023" (39 students attended), where 5 organisations and students involved in summer work projects participated and presented their activities. One of the biggest events organised by the Career Centre in 2023 was the "VMU Career Days'23: for students and graduates", with 27 companies and organisations participating in the employers' fair. During the Career Day, 16 companies offered job and traineeship positions and gave interviews.

In 2023, VMU Career Centre continued its cooperation with the "Idialogue" career mentoring platform, which brings together the University community: teachers, non-academic staff, alumni and students, who are invited to register with the system and become mentors or mentees, thus enabling individual knowledge acquisition in a specific professional field. The number of VMU students registered on the "Idialogue" mentoring platform was 30 (8 in 2022), while the number of mentors was 14 (13 in 2022).

In 2023, the Career Centre, together with the Department of Studies, organised three university-level surveys on the quality of students/graduates' studies and their current career situation and plans. The surveys showed changing trends: the proportion of students working during their studies is rising significantly, with as many as 35% of first-year students indicating that they were working at the start of their studies (22% in 2022); in the final year, 50% of working students said that their job was related to their final degree programme. For students in professional studies, the work is most closely linked to the study programme – 73%, 54% for second cycle students, 57% for full-time students and 40% for first cycle students.

The survey of graduates one year after graduation showed that 86.1% of graduates were employed, with the highest percentage of graduates working in Education, Training; Healthcare; Parliament, Ministries, Self-government; Banking, Finance, Accounting; Judiciary; Legal Services (the most popular fields of work in 2022 are Education,

Training; Agriculture; Sales, Trade; Banking, Finance, Accounting; Foster care, Social Care).

The summarised data from the surveys are used to improve the quality of studies, self-evaluations of study programmes, marketing purposes, and the quality of the Career Centre's activities.

According to the Employment Service's data of 1 February 2023 and 1 July 2023, one year after graduation, the number of graduates registered with the Employment Service, taking into account the number of completed programmes of study, accounted for 3.45% (75) of the total number of graduates (2,169) in June 2022 and January 2022.

Financial and social support. In 2023, 1046 one-off scholarships (692 in 2022) were awarded for active participation in scientific, sports, cultural, student social activities and financial support, and more than EUR 283,000 (EUR 126,259 in 2022) was disbursed from the State Budget, the University's funds, delegated and project funds. Funding of EUR 278,000 (2022: EUR 123,091) was allocated for student incentives and EUR 5,000 (2022: EUR 3,168) for support.

To encourage students to achieve outstanding study results and to participate in scientific, artistic and social activities actively, the following scholarships were awarded: a scholarship in the name of *President Algirdas Brazauskas* was awarded to a second cycle student of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and a scholarship in the name of *President Antanas Smetona* was awarded to a student of the Music Academy, and 7 students of the Education Academy were awarded the scholarships of the Signatories to the *Act of Independence of 16 February*. 52 students (113 in 2022) who participated in various projects in 2023 were awarded scholarships from the project funds in the amount of almost EUR 43,000 (EUR 133,263 in 2022) for their active work, research or other scientific activities.

A total of 5 (9 in 2022) *University honorary scholarships* were awarded for scientific, educational, musical, artistic, creative or social activities; they were awarded to a student of the Faculty of Social Sciences, a student of the Music Academy, a student of the Faculty of Agronomy of the Agriculture Academy, a student of the Faculty of Informatics, and a student of the Education Academy.

In order to encourage students' early scientific activity, the Vice-Rector of Studies Scholarship Fund for the Promotion of Student Scientific Activity was established in 2023, and scholarships of EUR 500 were awarded to 14 students based on a proposal by the Student Scientific and Artistic Activity Assessment Committee.

In 2023, new scholarships were established by 4 patrons, more than EUR 20,000 were awarded, of which the largest amount of support for students was provided by UAB "Sandara" – 7 students were awarded the amount of EUR 15,750, 3 students were awarded the scholarship of EUR 4,000 in the name of S. and V. Čepukėnai, and EUR 600 for one student was provided by UAB "Ritginta". In total, 16 natural or legal persons contributed more than EUR 57,000 to support 44 University students in 2023.

The *Alumni Club* of the Faculty of Informatics awarded single scholarships to Martynas Survilas (Informatics Systems Study Programme), Nerijus Šakinis (Mathematics and its Applications Study Programme) and Viktorija Macijauskaitė (Multimedia and Internet Technologies Study Programme) for their outstanding Bachelor theses.

"Teltonika" awarded an annual scholarship to Matas Miliūnas, a first-year student of the Informatics Systems programme.

Students of the Faculty of Agronomy were awarded: 4 one-time nominal scholarships by UAB "Nando"; 2 one-time nominal scholarships by Ieva and Arnas Radzevičiai; one one-time nominal scholarship of Agronomist Jonas Tallat-Kelpša; 2 one-time nominal scholarships by AB "East WestAgro"; Vydūnas Youth Foundation one-time nominal scholarship by Stasė Cukuraitė and Vaclovas Tallat-Kelpša; 2 nominal scholarships by Jurgis Sirusas; one-time scholarship by Kazimiera Varnaitė-Masiokienė Scholarship Foundation; 7 nominal scholarships by UAB "Scandagra"; 10 scholarships of Ministry of Agriculture.

The students of Sustainable Engineering and Agricultural Mechanical Engineering first cycle studies were awarded nominal scholarships from UAB "DOJUS agro", AB "Lytagra", UAB "Agrokoncernas", AB "East West Agro", UAB "Baltic Agro Machinery", UAB "Ivabalė", scholarships from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, and a scholarship from the Charity and Support Fund for "Assistance to Regional Youth Studies". The Lithuanian Association of Land Management and Hydraulic Engineers established scholarships for first cycle students studying land management and hydraulic engineering.

As of 29 March 2023, a new description of the *Procedure for awarding the nominal scholarship of Vytautas Magnus University Student Representative Council* was approved, according to which monthly scholarships are awarded to members of the Student Representative Council for their active work at the University.

In accordance with the *Procedure for granting tax benefits and compensation of Vytautas Magnus University*, tax benefits for students from socially vulnerable backgrounds were granted to 82 students in 2023 (104 in 2022) in the amount of EUR 40,748 (EUR 34,777 in 2022). In 2023, a sum of EUR 14,215 (EUR 18 365 in 2022) was awarded on a competitive basis to reimburse tuition fees for 26 students and EUR 26 533 (EUR 16 412 in 2022) was awarded to reimburse accommodation fees for 78 (EUR 64 in 2022) students.

The Talent Development, Higher Education Access Enhancement and International Student Encouragement Funds were established to provide opportunities for the most talented students to study at the University, to develop

fields of study that are important to society and the University, to develop internationalisation and to contribute to increasing access to higher education for the socially excluded. In 2023, 1,444 scholarships were awarded to 1,108 students to cover the cost of tuition fees for a total amount of EUR 1,840,241 (EUR 1,343,617 in 2022).

As part of the student tuition fee support system, the University granted tuition fee reduction from the Tuition Fee Support Fund to students enrolled at the University earlier than 2021, as well as tuition fee reduction to encourage employees or graduates to enrol in the University's studies, with a total number of 661 (930 for 2022), amounting to EUR 733,352 (EUR 851,550 for 2022).

Since 2022, the support provided to Ukrainian citizens studying at VMU has led to a significant increase in the provision of tuition fee reductions for incoming students, with 666 (820 in 2022) students benefiting from tuition fee reductions for a total amount of EUR 1,039,330 (EUR 1,186,723 in 2022). A total of EUR 3,611,436 (EUR 3,381,890 in 2022) was allocated for non-competitive tuition fee reductions in 2023.

In total, the University allocated an amount of EUR 4,284,808 (EUR 4,168,744 in 2022) for the promotion and support of students through fee reduction in 2023, of which EUR 3,625,651 (EUR 3,400,255 in 2022) was allocated for tuition fee reduction, and EUR 659,157 (EUR 768,489 in 2022) was allocated for dormitory accommodation reduction.

Raising state funds for student support and aid. In 2023, the Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour allocated EUR 65,187 (EUR 54,881 in 2022) to support students with disabilities/individual needs to meet their particular needs. This amount was granted to 67 (68 in 2022) students and EUR 4,713 (EUR 3,635 in 2022) to 29 (25 in 2022) students for the partial reimbursement of tuition fees, for a total amount of EUR 69,901 (EUR 58,516 in 2022) to 96 (93 in 2022) students.

Vytautas Magnus University participated in the project of the State Fund for Studies "Ensuring Access to Studies for Students with Special Needs", which made it possible to provide targeted benefits from the European Social Fund and the national budget of the Republic of Lithuania to 135 students in the amount of EUR 142,524 (EUR 89,256 in 2022).

Received social scholarships from the State Studies Foundation: 192 (189 in 2022) students from needy families, 99 (97 in 2022) students who have a level of work capacity of 45% or less or a severe or moderate level of disability established in accordance with the legislation, 131 (138 in 2022) students who are at least 25 years of age and who have been placed under guardianship (custody) or whose parents (or the only parent they had) have died by the time of reaching their majority. A total of 422 (424 in 2022) social scholarships were awarded in 2023.

The State Studies Foundation awarded scholarships of 3.25 BSB to 12 (12 in 2022) Lithuanian diaspora students; 2 (2 in 2022) persons who completed their compulsory initial military service or basic military training, which were partially reimbursed for part of the cost of the tuition fees, for a total amount of EUR 7,495 (7,646 in 2022).

Students applied to the State Studies Foundation for State-supported loans to cover the cost of tuition fees in 269 cases (561 in 2022), for study abroad in 1 case (6 in 2022) and for living expenses in 100 cases (186 in 2022), out of a total of 370 (753 in 2022), of which 301 (387 in 2022), or 81% of the applications (51% in 2022), were granted.

Improving infrastructure for studies and student well-being. Activities were carried out to increase the accessibility of the University's entrances and spaces for people with disabilities. A process was initiated to adjust (increase) the sound of the traffic lights at the crossing between Studentų skveras (Student Square) and Vienybės aikštė (Unity Square) (K. Donelaičio Street). In order to assess the current situation and the necessary adaptations, an analysis of the accessibility of the building of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law of VMU for persons with disabilities was conducted. In order to increase the accessibility of information for persons with disabilities from other countries, a process was initiated regarding the provision of information in English (as it becomes available) on the website of Kaunas Bus Station (in the section "Help for persons with disabilities at Kaunas Bus Station")

The "Disabled Student Information System" (NeSIS) is developed. In the new system, students can submit data relevant to the University, documents about their disability, and fill in an application for financial support. This enables system administrators to keep records of VMU students with disabilities, view the validity of disability certificates, compile student statistics, adapt the study process and provide other services to persons with disabilities.

VMU Alumni ID platform was created, allowing former students to get to know and benefit from the University – to find and see friends from their year of study, to share contacts, to publish a Facebook group so that it is known and accessible to other students in the same year. Alumni can also obtain a VMU Alumni ID in the system, which allows them to take advantage of discounts or services offered by VMU.

Form for transferring archived student data. The newly introduced functionality enables the transfer of student data from physical archives to VMU information systems. This enabled former students to use VMU alumni system and the University to store their data digitally.

System for student research activities. A new system was created where students can indicate the scientific, artistic and organisational activities they participated in, the scientific publications they published and the awards they received in a particular year. The system allows administrators to view, score and validate the data submitted by

students and to see a report of all students who have submitted data.

A *study programme marketing website and synergies with a data registry* were developed, which feeds detailed data on the study programmes taught at the University, the lists of study courses taught there, and the information required by the target group into the publicly accessible VMU website.

Accommodation in University dormitories. In 2023, there were 1,566 places in the halls of residence to accommodate students (1,545 in 2022) and 82 (96 in 2022) to accommodate guests (students and guests of the University, war refugees). A total of 1,648 (1,641 in 2022) residential places were in operation in VMU dormitories in 2023. 96 places were not operated due to poor living conditions.

In 2023, compared to 2022, the overall occupancy rate of dormitories in all VMU dormitories increased from 86% to 89%. The highest annual occupancy rate was in dormitory No. 7 (Universiteto g. 6, Akademija, Kauno r.) – 93%, the lowest – in dormitory No. 5 (Universiteto g. 8, Akademija, Kauno r.) – 81%.

In 2023, the Residence Accommodation Management Information System was further improved by updating the processes for confirming student room bookings and entering student data. In 2023, the WiFi network was partially upgraded in dormitory No. 1 (Taikos pr. 119, Kaunas), partial renovation of rooms (2nd and partly 3rd floor), installation of WiFi and purchase of new furniture in dormitory No. 7 (Universiteto g. 6, Akademija, Kauno r.).

For more on the results of infrastructure improvements, see “Building and improving infrastructure”.

Developing teachers’ competences and collaboration. In 2023, there were a number of changes in professional development activities. VMU Professional Competence Development Centre offered more than 145 learning activities to VMU community. Learning topics are tailored to the needs expressed in the regular staff survey. The training covers general, professional and specific competences. Training in digital competences is organised in cooperation with the Institute of Innovative Studies and in language competences with the Institute of Foreign Languages. Training was also delivered through project activities, in cooperation with different partners, and the Transform4Europe training activities continued.

In 2023, 2,770 participants took part in the learning activities. Learning activities were face-to-face, distance and hybrid. The most active participants were academic staff from the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities, the Education Academy, the Agriculture Academy and the Institute of Foreign Languages. Non-academic staff were most active from the Library, the Studies Department, the Human Resources Department and the Science and Innovation Department. The learning framework consisted of 30% of topics focused on the competences of academic staff, 20% of topics focused on the competences of non-academic staff, and 50% of topics focused on improving the competences of both target groups. Training by international experts accounted for 20% of all training. In total, 34.9% of teachers participated in professional development activities (33.06% in 2022).

More than 0.85 million of project funds were attracted for the development of staff professional development, not from the resources of the University, which allowed not only to offer the staff the highest level of foreign and Lithuanian teachers but also to demonstrate to the teachers the knowledge and abilities acquired in the implementation of the teaching innovations. The project “Strengthening VMU’s International Competitiveness in the Transform4Europe Alliance of European Universities” offers unique training topics: “Improving Public Communication of Higher Education Employees in Representing a Higher Education Institution” (28), “Research Data Management” (16), “Preparation and Management of Projects Based on Research Commercialisation” (17), “Conflict Mediation” (20), “Applying the Latest Innovative Methods and Tools through Deep Student Engagement” (18), “Higher Education Customer Service and Innovative Service Delivery Processes” (29), “Principles and Practices of Inclusive Education in Higher Education” (20). The Coursera.org platform was also offered for self-development, and teachers could choose any of the courses. The platform offers more than 10,000 training programmes. On Coursera.org, staff took part in 283 training programmes.

Teachers received particular attention in the Transform4Europe Alliance training, with 699 participants. Topics for teachers included “Digital Storytelling”, “Promoting Scientific Reasoning and Epistemological Attitude through Research-based Teaching”, “Teaching of Multilingual Groups”.

The project “Digital Transformation of Education (EdTech)” not only involved teachers in an intensive digital competences programme, but also required them to apply the acquired knowledge to develop digital learning tools, i.e., digitising study courses and tasks. As many as 86 teachers completed the 66-hour “Digital Transformation Competency Development for Higher Education Teachers” training at the University. The training sessions included “Co-creation: The Student as the Creator of His/Her Own Study Content” (86), “Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Education” (86), “Video Content Creation – Basic Editing Principles. Tip’s & Trick’s” (86), “SMP Workshop” (86), “Innovative Teaching Methods for Developing and Enabling Information Technology” (86), “Immersive Tools and Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Education” (86), “Trends in Education” (86), “Visual Communication: How to Prepare a Presentation?” (86), “Creating and Adapting Digital Resources” (86), “The Possibilities and Applications of the Graphic Design Platform Canva in the Daily Work of a Teacher” (86). In the second phase, 102 digital learning tools were developed by teachers, of which 70% digitised study courses and 30% developed digital learning tasks. Virtual teacher offices, a virtual simulation company, AI tool practice, breakout rooms and other unique and innovative tasks were created.

VMU Professional Development Foundation was launched in 2023. This year, 19 applications were funded, including

15 for the development of teaching staff competences and 4 for the development of non-academic staff competences. Teachers received training on the use of information and communication technologies in teaching and work processes (Malta), a student best practice workshop (Belgium), an experiential learning experience in Florence on sustainable tourism and travel psychology (Italy), sports psychology in teaching future and current athletes (distance learning; Spain), and sports performance recovery training (Spain).

The 2023 training quality survey shows that the content of the training was rated 4.8, the competence of the trainer was rated 4.9, the duration of the training was rated 4.7, the training tasks were rated 4.7, the timing of the training was rated 4.7, the format of the training was rated 4.9, and the usefulness of the training materials was rated 4.6. The majority of participants reported satisfaction with the training, its topics and quality.

In 2023, in addition to the formal foreign language courses, the Institute of Foreign Languages offered an innovation to its staff, the Language HUB, which is a weekly informal chat in a language other than one's own on topics of interest to academic and non-academic staff of the University.

The Institute of Innovative Studies organised 11 trainings for VMU teachers and 4 trainings for educators from other institutions in the framework of the "Digitally Competent Teacher Programme", and organised and participated in 20 events for higher education, professional and general education staff, their supervisors or teacher education experts from Lithuania. To improve digital competences, training was provided to 466 VMU teachers, 667 teachers from other organisations, 74 teachers from international partner institutions.

International networking and innovation through the sharing of experiences is promoted by VMU's participation in the "Trasform4Europe alliance". For the second year running, the Teaching Innovation Conference brings together teachers from all the Alliance's universities to share their experiences and develop innovative ideas together. The T4EU Innovative Teaching Award, organised in partnership with partners, helps to encourage teachers to develop innovative approaches and aims to identify and reward innovative teaching practices, exchange good practices and foster cooperation between European higher education institutions. The award aims to recognise exemplary practices in areas such as developing students' entrepreneurial skills, inclusive teaching and promoting internationalisation in the study process. The first award ceremony was held last year in Kaunas, Vytautas Magnus University, and this year it took place during the Innovative Teaching Methods Conference at the University of Trieste, Italy. One of the five teachers who won this year's Innovative Teaching Award was Evelina Bendoraitienė, associate professor at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU).

Mobility of teaching and non-teaching staff. In 2023, the number of Erasmus+ teaching visits to partner universities in the Programme countries (EU/EEA), during which VMU teachers went to lecture, increased by 21.66% compared to 2022 – from 157 visits in 2022 to 191 visits in 2023. In total, 389 Erasmus+ teaching visits took place in the last three years. There were 64 Erasmus+ teaching visits to non-EU/EEA universities, while 39 in 2022.

As many as 336 Erasmus+ learning visits to EU/EEA countries were carried out in 2023, an increase of 48.02% compared to 2022 and almost 4 times more than in 2021. This significant increase in numbers is due to the lifting of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, increased funding and increased visibility of the programme. In 2023, 49 VMU staff members went on Erasmus+ study visits to non-EU/EEA universities, and 23 in 2022. In 2023, the total number of Erasmus+ study visits by VMU staff was the highest at 385 (250 in 2022).

VMU academic units have the opportunity to invite employees (professionals) of foreign companies and organisations to teach. This type of visit involves sharing experiences and presenting students with practical applications of the theoretical knowledge they are gaining. In 2023, 32 employees of foreign companies and organisations came to VMU, in 2022 – 24. In 2023, employees from 15 countries visited VMU, in 2022 – from 11. In total, VMU received 651 foreign visitors in 2023 (conferences, presentations, Kavol Professorship, Erasmus+ learning and teaching visits, etc.)

In 2023, the International Relations Department of VMU organised "International Staff Week". The event was aimed at teachers and administrative staff from VMU partner universities abroad. During the "International Staff Week", visiting teachers gave lectures to VMU students, administrative staff participated in training sessions and shared their experience in the field of internationalisation of higher education. In 2023, 140 teachers and administrative staff from 43 countries participated in this week of events.

An ecosystem for personalities and talents to flourish

Academia cum laude activities. Academia cum laude aims to allow students to try out different academic and cultural combinations, aiming not at narrow specialisation but at the possibility of thinking more broadly and interdisciplinarily – interdisciplinary interactions are guaranteed by the combination of different academic disciplines. The Academia cum laude activity involves 30 curators (tutors) – internationally recognised VMU professors, scientists, researchers, artists, experts in their field, not only in Lithuania but also abroad.

Academia cum laude brings together highly motivated, broad-interested and advanced students. In 2023, 12 students had opted for individual studies. The small number of students allows Academia cum laude to remain a close-knit community that focuses on students' individual needs. The students' studies included IT and artificial intelligence, civil society, Soviet studies, human rights, sociolinguistics, cultural metaphorisation, and cultural management. In the summer of 2023, graduation certificates were awarded to the sixth class of Academia cum laude students.

The Academy continued its cooperation with partners in Lithuania and abroad, and open lectures and cultural events were attended by teachers of Lithuanian origin from Argentina and Indonesia and VMU researchers. In 2023, Academia cum laude continued its cooperation with school communities and gifted students. Members of the community gave lectures in a series of consultations for school leavers, collaborated in the implementation of the 11th VMU Kaunas History Competition. There were also ongoing activities in cooperation with the Lithuanian World University: a non-formal education programme for teachers of Lithuanian and Lithuanian language schools in Lithuania and around the world, “Challenges of Lithuanian Identity and Family Stories”.

VMU school network. VMU school network currently consists of 12 schools and gymnasiums. Throughout the year, intensive activities were carried out with each school: students from VMU network of schools studied together with students in both the spring and autumn semesters; they participated in preparatory courses for tenth-grade pupils and school leavers to prepare for the Basic Education Achievement Test and the maturity exams; VMU teachers lectured to VMU students throughout the school year; and they took part in VMU-organised events. More than 50 professional development events were held for teachers from VMU school network, and there was continuous development of foreign language competences and various project activities.

VMU together with VMU Rasa Gymnasium organised the State Gymnasium Conference “The World is Changing – People are Changing”, where 68 students from the network of VMU schools gave presentations. There was also an annual conference of representatives of VMU Schools Network, sharing best practices on challenges and opportunities in schools.

For the first time, VMU network school has been ranked among the winners of international competitions – Simas Tiškevičius, a student of VMU Ugnė Karvelis Gymnasium, won a silver medal at the International Geoscience Competition. VMU Ugnė Karvelis Gymnasium was also ranked among the country's top 60 gymnasiums in terms of pupils' chemistry results, coming 27th (93rd in 2022). VMU Rasa Gymnasium was ranked among the country's top 30 gymnasiums in terms of students' information technology scores, taking 37th place. In the overall ranking of gymnasiums, VMU Ugnė Karvelis Gymnasium moved up to 64th place (74th in 2022, 172nd in 2021).

From September 2024, VMU SMART IT classroom will open its doors for the first time in Kaunas Santaros Gymnasium, and cooperation with other schools is being expanded.

The Academy for Gifted Children. In 2023, a cooperation was agreed with the University of Haifa to train teachers on the needs of gifted children, from identification to individual programming. An agreement is reached with Menachem Nadler, Head of the Gifted Education Department at the Israeli Ministry of Education, on cooperation in advising on teacher training, identification systems for gifted and talented children, and curriculum development. Cooperation with Ariel University on the education of dual-ability children was launched. In the Israeli Parliament, opportunities for future cooperation are discussed with Simon Davidson MP.

The “Gifted” Centre works together with social partners: the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, the MO Museum and the art galleries.

Together with the team of Kaunas Simonas Daukantas Progymnasium, a pilot model of education for gifted children was developed for use in a mainstream school, the goals and structural model of the “E-Gifted” Centre were clarified, and the sharing of the experience of the Israeli partners continues.

In 2023, the Centre was attended by around 320 children, 26 different age groups, 40 teachers and a team of 8 psychologists.

“Gifted” in Tauragė will start on 8 January 2024, and consultations are underway with the municipalities of Kaišiadorys, Alytus, Druskininkai, Kėdainiai and Panevėžys. A National Curriculum for Teachers of Gifted Children is being developed.

Activities of the Entrepreneurship Academy. In 2023, 28 students chose the BA in Creative Business and Innovation Design. 16 students chose the Entrepreneurship Academy's complementary study programme. In the spring semester, the students were challenged by UAB “Hostinger” – What strategy would best position “Hostinger” as an attractive employer for Gen Z? VšĮ “Kauno Žalgirio krepšinio centras” – How to attract visitors to Kaunas “Žalgiris” LKL home games in order to maintain higher attendance in the long term?

