Vytautas Magnus University Graduating Students' Survey (EXIT) Results: Studies, Preparation and Defense of Final Theses

2024

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Survey Purpose and Respondents

The survey of graduating students was conducted in January and June 2024.

The aim was to identify the graduating students' opinion about studies at Vytautas Magnus University (further – University, VMU) and to evaluate students' career plans.

Respondents: VMU students who had studied in bachelor, master, integrated and professional study programmes.

Respondents' answers about their studies, completed internships, preparation and defense of the final thesis are presented below.

These questions were answered by 1651 student in the survey – 843 bachelor, 613 master, 36 integrated and 159 professional studies' students. 8.24% of respondents were international students.

Respondents in faculties, academies

| Faculty, academy	Number of respondents	Number of graduates	Percentage of students surveyed, %
1. Faculty of Economics and Management	161	223	72.20%
2. Faculty of Natural Sciences	87	108	80.56%
3. Faculty of Humanities	148	186	79.57%
4. Faculty of Informatics	74	102	72.55%
5. Faculty of Catholic Theology	19	27	70.37%
6. Faculty of Arts	98	137	71.53%
7. Music Academy	50	85	58.82%
8. Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy	154	204	75.49%
9. Faculty of Social Sciences	156	219	71.23%
10. Education Academy	348	520	66.92%
11. Faculty of Law	71	93	76.34%
12. Agriculture Academy	285	356	80.06%
In total:	**1651**	**2260**	**73.05%**

Evaluation of Studies

12 statements, answers from "agree" – 4 to "disagree" – 1; "I do not know, hard to say" (0) – eliminated.

No.	Statements	Averages of evaluations and percentage		
		All respondents	Lithuanian students	International students
1.	I completed all the study tasks	3.84 (96%)	3.83 (95.75%)	3.92 (98%)
2.	The administrative staff provided all necessary assistance	3.74 (93.5%)	3.74 (93.5%)	3.78 (94.5%)
3.	The university provided me with opportunities for international mobility	3.70 (92.5%)	3.68 (92%)	3.88 (97%)
4.	There was a possibility to choose minor studies	3.69 (92.25%)	3.70 (92.5%)	3.53 (88.25%)
5.	If necessary, I was able to consult with teachers	3.65 (91.25%)	3.63 (90.75%)	3.87 (96.75%)
6.	The equipment in the classrooms, laboratories and other study rooms was appropriate	3.62 (90.5%)	3.60 (90%)	3.82 (95.5%)
7.	I dedicated enough time to my studies	3.61 (90.25%)	3.60 (90%)	3.82 (95.5%)
8.	Study material and literature sources were available in the library and/or virtual environment	3.60 (90%)	3.58 (89.5%)	3.85 (96.25%)
9.	The content of the courses corresponded to the purpose of the study programme	3.50 (87.5%)	3.48 (87%)	3.74 (93.5%)
10.	Opportunities to learn various foreign languages were provided at the university	3.50 (87.5%)	3.47 (86.75%)	3.74 (93.5%)
11.	The workload of the studies was appropriate for me	3.40 (85%)	3.36 (84%)	3.76 (94%)
12.	Classes (lectures, seminars, lab work, etc.) matched my study expectations	3.32 (83%)	3.29 (82.25%)	3.63 (90.75%)

Assessment of Study Internship

5 statements, answers from "agree" – 4 to "disagree" – 1; "I do not know, hard to say" (0) – eliminated. Replied those students, who had completed internship during their studies (N=1147).

Statements

Averages of evaluations and percentage (%)