5 social initiatives were implemented in the communities of the towns: “Naktis Obelynėje”, “Kino šaknys” in Ariogala, the Nesting Feast in Baitai, the Orienteering Competition in Raudondvaris, and the renovation of the Vilkija Gymnasium Pupils' Council office.

On 13 March, VMU hosted a meeting with Jonas Ohman, the founder of “Blue/Yellow”, to discuss the importance of youth activism in public life.

On 27 April, a conference, “Entrepreneurship is not Equal to Business” was organised in the framework of the project “Developing Active Citizenship among Youth in Lithuanian Regions”. The students and their teachers were greeted at the event by several famous Lithuanian people – Rimantas Kaukėnas, the founder of the foundation bearing his name, Milda Mitkutė, co-founder of the start-up “Vinted”, and Vaidotas Valiukevičius and the leader of the band “The Roop”.

On 27 September, the final event of the project "Developing Active Citizenship among the Youth of Lithuanian Regions" took place, where Ieva Krivickaitė, a social activist, founder of the kindness foundation "Ne apie mane" and Indrė Stonkuvienė, a TV presenter, author of various social initiatives, founder of the advertising agency "IS agency", shared their experiences, good deeds for the society, and changes.

In the autumn semester, the challenge was presented by "Jorus": How can the popularity of the CBD cosmetics category be increased in order to increase the sales of products in this category? How to promote hemp seed proteins to increase sales of these products?

Visits to gymnasiums in Lithuania, workshops for pupils and training for professionals working with young people.

Arts, sports and other activities for students and pupils

Activities for pupils. In cooperation with the Marketing and Communication Department, the Career Centre delivered more than 50 training sessions (one-to-one consultations, face-to-face and virtual seminars) to students. Training on how to know yourself in order to make the right career choice and plan your career, time management, public speaking, etc., as well as 37 one-to-one counselling sessions at the 2023 Litexpo Study Fair in Vilnius "Career & Studies'23".

The University has a number of active projects to introduce pupils to the University, to help them prepare for exams and to help them decide on their future careers and studies. For several years now, pupils were invited to the following events: *"Matuokis profesiją", VMU Study Fest, the Summer Camp, the Pupils' University*, and excursions on 18 different themes, etc. In 2023, 224 pupils took part in VMU Students' University, more than 900 pupils attended classes at VMU, more than 3,000 pupils attended preparatory courses, and 100 students participated in a summer school. Pupils are actively communicated with via newsletters, a closed FB group and social networks.

In 2023, VMU initiated an opportunity for pupils in grades 9–12 to broaden their knowledge and skills outside of school by choosing a socio-political hours programme. The programme allows students to participate in various activities that help develop social skills, promote civic awareness and encourage involvement in community work. Pupils who wish to gain social hours have the opportunity to participate and contribute to the organisation of events at VMU Sports Centre, to the maintenance of the Botanical Garden environment, to the activities organised by the various VMU faculties, and to the maintenance of order in the Library.

The "Smart Student Academy" of the Agriculture Academy brought together over 700 students from 16 educational institutions across the country. From 2023 to 2024, the project expanded by integrating experimental engineering, science, entrepreneurship and ecology classes in the districts with local businesses and municipalities, involving 784 pupils from 27 educational institutions nationwide. The Education Academy invited pupils in grades 7–12 to attend the conference "Learning Together: from Antiquity to Artificial Intelligence". The Faculty of Catholic Theology, together with the Federation of Atheists, organised the national academic essay competition "Religion and Science: interconnections and intersections" for pupils in grades 10–12. A conference, "Entrepreneurship Is not Equal to Business" was held at the Faculty of Economics and Management. The organisers of the project "Active Citizenship of Youth in Lithuanian Regions", MINDED VMU and Public Institution "Psychological Support and Counselling Centre", continued the cycle of events, and this time the event was implemented in cooperation with Kaunas Veršvų gymnasium.

Artistic activities for students. 2023 m. In the spring semester, the Arts Centre had 10 artistic groups, and in the autumn semester, after the integration of VMU Solo Latino Dance Group into the Recreational Dance Studio, the Arts Centre has 9 artistic groups: Academic mixed choir "Vivere Cantus", folklore ensemble "Linago", folk dance ensemble "Žilvitis", song and dance ensemble "Šviesa" of the Education Academy, folk music band "Ūkininkas" of VMU Agriculture Academy, mixed choir "Daina", folk dance collective "Sėja", theatre "Jovaras" and VMU Ballroom Dance Studio.

Students, alumni or staff registered for the Arts Centre's groups using the online registration system. The most popular groups of VMU Arts Centre in 2023 in terms of the number of members were the academic mixed choir "Vivere Cantus" (55 members) and the Recreational Dance Studio (47 members), the least popular was the folklore ensemble "Linago" (6 members).

For the third year in a row the exhibition "On the Road" of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) Education Academy alumni of art pedagogy is attended by nine authors Agnė Čepulytė, Aida Vėžalienė, Aurelija Gavėnavičė, Diana Zviedrienė, Evelina Lazdane-Jarukaitė, Jolanta Kanapickaitė, Laura Mickutė, Lina Magdalena Bujė, and Virginija Aliukonė.

2023 was one of the most successful years for VMU Academic Choir "Vivere Cantus", which is in its eighth year of existence. This year, the choir demonstrated its improved musical level in Lithuania and secured its place in the international choral music scene of the World – it took part in the prestigious International Choir Competition in Tolosa (Spain).

VMU folk dance ensemble "Žilvitis", bringing together dancers and musicians, has added one more country to its geographical portfolio. The ensemble, which has toured throughout Europe, the USA, China, India and Canada, made its first visit to distant Japan at the end of October. In the Land of the Rising Sun, the performers not only

presented Lithuanian culture, but also got acquainted with unique Japanese dances and songs.

Sports activities. In 2023, the infrastructure of the President Valdas Adamkus Sports Centre was enriched by the addition of a 3X3 indoor basketball hall, an excellent beach volleyball court, which meets all the requirements for international competitions, a baseball field built in cooperation with the Lithuanian Baseball Federation, and the renovation of the small football field. The President Valdas Adamkus Oak Grove was completed and opened on 10 October 2023.

In 2023, 15 different leisure sports activities (sports) were practised: volleyball, athletics, badminton, basketball, football, physical training, functional training, chess, intensive Zumba, Pilates, sports yoga, strength and conditioning, e-sports, athletic training and running. Student enrolment in sports activities and training was 36% higher than in 2022. The total number of registrations for sport and physical activity activities in both semesters in 2023 was 1,440. The most popular physical activity in 2022 remained Physical Training (coaches: Dr. A. Mockienė, D. Žalga, R. Ramanauskas, A. Stuknys), while the least popular activity among students was e-sports (Dr. E. Abromavičius).

Achievements of VMU sports representatives. (VMU) rowing team took part in the European University Rowing Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland, and won two medals. Raminta Morkūnaitė, a fourth-year student of VMU Education Academy, competed in the **Women's single-handed dinghy class (W1x)** and won the silver medal. **In the Men's Paired Quadruple Boat Class (M4x)**, in which 8 crews took part, the winners after a fierce struggle, were the athletes of VMU: second-year student of VMU Education Academy, Benas Paunksnis, a third-year student of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Rokas Jakubauskas, fourth-year student of VMU Education Academy, Virgilijus Prushinskas, and first-year student of the Education Academy Domantas Riauba. With an impressive performance (2:54.82), VMU athletes won gold medals after overtaking their competitors and leaving them behind.

The 31st World University Games in Chengdu, China, brought together nearly 6,500 athletes from 113 countries, including 36 athletes from rowing, swimming, judo, fencing, athletics, and the Lithuanian student basketball team. The honour of our country and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) was defended by 12 athletes who returned to Lithuania with 6 medals won in rowing and swimming competitions.

Student Kotryna Teterevkova won two gold medals at the World University Games in China: she was undefeated in the 100m and 200m breaststroke and fulfilled the Olympic qualification for the 2024 Paris Olympics. K. Teterevkova also set a new Lithuanian record.

Representatives of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) brought silver medals to Lithuania at the European University Basketball Championships in Portugal, which was attended by more than 400 participants representing 20 universities from 12 countries.

The European University 3x3 Basketball Championship was held in Debrecen, Hungary, where the gold medal was won by the trio of Vytautas Magnus University students.

The European University Beach Volleyball Championships, where Lithuanians won both the men's and women's competitions. In the men's competition, Vytautas Magnus University representatives – Patrikas Stankevičius and Audrius Knašas won gold medals.

VMU students were among the best Lithuanian student athletes in 2023 and were awarded at the annual awards event, which recognises all the people who make Lithuania famous.

Vytautas Magnus University's triples team won the gold medal for the first time at the FISU World University 3x3 Basketball Championships in Doha, Qatar. Augustinas Mikštas, Gabrielius Čelka, Eimantas Žilius and Nojus Lebskas of VMU team defended the name of Lithuania and the University and took a place on the champions' podium.

Leadership in teacher training

Key changes in teacher training. The quality of education science was given the highest rating of 4.5 out of 5 in an international comparative evaluation by foreign experts. This is the highest award for education in Lithuania. Two "Horizon 2020" projects were won: "CLiViE" and "Skill Partnerships for Sustainable and just Migration Patterns". The latter is coordinated by VMU Education Academy.

Three national EU Structural Funds projects were launched with VMU as a partner: the project "Continue: Come, Improve, Contribute!", "Digital Transformations in Education ("EdTech") and "Enhancing the Competences of Teachers in National Professional Development Programmes and Second Cycle Studies". As part of these projects, Lithuanian educators are taking part in retraining studies, and more than 100 current and future heads of educational institutions are enrolled in the second cycle programme in Educational Management.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania approved two national professional development programmes VMU Education Academy developed: the "Implementation of the Life Skills Curriculum in Primary Education" and the "Inclusive Education through Approach to Universal Design Education".

Admission to studies in education. In 2023, the Education Academy admitted 339 first cycle students. Compared to the 2022 intake, the number of students enrolled in VMU's Pedagogy programme in 2023 is 58 (281 in 2022). The number of students receiving state-funded places this year is 52 more than last year (170 in 2022). There are 8 more students enrolled in non-state-funded studies (109 in 2022).

The Pedagogy study programme was ranked 6th among the study programmes with the highest number of applicants (140 signed contracts) in Lithuania in 2023.

Admission to further training and retraining activities. In 2023, 4088 participants took part in retraining studies. The most popular modules for retraining are the primary education, pre-school education, and educational assistance (speech therapy, special education) modules. Most of the retraining studies were financed by EU Structural Funds projects, in which VMU Education Academy participates as a partner.

The most popular retraining or professional development studies carried out in 2023 were: the Programme for Heads of Educational Institutions, Educational Managers (465 participants), the Programme for School Teams (2,298 participants), the Programme for Primary School Teachers (260 participants), the Programme for Pre-school Teams (389 participants), the Programme for Educational Support Professionals (386 participants), among others.

When analysed by districts, the following participants took part in professional development activities: from Vilnius city – 2029 participants, Vilnius district – 222 participants, Kaunas city – 1302 participants, Kaunas district – 196 participants, Klaipėda city – 118 participants, Klaipėda district – 118 participants, Klaipėda city – 118 participants, Klaipėda district – 118 participants. – 43 participants, Druskininkai – 42 participants, Alytus – 8 participants, Šiauliai – 24 participants, Šilutė – 20 participants, Elektrėnai – 9 participants, Kaišiadorys – 34 participants, Šalčininkai – 41 participants, and from other municipalities – 50 participants.

Further development of activities:

The significant results achieved in 2023 oblige us not only to maintain them next year but also to strive for even more ambitious projects and to mobilise the community to achieve the goals we have set ourselves while eliminating as much as possible the potential disruptions to their implementation. The following follow-up activities are planned:

- Effective marketing activities to maintain stable student numbers and minimise the predicted decline in enrolments.
- Increasing the share of innovation in the study process by creating a system to motivate teachers to innovate.
- Developing a model to encourage early involvement of students in research and artistic activities by increasing access to research/artistic activities and developing a system of financial incentives.
- Enhancing student support to improve students' social and emotional well-being, leading to better academic performance.
- Improving the model for promoting student mobility in order to increase the international mobility of the University's students and to enable all departments to participate.
- Strengthening the Teacher Training Centre by increasing internationalisation and developing joint study programmes.
- Improving processes for the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal learning by digitising them, using innovative assessment methods, with a view to increasing participation and value for labour market stakeholders.
- Developing the visibility of lifelong learning activities to the general public, through enhanced cooperation with business partners.
- Improving the quality assurance system by empowering all members of the University community to take responsibility for developing a quality culture.
- Developing interdisciplinary joint study programmes with universities in the Transform4Europe Alliance and accredit them using the European Quality Model.
- Developing study innovations and create innovative, engaging and highly digitalised study modules for students and trainees of the "Transform4Europe" Alliance that respond to European challenges.
- Developing Academic Kaunas activities to increase university involvement and implementation of ideas.
- Strengthen the network of VMU schools by playing an active role in developing the quality level of school education and increasing students' readiness for university studies.
- Providing opportunities for students to achieve excellence in sport, arts, science and studies at national and international levels.

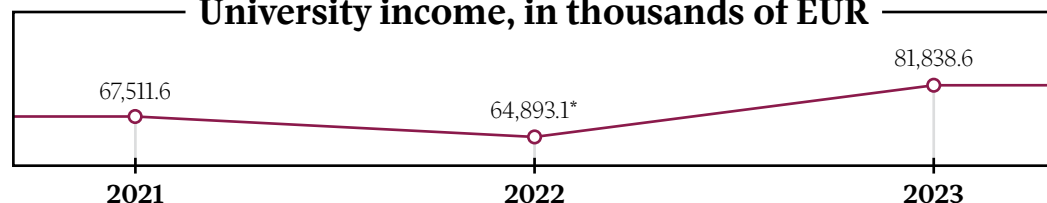


Integrity of self-governance and responsibility

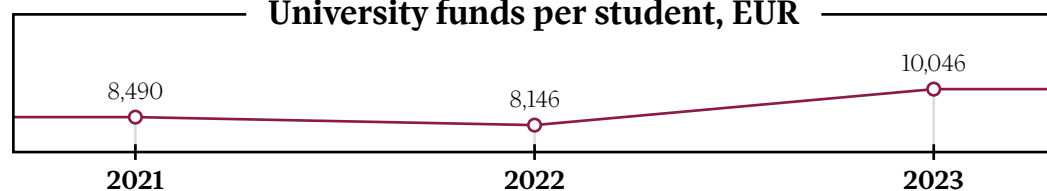


Library's Collection	1,766,262
Number of printed and electronic documents acquired	795,677
Number of printed documents acquired	7,775
Number of electronic documents acquired	787,902
Number of publications published	105
Number of databases subscribed	63
One student downloaded and read (documents)	238
Number of printed documents issued per student	5
University Library	7
Total area of the University premises per student	19.24

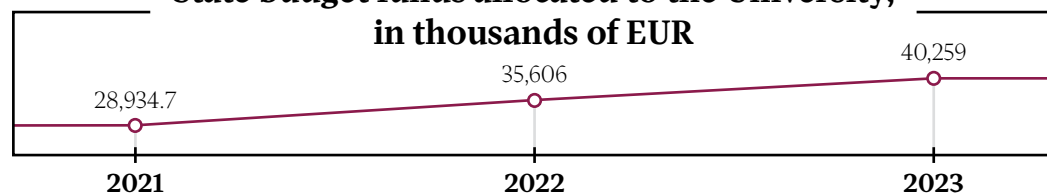
University income, in thousands of EUR



University funds per student, EUR



State budget funds allocated to the University, in thousands of EUR



Stakeholders of VMU and the value of their contributions (in thousands of EUR)

The State of the Republic of Lithuania (the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania is the institution exercising the stakeholder's property and non-property rights and obligations)

Contribution value	31 12 2022	24,277.9
	31 12 2023	24,277.9

Average salary of the University staff in EUR

	2021	2022	2023
Academic staff	2,100	2,353	2,610
Other employees	1,087	1,217	1,358
Total of all employees	1,623	1,828	2,039

Integrity of self-governance and responsibility

In the evaluation of VMU organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, the experts noted that the merger of VMU with the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and Aleksandras Stulginskis University resulted in the establishment of efficient management processes. Stakeholders, including students, graduates, social partners, and other representatives of the sector, are actively involved in the governance process. This includes operational and strategic issues, membership of the Council and other University committees, thus fostering a sense of participation and trust. Digital governance is being developed through the DMS system, with a particular focus on cybercrime issues.

VMU plans and allocates its financial resources efficiently, taking into account the financial implications of the merger of the Universities (2019), and continues to upgrade and renovate its physical infrastructure.

The learning resources at VMU are appropriate for the study programmes offered by the University. They are used efficiently, and there is a clear system of planned renovation and repairs of all the facilities to meet the needs of different students. The University is committed to continuously investing in and upgrading its infrastructure, as evidenced by the development of state-of-the-art facilities, such as a sports centre that encourages student participation and commitment. The University resources provide opportunities for researchers, teachers, and students to carry out in-depth research in their chosen fields of study (Institutional Review Report of Vytautas Magnus University, SKVC).

Creation of a balanced structure of study and research units

Changes in the structure of the University. In 2023, one of the objectives of strengthening the governance structure of the University was to strengthen the activities of the research institutes. The development of the activities of the research institutes as units is focused on intensifying the relevant research development areas. To achieve these goals, research institutes expanded the number of researcher positions, launched R&D projects, and prepared new project applications. Synergies were achieved through the generation of interdisciplinary research ideas.

Much attention was paid to VMU STEAM Didactics Centre, whose mission is to mobilise the potential of researchers and practitioners to ensure the advancement of STEAM education in Lithuania. The STEAM Didactics Centre aims to develop innovative models for the organisation of the content and process of STEAM education as well as for the qualitative assessment of educational progress, and to improve the special and didactic competences of teachers and students of STEAM subjects. In 2023, Assoc. Prof. Judita Žukauskienė was appointed Director of the STEAM Didactics Centre.

Ensuring the effective use of infrastructure

Development of resources for learning, studies, and research. VMU Library sought to ensure maximum provision of information for learning and studies and a supply of information resources meeting the academic needs of the University, to strengthen the academic community's information and scientific communication competences, to develop, create, and improve a modern and high-quality library infrastructure and to implement Open Science initiatives at the University.

To ensure the best possible conditions for the achievement of study outcomes, by improving the infrastructure and physical resources needed for studies, in 2022, the Library implemented Strategic Objective 3.1.1 by introducing the next-generation cloud-based library services platform (LSP) Alma (ExLibris). In 2023, the platform continued its operation and new processes were implemented: subscription procedures for periodicals and licensed databases, mass-marketing of publications, bibliographic records and collections information on demand, almost 39,000 items were downloaded from the Alma community area to VMU Virtual Library. The Library also imported almost 3,000 records from the WorldCat Medici.tv database and more than 120,000 VMU CRIS records, integrated 45 open access databases into the search, and continuously transferred (harvested) the data of VMU Alma catalogue to the Lithuanian Academic eLibrary (eLABa), etc. To better disseminate the libraries donated by the most important patrons of the Library, 18 named collections were created.

The total collection of the Library in 2023 consisted of more than 1.7 million documents: almost 1 million printed documents and more than 787,000 electronic documents, similar to the previous year. The number of subscribed databases was 63 (58 in 2022). Over 100,000 more electronic documents were acquired in 2023 than in 2022. The trends in the formation of the collection of the Library remained the same: the number of acquisitions of printed publications had been declining year by year and in the reporting year, represented 0.98% of the total number of acquisitions in that year. The most up-to-date, relevant, and quickly accessible information can be found in electronic resources, which is why their use is constantly growing. In the reporting year, 3.9 million (3.2 million in 2022) electronic information resources were viewed and downloaded.

In addition to research and study resources, users actively searched for and read information on the Library's website

and on other websites developed by the Library on how to use them. Reading this information falls under the category of virtual Library visits. Over 1 million (over 908,000 in 2022) virtual visits were recorded in 2023. This growth reflects the demand for and usefulness of the information provided on the websites of the Library. The users were mainly interested in information about VMU CRIS, information resources in licensed databases, archiving of final theses and dissertations, citation styles and bibliographic references, and watched the video-trainings prepared by the Library about information resources and Library services. The number of virtual visits increased by 11.2%.

In the reporting year, the number of users visiting the seven user service units of the Library increased by 17.7% compared to 2022. The proportion of the open access collection increased by almost 2%, making it easier for users to find the information resources they need quickly and easily themselves.

In 2023, a total of 566 (636 in 2022) workstations were available to users in the Library, of which 132 were computerised (201 in 2022), 280 were designed to connect personal computers; 72 (87 in 2022) workstations were available in 17 individual and group workspaces. A total of 17 specialised workstations designed for visitors with disabilities were available in all units. During the reporting year, the number of positions was reduced due to the closure of the Educational Library of the Agriculture Academy in order to efficiently consolidate the dispersed literature and infrastructure of the Agriculture Academy into the Central Library of the Agriculture Academy. Neither the reduction in the number of workstations nor the reduction in the number of desktop computers had a negative impact on users, as there were enough workstations and the majority of users mostly worked on PCs.

In addition to organising and maintaining access to print and electronic information resources, the Library ensured that members of the community were able to identify, locate, evaluate, select, and use relevant information from a wide range of sources in an ethical and responsible manner. Regular consultations and trainings on information literacy by the Library staff were of great importance for the users to work with the Library resources. In 2023, 106 (60 in 2022) training sessions were held for the academic community of the University, presenting the possibilities of searching for information resources, finding ways and conditions for the management and ethical use of information. The Library provided 139 (72 in 2022) academic hours of trainings: 60 (38 in 2022) academic hours of face-to-face and 46 (22 in 2022) academic hours of online training sessions. A total of 1,767 (1,067 in 2022) participants participated in the trainings. In 2023, the number of trainings increased by over 76%, the number of academic hours allocated to trainings increased by 48%, and the number of participants increased by 40%.

To better reveal the book collections of the Library, a virtual exhibition “The Book Collections of the Library of the Re-established Vytautas Magnus University (1990–2022)” was organised to mark the centenary of the Library of the University of Lithuania. The exhibition featured the largest book collections of the Reconstructed VMU Library, over a thousand publications, and their owners.

Building and improving infrastructure. The total area of real estate owned by Vytautas Magnus University as of 31 December 2023 was **187,688.95 m²**. The total area of the premises of the University per student was **19.24 m²**.

The area of the premises leased under long-term lease contracts as of 31 December 2023 was 5,296 m², and the leased area of the engineering structures was 2,324 m². A total of 17 new long-term leases were concluded in 2023. The number of long-term lease contracts in force on 31 December 2023 was 72. In 2023, income from long-term leases amounted to EUR 262,360. In 2023, the income from organising events amounted to EUR 177,093, which is about 75% more than in 2022. The number of Loan for Use Contracts in force on 31 December 2023 was 5. Area of premises transferred under Loan for Use was 4,696 m².

To optimise the costs of the University and reduce the use of fossil fuels, the building at Universiteto g. 8A, Akademija, Kauno r. was switched from gas heating to district heating. In 2023, the continuation of the savings started in 2022 in accordance with the approved plan resulted in a reduction of thermal energy consumption by more than 14% compared to 2021.

In 2023, the Asset Management Tool was designed and programmed, and completion of the work is underway. The system is ready for use in 2024. The Asset Management System will allow quick and multidimensional analysis of information related to asset management, utility costs, timely decision-making to optimise assets, savings in utility costs, easier reporting to the authorities, and easier asset management for asset managers.

To help Ukrainian citizens who fled the country as a result of the hostilities, 270 war refugees from Ukraine were temporarily accommodated in the dormitories of the University and in a holiday resort in Palanga in 2023.

Every year, UI GreenMetric, an organisation that ranks universities internationally on sustainability performance, publishes rankings of the universities around the world based on a range of sustainability indicators. In 2023, 1,183 universities around the world were ranked according to their contribution and impact in areas such as research and studies, infrastructure, energy, climate change, waste sorting, use of water and transport. Vytautas Magnus University participated in the 2023 ranking and was ranked **445th** among the most sustainable universities.

To ensure a supportive environment for studies, research and artistic activities, maintenance work on the existing infrastructure was carried out in 2023, and a **new attractive and modern infrastructure of the University was created:**

Within the framework of the project “Relocation of the Faculties of Natural Sciences and Informatics, Integration of the Faculties of Economics and Management: Renovation of the Research and Study Infrastructure”, the indoor infrastructure of the building was adapted to the research and study activities by renovating the area of 2,730 m² of the premises in the building located at Universiteto g. 10, Akademija, Kaunas r. More than EUR 2.6 million was spent

on research equipment: laboratory equipment (scales, refrigerators, freezers, centrifuges, autoclaves, laminators, microscopes, a chromatography system, a 3D printing system, a CO₂ extractor, and other laboratory equipment); furniture (tables, chairs, cabinets, cabinets for chemical and hazardous materials, fume cupboards, laboratory tables, laboratory cabinets, and other furniture); and computers.

The renovated premises house the following laboratories of the Faculty of Informatics: the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory; the Internet of Things Laboratory; the Computer Networks Laboratory; the Robotics Laboratory; the Augmented Reality Laboratory; the Multimedia Laboratory; the Audio-Visual Technologies Laboratory; the Photography Studio; and the 3D Modelling Laboratory.

The Modern Didactics Centre (in the third phase of construction of the multifunctional centre for studies and research at V. Putvinskio g. 23, Kaunas (560 m²)) houses the Eye Tracking Laboratory, the Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Laboratory, the Inclusive Education Laboratory of the Educational Support Resource Centre, the Multisensory Room, and the Biofeedback Laboratory. The three equipped rooms can accommodate more than 100 students.

After the implementation of the project “Modernisation of Agroinnovation Research Base”, the renovated Building 4 of the Agriculture Academy at Studentų g. 9, Akademija, Kaunas r. (2,400 m²) now houses the Laboratory of Pasteurization of Plant Raw Materials, the Laboratory of Bio-fermentation of Secondary Food Materials, the Laboratory of Biodiversity Resources, the Laboratory of Game Management, and the Laboratory of Molecular Ecology and Genomics. More than one million euros were spent on research equipment, such as a genetic analyser, a fluorescence measuring device, an industrial fermenter, a drone with filming capability, a decanter, etc. The renovated premises were equipped with showcases for bird exhibitions and a bison exposition.

The construction of the parking lot for visitors of the Botanical Garden at Vilties g. 6, Kaunas was completed (a new parking lot of 4,730 m² with 98 parking spaces).

The reconstruction works in the Greenhouse of the Botanical Garden at Ž. E. Žilibero g. 9, Kaunas were completed – an extension was built (a part of the Greenhouse with a total area of 225 m² was reconstructed).

In the Botanical Garden area, the asphalt paths (515 m²) were renewed; an automatic gate was installed at the entrance to the Botanical Garden, the path was widened, and a section of the fence leading from the gate all the way to the pond was relocated; a 10-kV transformer substation was built, and a 0.4-kV switchgear for the supply of electricity for various events was built with a capacity of up to 200 kW; the facade of the Greenhouse of the Botanical Garden, located at Ž. Žilibero g. 9, Kaunas, was renovated, and the Greenhouse was repaired and adapted for the exhibition of butterflies; and the interior of the educational centre for gifted children “Gifted” in the building of the Botanical Garden at Ž. Žilibero g. 2, Kaunas was renovated.

The development of the sports complex (Studentų g. 9A, Akademija, Kauno r.), the construction of a sports hall (730 m²), the equipping of four beach volleyball courts, the adaptation of the baseball field and the general infrastructure for the needs of the community were completed.

A part of the dormitory at Universiteto g. 6, Akademija, Kauno r. was renewed, repairing 35 rooms, renovating furniture and household appliances, which will improve the quality of life of 70 students.

The adapted and renovated premises (300 m²) in the building at Universiteto g. 10, Akademija, Kaunas r., house the workplaces of the Faculty of Bioeconomy Development.

The newly adapted premises at Studentų g. 15A, Akademija, Kauno district, equipped with fume cupboards, reagent storage cabinets, and washing stations, house the staff of the Department of Plant and Biological Food Sciences.

The heating method of the building at Universiteto g. 8A, Akademija, Kaunas r., was changed from gas heating to central heating.

On the campus of the Academy, asphalt pitches and driving paths were resurfaced (1,071 m²); the fence of the existing secured parking lot was renewed (fence length 172.5 m), and LED lighting was installed.

In the educational centre for gifted children “Gifted” of the Education Academy at T. Ševčenkos g. 31, Vilnius, the third-floor corridor and part of the premises were renovated by installing an innovative lighting system; the common sanitary facilities on the first floor were also renovated.

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, at Jonavos g. 66, Kaunas, part of the lecture rooms was renovated, a meeting room with a kitchenette was set up, the students' leisure space was expanded, and a rest area was created.

The walls of the corridors and rooms at the Faculty of Arts, at Muitinės g. 7, Kaunas, were also renovated.

The newly equipped premises at K. Donelaičio g. 52, Kaunas, became the seat of the Student Representative Council of the University.

In Česlovas Milošas's homestead (Šeteniai, Vilainiai municipality, Kėdainiai district), the facade was renovated (215 m²), and walking and driving paths were newly built (203 m²).

Inefficient and energy-intensive lighting systems are being phased out in all of the buildings of the University, with around 2,250 LED bulbs and 3,570 LED luminaires being replaced.

Maintenance works (restoration, conservation, repair) of the building of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Lithuania at K. Donelaičio g. 58, Kaunas (750 m²) are underway.

Simple repair work is being carried out in the building intended for research purposes at S. Daukantas g. 28, Kaunas (the

area of premises under repair is 2,200 m²).

Simple repairs are underway in an administrative building at S. Daukanto g. 27, Kaunas (total area 700 m²).

A project for the interior management (conservation, restoration, repair, and elimination of the risk of accidents) of the Aukštoji Freda Manor House, located at Žilibero g. 6, Kaunas, (1,060 m²) was prepared.

Projects for the renovation of student dormitories at Vytauto pr. 71, Kaunas (total area 6,000 m²) and Studentų g. 7, Akademija, Kaunas r. (total area 3,500 m²) were started; a project for the renovation of the facades of the building at Gimnazijos g. 7, Kaunas, was initiated.

Activities of the Information Technology Centre. The main IT objectives for 2023 were the modernisation of the workstations at the University and increasing of the digitisation of documents.

Learning Academy. New training modules of VMU trainer courses and EDIHLT were created in the system. Both modules provide the possibility to view up-to-date information about courses, register for courses, and make payments for courses directly in the system.

Integration of the Asset Management System with VMU information systems. When a building or room is created, edited, or deleted in the Asset Management System, all the relevant data is transferred to VMU systems and is subsequently used for room reservation, scheduling, and dormitory access control.

Teacher Portal subsystem. A subsystem was developed in the Teacher Portal to display basic information on the study courses taught by a given teacher, the number of students attending those courses, the formulae used to calculate the workload hours and the resulting full-time equivalent.

Competing licences for ArcGIS, SPSS, Adobe Creative Cloud were introduced in the computer classrooms, allowing more flexible use of the applications and collaborative management of licensing.

The IT maintenance team and administrators are responsible for the maintenance, administration, upgrading and installation of new hardware and software. This year, the focus was on providing online and hybrid working tools for a smooth study process, assisting teachers and other staff members with IT tools, upgrading workstations and expanding IT infrastructure to meet the demand for resources, and to ensure the smooth operation of the network and services. In 2023, special attention was paid to the modernisation of the workstations in the buildings on Akademija campus.

In the building located at Universiteto g. 10, eleven classrooms were newly equipped, of which nine classrooms were equipped for hybrid learning, four computer classrooms with 66 workstations were newly equipped with HP and DELL AIO, and four computer classrooms were modernised with 67 computers. Computers for all newly relocated staff were changed to AIO type computers.

In the building at Muitinės g. 7, seven classrooms were modernised with smart boards and adapted for hybrid learning. Computer hardware was upgraded in two computer classrooms with 19 Apple Mac Studio M1 Ultra computers and 19 Dell Alienware Aurora R15 high-performance computers. Computers for all the employees of the building were also upgraded to DELL AIO.

In the building at T. Ševčenkos g. 31, Vilnius, eight classrooms were modernised and adapted for online learning, installing new projectors, smart boards and cameras with automatic human tracking. The assembly hall was modernised with new lighting and sound systems.

A total of 207 workstations were upgraded at the University with new computers, and more than 80 workstations were upgraded by changing the components of the existing computers. The upgrading of older computers is aimed at ensuring efficient computer performance, saving the environment and other resources of the University.

Development of network infrastructure, maintenance of IT systems. The development of the Eduroam wireless network in the University-managed infrastructure is being carried out in a systematic manner. In total 147 additional wireless network access points were installed in the buildings and dormitories of the University. The wireless network is also being upgraded, replacing old wireless network equipment with a new one, which significantly improves Eduroam's speed to 500Mbps.

The network entry equipment was upgraded. A total of four new switching nodes with switching equipment and optical lines were installed or upgraded. The number of monitored network devices (servers, network routers) is also increasing year by year, helping to react more quickly to network or service disruptions, and to more accurately localise the area and nature of the problem.

The administrators of the IT centre ensured consistent updating and maintenance of the "Zabbix", "Cacti", "Munin" and "Aruba Airwave" software used to monitor network equipment and servers. The number of monitored devices was increased, allowing faster response to incidents on the computer network.

To increase the reliability of the computer network, five uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) were installed at critical switching nodes.

Maintenance of IT systems and improvement of security levels. Access to external websites that may have been distributing illegal copyrighted content was restricted. The University users who may have used such services were warned and informed of the possible consequences of using this type of websites. Access to websites that may have sent fraudulent emails was also restricted.

Efforts are being made to reduce the number of insecure University websites that do not have SSL certificates. There are currently 118 SSL certificates in use (104 Single-domain and 14 Wildcard SSL certificates). As the number of SCAM, phishing, and malicious emails sent to the University community has increased, it is important to increase staff knowledge in the field of cyber security and to build resilience to cyber threats. Information alerts informing about scam or phishing attacks were sent, with copies of the scam emails and IT security advice on how to deal with these types of emails.

VMU email system also automatically filters unsolicited (SPAM) emails and blocks malicious emails. This security measure prevented an average of 4,200 SPAM emails and around 1,300 phishing emails from reaching the email inboxes of University employees every month. During the festive period in December there was a spike in phishing attacks, and more than 8,000 fraudulent emails of this type were blocked.

VMU technical support system *itpagalba.vdu.lt* was updated and redesigned. The system was moved to a newly developed and more secure stand-alone virtual server, redesigning its graphical interface, creating new documentation, preserving the previous order data, and redesigning the automated task mechanism.

The virtual learning environment Moodle was developed and made ready for the Transform4Europe project. The system was integrated with seven other European universities using the federated eduGAIN identity module.

Virtual servers were created and made operational for these systems: for Mobility-Online with SOP, and for VMU Asset Management System *turtas.vdu.lt*.

With the help of the international company Darktrace, traffic generated by computing devices accessible through VMU computer network was inspected to detect potential vulnerabilities. Based on the results, the security gaps that had been left were corrected.

There was a successful transition to the new Microsoft 365 licensing and renewed licence.

In collaboration with VMU Faculty of Informatics, an environment and a new website *eduroam.vdu.lt* was developed to inform VMU staff and students how to connect to the eduroam wireless network in the University buildings. New, simpler instructions that include not only text but also videos and new illustrations were created.

In collaboration with VMU Faculty of Informatics, a new website *eosc.lt* was developed for the international project “European Open Science Cloud” to introduce the opportunities offered by the project.

Environments for the following systems were developed on VMU servers: Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute (*ki.vdu.lt*), VMU Study Department (*studijuplanavimas.vdu.lt*), the Research Institute of Natural and Technological Sciences (*gtmti.vdu.lt*), VMU Marketing Service (*stendas.vdu.lt*, *zaidimas.vdu.lt*), and the Department of Psychology (*orgpsylab.vdu.lt*).

The Matlab licence server and the Matlab software were updated in the computer rooms.

The power supply to the central server room of the University was redesigned to ensure a more secure power supply to the servers in the event of a power failure.

The main VMU servers were switched to time synchronisation from the dedicated time (NTP) server at VMU.

Web servers were reconfigured and periodically updated to strengthen their resilience to potential hacks and cyber-attacks.

Management of financial resources

To ensure the strategic objective to train specialists of the highest qualification for the Lithuanian economy, science, culture and education, and to improve the quality of its activities and the efficiency of its management, the University fosters values that support its strategic provisions.

The performance of the University in 2023 is reflected in its funding and other income, its structure and its annual outcomes. In 2023, the funding and revenue of the University amounted to EUR 81,838,600; compared to 2022, the amount increased by EUR 16,945,300 (26.1%).

The structure of the revenue of the University:

- **State budget appropriations and investments:** 4EUR 40,259,000; compared to 2022, the amount increased by EUR 4,653,000 (13.1%). In 2023, state budget appropriations amounted to 49.2% of the total revenue of the University.

An additional amount of EUR 2,929,000 was allocated to the University in 2023, compared to 2022, for salary increases for teachers, researchers and non-academic staff; EUR 1,632,600 were allocated for research, administration, and property maintenance; funding for scholarships and studies decreased by EUR 732,600. In 2023, no funds were allocated for the merger of the Universities and for investments. In 2023, the additional funding received by the University: EUR 2,117,800 were allocated for the cost of tuition fees for students enrolled in state-funded study places and for costs related to the improvement of quality of research and studies; EUR 107,400 were used to compensate for temporary accommodation of foreigners who had fled Ukraine; EUR 50,700 were allocated for the improvement of teachers' English language; EUR 93,000 were allocated for the improvement of the quality of artistic activities. Due to students changing their study programme and moving to other universities, funding was reduced by EUR 8,900.

The increase in the state budget appropriations was due to improved research performance, systematic work on the promotion of study programmes, and increased state funding for higher education.

- **targeted funds** – EUR 29,135,800; compared to 2022, the amount increased by EUR 10,253,000 (54.3%). Targeted funds in 2023 accounted for 35.6% of the total revenue of the University. Of this amount, the University received EUR 22,501,900 from the European Union funds and other international support funds, which made 27.5% of the total revenue of the University; the state budget targeted funds for various projects amounted to EUR 6,160,800, which accounted for 7.5% of the total revenue of the University and, in comparison with 2022, increased by EUR 1,448,700; EUR 258,000 were received from natural and legal persons, which was a decrease of EUR 112,600 in comparison with 2022; and the University received EUR 215,100 from other, municipal budget targeted funds, i.e., EUR 115,600 less than in 2022.

The targeted funds received by the University in 2023 from the targeted funds of the state budget for the implementation of various research projects increased compared to 2022, but the overall increase in targeted funds by 54.3% (compared to 2022) was due to the increase in funding from the European Union funds by EUR 9,032,500.

- **own funds** – EUR 12,443,800; compared to 2022, increased by EUR 2,039,300 (19.6%). The main sources of the income of the University for own funds consisted of tuition fees for full-time and part-time studies – EUR 4,684,500; revenue generated by other studies, courses and trainings, and study organisation services – EUR 2,503,900; revenue from outsourcing and service contracts – EUR 944,200; revenue generated by economic activity services – EUR 3,157,800; revenue from property rental – EUR 1,143,700; and revenue from the sale of property – EUR 9,700. The own funds of the University accounted for 15.2% of the total revenue of the University. The increase in own funds was due to increased contributions from professional development, training contracts, outsourced work, and economic activity services.

In 2023, the University's expenditure amounted to EUR 85,032,200. Of this amount, remuneration and social insurance accounted for EUR 47,959,900 (56.4%); scholarships accounted for EUR 6,196,200 (7.3%); acquisition of long-term tangible and intangible assets, acquisition of short-term assets, repairs and rental of assets accounted for EUR 7,030,200 (8.3); property maintenance costs accounted for EUR 2,849,900 (3.4%); construction and renovation of buildings accounted for EUR 5,007,300 (5.9%); costs related to work trips, goods and services accounted for EUR 15,988,400 (18.8%). Compared to 2022, the expenditure increased by EUR 13,539,200 (18.9%).

Expenditure on salaries increased by 15.4% compared to 2022, while other expenditure increased by 65.2%; expenditure on construction and renovation increased by 14.3%. The increase in expenditure was significantly due to the cost of implementing projects under European Union funds and other international support funds. Operating expenses decreased by 10.6% compared to 2022.

The average salary of the University staff increased by EUR 211.00 (11.5%), that of academic staff by EUR 257.00 (10.9%) and that of other staff by EUR 141.00 (11.6%).

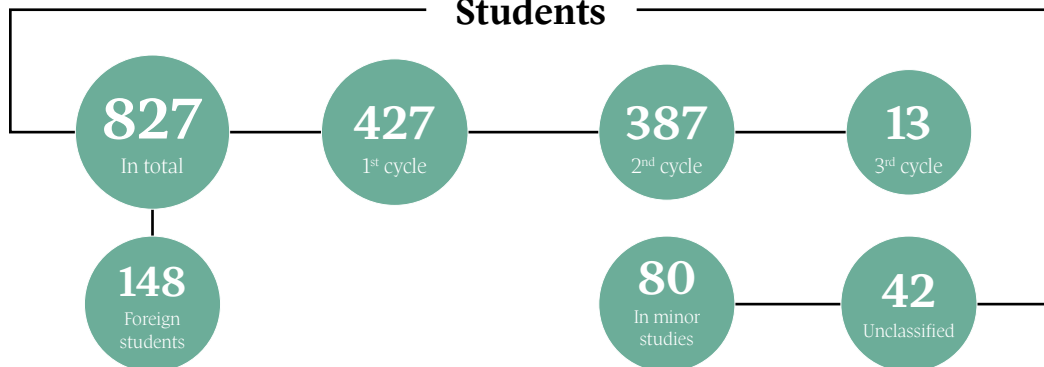
Further development of activities:

- Updating VMU Strategic Plan for 2021–2027 and VMU Strategic Action Plan for 2021–2027: measures and indicators, taking into account the relevance of the objectives, tasks and measures, and reducing the number of monitored indicators. Analysing key indicators such as student drop-out rates and staff turnover more effectively.
- Increasing community involvement in decision-making, ensuring equal representation of units, empowering staff independence and autonomy, promoting accountability and performance excellence.
- Improving the efficiency of the University's activities by promoting a systemic approach to organisational development, bringing together the strengths, resources, activities, functions, structures and processes of the units, and reducing internal competition between units.
- Continuing to optimise the administration of the University's activities through the efficient use of the information systems in place.
- Ensuring the quality of the services provided by the Library, which can be easily accessed by all users, and increasing their popularity, by exploiting the opportunities offered by the virtual environment, responding to the demand for information resources for research and studies.
- Analysing the size, productivity, and infrastructure efficiency of research institutes, clusters, and other research groups.
- Developing the effective asset management activities of the University by analysing the efficiency of the use of physical infrastructure and introducing asset management tools.
- Developing ongoing and new projects related to the modernisation of the infrastructure of the University and its adaptation for modern, high-quality studies and research.

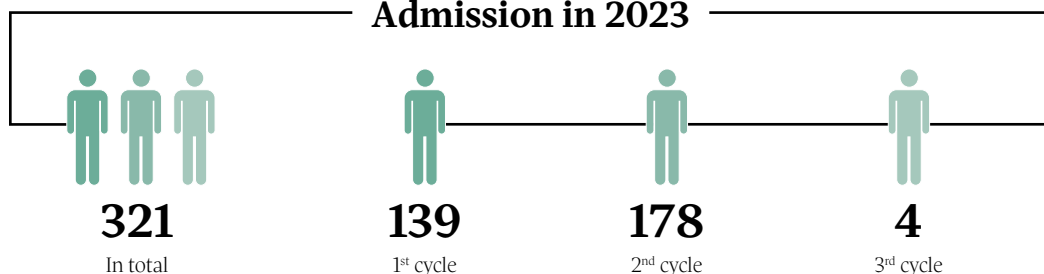
Faculty of Economics and Management



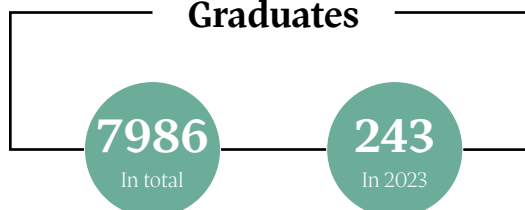
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	39
Academic staff with PhD (%)	87
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	26
Number of projects	6
Visiting teachers	11

Study programmes

First cycle

Economics
Economics and Finance
Creative Business and Innovation Design
Marketing
Business Administration
Business Finance

Second cycle

Finance (LT/EN)
Marketing and International Commerce (LT/EN)
Advertising Management
Corporate Strategic Management
International Economics (LT/EN)
Marketing and Sales
Business and Entrepreneurship
**Executive Master's degree programme:*
BMI Executive Master's Degree Programme
Sports Business Management (EN)

Fields of doctoral studies

Economics
Management

Dean Assoc. Prof. Rita Bendaravičienė

Address K. Donelaičio g. 52, 44244 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

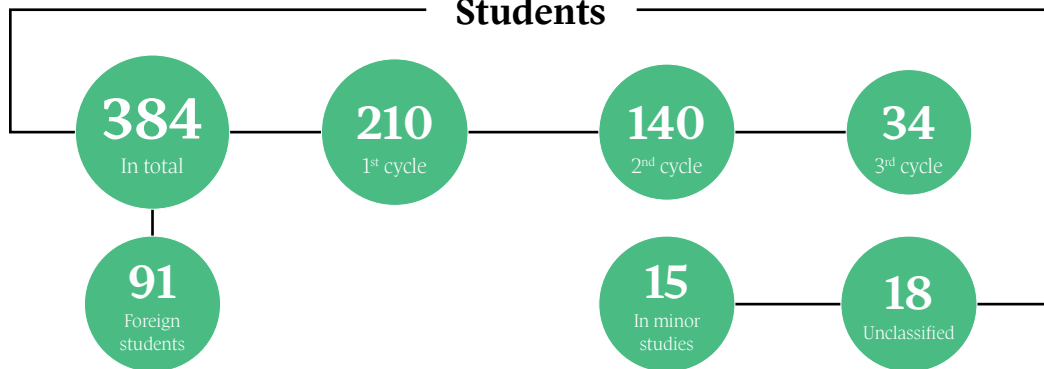
- At the 16th Eduniversal World Convention of Business Schools, held in Fiji from 30 October to 2 November 2023, VMU Faculty of Economics and Management was awarded three palm leaves award as Excellent Business Schools with Reinforcing International Influence for the ninth consecutive year.
- On 31 January 2023, the Faculty of Economics and Management, with the help of “360 Kampu”, also moved into virtual reality: a virtual tour of the faculty or a tour with gamified elements is available.
- On 8 March, the Euclid Network published a list of 100 European women leaders in social entrepreneurship and innovation. The list included Faculty alumna and Partnership Associate Professor Simona Šimulytė, Head of the European Institute for Social Entrepreneurship Education and Innovative Studies, initiator and expert of the “ChangeMakers’ON” programme.
- On 21 June, 164 graduates of VMU Faculty of Economics and Management received their Bachelor’s and Master’s diplomas. Six students of the study programme “Marketing and International Business” offered by the Faculty of Economics and Management defended their Master’s theses at the Catholic University of Leuven and received double degree diplomas.
- On 19 May, the Faculty hosted the 26th young scientists’ scientific conference “EU Economic, Financial and Business Processes and Trends”.
- In October 2023, a new Horizon Europe project, GIFFT (Sustainable Glass Industry with Fuel-Flexible Technology) was launched.
- In September, 21 students from 11 countries joined the programme “Sports Business MBA” by EB Institute and Vytautas Magnus University.
- On 4 October, Alumna of the Faculty of Economics and Management Laura Jarošenko, representative of Matel in Lithuania, presented the Faculty with “Barbie” exhibition. The exhibition featured famous dolls for which the clothing collection was created by such Lithuanian designers as Ramunė Piekautaitė, Robertas Kalinkinas, Monika Kazakevičiūtė, Egidijus Rainys, Kęstutis Rimdžius, and others.
- On 23 November, Justė Juknevičiūtė’s Master’s thesis “Assessment of the Herding Effect in the Nordic Stock Markets in the COVID-19 Period”, supervised by Dr. Gintarė Leckė, was selected as the best Master’s thesis of the year 2023 in the field of Social Sciences in Lithuania. The prize was awarded at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania.
- In December, the board game “Kondigno”, which reduces social exclusion, won the “For a More Sustainable World” category at Kaunas Startup Awards, where it represented VMU.
- In 2023, 61 representatives of companies and organisations gave lectures at the Faculty of Economics and Management.



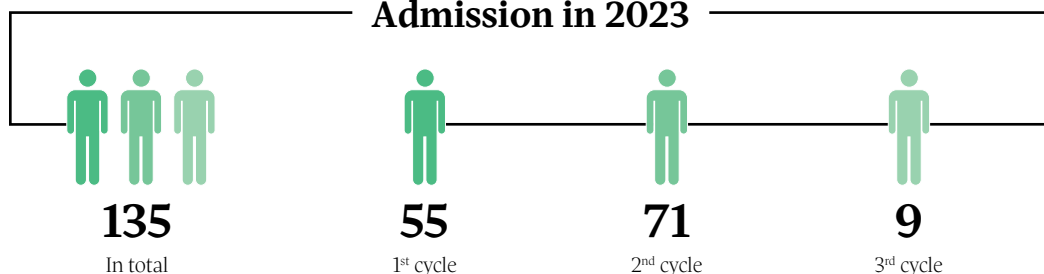
Faculty of Natural Sciences



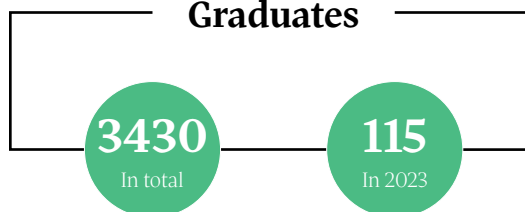
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	52
Academic staff with PhD (%)	95
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	57
Number of projects	30
Visiting teachers	12

Study programmes

First cycle

Environmental Science and Protection
Biochemistry
Biology
Biotechnology

Second cycle

Environmental Management
Biochemical Analysis
Molecular Biology and Biotechnology
Applied Biotechnology
Industrial Ecology
Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Analysis

Fields of doctoral studies

Natural Sciences

Biology
Biophysics
Ecology and Environmental Science
Biochemistry

Dean Prof. Saulius Mickevičius

Address Universiteto g. 10, Akademija, 53361 Kauno r.

Key events of 2023

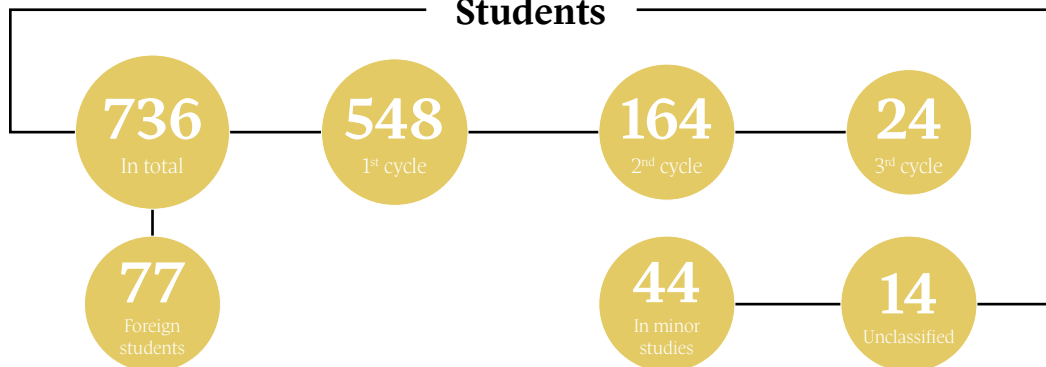
- Prof. Saulius Mickevičius, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, joined the Working Group for the Development of the Use of Alternative Proteins in Lithuania, established by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation.
- Prof. Audrius Dėdelė, Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences, is a member of the National Committee on Climate Change under the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania.
- Prof. Saulius Šatkauskas, Head of the Department of Biochemistry, became a member of the European Biophysical Societies' Association.
- Prof. Jana Radzijeuskaja, Head of the Department of Biology, became the representative of the Republic of Lithuania as a member of the Steering Committee of COST Action CA21170 PRAGMATIC – “Prevention, Anticipation and Mitigation of Tick-Borne Disease Risk Applying the DAMA Protocol”.
- Algimantas Paulauskas, Professor at the Department of Biology, became the Chairperson of the Lithuanian National Committee of the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.
- Algimantas Paulauskas, Professor at the Department of Biology, became a member of the Committee for the Supervision of Genetically Modified Organisms of the Ministry of the Environment.
- Regina Gražulevičienė, Professor at the Department of Environmental Sciences, together with other partners of the Urban Health project of the EC Horizon Programme, was awarded the 2023 Digital Community Prize.
- Sandra Andrušaitytė, Associate Professor at the Department of Environmental Sciences, became a member of the International Epidemiological Association (IEA).
- On 18–19 May, the 17th International Scientific Conference “The Vital Nature Sign 2023” was organised. The Chairperson of the Organising Committee of the Conference was Audrius Sigita Maruška, Professor at the Department of Biology.
- On 23–25 May, the 2nd Jerzy Sniadecki Memorial Conference was organised. Vida Mildažienė, Professor at the Department of Biochemistry, chaired the Organising Committee of the Conference.
- On 23–27 May, the International Conference on the History of Chemistry was organised. Vida Mildažienė, Professor at the Department of Biochemistry was a member of the Organising Committee of the Conference.
- On 5–6 May, the 7th Education Ambassadors Meeting of the Education Committee of the Federation of Biochemical Societies (FEBS) was organised. The Chairperson of the Organising Committee of the event was Rasa Žukienė, Associate Professor at the Department of Biochemistry.
- VMU and Kaunas scientific community celebrated the 90th anniversary of the founder of biophysics in Lithuania Prof. Mindaugas Venslauskas, and on this occasion, VMU Professor's students and colleagues organised a conference “The Phenomenon of Biophysics in Kaunas”.
- The project “Accelerating Women Participation in STEM Fields to Respond to the Needs of Industry 4.0 – FEMSTEM”, a collaborative partnership in higher education under Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2), was won. The leader of VMU part of the project is Prof. Saulius Mickevičius, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.
- The project “SLIPS Service Learning in Primary Schools”, a collaborative partnership in higher education under Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2), was won. The leader of VMU part of the project is Prof. Saulius Mickevičius, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.



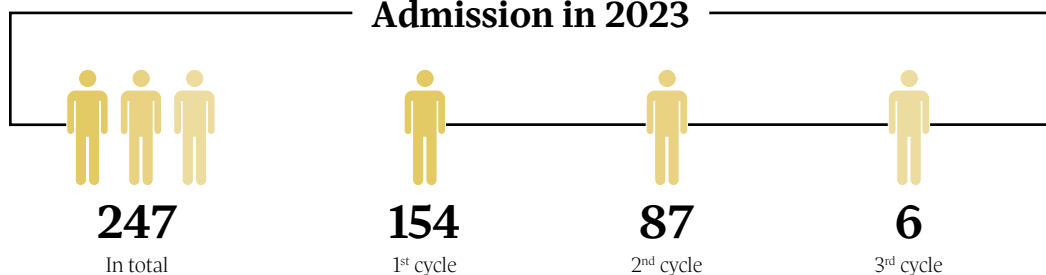
Faculty of Humanities



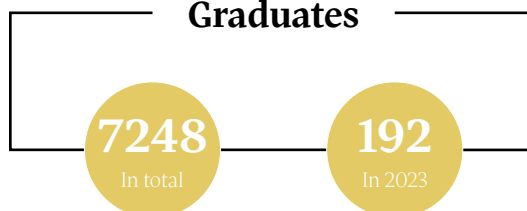
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	81
Academic staff with PhD (%)	88
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	177
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	31
Number of projects	30
Visiting teachers	35

Study programmes

First cycle

English Philology
History
Lithuanian Philology and Publishing
Regional Studies: Cultures and Languages of East Asian Countries
Regional studies: Cultures and Languages of Scandinavian Countries
Foreign Languages and Cultures: Francophone Studies
Foreign Languages and Cultures: Italian Studies and Romance Languages
Foreign Languages and Cultures: German Language and Communication

Second cycle

Literature Creation, Criticism and Communication
Comparative Cultural Studies (online)
Modern Linguistics (online)
Practical Philosophy (blended online)
Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism (joint study programme)
Applied English Linguistics
East-Central European and Lithuanian Historical Studies

Fields of doctoral studies

Ethnology
Philology
Philosophy
History and Archaeology

Dean Assoc. Prof. Rūta Eidukevičienė

Address V. Putvinskio g. 23, 44243 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

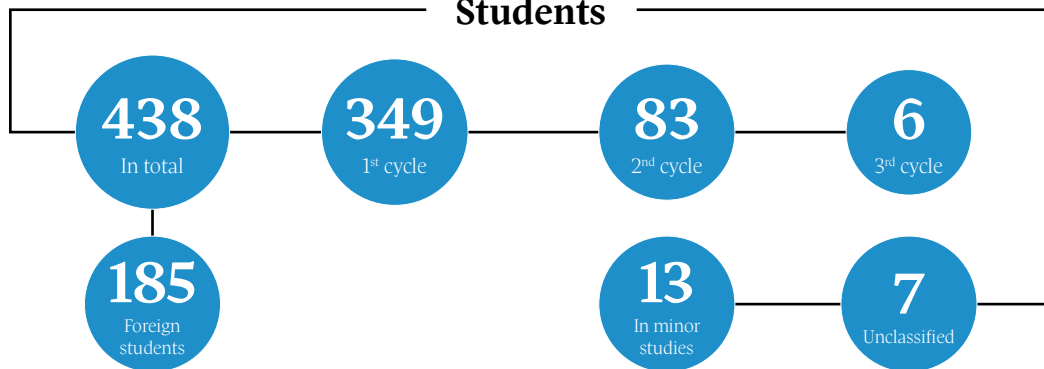
- International experts rated the research carried out in the field of Humanities at VMU, including the research output in the fields of Ethnology, Philology, Philosophy, and History in 2018–2022, very highly, stressing that it is “of a high standard and internationally recognised”.
- In an external evaluation of the study fields, all of programmes in the field of Philology by Language offered by the Faculty of Humanities (Lithuanian Philology and Publishing, English Philology, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, Italian Studies and Romance Languages, and German Language and Communication) were given high scores and accredited by international experts for a seven-year period.
- Teachers of the Faculty of Humanities received the following significant awards for their research and other educational activities: Assoc. Prof. Žydronė Kolevinskienė was awarded Justinas Marcinkevičius Prize, Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis received Stasys Šalkauskis Prize, Dr. Neringa Butnoriūtė was awarded Vytautas Kubilius Prize, lect. Fabrizio Mazzella was awarded the title of Chevalier of the Order of the Star of the Italian Republic, Prof. Ineta Dabašinskienė was awarded the Ambassador's Badge of Mariupol University of Ukraine.
- Three doctoral dissertations were defended: in the field of Philology – Joris Kazlauskas's dissertation “Secondary Stress in the Standard Lithuanian Language” (supervised by Prof. Asta Kazlauskienė), in the field of Philosophy – Tomas Šinkūnas's dissertation “Aurel Kolnai's Multifaceted Disgust: from Classification to Originary Conception of Disgust” (supervised by Prof. Dalius Jonkus), and Kęstutis Mosakas's dissertation “Moral and Legal Rights for Intelligent Robots” (supervised by Prof. John Stewart Gordon).
- The Faculty teachers and researchers organised several important international scientific conferences: the final conference of the project “Promoting Cooperation between Foreign Centres of Baltic Studies and Lithuanian Research and Study Institutions” “Baltic Studies in the World: Experiences, Challenges and the Future” (on 16–17 March), the 15th Conference on Baltic Region Studies in Europe (CBSE) “Turning Points: Values and Conflicting Futures in the Baltics” (on 15–17 June), etc.
- Seven international and national projects were successfully completed: the project “Promotion of Cooperation between Foreign Baltic Studies Centres and Lithuanian Research and Study Institutions”, funded by the EU Structural Funds (project managers Dr. Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda and Assoc. Prof. Laimutė Anglickienė); the project “Spotlight Taiwan” funded by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Taiwan; five projects of the Research Council of Lithuania (“Intonation of the Lithuanian Language: Prosodic Word and Phrases, Their Hierarchy, Realisation and Transcription” (project manager Prof. Asta Kazlauskienė), “Lithuanians and Their Religions: the Construction of Religion in the Discourse of Ethnic Culture Researchers” (project manager Dr. Eglė Aleknaitytė), “Issues of Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Technology in the Context of Ecological Philosophy” (project manager Dr. Tadas Čapanauskas), “History and Art of Kaunas Bernardines” (project manager Prof. Vaida Kamuntavičienė), “History of Kaunas in 1655–1795” (project manager Assoc. Prof. Liudas Glemža).
- The major books published by the teachers and researchers of the Faculty: “Critical Theory and Cultural Policy” by Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis; the monograph “Colours and Stripes: the History of Academic Lithuanian Scouting, 1924–2024” by Prof. Egidijus Aleksandravičius; the collective monograph “(Inter)Cultural Dialogue and Identity in Lithuanian Literature” (compiled by Assoc. Prof. Irena Ragaišienė and Prof. Adelheid Rundholz); the monograph “How Kovno became Kaunas: the Lithuanisation of the City in 1918–1940” by Dr. Mindaugas Balkus; “History of Kaunas. Volume 2: From 1655 to 1795” by Prof. Zigmuntas Kiaupa and Assoc. Prof. Liudas Glemža; the monograph “A Syllable of the Standard Lithuanian Language” by Prof. Asta Kazlauskienė; and the 20th anniversary volume of “Kaunas History Annals”.
- A total of 44 Faculty teachers took part in Erasmus+ training and teaching visits; 9 teachers took part in long-term traineeships in the USA, South Korea, Japan, Israel, UK, Poland, and Italy. A total of 126 students studied at the Faculty under Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes, and 21 students studied part-time at foreign universities.
- The most significant activities for students included the following: the 4th International Student Italian Language Competition “Universiadi 2023”, the 6th National Japanese Language Competition, the International Young Writers Competition “Prix Laurence” (VMU, Esch/Luxembourg), the student scientific conferences “East Asian Studies 2023”, “Topical Issues of Scandinavia through the Eyes of the Young Scandinavians”, “Young Scholarly Voices 2023”.
- The 27th Kaunas History Conference was organised.
- A wide range of cultural events organised by the Faculty teachers and students were offered to the academic community and the general public: “Kaunas Literature Week 2023” with spring and autumn programmes, “October – Lithuanian Diaspora Month”, Francophone Month, VMU Asia Week, Japan Days in Kaunas WA, Scandinavian Days, International Mother Language Day at VMU, German Language Days “Ö kaip vokiškai” (How do You Say It in German?), the project involving Lithuanian and Latvian school libraries “Baltic Literature Week 2023”, photography exhibitions of the Faculty teachers, and more.



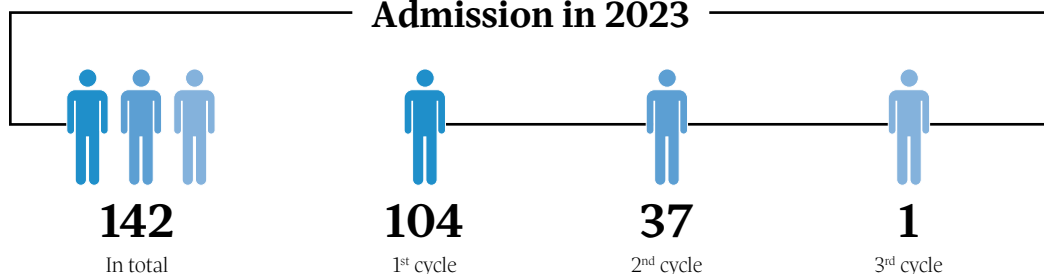
Faculty of Informatics



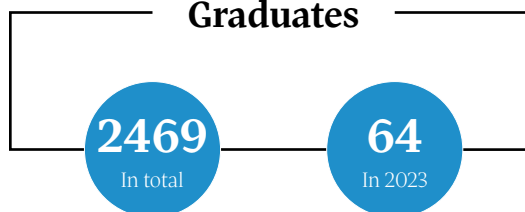
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	36
Academic staff with PhD (%)	65
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	29
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	50
Number of projects	15
Visiting teachers	20

Study programmes

First cycle

Informatics Systems
Mathematics and Its Application
Multimedia and Internet Technologies

Second cycle

Applied Informatics
Applied Mathematics

Fields of doctoral studies

Informatics

Dean Prof. Tomas Krilavičius

Address Universiteto g. 10, Akademija, 53361 Kauno r.

Key events of 2023

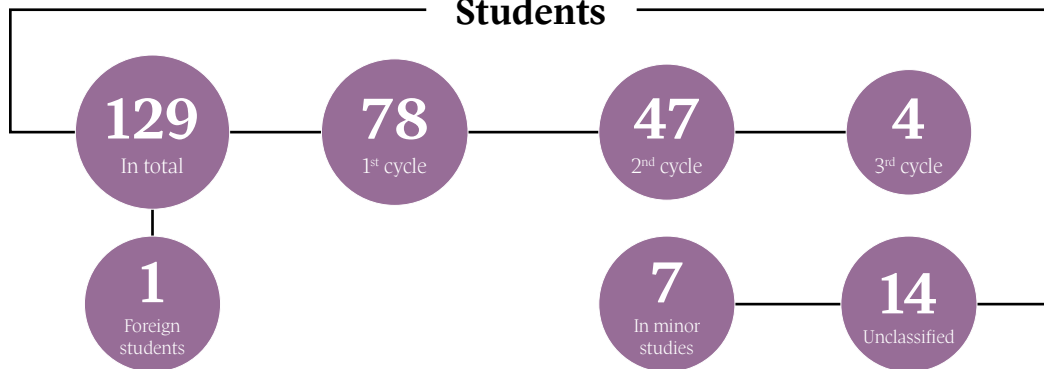
- The Faculty launched FOREST 4.0, one of the largest research projects at the University. Its aim is to establish and operate a Forest 4.0 Centre of Excellence for the development of a sustainable forest bioeconomy, ensuring that the Centre has the necessary physical and human resource base, financial sustainability, and capacity to carry out cutting-edge research and to increase the level of internationalisation of science. The project is carried out together with KTU, ART21, “Agrifood Lithuania DIH”, Linnaeus University, and Interiorcluster.
- The SustAInLivWork project was launched with the aim of creating a joint “Centre of Excellence of Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Living and Working” (SusAInLivWork) in Lithuania, which will play a significant role in the development and application of AI-based R&D solutions in the manufacturing, energy, health, and transport sectors. The project is carried out together with KTU, LSMU, VILNIUS TECH, Tampere University, Hamburg University of Technology.
- VMU researchers joined the DIGITAL Europe project “European Masters Programme in Cybersecurity Management & Data Sovereignty” (DIGITAL4Security), which aims to develop a degree programme that will equip businesses in different sectors with the cyber security management, regulatory and technical skills needed to prevent and respond to existing and emerging cyber security threats, thus helping to protect European businesses from cyber-attacks.
- The project “Using Serious Games in Teacher Training to Promote Creativity and Social Cohesion” (EduGame) was launched. It aims to update teacher training programmes in IT, Social Sciences and Humanities by integrating serious games and game-based learning and to develop teaching materials as well as set up laboratories for teaching serious games. The project partners: the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the University of Salerno, the University of Sousse, the University of Jendouba, the University of Tirana, the University of Elbasan, the University of Mostar, and the University of Bihac.
- The project “Digital Competences Framework for Ukrainian Teachers and Other Citizens”, led by Assoc. Prof. Artūras Mickus, was completed, which resulted in the establishment of the Ukrainian National Digital Coalition (UNDC) and seven digital literacy centres in Ukrainian universities.
- Prof. Tomas Krilavičius, Prof. Ričardas Krikštolaitis and other Faculty staff and students successfully completed a joint project with LSMU “Use of Digital Phenotyping for Monitoring of Cancer Patients in the COVID-19 Pandemic” and developed solutions for remote monitoring of patients and identification of health disorders.
- The research team led by Daiva Vitkutė-Adžgauskienė successfully completed the third stage of the project “Establishment of the National Information Impact Identification and Analysis Ecosystem (NAAS)” of the General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy and developed an innovative methodology for the identification, analysis and monitoring of threats in the information space, and the final software system version.
- Since 2022, the Faculty of Informatics has participated in the project “Stronger Together – Strategic Partnerships of the University of Silesia in Katowice with the Transform4Europe Network”, with the plan to develop a joint “Data Science” study module.
- In 2022, The project “Automatic Adaptation of Administrative Texts in Lithuanian for the Needs of Non-specialists”, led by Dr. Justina Mandravickaitė, was launched to develop a methodology for the automatic adaptation of administrative (office) style texts in Lithuanian, transforming them into simplified language texts.
- The activities in the project “Unlock Big Data Storytelling Skills in European University Students / DATASTORYTELLER” were continued with the aim of building a Big Data repository and collecting the first Open Educational Source (OES).
- On 28 January 2023, the 17th informatics and mathematics quiz “IFtorina-23” was organised by VMU Faculty of Informatics for pupils in grades 11-12 and gymnasium grades 3–4. It was attended by 70 students (25 teams) and 18 teachers from different Lithuanian schools (the event was held remotely).
- Prof. Tomas Krilavičius, Dr. Justina Mandravickaitė, Dr. Danguolė Kalinauskaitė and the students of the Faculty worked on the “Horizon” project “Be Hate-Free: Building Hate-Free Communities in Lithuania” to develop methods to detect hate speech.
- Dr. Edgaras Ščiglinas, Prof. Tomas Krilavičius, Rimantė Kunickaitė, Prof. Daiva Vitkutė-Adžgauskienė, Assoc. Prof. Artūras Mickus and the students of the study programme “Multimedia and Internet Technologies” successfully completed their activities in a joint project with UAB “Gluk Media” entitled “A Touchable Holographic Imaging Interface”, which aimed to develop a smart adaptive interface for holographic displays.
- On 8–9 June, VMU FI team took part in the events of the Science Festival “Spaceship Earth”. The participants could learn about smart homes, digital phenotyping, artificial intelligence, scale symmetry and more (the events were held online).
- In 2022, EdTech IT Teacher Qualification and IT Master’s Degree studies for teachers were launched as part of the Education Development Programme of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, under the Progress Measure No. 12-003-03-01-02 “Implementing EdTech Digital Transformation of Education”. In 2023, a total of 67 students started the module, and 25 students successfully completed their studies.
- A total of 22 mathematics teachers from all over Lithuania studied the Mathematics modules as part of the teacher retraining programme run by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and 25 unclassified students successfully completed their studies.
- A new interdisciplinary double degree programme “Digital Transformation Technologies and Management” is being developed with the University of Saarland in Germany.



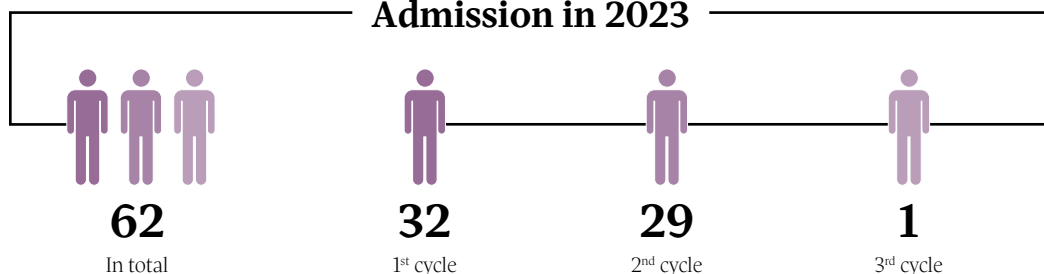
Faculty of Catholic Theology



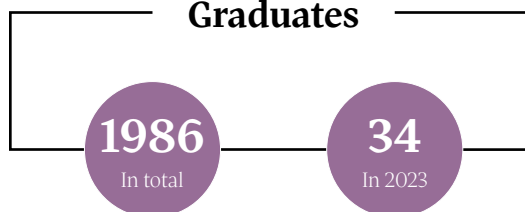
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	15
Academic staff with PhD (%)	97
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	9

Study programmes

First cycle

Catholic Theology
Pedagogy of Religion

Second cycle

Pastoral Theology
Religious Education
Family Research

Fields of doctoral studies

Theology

Dean Assoc. Prof. Benas Ulevičius

Address Gimnazijos g. 7, 44260 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

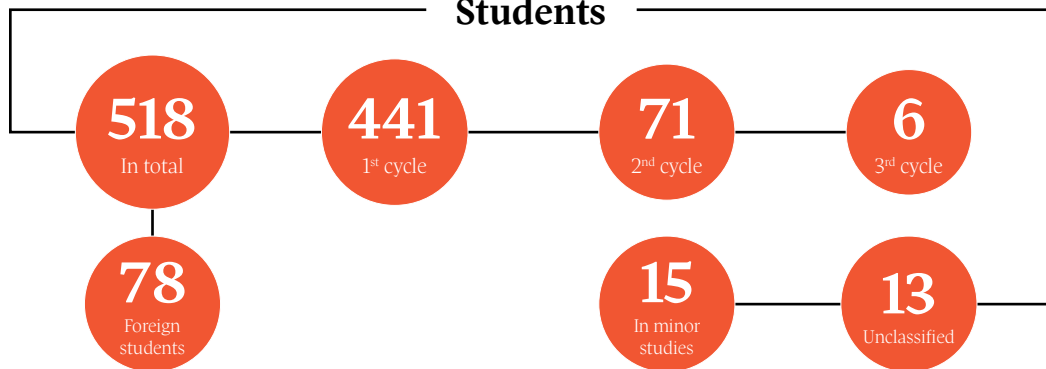
- In 2023, the most important event for the Faculty of Catholic Theology was the Comparative Assessment of Universities and Research. Research activities of the Faculty received high scores from an international panel of experts.
- In 2023, the Faculty developed relations with foreign universities and partners. The Faculty teachers and students went to teach, study and do internships at various universities and organisations in Europe and around the world. Networking was established with the Faculties of Catholic Theology of the Catholic University of Portugal and the University of Silesia in Katowice in the context of the Transform4Europe alliance. Particularly close cooperation took place with the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland), the Pontifical John Paul II University in Krakow (Poland), the University of Malta (Malta), Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University (Latvia), and Congregation for Catholic Education of the Holy See (Vatican).
- In 2023, the Faculty of Catholic Theology continued to strengthen its relations with social partners and society. The Faculty organised non-formal education programmes, lectures and seminars for the public and for employees of Catholic organisations. The teachers of the Faculty gave lectures, hosted radio programmes and seminars, consulted Catholic organisations, carried out pastoral and educational activities in parishes, communities, hospitals and elsewhere. Students-volunteers of the Faculty form an important part of the volunteers in various Catholic organisations. The Faculty maintains a particularly close contact with the Catholic centres and social institutions of Kaunas Archdiocese. The relations of the Faculty of Catholic Theology with the social partners are very strong, as many of the leaders and staff of Catholic organisations are alumni of the Faculty.
- In 2023 The Faculty of Catholic Theology strengthened its cooperation with schools. The teachers went to schools, gave lectures to school teachers and students; groups of students visited the Faculty. Close collaboration with VMU "Rasa" Gymnasium and Catholic schools throughout Lithuania should also be mentioned. In 2023, the Faculty continued the tradition of the Republican competition of senior school pupils' works on religion and science.



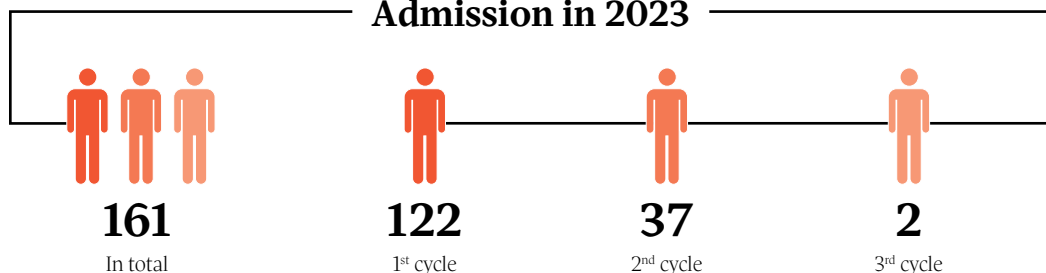
Faculty of Arts



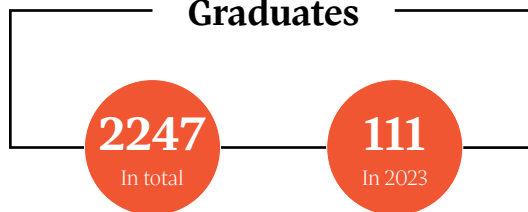
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	28
Academic staff with PhD (%)	81
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	61
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	11
Works of art	28
Number of projects	4
Visiting teachers	20

Study programmes

First cycle

Art History, Criticism and Media
New Media Art
Creative Industries
Music Production

Second cycle

Cultural Heritage and Tourism
Art Curating
Creative Industries
Theatre Research and Stage Art Management

Fields of doctoral studies

History and Theory of Art

Dean Prof. Jurgita Staniškytė

Address Muitinės g. 7, 44280 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

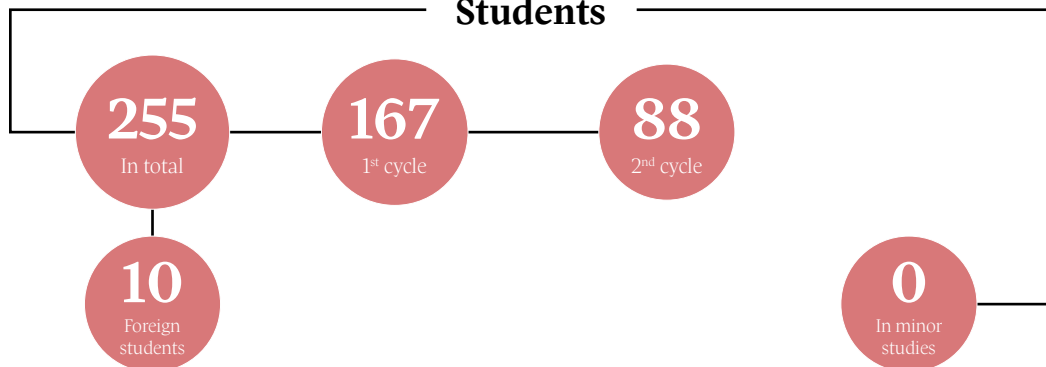
- In the results of the evaluation of research and experimental development (R&D) published by the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL), the quality of studies in history and theory of arts at VMU was rated with the highest score (5).
- In the 2023 ranking of study fields at universities in Lithuania published by the magazine "Reitingai", the second cycle study programmes of VMU Faculty of Arts in the field of the History and Theory of Arts (programmes "Art Curatorship", "Theatre Studies and Stage Art Management") and in the field of Communication (programme "Creative Industries") were ranked in the first place.
- In the evaluation of the study fields by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, the second cycle study programme in the field of heritage "Culture Heritage and Tourism" and the first cycle study programme in the field of media art "New Media Art" were accredited for the maximum period of time.
- The scholarly journal "Art History & Criticism" was listed in the Elsevier – Reaxys database and received a SNIP index in the Scopus database.
- The traditional art and culture festival "VMU Culture Days" was organised, featuring open lectures, discussions, art events, student projects and the traditional "Open Day for School Students".
- An international mobility week was dedicated to Critical Heritage, involving 50 students from Transform4Europe partner universities.
- D. Vaišnorienė, a second cycle student of the study programme "Cultural Heritage and Tourism", received funding for her research under the RCL competition "Student Research in the Summer" (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Aušra Vasiliauskienė).
- R. Valinčiūtė-Varnė contributed to the finding of the canvases "The Apostles" by L. Truikis, which had been presumed missing.
- In collaboration with Kaunas Biennial, I. Lukševičius, a student of the study programme "Music Production", created the soundtrack of the 14th Biennial "Geography of Proximity"; in collaboration with the International Performing Arts Festival "Contempo", the Young Critics Workshop was organised (curator D. Dementavičiūtė-Stankuvienė); and in collaboration between T. Petrikis and the graduate of the study programme "Music Production" S. Larbi, a soundtrack was created for the Lithuanian cinematographic film "Male Dreams".
- International conferences "Turning Points: Values and Conflicting Futures in the Baltics (CBSE)" (together with the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy) and "Icons of Disobedience" were organised (organisers R. Žukienė, T. Pabedinskas); A. Vasiliauskienė's monographs "The Art Collection of Rokiškis Manor" and "Memory Returned: the History of Kaunas Bernardines and the Monastery Ensemble from the Late 16th to the 19th Century" were published (co-author V. V. Kamuntavičienė); D. Price compiled the journal "Memory as a Journal"; J. Staniškytė published an article "The Routledge Companion to Contemporary European Theatre and Performance"; R. Mažeikienė was the Chairperson of the Scientific Committee of VMU Student Conference "Freedom to Create 2023".
- I. Pukelytė curated the exhibition "Wandering Stars: Jewish Theatre in Lithuania in 1910–1943" (Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Film Museum, Vilnius); R. Žukienė and T. Pabedinskas curated the exhibition "Icons of Disobedience" (VMU Art Gallery "IOI", Kaunas); R. Žukienė compiled the album "Rimvidas Jankauskas Kampas", R. Simanaitienė compiled the album "Twelve Meetings, Twenty-Four Touches. For the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of Kaunas Art School"; R. Požerskis's exhibitions were organised at SLA Art Space (New York, USA), European Photography Festival (Castellanza, Italy), "Victories and Defeats" (Photautnales Festival, France), "Indulgences" (Valencia, Spain), "Crazy Sculptures in the Desert of Nevada" (VMU, Kaunas), and the exhibitions dedicated to the events of January 1991 were organised (Ignalina Regional Museum, Tauragė Regional Museum Photography Gallery, Quadrum Business Centre, Vilnius), also the exhibitions with M. Požerskytė-Kalvelė "Unexpected Dialogue. Still Lives and Islands" ("Aukso pjūvis", Kaunas), "Unexpected Dialogue. Women" (VMU Art Gallery "IOI", Kaunas) were organised; R. Plungė exhibited his works at the 7th International Biennial of Painting in Zagreb (Croatia), and R. Venckus curated a group exhibition of Lithuanian painters "Floating Identity: Between a Recognizable Image and Abstraction"; G. Sakellariou and his band "Vartai" released their debut album and video "Pro vartus" (Through the Gates); T. Petrikis composed the soundtrack for the film "Yesterday"; T. Pabedinskas hosted a series of 16 TV programmes "Perspektyva" (Perspective); G. Dovydaitis was a co-author of the installation "Pavadininti akis" (Name the Eyes) of the exposition "Tapatybė" (Identity) at the State Cognition Centre.
- The students of the study programme "New Media Art" U. Serapinaitė and G. M. Valaitytė participated in the international exhibition "ID" ("Together Mansion" Gallery, Rome, Italy); U. Serapinaitė organised the exhibition "Transformation" (International Festival of Photography and Media Art, Kaunas); U. Serapinaitė and A. Alekna took part in the exhibition "Sambūris" (Gathering) (A. and P. Galaunė House-Museum, Kaunas); A. Auškalnytė presented a light and sound installation "Užuoglauda" (Shelter) at Kaunas Artists' House; students A. Mackevičiūtė, G. M. Valaitytė, R. Kuliešiūtė, U. Serapinaitė participated in the exhibition "Struktūros" (Structures) (VMU Art Gallery "IOI", Kaunas); students P. Andriulionis, E. Galinkevičė, R. Kirsnickaitė, G. Gendvilaitė, and V. Budahs took part in Erasmus+ BIP programme at VIVES University of Applied Sciences (Bruges, Belgium).
- Prof. Jurgita Staniškytė was elected to the CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe) Programme Committee.
- Assoc. Prof. Linara Dovydaitytė was elected President of the Council of Kaunas City Museum.
- Prof. Jurgita Staniškytė became a member of the Study Assessment Commission of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education; Assoc. Prof. Rūta Mažeikienė became a member of the Higher Education Assessment Commission of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.



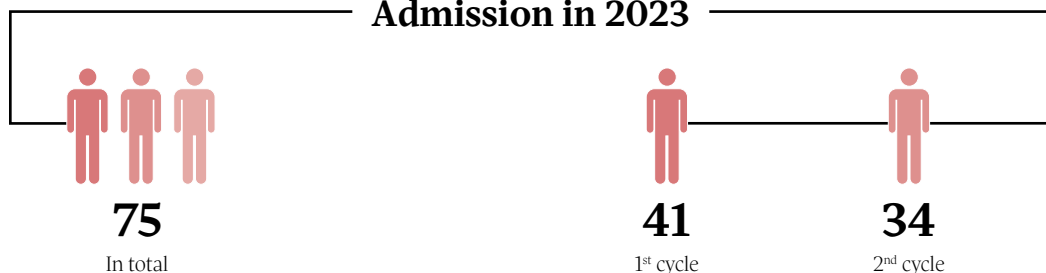
Music Academy



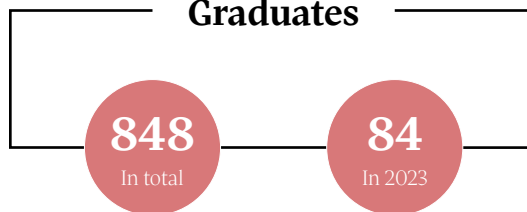
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	63
Academic staff with PhD (%)	56
Number of concerts	717
Works of music	67
Visiting teachers	43

Study programmes



Key events of 2023

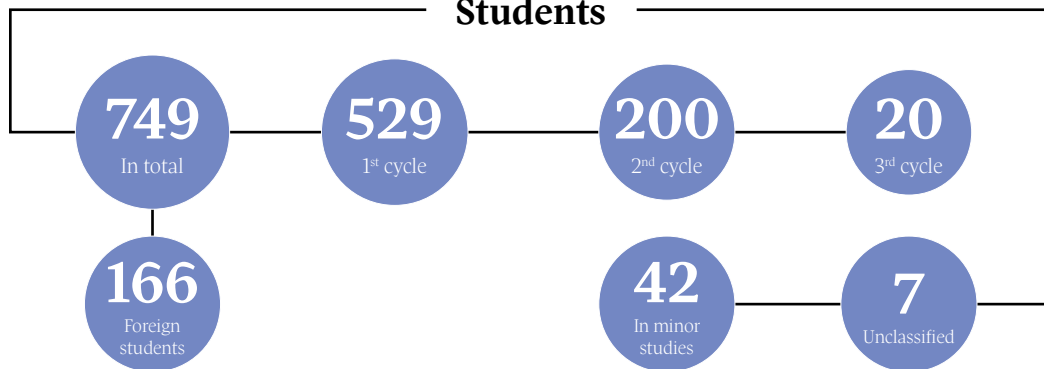
- Prof. Jonas Janulevičius was recognised as the most memorable artist of Kaunas.
- On 28 March, teacher Gabrielė Bukinė was awarded Kaunas City Culture Prize.
- The 2nd degree Santaka Badge of Honour was awarded to teacher Giedrius Prunskus, the 3rd degree Santaka Badge of Honour was awarded to teachers Virgilijus Visockas and Rolandas Daugėla.
- Student Rokas Laureckias was awarded the Fortuna Diploma for the role of Lukenis in the musical “Elizabeth”.
- Assoc. Prof. Rimantas Vingras continues his membership in the European Cultural Committee.
- The main roles in the opera “Aida” by Giuseppe Verdi at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre (directed by G. Šeduikis) are performed by teacher Kostas Smoriginas (Amonasr), student Joris Rubinovas (Pharaoh) (premiere on 10 November 2023).
- Music director and conductor of the musical “Mozart!” by Michael Kunze and Sylvester Levay at Kaunas State Musical Theatre (premiere on 6 October 2023) is Prof. Jonas Janulevičius, the roles are played by teachers Gabrielė Bukinė (Aloizija Veber), Gabrielė Kuzmickaitė (Jozefa Veber) and students Karina Ivanickytė (Sofija Veber), Rokas Laureckis (Jeronimas Koloredas), and Joris Rubinovas (Count Arko).
- The cast of Jule Massenet’s opera “Cinderella” (premiere on 7 September 2023), a project of Kaunas State Musical Theatre and the Estonian Concert Institution “Promfest”, is composed of teachers Gabrielė Bukinė (Noemie) and Vladimiras Prudnikovas (Le Roi).
- Assoc. Prof. Povilas Velikis, together with the director, composed the music for the play “Diskoteka angelams” (Disco for Angels) (directed by Gabrielius Zapalskis, premiere on 3 March 2023 at Panevėžys theatre “Menas”).
- Assoc. Prof. Povilas Velikis composed the music for the songs “Giria” and “Pempės vaka” that were performed at the Song Celebration in 2023.
- Assoc. Prof. Vytautas Liesionis continues his activities as the Chairperson of the Sectoral Professional Committee for Service Administration, Service Provision, and Activities of Organisations and Institutions.
- Assoc. Prof. Rimantas Astrauskas continues to serve on the Council for the Safeguarding of Ethnic Culture under the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.
- Assoc. Prof. Justas Dvarionas is the Vice-President of the European Music Competition Association.
- Teacher Gabrielė Bukinė made her debut at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre as Violetta in Verdi’s “La Traviata”.
- On 27–28 October, Prof. Alexander Paley organised the 2023 *Alexander Paley Music Festival* in Richmond (USA).



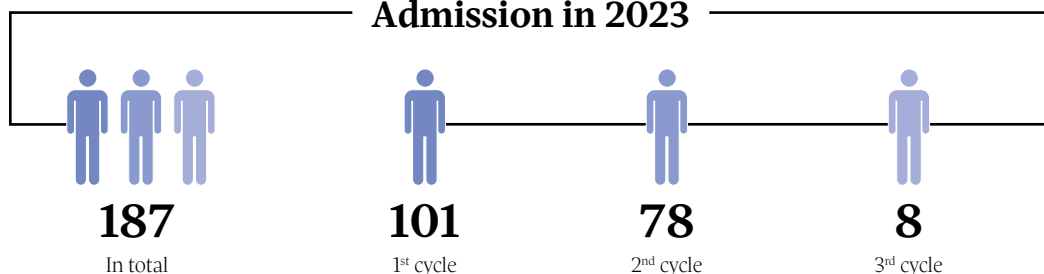
Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy



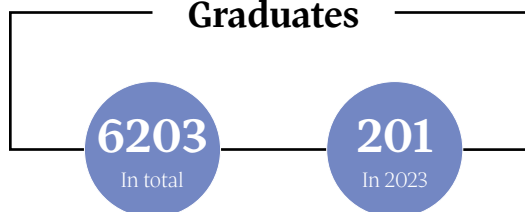
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	41
Academic staff with PhD (%)	65
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	31
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	27
Number of projects	18
Visiting teachers	20

Study programmes

First cycle

World Politics and Economics
Political Science
International Politics and Development Studies
Public Administration
Public Communication

Second cycle

Future Media and Journalism
Diplomacy and International Relations
Integrated Communication
Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe
Contemporary European Politics
State Institutions Administration

Fields of doctoral studies

Political Science
Communication and Information Sciences

Dean Prof. Šarūnas Liekis

Address V. Putvinskio g. 23, 44243 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

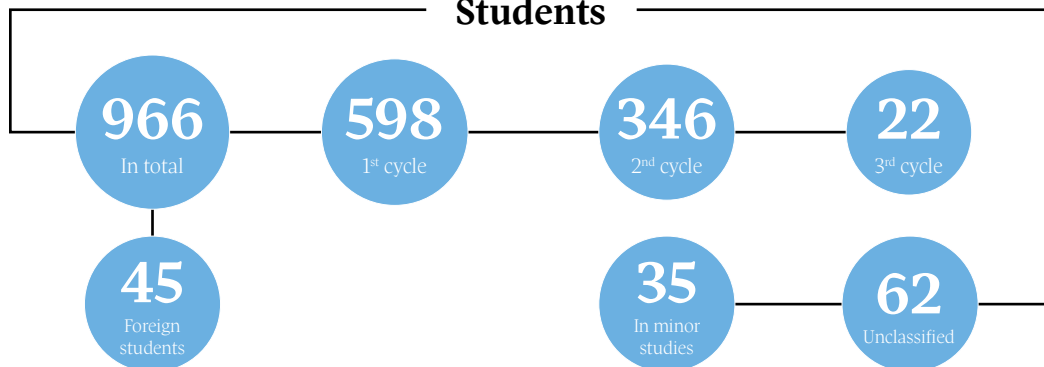
- In 2023, the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between UNESCO and VMU was extended for a new term until 2026, under which the UNESCO-UNITWIN Research Centre for Media and Information Literacy was established at the Faculty in 2019. The Centre is headed by Prof. Auksė Balčytienė and Prof. Kristina Juraitė and is dedicated to research, international projects, training and dissemination of expertise to strengthen competences in media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue among different groups of society.
- The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Lithuania María Nieves Blanco Diaz delivered a lecture on “NATO as an International Organisation: Security Challenges and Future Prospects” at VMU Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy.
- The Baltic Research Foundation for Digital Resilience, DIGIRES (founded by VMU), organised a workshop for regional journalists on “The Idea Facilitator for Small Editorial Offices: News and Sustainability”. The workshop focused on the impact of artificial intelligence on journalism, funding models, the issue of trust in the media, other topical issues, and sharing experiences and good practices.
- The 11th National Conference “Evaluation of Public Policies and Services: the Role of Citizens and Non-Governmental Organisations” was organised by the Department of Public Administration of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy at VMU Multifunctional Centre for Research and Studies.
- VMU Andrei Sakharov Research Centre for Democratic Development organised an exhibition-auction of paintings “Maler” by Petras Vaitiekūnas and “Brick after brick” by Ukrainian ceramicists, and the collected funds were donated to Ukraine. The War Museum also hosted an exhibition of war artefacts “Anatomy of War: Ukraine”.
- In April, at the final conference of the Media Literacy in the Baltics Programme in Riga, the Department of Public Communications was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from IREX for its cooperation in the field of media literacy.
- Prof. Audronė Nugaraitė was elected as a member of the Council of the Media Support Foundation. Assoc. Prof. Ignas Kalpokas was appointed a member of the Media Council. Lect. Ina Žurkuvienė was appointed a member of the Ethics Commission for Public Information.
- Egdūnas Račius, Professor at the Department of Regional Studies of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy published a research article in a top international scientific journal (Q1). Religious Terminology in Islamic Literature in the Lithuanian Language. *Contemporary Islam*, 17:3, P. 451–466, Dordrecht: Springer.
- The title of Ambassador of Mariupol State University was awarded to the teacher Aistė Žemaitytė for promoting academic and cultural exchanges, supporting Ukraine internationally, and building bridges of understanding and collaboration between the institutions.
- On 10 November, a discussion with the graduates of the Faculty “Communication X 25G” was organised to mark the 25th anniversary of the Department of Public Communications.
- Rugilė Špaukauskaitė, a second cycle student in the study programme “Diplomacy and International Relations”, was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the members of the Lithuanian Ambassadors' Club for her final Master's thesis on “Directions and Strategies of French Cultural Diplomacy in Lithuania and Poland in 2017–2022” (supervisor Dr. Mindaugas Norkevičius).
- On 19 May 2023, VMU Andrei Sakharov Research Centre for Democratic Development organised a charity concert “Lifted up to the Sky” in Vilnius City Hall, featuring Ukrainian pianist A. Botvinov and NIKO string instruments group (R. Van Voren, D. Genys, N. Gališanskijė).
- The Eleventh International Congress of Belarusian Studies was organised. World War II Museum, Gdansk, 22–24 September 2023.
- The Student Academic Club of Political Scientists of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy won the 1st place in the team brain battle tournament “Euro Minds” organised by Kaunas Europe Direct IC.
- An international scientific seminar “Analysing Russian Foreign Policy in Times of Upheavals” was organised, International Research Centre (Centre de Recherches Internationales, CERI), Sciences Po, Paris. 26 May 2023. Project “The Role of Russian Diplomacy in Multilateral Conflict Resolution Forums” No. 09.3.3-LMT-K-712-23-0123 (organiser Emilija Pundziūtė-Gallois).
- A practical off-site conference “The European Union in Schools: How to Present Current Issues in an Interesting and Creative Way?” was held in Birštonas for the educational communities of Kaunas, Alytus, and Marijampolė. The conference was organised in cooperation with the Europe Direct Centres in Alytus and Marijampolė, the Representative Office of the European Commission and the European Parliament Office in Lithuania (the organiser D. Lukoševičiūtė Burneikienė).



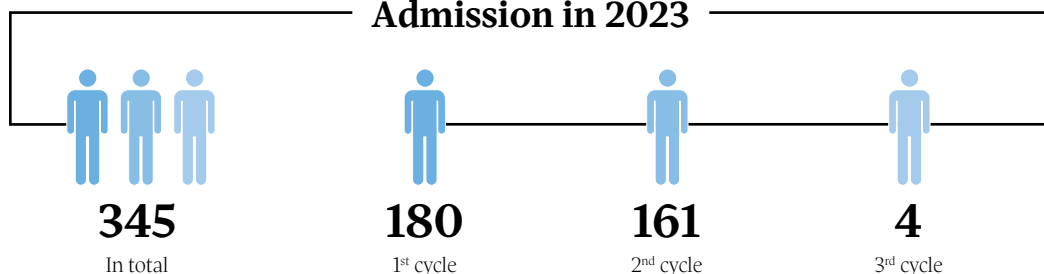
Faculty of Social Sciences



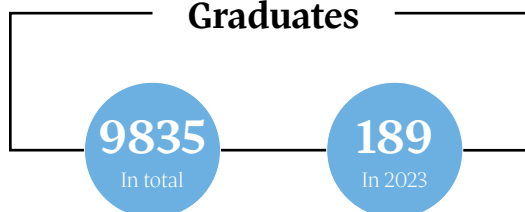
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	49
Academic staff with PhD (%)	89
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	43
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	38
Number of projects	21
Visiting teachers	10

Study programmes

First cycle

Psychology
 Social Work (Social Work and Psychosocial Counselling from 2023)
 Sociology and Anthropology
 Society, Culture and Communication (EN)

Second cycle

School Psychology
 Organisational Psychology
 Social Anthropology
 Social Work
 Health Psychology
 Applied Sociology

Fields of doctoral studies

Sociology
 Psychology

Dean Assoc. Prof. Aurelija Stelmokienė

Address Jonavos g. 66, 44191 Kaunas

Key events of 2023

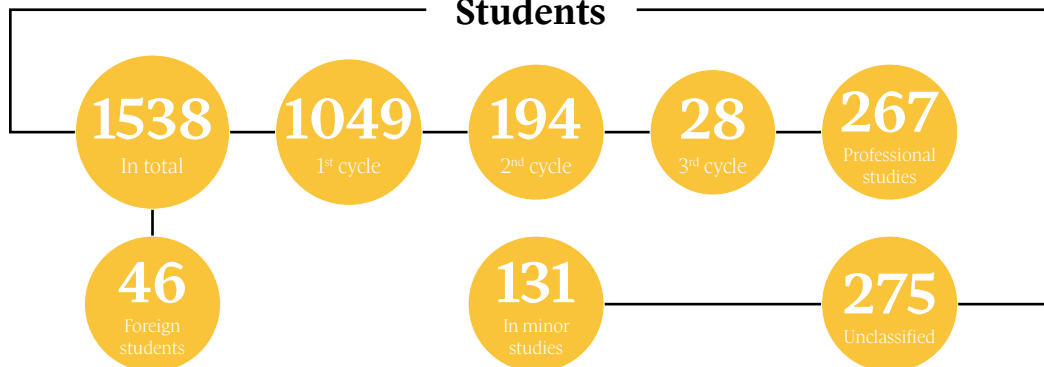
- The discussion “Mental Health, Psychosocial Disability and Human Rights: What Changes Does Lithuania Need and Why?” was organised by the Human Rights Monitoring Institute and VMU Department of Social Work.
- VMU Department of Sociology and the Lithuanian Society of Sociologists organised the 9th National Conference of Young Sociologists and Anthropologists “Current Research in Sociology and Anthropology: Problems and Context”.
- The following professors were awarded with personal Certificates of Appreciation by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson for their long-term activities in the field of human rights: Prof. Milda Ališauskienė, Prof. Artūras Tereškinas and Prof. Jonas Ruškus. Prof. Jonas Ruškus received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania for his active work in the United Nations Committee for Persons with Disabilities. Dr. Roberta Motiečienė was awarded the 3rd degree Badge of Honour of Santaka for her merits to the city of Kaunas. Dr. Kristina Jonutytė received Caroline von Humboldt Award (Germany) and the award to carry out research.
- International experts evaluated the Anthropology study field with excellent scores (the highest overall evaluation of the study field at the University). The first cycle study programme “Social Work and Psychosocial Counselling” was updated and successfully launched. Two new specialisations were developed and approved for the MSc in Social Work: “Social Work in the Context of Global Crises” and “Transformative Social Work Practice”. The first cycle study programme “Psychology” attracted exceptional interest from the first-year students and had the highest number of state-funded places in the University. The Club of Sociologists received a one-year funding for the project “SOC’kava” in VMU Student Organisations Support Competition.
- In the comparative expert evaluation of research activities, the evaluation unit of the Faculty was evaluated as promising, having not only national but also international economic and social impact, and conducting R&D activities in the fields of sociology and psychology at a very good level.
- Four RCL-funded research group projects were won and started to be implemented: “Possibilities of a Personalised Feedback Intervention for Reducing the Problematic Self-Disclosure of 15-16 Years Old Adolescents in Photos on Social Networks” (project manager Prof. Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė), “Maintaining Safe Driving Competence in Old Age” (project manager Assoc. Prof. Laura Šeibokaitė), “Interactions of Factors Determining Cognitive Function Improvement in Stroke Patients and Their Implications for Recovery Using Virtual Reality Method” (project manager Prof. Liuda Šinkariova), “How the Role of the Local Politician Is Changing in Local Government: Leadership, Institutions and Communities” (project manager Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė). The research programme project of Taiwan-Lithuania-Latvia No. P-LLT-24-22 “Models of Penetration of Authoritarian Regimes into Democratic Systems: a Comparative Analysis of Political Representation in Lithuania, Latvia and Taiwan” was also won (project manager Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė).
- Nine RCL-funded student research projects during the semester and summer were won and started to be implemented: two projects by Lela Zarevičiūtė (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Gabija Jarašiūnaitė-Fedosejeva), two projects by Indrė Muraškaitė (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė), one project by Rasa Katinaitytė (Prof. Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė), one project by Greta Karalevičiūtė (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Gabija Jarašiūnaitė-Fedosejeva), one project by Paulius Miškinis (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Ugnė Paluckaitė), one project by Gabrielė Janilionytė (supervisor Assoc. Prof. Kristina Šliavaitė), one project by Greta Pukenytė (supervisor Dr. Rasa Indriliūnaitė).
- The following three monographs were prepared and published: “Harmful Alcohol Consumption Practices in Lithuania: Social Context and Men’s Experiences” by Daumantas Stumbris, “Teenagers’ Self-Disclosure through Photos on Social Networks” by Ugnė Paluckaitė and Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė, and “Religious Minorities, Society and the State in Modern Lithuania” by Milda Ališauskienė.
- By organising conferences, symposia, trainings, seminars, discussions, and other activities (more than 80 different forms of activities were implemented), members of the FSS community actively shared their experience with various target groups: students, teachers, parents, the professional community, VMU community, alumni, and the general public. Cooperation agreements were initiated and signed with four organisations.
- VMU Parent Academy continued its mission and invited the public to participate in a series of seminars once a month on a variety of topical issues such as psychological resilience, mediation, etc.
- More than 40 foreign teachers, researchers, and practitioners visited the Faculty under various funding programmes.



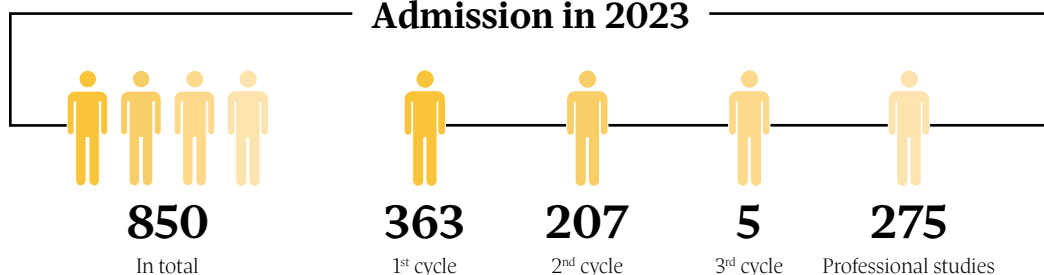
Education Academy



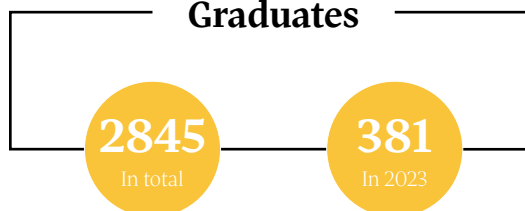
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	105
Academic staff with PhD (%)	85
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	87
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	63
New species of organisms that passed the international expert examination	15
Number of projects	45
Visiting teachers	68

Study programmes

First cycle	Second cycle	Professional studies	Fields of doctoral studies
Pre-school and Pre-primary School Pedagogy	Physical Education and Sports	Pedagogy	Education Sciences
Subject Pedagogy	Inclusive Education: Socio-educational Industries		
Pedagogy of Primary Education and Early Foreign Language Teaching	Music Education		
Special Educational Support	Professional Education		
Sports Studies	Educational Management (EN/LT)		
	Speech and Language Therapy		

Chancellor Prof. Lina Kaminskiene

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Key events of 2023

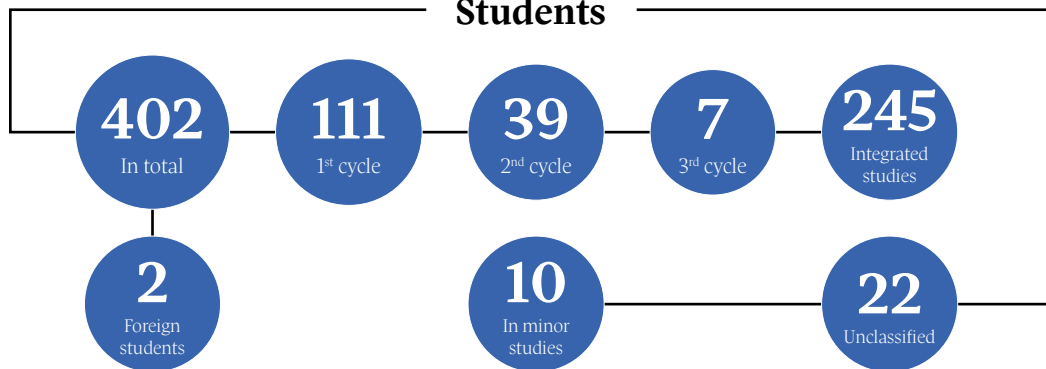
- The educational research unit of VMU received a high rating of 4.5 out of 5 from international experts. This is the highest award for the field of education in Lithuania.
- The study programme “Subject Pedagogy” offered by VMU Education Academy is ranked 6th among the study programmes with the highest number of entrants in Lithuania in 2023.
- Dr. Birutė Vitytė, a teacher at VMU Education Academy, was awarded the prize for the best dissertation in the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts by the Lithuanian Young Scientists' Union. Dissertation “LIBERTÉ vs SECURITÉ and AUTOCRATIE: Grounded Theory on Stereotyping as a Challenge for the Digital Game-Based Learning of Visual Arts” (Social Sciences, Education S 007), supervisor Prof. Ona Monkevičienė.
- The Education Progress Assembly, initiated by the President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda and dedicated to the International Children's Day, was held at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The event was co-organised by VMU Education Academy.
- For the third year in a row, the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, together with its partners VMU, Vilnius University, and Vilnius College, organised a meeting for future school teachers and their university teachers on the occasion of International Teachers' Day. The meeting took place in the Column Hall of the Presidential Palace.
- The national forum “The Speech and Language Therapy Profession in the Context of Globalisation” was held in Kaunas.
- VMU Education Academy together with the UNESCO Representative Office in Lithuania organised the annual conference of the members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet).
- The Lithuanian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language LAKMA, VMU Education Academy, and VMU Ugnė Karvelis Gymnasium organised an international conference for English language teachers.
- VMU Education Academy in Kaunas and Vilnius hosted the scientific-practical conferences “Primary Education in the 21st Century: from Theoretical Assumptions to Best Practices” and “Research-Based Innovative Practices in Preschool and Pre-Primary Education”.
- VMU Education Academy organised a national forum “The Speech and Language Therapy Profession in the Context of Globalisation”. The keynote speaker of the forum was Norma Camilleri, President of the European Speech and Language Therapy Association.
- VMU Education Academy together with VMU Faculty of Humanities, Baltic Summer University organised Lithuanian language and culture summer and winter courses and the Lithuanian studies. The online and face-to-face courses were held at VMU Education Academy in Vilnius and were attended by more than 65 foreigners from 35 countries around the world, as well as by 10 foreign teachers from Lithuanian language schools and teachers from Baltic Studies Centres.
- Together with the Lithuanian branch of the University of Białystok and the Adam Mickiewicz Museum, VMU Education Academy organised the 4th International Conference “Multicultural Vilnius: Tradition and Modernity”.
- VMU Education Academy in Kaunas and Vilnius hosted a conference for pupils in grades 8–12 “Learning Creatively from STEAM to Philosophy” and a conference for pupils in grades 7–12 “Learning Together: from Antiquity to Artificial Intelligence”, which were attended by over 350 participants.
- VMU Education Academy, in cooperation with Irytas.lt, continued the podcast “From Teacher's Notes”. For six weeks, students, teachers, heads of educational institutions, educators and well-known people talked about the teaching profession, the challenges of everyday school life, leadership in education, and the school of the future.
- In 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania approved two national professional development programmes developed by VMU Education Academy: the “Implementation of Life Skills Subject in Basic Education” and the “Inclusive Education in Universal Design for Learning”.
- On 2 March 2023, within the framework of the IREX project “Media Literacy in the Baltics”, VMU Education Academy organised an international scientific conference “Media Literacy and Information Technologies: Challenges and Solutions in the 21st Century” at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.



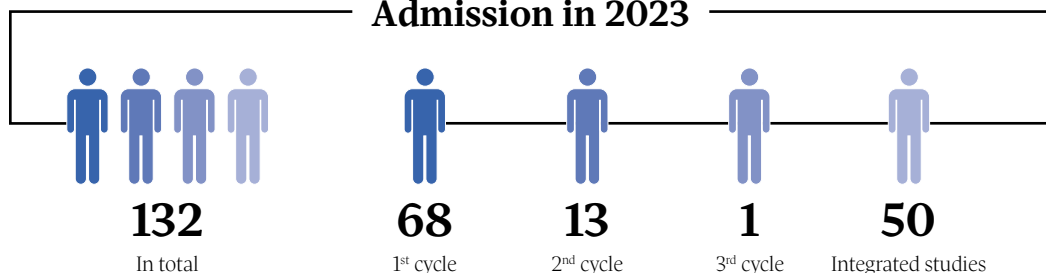
Faculty of Law



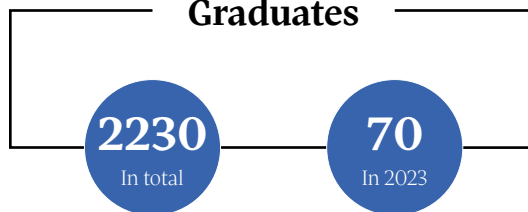
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	23
Academic staff with PhD (%)	84
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	53
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	8
Number of projects	3
Visiting teachers	9

Study programmes

First cycle	Second cycle	Integrated studies	Fields of doctoral studies
Law and Finances	Criminal and Business Law International Business Law	Law	Law

Dean Prof. Dainius Žalimas

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Key events of 2023

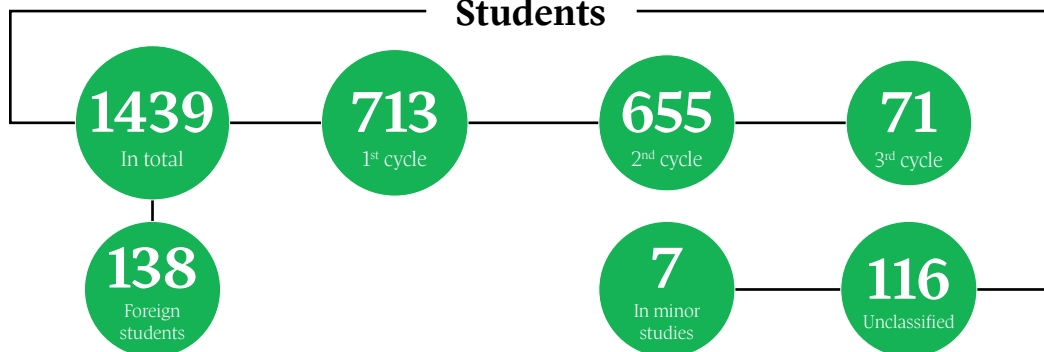
- One of the results of the international recognition of the research work of the teachers of the Faculty of Law in 2023 is the book "Future Law, Ethics, and Smart Technologies", published by Brill. This interdisciplinary textbook on artificial intelligence and its impact on legal and ethical issues written by scholars with a common interest is an important introduction to the future of legal education in light of the widespread use of artificial intelligence.
- In April, Julija Kalpokienė, a doctoral student at the Faculty of Law, was appointed a member of the Council of Europe *consultancy services in the framework of activities of the Education Department – Artificial Intelligence and Education (AIED) Expert Group*. Her expert work focuses on the legislation of the Council of Europe on the use of artificial intelligence in education and on the development of guidelines and recommendations, with consultations on the best regulatory model underway and the drafting of various legal instruments.
- On 28 April, the Third International Scientific and Practical Conference "Trends and Challenges of European and National Criminal Policy" was organised jointly with Mykolas Romeris University and the Institute of Law, with presentations by scholars and practitioners from Ukraine, Norway, and Lithuania.
- On 14 June, the Faculty of Law, together with the Academic Community of Competition Law (ASCOLA chapters: Eastern Europe (Baltics), Central Europe, and South-East Europe), Brunel University (London, UK), and the University of Warsaw (Poland), organised a webinar on "Judicial Review of Competition Cases: the CEE and SEE Countries Perspective".
- On 9 September, at the International Conference on Law and Social-Transformation, the scientific publication "Inchoate Crimes in the Context of Principle of Harm" by the doctoral student of the Faculty of Law Ugnė Urbšytė was chosen as the best paper among the 49 research papers selected for publication, and the doctoral student was awarded the prize as the best researcher who participated in the conference.
- We are also pleased with the first research results of students' active involvement in project activities. Within the framework of the project of the Research Council of Lithuania "Corruption in Medicine: Concept, Signs and Prevention", No. P-ST-22-117, which was won in 2022, Karolis Orlauskas, a fourth-year student, together with the project supervisor, prepared two research articles in English in 2023, one of which was published in a journal included in Scopus databases.
- The relevance of the current research and the research potential of the Faculty of Law are evidenced by the funding of R. Jakštienė's postdoctoral fellowship application "Opportunities for Improving the Response to the Prosecution of an Intimate Partner by Means of Criminal Law", which was won on 21 December 2023, supervised by the professor of the Faculty of Law E. Gruodytė (Order of the Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania No. V-691).
- In 2023 The researchers of the Faculty of Law were also actively involved in science popularisation and public consultation activities: six expert opinions were prepared for committees and commissions of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as for the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, more than 20 public lectures were delivered to various target groups on various legal topics, participation in various television and radio programmes took place, and science popularisation articles on issues of relevance to the public were prepared and published in various portals.
- On 22 November 2023, the Dean of the Faculty of Law Prof. Dainius Žalimas was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman for his valuable and historically significant contribution to the establishment of equal opportunities in Lithuanian society over the past twenty years.
- In 2023, five cooperation agreements were signed with law firms, notaries, and public authorities. One of the most important is the agreement with the Financial Crimes Investigation Service (FICIS), signed on 8 November 2023, which aims to update data on the demand for FICIS staff, their training and retraining, promote the prestige of the profession, provide financial support for those who choose to study law and later join the FICIS, etc.
- To strengthen the relationship between students and alumni of the Faculty of Law, an event "The Legal Profession – First Steps after Graduation" was organised on 11 May 2023. During the event, graduates of the Faculty of Law, who hold the positions of assistant judge, assistant attorney at law and corporate lawyer, presented the mentioned specialties to the students, answered their questions about various legal professions, current trends in the labour market, and employment opportunities.
- In 2023, in keeping with the long-standing tradition of organising studies at the Faculty of Law, nine foreign teachers from the USA, Brazil, Spain, Poland, etc. gave lectures in English to the students of the Faculty of Law.
- In 2023, the Legal Clinic at the Faculty of Law provided 123 consultations. A total of 18 students provided legal advice and completed their internship at the Legal Clinic. During this period, the number of students completing their internship at the Legal Clinic was the highest in its entire history. This year, for the first time, the Legal Clinic also offered consultations during the summer period.
- Four groups of participants attended the training course "Fundamentals of Mediation: Theory and Practice" organised by the Faculty of Law. The training course "Mediation Practice Day for the Advanced" was organised for another group of participants.
- In 2023 VMU Faculty of Law organised university courses "Fundamentals of Law" for pupils. The pupils could learn about all the main branches of law and the legal system: constitutional law, administrative law, EU law, civil law, criminal law, criminal procedure law, civil procedure law, and tax law. The courses were held every Saturday online and were attended by around 60 students from different schools in Lithuania.



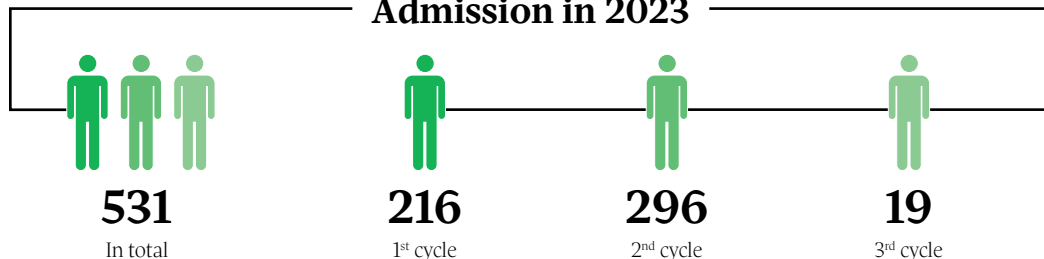
Agriculture Academy



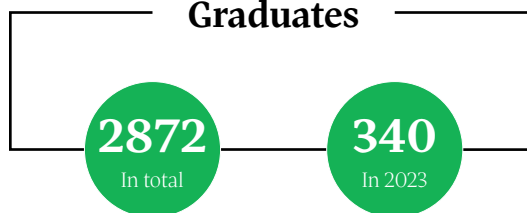
Students



Admission in 2023



Graduates



Academic staff (positions)	145
Academic staff with PhD (%)	87
Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	52
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	224
Patents registered in Lithuania	15
Number of projects	87
Visiting teachers	55

Study programmes

First cycle

Agronomy
 Accounting and Finance
 Sustainable Biobusiness Management
 Landscape Design
 Logistics and Commerce
 Food Quality and Safety
 Forestry
 Applied Ecology
 Tourism Industries
 Sustainable Engineering
 Land Use Planning and Real Estate Valuation
 Agricultural Mechanical Engineering

Second cycle

Agroecosystems
 Agronomy
 Accounting and Finance
 Quality and Safety of Plant Food Raw Materials
 Ecology and Climate Change
 Hydraulic Engineering
 Rural Development Administration
 Wildlife Resources and Management
 Mechanical Engineering
 Forestry
 MBA Customs Process Management
 Transport Machinery Engineering
 Sustainable Energy
 Business Logistics
 Agricultural Economics
 Agricultural Engineering and Management
 Agricultural Business Management
 Land Management

Fields of doctoral studies

Agronomy
 Environmental Engineering
 Economics
 Forestry
 Mechanical Engineering
 Transport Engineering
 Management

Chancellor Prof. Astrida Miceikienė

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Faculty of Agronomy

Key events of 2023

- The 29th International Scientific and Practical Conference “Human and Nature Safety 2023” marked the World Health, Environment Protection, and Occupational Safety and Health Days.
- Cooperation agreements were signed with AB “Žemaitijos pienas”, UAB “Ingleby Lithuania Agro”, UAB “Arm Gate”, UAB “Scandagra”, UAB “Intra Vires”.
- Prof. E. Jarienė was awarded the Honorary Medal of Merit of Warsaw University of Life Sciences and received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania; Prof. Prof. A. Marcinkevičienė was awarded the title of Honorary Member of the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists and received Certificates of Appreciation from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Agriculture; Prof. A. J. Motuzas was awarded the title of Agronomist of Merit for Lithuania by the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists and received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania; Prof. A. Blinstrubienė received the “Knight of the Profession” nomination from the Lithuanian Industrialists’ Confederation and the “Employee of the Year” nomination from VMU AA Prof. V. Bogužas received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania; Assoc. Prof. I. Prancietienė was awarded the title of Agronomist of Merit for Lithuania by the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists; Assoc. Prof. I. Vagusevičienė received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania; Lect. A. Lozuraitienė received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Minister of Culture Simonas Kairys for her promotion of creative activity, fostering culture that is inclusive for the creation of public welfare, and active participation in the project “Smart City 9”. The international project “Freeze-Dried Yogurt Bites Enriched with Non-Traditional Functional Raw Materials” was awarded the title of VMU AA “Project of the Year”. Project manager Assoc. Prof. J. Kulaitienė, Prof. V. Bogužas, Assoc. Prof. J. Aleinikovienė, Junior Research Worker Dr. L. Skinulienė, research worker Dr. V. Steponavičienė won the first prize in the category of “Groups of Researchers” of VMU Agriculture Academy competition of research works for the collection of research papers “Application of Technologies for Multifunctional Resilience and Stability of Soils in Natural Ecosystems”; Assoc. Prof. L. M. Butkevičienė, Assoc. Prof. A. Sinkevičienė, Assoc. Prof. D. Jodaugienė, Prof. V. Bogužas won the first prize in the “Methodological Publications Category” of VMU AA Studies and Methodological Tools Competition for the educational book “Crop Rotation Design and Soil Quality Assessment”; Prof. Z. Kriauciūnienė was awarded VMU AA nomination “International Mobility of Researcher of the Year”; Assoc. Prof. E. Klimas was awarded VMU AA nomination “Teacher of the Year”; Assoc. Prof. P. Mulerčikas was nominated by students as the best teacher of the year at the Faculty of Agronomy of VMU; student U. Ginelevičius was awarded VMU AA nomination “Student of the Year”.
- The annual scientific-practical conference “Herbology: Ecology and Control of Weeds 2023” was organised.
- An intensive Erasmus BIP Training Course on “Sustainable use of natural resources” was organised together with the Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technology, the Estonian University of Life Sciences (Tartu), and the University of Warmia and Mazury (Poland).
- A total of 15 researchers from the Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, the USA, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, and Uzbekistan had traineeships at or visits to the Faculty.
- A total of 14 teachers of the Faculty of Agriculture took part in Erasmus+ teaching and training exchange visits in Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Spain, Greece, and the Philippines.
- Representatives of agribusiness companies gave lectures and practical trainings to students; teachers improved their qualifications at 37 field days, seminars and trainings organised by agribusiness companies, collaborated on research issues, consulted representatives of the companies; 16 faculty scientists gave lectures and conducted theoretical, creative, practical, and experimental activities to 31 gymnasium pupils.
- In total, 6 doctoral dissertations were defended in the field of Agronomy in the area of Agricultural Sciences.
- Seven doctoral students were admitted to doctoral studies in the field of Agronomy in the area of Agricultural Sciences, and one doctoral student was admitted to doctoral studies in the field of Environmental Engineering in the area of Technological Sciences.
- The Faculty of Agronomy purchased equipment for EUR 267,730.66 (XAG M500 drone with multispectral camera, AgroCare scanner, soil gas (CO₂/H₂O) measurement system, pasteurisation system, composting equipment, laboratory fermenter bioreactor, decanter, fruit and vegetable washing equipment, etc).
- Eight faculty researchers were members of editorial boards, editors, guest editors, and advisory board members of 14 scientific journals published abroad or jointly with foreign research and/or study institutions.
- More than 20 teachers and researchers actively participated in international organisations (European Research Alliance Towards a Chemical Pesticide Free Agriculture – ERA Pesticide Free, Young Academies Science Advice Structure, Global Research Alliance, Integrating Safety and Environmental Knowledge Into Food Studies, European Food Safety Authority, Young Academy of Europe, Young Academy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences).
- More than 162 research articles were published, including 37 research articles in publications referenced and indexed in the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science database. Of these, 26 were published in the first quartile (Q1) and 9 in the second quartile (Q2). Sixteen articles were published with co-authors from foreign institutions.
- Two patents were registered in collaboration with researchers from the Faculty of Engineering of VMU AA.
- The researchers of the Faculty carried out 20 project activities, of which 8 in international and 12 in national programmes.

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Faculty of Bioeconomy Development

Key events of 2023

- The most important international research projects in 2023 are “Horizon Europe” project “Accelerating the Integration of Circular Biosolutions in European Rural Areas” (BioRural), 2022–2025 (coordinator of VMU activities – Prof. V. Vitunskienė), “Horizon Europe” project “Strengthening Farm Health and Safety Knowledge and Innovation Systems” (Safehabitus), 2023–2026 (VMU coordinator – Assoc. Prof. L. Girdžiūtė); the project “NordicBaltic Cooperation for the Development of Bio- and Circular Economy”, 2021–2023 funded by Nordic Council of Ministers (VMU project manager V. Kargytė),
- The most significant national research projects carried out are the European Innovation Partnership project “Improving the management of production and commercialisation of high added value (HAV) berry products in Lithuanian berry farms”, 2021–2023 (project manager Assoc. Prof. J. Greblkaitė); the project of the Ministry of Agriculture “Preparation of the Recommendations for the Standard of the Agricultural Consultancy Services”, 2022–2023 (project manager Assoc. Prof. R. Pakeltienė).
- Faculty researchers and co-authors published 46 scientific articles in publications referenced and with citation index in Clarivate Analytics Web of Science and Scopus databases (of which 27 – first quartile and 15 – second quartile), 29 scientific dissemination publications. 7 plenary presentations at international scientific conferences. Presentations were given by Prof. V. Vitunskienė, Assoc. Prof. D. Perkumienė, Assoc. Prof. E. Besusparienė, Assoc. Prof. A. Kustienė.
- I. Vidrevičienė “Interactions and Consequences of Employee Empowerment and Employee Engagement” (supervisor Prof. S. Vaitkevičius)
- Dr. L. Lauraitienė is the winner of the Lithuanian Union of Young Scientists Best Dissertation Competition in Humanities and Social Sciences. The topic of the dissertation is “Assessment of Environmentally Sustainable Growth in Agriculture in the European Union Countries”, supervisor Prof. Habil. Dr. V. Vitunskienė.
- S. Šomkė is the winner of the Lithuanian Union of Young Scientists’ Best Master’s Thesis Competition 2023 in the field of Agricultural Sciences. The thesis topic is “Analysis of territorial differences of agricultural land prices and their factors in the case of Lithuania”, and the supervisor is Prof. Habil. Dr. V. Vitunskienė.
- Associate Professor R. Pakeltienė became the Chair of the European Committee of the European Association of Life Sciences Universities (ICA) and a member of the Bioeconomy and Biodiversity and Climate Leadership Groups of the European Commission’s European Economic and Social Committee. Prof. A. Miceikienė became a member of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy Network and a representative of Lithuanian scientific institutions in the network. Assoc. Prof. A. Novikova became a member of the European Circular Bio-based Green Economy Network and a representative of Lithuanian scientific institutions in the network.
- Prof. A. Miceikienė became an expert at the National Science Centre of Poland and Assoc. Prof. A. Novikova became an expert in Horizon Europe Action Group 6 “Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and the Environment”.
- Expert evaluation of the finance and management fields of study was carried out – both fields of study were accredited for 7 years.
- The first students were admitted to the postgraduate programme in Customs Process Management.
- The name of the first cycle study programme “Bioeconomy Business Management” was changed to “Sustainable Bio-Business Management”. A new postgraduate programme on Bioeconomy Innovation and Sustainability Management is under development.
- Two Erasmus+ BIP courses were held: “Sustainable Agriculture for Rural Development” (supervised by Assoc. Prof. A. Novikova) and “Management for Business Start-ups” (supervised by Prof. J. Žukovskis).
- A total of 66 visiting teachers from foreign universities lectured at the Faculty of Bioeconomy Development, including 15 teachers from foreign universities who came to teach under the Erasmus+ exchange programme and 7 teachers from foreign universities who came to study. Under the Erasmus+ exchange programme, the Faculty’s teachers and staff went to foreign higher education institutions 26 times to teach and 28 times to study.
- A total of 6 training programmes were provided in-service training for businesses.

Dean Prof. Bernardas Vazonis

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Faculty of Engineering

Key events of 2023

- The Agricultural Science and Innovation Development Fund of VMU AA was established by the sponsors of VMU AA: UAB "Agrokoncerno technika", UAB "Baltic Agro Machinery", UAB "Dojus agro", AB "East West Agro", UAB "Ivabaltė", AB "Lytagra", UAB "Rovaltra", UAB "Žemtiekimas".
- The experimental engineering classes of VMU AA "Sumanaus moksleivio akademija" were established in Naujosios Akmenės, Mažeikiai, Zarasai, Šakiai districts, and the activities of the experimental engineering classes in Rokiškis, Pasvalys, Joniškis, Biržai, and Plungė districts are being continued, and the activities in "Išmaniosios inžinerijos" are set up in Rumšiškės Antanas Baranauskas and Žiežmariai Gymnasiums in Kaišiadorys district. Two large-scale events for pupils were organised to celebrate World Earth Day, "Earth Day", and International GIS Day, "GIS Day".
- The first students were admitted to the new undergraduate programme in Sustainable Engineering. The first cycle study programme in "Water and Land Management" changed to "Land Management and Real Estate Valuation" and the second cycle study programme in Agricultural Mechanical Engineering changed to "Mechanical Engineering".
- A total of 7 doctoral dissertations were defended: Mindaugas Rukanskis (supervisor Prof. Juozas Padgurskas), Rasa Vismontienė (supervisor Prof. Arvydas Povilaitis), Eglė Tumelienė (supervisor Prof. Vida Malienė), Lina Saldukaite-Sribikė (supervisor Prof. Egidijus Šarauskis), Andrii Zabrodskiyi (supervisor Prof. Egidijus Šarauskis), Raimonda Zinkevičienė (supervisor Prof. Eglė Jotautienė), Shankar Bhandari (supervisor Prof. Eglė Jotautienė). 7 doctoral students (including one who won a competition of the Research Council of Lithuania) were admitted to doctoral studies.
- Academic Prof. Arvydas Povilaitis received a Certificate of Appreciation from Valery Gaucherand, Director General of the UNESCO and L'Oreal Science Foundation Programme "Women in Science", and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Rector of VMU, Academic Prof. Dainius Steponavičius, Academic Prof. Egidijus Šarauskis, and Prof. Eglė Jotautienė were awarded Certificates of Appreciation from the Rector of VMU.
- The International Scientific and Practical Conference "Human and Nature Safety 2023", the International Scientific and Methodological Conference "Baltic Surveying 23", the Erasmus BIP and BOVA courses "New Challenges for Land Administration in Post Land Reform Countries" and the Erasmus BIP course "Application of Modern Technologies in the Determination of Geodetic Methods Height System" were organised.
- The welding equipment and technology DEMO Laboratory, the Watershed Laboratory, the Aquaculture Centre were renovated, Phase I of the Land Management and Hydraulic Engineering Museum was completed, and UAB "Baltic Agro Machinery" donated glass partitions to separate the laboratory spaces.
- A total of 2 international research projects were won and launched, with Faculty researchers working as part of VMU; more than 30 different research projects and more than 10 research project applications are engaged in. 33 scientific articles were published in journals in the Q1 quartile.
- Faculty teachers and researchers served as experts on more than 10 different review boards, more than 10 international societies, more than 20 editorial boards and scientific committees of scientific journals.
- More than 20 visits of foreign scientists were organised, more than 20 times the teachers and researchers of the Faculty underwent further training and internships abroad, and more than 20 seminars and other trainings were organised and conducted by the Faculty's scientists.

Dean Assoc. Prof. Rolandas Domeika

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Faculty of Forest Sciences and Ecology

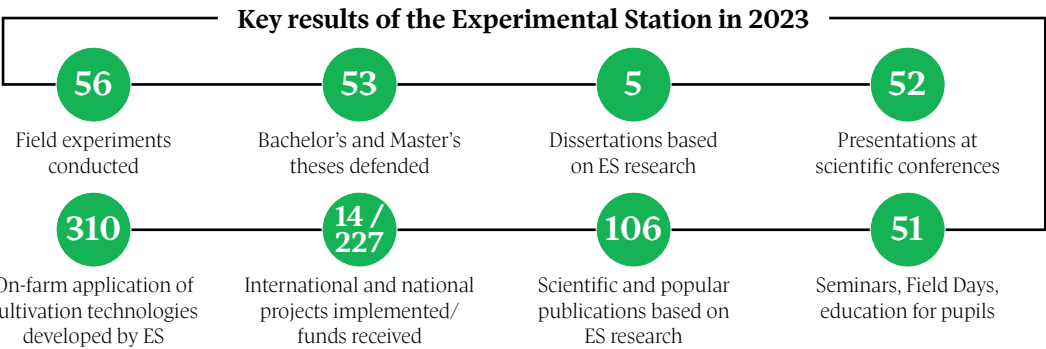
Key events of 2023

- A comparative expert evaluation of scientific activities for the period 2018–2022 was performed. The research activities of the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology were rated very good (Forest Science – 4, Ecology and Environmental Science – 4, Environmental Engineering – 4).
- The scholarship established by VŠĮ “Ekoagros” for the best Master's thesis in Ecology and Climate Change was awarded to Povilas Stankūnas.
- The graduation theses of students of the Forestry study programme Aušrinė Žolynaitė, Juras Zaukevičius, Mindaugas Strigas were awarded with the prizes awarded by the State Forest Enterprise for their topical forestry topics.
- Artūras Kibišas was awarded the “Medeinė” medal by the Lithuanian Hunting and Fishing Society for his contribution to the promotion of hunting culture and traditions.
- In 2023, the Faculty's staff publicised the results of their research in more than 80 events (TV programmes, media interviews, public lectures, debates, popular science articles, etc.) on forestry, nature conservation and hunting topics.
- On 20 January 2023, a scientific practical conference, “Adaptive Management of Lithuanian Forests and Opportunities for Enhancing Adaptive Management of Lithuanian Forests” was organised jointly with the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania.
- On 23 March, the final of the annual national competition “My World for a Sustainable Lithuania”, organised by the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology of Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy since 2012, took place at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. The 7 teams that made it to the finals competed in the event.
- On 10 October 2023, together with the State Forest Enterprise and the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, a workshop conference “Increasing the species composition and diversity of forest plantations and stands” was organised. On 29 November 2023, a conference on “Close to nature forestry in Lithuanian pine forests: scientific challenge and perspectives” took place.
- On 31 October, a seminar on “Organic composting technologies, production of organic compost fertilisers and legal regulation of composting” was organised (Dr. J. Pekarskas).
- Martynas Narmontas, Rūta Kembrytė-Ilčiukienė and Aidis Pivoriūnas defended their dissertations in forestry.
- In total, 3 “Horizon”, 1 LIFE, 5 COST, 3 Erasmus+ and more than 30 national projects were launched.
- The “Horizon Europe” project FOREST 4.0 was launched to promote innovative, data-driven solutions for forest monitoring, data collection and analysis, and forest management along the entire value chain, from the management of forest resources to the final product on the market.
- The international “Horizon Europe” project “Education and Nature-Based Solutions: Empowering Society for biodiversity-informed change” (eNaBIS) was won. VMU coordinator Prof. Gediminas Brazaitis.
- The Erasmus+ international project “Digital Blue Careers in the Carbon Crisis – Innovations in Aquaculture Curricula” (DiBluCa) was funded. The main project manager is Dr. Anželika Dautartė.
- The EIP project “Sustainable Agriculture – Sustainable Soil and Raw Materials” was awarded and launched. Coordinator Dr. J. Pekarskas, VMU.
- In 2023, 105 articles were published, including 40 articles in peer-reviewed journals with a citation index in the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science database, 38 articles in other peer-reviewed journals, and 12 dissemination articles.

Dean Prof. Vitas Marozas

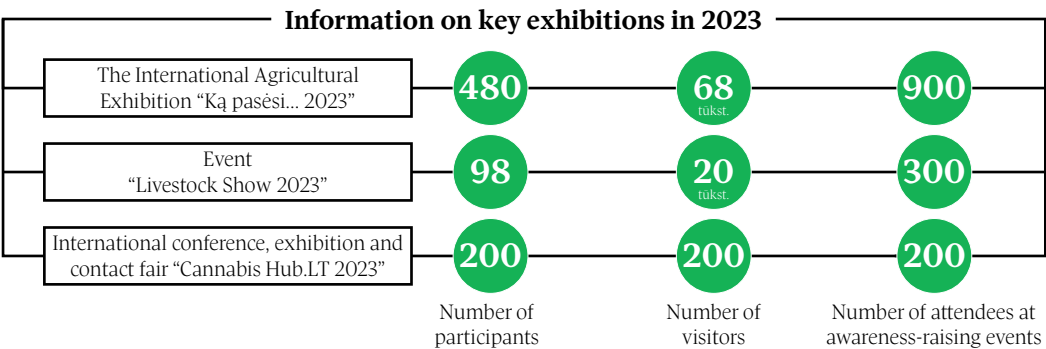
Address Studentų g. 11, Akademija, 53361 Kauno r.

VMU AA Experimental Station



Director Prof. Habil. Dr. Rimantas Velička | **Address** Rapsų g. 7, Noreikiškės, 53365 Kauno r.

VMU AA Business and Social Partnership Centre

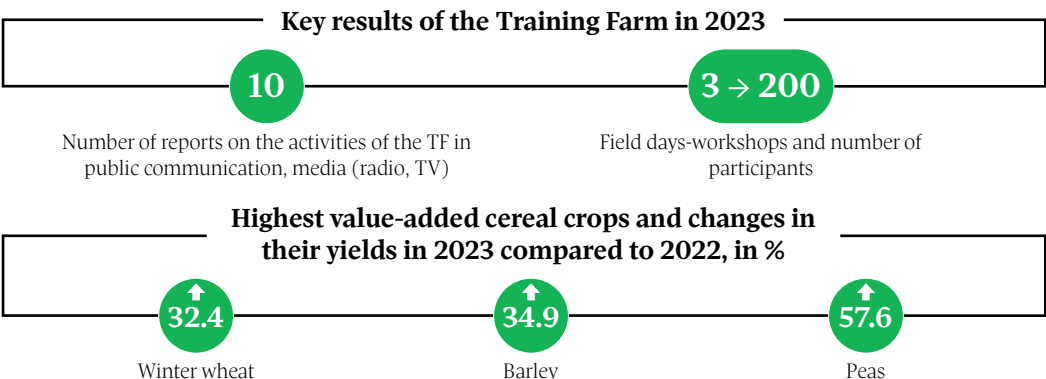


Information on ongoing projects

Ongoing projects		Training within the projects	
PCs.	Total value in EUR	No of organized trainings	Trained persons
10	565 400	101	1,965 PERS.

Director Rita Petlickaitė | **Address** Universiteto 8A, Akademija, 53361 Kauno r.

VMU AA Training Farm



Director Vilius Venskutonis | **Address** Rapsų g. 1, Noreikiškės, 53365 Kauno r.

Key events of 2023

VMU Agriculture Academy Experimental Station

- Teams of interdisciplinary researchers carried out 56 field experiments in 2,750 plots covering 47.35 ha. Permanent collections of crop rotations, energy crops, plant breeding – grassland and plant gene pools were set up and updated.
- 14 international, national and outsourced operator projects were carried out with an estimated value of EUR 724,135. The value of scientific experimental services provided under these projects is EUR 226,808.
- Scientific publications based on the research carried out in the ES database, presentations at conferences and seminars: in CA Web of Science DB refereed publications with IF – 14 (of which Q1 – 11, Q2 – 2, Q3 – 1); in other peer-reviewed journals – 27; articles on science popularisation – 65; presentations at scientific conferences abroad and in Lithuania – 52; seminars, field days – 46.
- 5 doctoral dissertations were defended on the basis of research carried out in the ES base (Inga Andruškaitė, Arūnas Čmukas, Jovita Balandaitė, Alfredas Sinkevičius – agronomy, Lina Saldukaitė – environmental engineering). Currently, 7 doctoral students, one of them Indonesian, are carrying out doctoral research at the Station. 31 Bachelor's and 22 Master's theses were prepared and defended; VMU AA students carried out 18 educational internships, which amounted to 508 hours. 4 educational events for pupils, a seminar for directors of Lithuanian STEAM centres, international cooperation with scientists from foreign institutions and agricultural consultants took place.

VMU Agriculture Academy Business and Social Partnership Centre

- 3 exhibitions were organised: the International Agricultural Exhibition “Ką pasėsi... 2023” (30 March–1 April), “Livestock Show 2023” (28–30 September, co-organised with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania); Cannabis Business Conference Exhibition and Contact Fair “Cannabis Hub.LT 2023” (27–28 October, co-organised with the Association of Cannabis Growers, Processors and Business Innovators).
- The event “Forum for the Future of Regions 2023” (26 April) was organised for farmers, members of Local Action Groups and other NGOs, researchers, business representatives and other interested parties. The event was attended by 153 people.
- A demonstration event “Open Farm 2023. Experiences and Recommendations” (27 June) was held. During the event, the visitors were introduced to the experience of the Teaching Farm of VMU Agriculture Academy in the application of different crop production technologies, and innovative machinery was demonstrated. The event was attended by 116 targeted visitors.
- The international event “EIP Action Groups Contacts and Experience Fair 2023” was organised (27–28 September). The event was attended by 90 people – farmers, researchers and consultants.
- 7 national and 3 international projects were carried out for a total value of EUR 565,390.

VMU Agriculture Academy Training Farm

- The logo of the Training Farm was updated and presented to the public.
- 411 visitors, including two foreign delegations, visited the Training Farm and learned about its activities.
- Aida Šiupšinskaitė, a student at the Faculty of Agronomy of VMU AA, studied the effect of biological products on winter wheat.
- Staff members' professional knowledge was enhanced in foreign farms, companies and exhibitions in Germany, the Netherlands and the USA.
- At the International Agricultural Exhibition “Ką pasėsi...2023”, in cooperation with the Business And Social Partnership Centre, a joint event was organised for different manufacturers of sprayers (Amazone “Pantera 4504”, Horsch “Leeb PT”, Berthoud “Raptor 5240”) and fertilisers (Rauch Axis H 50. 2 EMC, Amazone ZA-TS 3200 Super Profis Hydro, F4 pendant, Sully Econov X40+Econov, Kverneland Exacta-TLX GEO)) were demonstrated in a real farming field.
- “Livestock Show 2023” introduced the farm's cattle.
- There is cooperation with large agribusiness companies (AB “Linās Agro”, UAB “Dotnuva Baltic”, AB “Agrokoncernas”, UAB “Agrolitpa”, Corteva Agriscience Lithuania, UAB, “Rapool-Ring”, UAB “Nando”, UAB “Žemtiekimas”, cooperative “Pienas LT”, and advanced farms (T. Rupšys' farm, A. Stankus' farm, UAB “Juragiai”, ŽŪB “Linās”).
- The Training Farm has a prestigious herbarium and a series of 6 video trainings about it.
- A digital interactive map of the fields of Training Farm made available to the public (see <https://mokomasiskus.vdu.lt>).
- Various tillage trials, seeding drone trials, monitoring and testing of different varieties of winter oilseed rape and maize were conducted.
- A live video surveillance system from the farm was installed. New stall systems were installed, and a modern feed distribution unit was purchased. EUR 119,172.90 were invested.

Botanical Garden



Largest collections (number of collectible issues)

1835

Roses

796

Peonies

753

Dahlias

673

Daylilies

483

Tulips

274

Rhododendron

276

Astilbes

292

Plantain lilies

351

Lingonberries, rosehips
and cranberries

403

Iris

Collectible numbers (in total) **18 018**Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications **9**Rare plant species **111**Plant collection numbers assigned to ANGI **303**Number of projects **2**Volunteers **87**

Visitors

100 128

Visitors per year

236

Excursion groups

4533

Participants in
educational activities

Activity

Conferences and seminars

A meeting of the European Botanic Garden Consortium (EBGC)
A workshop by Plant Sentinel Network (IPSN)
Meeting of the Baltic Botanical Gardens
Conference "Human and Natural Safety 2023"
Scientific-practical seminar "The role of medicinal (aromatic) plants in traditional, scientific and applied aspects: dedicated to the 100th anniversary of VMU Botanical Garden (1923–2023)"

Events for the public

The fascination of Plants Day
Weeks of flowering of plants
Night of Scents
The fairs "Pakalnutės žiedas"
Photo exhibitions "VMU Botanical Garden – 100" and "Plant varieties developed in VMU Botanical Garden"
International Dahlia Exhibition
Art and music festivals "ConTempo", "Vasara Kaune 2023" and "Muzika Botanikoje"
Winter light festival "Jungle Book"

Director Dr. Nerijus Jurkonis

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Key events of 2023

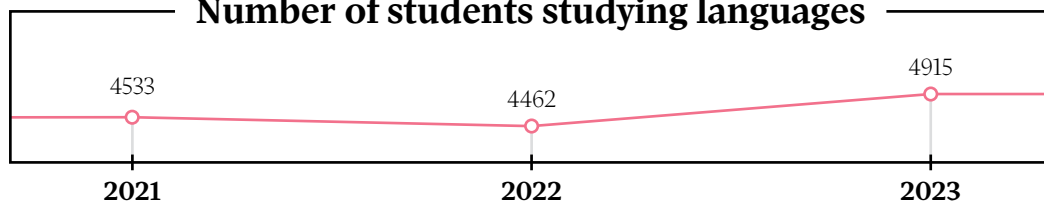
- In 2023, VMU Botanical Garden celebrated its 100th anniversary. To commemorate this anniversary, the Lithuanian Post issued a block of 4 stamps, "100 Years of VMU Botanical Garden".
- The Botanic Garden celebrated the anniversary with meetings of the European Consortium of Botanic Gardens and the Botanic Gardens of the Baltic States, an international exhibition of dahlias, and the opening of photo exhibitions dedicated to the anniversary.
- In 2023, 2 projects were completed: "Development of Technology for Decontamination of Used Wooden Sleepers by Biological Methods" (REMTECH) (headed by Prof. Audrius Maruška) and "Development of Innovative Growing Media Using Alternative Ingredients" (headed by Dr. Laima Česonienė), and the project "Nano-architectural Methodology and Empirical Study of the Micro-analysis of Fast Environmental Samples Using Highly Sustainable π -electron Materials" (headed by Prof. Audrius Maruška) is an ongoing one.
- In 2023, twelve varieties of Dr. Arūnas Balsevičius' dahlias ("Anelė Albina", "Duonos Kelias", "Freda Kristina Pink", "Janusz Bogdan Faliński", "Laumė", "Meška Slapukė", "Orija", "Ragana", "Tumė", "Vytautas Magnus University", "Wigry", "Žuvinto Lūgnė") were included in the Plant National Genetic Resources.
- The American Peony Societ registered a new peony cultivar, "Estonian Snow" (by Dr. Arūnas Balsevičius), in the International Registry of Paeonies.
- The International Scientific Conference "Man and Nature Protection 2023" with a scientific workshop "The role of medicinal (aromatic) plants in traditional, scientific and applied aspects: dedicated to the 100th anniversary of VMU Botanical Garden (1923–2023)" and the Plant Sentinel Network (IPSN) workshop on the monitoring of the ash pest, the Emerald Ash Borer (AEB) were organised.
- The Botanical Garden staff published 16 scientific publications in Lithuanian and foreign scientific journals.
- In total, 20 Botanic Garden staff members took part in Erasmus+ teaching and learning visits to botanical gardens, arboretums and other scientific institutions in different countries.
- Dr. Paulina Martusevičė did her internship at the Department of Food Science and Technology of the University of Davis, California, as part of the Baltic–American Freedom Foundation's Professional Internship Programme.
- Prof. Remigijus Daubaras participated in the 4th Asian Horticultural Congress in Tokyo (Japan), Prof. Remigijus Daubaras and Dr. Laima Česonienė participated in the Symposium on Fruit Breeding and Genetics EUCARPIA in Dresden (Germany), Prof. Ona Ragažinskienė – at the 72nd Medicinal and Natural Products Research Congress in Dublin (Ireland), Dr. Arūnas Balsevičius – at the International Dahlia Competition at the Parc de Floral Garden in Paris (France), doc. Viktorija Puzerytė and Dr. Paulina Martusevičė at the 12th Congress on Probiotics, Prebiotics and Novel Foods for Nutrition and Human and Microbiota Health in Rome, Italy.
- Prof. Remigijus Daubaras took part in the planting of the varieties "Dievind" and "Aras" (*Viburnum opulus* L.) developed at the Botanical Garden in Strasbourg and Brussels, dedicated to the start of the negotiations between the EU and Ukraine.
- VMU Botanic Garden participated in a plant seed exchange with 315 botanic gardens, arboretums and other scientific institutions worldwide.
- VMU BG provides a base for internships for various study programmes. In 2023, 646 students, including 362 students from universities, 236 students from universities of applied sciences and 48 students from vocational training centres, took part in internships at the Botanical Garden.
- 236 educational activities were held, attended by 4,533 pupils. In 2023, 3 summer camps were organised during the school summer holidays with 62 participants.
- The Cultural Education System's Cultural Passport 71 education activities ("Vegetation – a Reflection of the Culture of Countries", "The Cultural Heritage of the Manor House in the Botanical Gardens" and "Learning by Experimenting") were implemented. A total of 1538 pupils participated.
- In 2023, 3 training workshops on dendrology, floriculture and the cultivation and protection of medicinal plants were organised for adult training. The total number of participants was 73.
- In 2023, 12 students volunteered at VMU BG, 11 students took part in socio-civic lessons at the Botanical Gardens, 54 people took part in clean-up activities of companies and organisations. A total of 87 people volunteered.
- In 2023, 7 new plant displays were created, and 9 displays were reconstructed and renovated. The historical grape collection of Prof. K. Regel was recreated. The Educational Garden is adapted for growing and displaying spring bulbs and biennial flowers.
- In 2023, the construction of a car park for visitors to the Botanical Garden (98 parking spaces) and the reconstruction of the glasshouse, with the construction of an extension (225 m²), the renovation of the glasshouse facade, the repair and adaptation of one greenhouse for butterfly exhibitions, and the preparation of a project for the renovation of the internal spaces of the palace of the Aukštoji Freda Manor House, were finished.
- For the convenience of visitors, an automatic turning gate was installed at the entrance gate to the Botanical Garden, and the paved paths were resurfaced (515 m²).



Institute of Foreign Languages



Number of students studying languages



A total number of students, pupils, etc. number of unclassified students — **4987**

Unclassified students from the public learned in language groups with students — **13**

Pupils studied languages through non-formal education — **44**

VMU staff learned in language groups with students — **16**

VMU staff attended English language courses for staff — **244**

Pages translated — **1263**

Hours of interpretation — **100**

Pages edited — **256**

Research workers — **3**

Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications — **6**

Number of projects — **4**

Visiting teachers — **33**

1296 – Linguistic competences assessed



1230

English



66

French

59 – language teachers (53 of whom are employed by IFL)



27

teaching English



32

teaching other languages



13

teaching their mother tongue

31 languages are offered

English,
Arab,
Danish,
Estonian,
Esperanto,
Farsi,
Spanish,
Italian,

Japanese,
Georgian,
Chinese,
Korean,
Croatian,
Latvian,
Polish,
Lithuanian Sign
Language,

Latin,
New Testament
Greek,
Norwegian,
Portuguese,
French,
Russian,
Romanian,
Old Hebrew,

Serbian,
Finnish,
Modern Hebrew,
Swedish,
Turkish,
Ukrainian,
German.

Director Dr. Teresė Ringailienė

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Key events of 2023

- The Erasmus+ project APATCHE: Adding Plurilingual Approaches to Language Teacher Competences in Higher Education, coordinated by the Institute of Foreign Languages, was launched in 2023, with the aim of complementing the competences of language teachers in Higher Education Institutions with approaches that empower and develop multilingualism.
- On 25 January, the IFL hosted a lecture by Assoc. Prof. Emrah Etasoy from the University of Warwick.
- The DELF exam session took place on 17 March and 5 May. IFL is one of the few centres in Lithuania authorised to administer this French language exam.
- On 17-27 April, Vytautas Magnus University hosted the 12th annual festival of Spanish culture “Primavera en español”. The colourful two-week programme of the event invited people to get to know the Spanish-speaking world by interacting with native speakers, taking part in lectures by guest speakers, competitions, watching a film or cooking traditional Spanish dishes.
- Issues 22 and 23 of the scientific journal “Sustainable Multilingualism” were published. The journal publishes international research on language policy, the acquisition and development of individual multilingual competence, the development of societal multilingualism, linguistic identity, language teaching and learning in higher education, and teaching and learning in multilingual and multicultural environments.
- In April and November, weekly “Language Tasting” distance events were held to introduce participants to less commonly spoken languages such as Romanian, Swahili, Esperanto, etc.
- On 26 May, Georgia Independence Day was celebrated with a meeting with the Ambassador of Georgia to Lithuania, Salome Shapakidze, and the opening of two exhibitions: “The Living Culture of the Three Writing Systems of the Georgian Alphabet” and the “Knight of Panther’s Skin – the Georgian Handwriting Heritage”.
- On 12 September, a new initiative, “Language HUB”, was launched to make it even easier for the University community to come together to empower English language skills. These are weekly informal conversations in a language other than your own on topics of interest to University staff.
- European Day of Languages was traditionally celebrated on 26 September. The participants listened to a presentation by K. Kazlauskaitė, a representative of the company “Alliance for Recruitment”, on the need for languages in today’s labour market, took part in a roundtable discussion on “Student success stories: why translators should learn languages”, and played an orientation game “A mosaic of languages and cultures in Kaunas”.
- The IFL teachers and international students took part in the “Garden of Cultures 2023” event on 16 September, teaching words and phrases in 8 languages.
- In October, IFL and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain organised a Spanish Film Screening Series (5 films shown).
- On 11 October, the IFL and Kaunas IN invited participants to the “Pristabydk ir pamatyk” activity “Kalbų lagaminas”, where they learned 6 different languages.
- The Camões Portuguese Language Centre was opened on 12 October to promote the Portuguese language, culture, values, charity and economy.
- Events of German Week “Ö kaip vokiškai?” took place on 16-24 October.
- On 2 December, the 7th VMU Spanish Language Forum took place, which aims to bring together Spanish language teachers, lecturers, translators and other professionals to share news, research results, and discuss the latest language teaching methods. The event attracts more and more participants yearly, from Lithuania and neighbouring countries.
- The IFL teachers gave semester-long informal Italian and Spanish classes to pupils, lectured to students in various gymnasiums and pro-gymnasiums, and held classes with international students at the “Žilvitis” kindergarten.
- The IFL teachers taught German to S. Darius and S. Girėnas Gymnasium teachers, employees of UAB “GOD” and “Auslandsgesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt”.
- An English-Spanish tandem with El Salvador’s Don Bosco University: students from IFL learn Spanish and teach English.
- Sean O’Costealbha from Ireland visited the IFL to introduce the Irish language and culture to the IFL staff and students as part of the Erasmus+ teaching programme for employees of companies and organisations. At the same time, Ales Janoušek from Germany gave lectures to students studying German.



Bioeconomy Research Institute

Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	44
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	42
Number of ongoing scientific projects	12
Number of new project proposals prepared	19
R&D contracts with businesses and public authorities	4
Research staff (FTE on 31 December)	23

Key events of 2023

- The national project "Development of the Bioeconomy Research Excellence Centre (BioTEC)" was won and launched. The project duration is from 2023 to 2027. Project manager Dr. Monika Medikienė, project supervisor Dr. Zita Kriauciūnienė.
- Researchers from the Faculty of Engineering of the Agriculture Academy and the Bioeconomy Research Institute, led by Professor Arvydas Povilaitis, started a major HORIZON Europe CL6-2022-ZEROPOLLUTION-01-02 project NENUPHAR – "New Nutrient Management Models to Reduce Pollution, Increase Recycling and Recovery of Nutrients from Waste".
- The international Horizon Europe project "Creation of the Centre of Excellence in Smart Forestry (Forest 4.0)" was launched together with VMU Faculties of Informatics, Forestry and Ecology and other departments. The project duration is from 2023 to 2029. Project coordinator at the Bioeconomy Research Institute Virginija Kargytė.
- The "New Governance Models to Enhance Nutrient Pollution Handling and Nutrients Recycling (NENUPHAR)" international project under the "European Horizon" Programme was awarded and launched. The project duration is from 2023 to 2027. Project Manager Dr. Arvydas Povilaitis.
- The international project "BOOSTing the Bioeconomy Transformation FOR (4) the BIOEAST region (BOOST4BIOEAST)" was funded by the "European Horizon" Programme. The project duration is from 2023 to 2026. Project manager Assoc. Prof. Rasa Pakeltienė.
- The international LIFE project "Green Farm (GFarm for Life)" receives the funding and is launched. The project duration is from 2023 to 2026. Project manager Dr. Rytis Skominas.
- The Interreg Baltic Sea Region project "Creating Resilient Rural Communities in BSR Based on the Opportunities of Digital Bio Businesses (eRural resilience)" is funded and launched. The project duration is from 2023 to 2026. Project manager Dr. Jolita Greblikaitė.
- The International Scientific Conference "Sustainable Energy and Environmental Protection SEEP2023" was co-organised with Brunel University in London on 25-28 July 2023.
- On 7 September 2023, Rytis Skominas, Director of the Institute, signed a cooperation agreement with Pohang Technopark, Bioapp, Genecell Biotech, Lart-Bio, UAB "Nando" and UAB "Caszyme" in South Korea.
- On 27 September 2023, the Lithuanian Bioeconomy Innovation and Business Development Forum was organised with partners under the auspices of the Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, Aušrinė Armonaitė, and attracted more than 400 participants from science, business and the public sector.
- On 18–19 October 2023, Virginija Kargytė, Deputy Director of the Institute, together with the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, and representatives from other science and business organisations in the country, visited Melbourne to participate in the first Australian-Victorian-Lithuanian Business and Science Forum.
- The Centre for Animal Production Research and Innovation launched a project within the framework of the measure "Knowledge Transfer and Information Activities" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 "Support for Demonstration Projects and Dissemination Activities", the project "Genetic Determination of Economically Useful Traits in Dairy Cattle".

Director of the Institute Assoc. Prof. Rytis Skominas

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Research Institute of Natural and Technological Sciences

Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	12
Patent registered in Lithuania	1
Number of ongoing scientific projects	10
Number of new project proposals prepared	11
Research staff (FTE on 31 December)	40

Key events of 2023

- Audrius Dėdelė, Head of the Institute's Environmental Research, Health and Sustainability Research Group and chief research worker, together with the other partners of the EC "Horizon" Programme's "Cities Health" project, was awarded the 2023 Digital Communities Award for Citizen Science Cities Health Partners (2023).
- Research Institute of Natural and Technological Sciences organised the 8th Baltic Genetics Congress.
- Algimantas Paulauskas, Director of the Research Institute of Natural and Technological Sciences, became the Chairman of the Technical Committee LST TK 87 Biotechnology of the Lithuanian Standards Department and a member of the National Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture's project FIT4FOOD 2030 (Fostering Integration and Transformation for FOOD 2030).
- Saulius Mickevičius, head of the Functional Materials Research Group and senior research worker, became a member of the Board of the Lithuanian Physical Society.
- The 17th International Scientific Conference, "Gyvasis gamtos ženklas 2023", was organised on 18-19 May. The Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Conference is Audrius Sigitas Maruška, Head of the Centre for Open Access to Instrumental Analysis.
- The 16th International Conference of the Lithuanian Biochemical Society was held in Taujėnai, Lithuania on 28-30 June. Rasa Žukienė, senior research worker at the Cellular Stress Response Research Group, was a member of the conference organising committee.
- The Artificial Intelligence Research Group runs the Excellence Centres project "Sustainable Living and Working SUSTAINLIVWork". The project is led by Ričardas Krikštolaitis, Head of the Artificial Intelligence Research Group chief research worker at VMU.
- Patent LT 6978 B. *Method* for the treatment of waste contaminated with *organophosphorus compounds* was registered with the State Patent Bureau of the Republic of Lithuania. The patent is co-authored by Marina Sidorenko, a researcher in the Molecular Ecology and Genomics Research Group, and Volodymyr Vasylenko, a junior research worker in the Functional Materials Research Group.
- The Research Council of Lithuania's technological development project, "Commercialisation of a wireless electroporator", was won. The project manager is Saulius Šatkauskas, a chief research worker.
- A project of the Research Council of Lithuania-Ukraine Bilateral Cooperation Programme on Science and Technology, "Genetic control of transmembrane translocation and metabolism of pentose sugars during alcoholic fermentation of *Ogataea polymorpha*", was won. The Lithuanian part of the project is led by Rimantas Daugelavičius, a chief research worker.
- The project "Development and application of a technology for the production of multicomponent liposome carriers" under the Innovation Agency's InoStartas measure was won. The project is led by Baltramiejus Jakštys, a research worker in the Cell and Tissue Biotechnology Research Group.
- The project 35BV-KK-21-I-08998-PR001, "Application of nano-structured water technology on dairy farms for the prevention of mastitis in high breeding value cows, increasing productivity and improving the genetic potential of herds", was won. The project manager is Vida Juozaitienė, chief research worker at the Molecular Ecology and Genomics Research Group.
- The project "Tick-borne pathogens in urban, suburban and rural areas" of the Research Council of Lithuania was won. The project is led by Jana Radzijeuskaja, chief research worker at the Molecular Ecology and Genomics Research Group.
- The project "Application of plasma and aeroponics technologies to increase plant biomass growth and yield of biologically active substances" of the Research Council of Lithuania was won. The project manager is Vida Mildažienė, chief research worker at the Cellular Stress Response Research Group.

Director of the Institute Prof. Algimantas Paulauskas

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Educational Research Institute

Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	34
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	22
Number of ongoing scientific projects	3
Number of new project proposals prepared	8
R&D contracts with businesses and public authorities	5
Research staff (FTE on 31 December)	16

Key events of 2023

- In February, the ERI launched an innovative activity to develop competences in research methodology for Lithuania, aimed at contributing to the quality of ongoing research – the series of research methodology seminars “Metodologiniai suvožtiniai”. Workshops are attended by Master's students, postgraduates, doctoral students, researchers and practitioners. 15 methodological workshops were held in 2023.
- The Educational Research Institute of Vytautas Magnus University, Education Academy, organised the second event of a new format, “Dialogue Laboratory 2023. Learning Journey: Change as a Permanent State”. The Dialogue Lab is an opportunity for practitioners, policymakers, and scientists to come together and share their views and experiences through dialogue.
- VMU EA hosted the international conference “Crossing Boundaries” in cooperation with the European Research Network “Vocational Education and Training”.
- VMU Educational Research Institute of VMU Education Academy organised the fifth annual International Summer School at VMU. The international audience brings together researchers and scientists from all over the world.
- The Lithuanian Science Prizes (LSP) Commission's meeting of the management and section chairpersons discussed the scientific works submitted for the LSP competition. Among them, there is a series of papers by Prof. Vilma Žydžiūnaitė, Director of the Educational Research Institute at VMU Education Academy, entitled “Evidence-Based Qualitative Research Methodology and Educational Leadership at School and University (2008–2022)”.
- The President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, awarded the winners of the best dissertations of 2022. Among the authors was the dissertation “LIBERTÉ vs SECURITÉ and AUTOCRATIE” by Dr. Birutė Vitytė, a teacher at the Education Academy of Vytautas Magnus University and researcher at the ERI.

Director of the Institute Prof. Vilma Žydžiūnaitė

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Institute of Digital Resources and Interdisciplinary Research

Number of articles in the Scopus database of peer-reviewed journals	3
Number of ongoing scientific projects	9
Number of new project proposals prepared	5
Research staff (FTE on 31 December)	5,5

Key events of 2023

- Before the international conference “Sustainable Multilingualism 2023” Jurgita Vaičenonienė led a seminar on the resources of the international research infrastructure CLARIN and language analysis tools and their application in education.
- Jurgita Vaičenonienė remotely organised a series of CLARIN-LT consortium events for Ukrainian researchers gave a presentation and a workshop on CLARIN ERIC’s language research open resources, tools and services.
- In November, SITTI scientists organised a lecture-seminar at the Lithuanian Science Council on Science Data Spaces in Europe, Data Opening and Open Science.
- SITTI researchers organised an extended workshop-training for VMU staff on research data management, openness and open science.
- In November 2023, SITTI researchers organised a republican scientific-practical conference on the opening and use of citizen science project data based on one of the projects.
- Darius Amilevičius became a member of the International Language and Law Association.
- Andrius Utka became VMU’s representative in the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC).
- Laura Kamandulytė-Merfeldienė, as a member of an expert group formed by the National Education Agency, participated in the preparation of the *guidelines for the pre-school curriculum* approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.
- Darius Amilevičius obtained the international certificate of data steward and advised the Information Society Development Committee under the Ministry of Economy and Innovation on data governance and management issues for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in the preparation of the reform of the management of state information resources.
- Andrius Utka was an invited guest at a public debate on the ethics of artificial intelligence in the Baltic States in Tartu.
- Darius Amilevičius, at the invitation of the European Court of Justice, presented a paper entitled “The Use of Intelligent Systems and Big Language Models in the Field of Law: Mission (Im)possible?” at the annual interinstitutional meeting of terminologists organised by the European Court of Justice on 17 November 2023.
- Volume 79 of VMU Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences “Darbai ir dienos” was prepared and published in English by the SITTI people as part of the European University Alliance projects T4EU and T4ERI with the University of Saarland.

Director of the Institute Prof. Habil. Dr. Rūta Petrauskaitė

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Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute

Number of author's sheets of monographs or studies	43
Number of research articles in CA WoS and/or Scopus referenced publications	5
Number of ongoing scientific projects	7
Number of new project proposals prepared	39
R&D contracts with businesses and public authorities	36
Research staff (FTE on 31 December)	28

2023 m. svarbiausi įvykiai

- The Institute started its active phase on 1 September 2023 and comprises researchers from 10 scientific fields, representing 6 faculties of VMU. The new Council of the Institute was elected on 18 December 2023.
- The agreement on the financing of the project "Strengthening the R&D activities of Vytautas Kavolis Institute of Transdisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities SOCMTEP", No. S-A-UEI-23-13 was signed under the advancement measure No. 12-001-01-01-01 under the programme "The Excellence Initiative of Universities" of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Project duration: 1.10.2023-31.12.2027 (EUR 2.9 million).
- "The Generations and Gender Programme Preparatory Phase Project (GGP-5D)" No. 101079357 is an ongoing H2020 Data Infrastructure project (led by Prof. Aušra Maslauskaitė).
- The Council of the State Progress Strategy "Lithuania's Vision for the Future: Lithuania 2050" was composed of Prof. Aušra Maslauskaitė (member of the Council's Coordination Group) and Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis.
- Prof. Milda Ališauskienė and Prof. Artūras Tereškinas were awarded with personal acknowledgements from the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's Office for their long-term activities in the field of human rights.
- Dr. Kristina Jonutytė was awarded the prestigious Caroline von Humboldt (Germany) Young Investigator Award and the Research Award.
- Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė, Director of the Kavolis Institute, together with Prof. Natalija Mažeikienė, a member of the Institute's Board, and a group of researchers visited the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Helsinki (HSSH). The aim of the visit was to deepen knowledge and discover new ideas on how the Institute's activities can contribute to strengthening the competences and skills of researchers, developing transdisciplinary research and making an impact on society.
- Three projects funded by the Research Council of Lithuania were launched, led by researchers of V. Kavolis Institute: "A Model of Religious, Spiritual Support for Victims of Workplace Mobbing: Attracting New Resources for a Healthy and Safe Working Environment" (project manager Prof. Jolita Vveinhardt), "The History and Heritage of Kaunas Dominicans" (project manager Prof. Vaida Kamuntavičienė), "The Changing Role of the Local Politician in Local Government: Leadership, Institutions, and Communities" (project manager Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė).
- From 2023 onwards, participation in the "Lithuanian Longitudinal Social Survey – LIST" pilot phase with KTU, VU, Strata (Prof. Aušra Maslauskaitė).
- The project "Transmedia Communication Model for Achieving Media Resilience and Information Integrity of Society" was approved by the Research Council of Lithuania under the Competitive Priority Research Programme "Strengthening Resilience of Society and Crisis Management in the Context of Contemporary Geopolitical Events" (project manager Prof. Aukšė Balčytienė).
- Taiwan-Lithuania-Latvia Research Programme Project No. P-LLT-24-22 "Patterns of Penetration of Authoritarian Regimes into Democratic Systems: a Comparative Analysis of Political Representation in Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan" was won (project manager Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė, researcher Assoc. Prof. Sima Rakutienė), partners: the University of Soochow (Taiwan) and the University of Latvia.
- Two H2020 projects are underway: the BECID "Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders" (partner leader Prof. A. Balčytienė); the DIACOMET "Fostering Capacity Building for Civic Resilience and Participation: Dialogic Communication Ethics and Accountability" (partner leader Prof. A. Balčytienė, researcher Prof. Natalija Mažeikienė).

Director of the Institute Assoc. Prof. Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė

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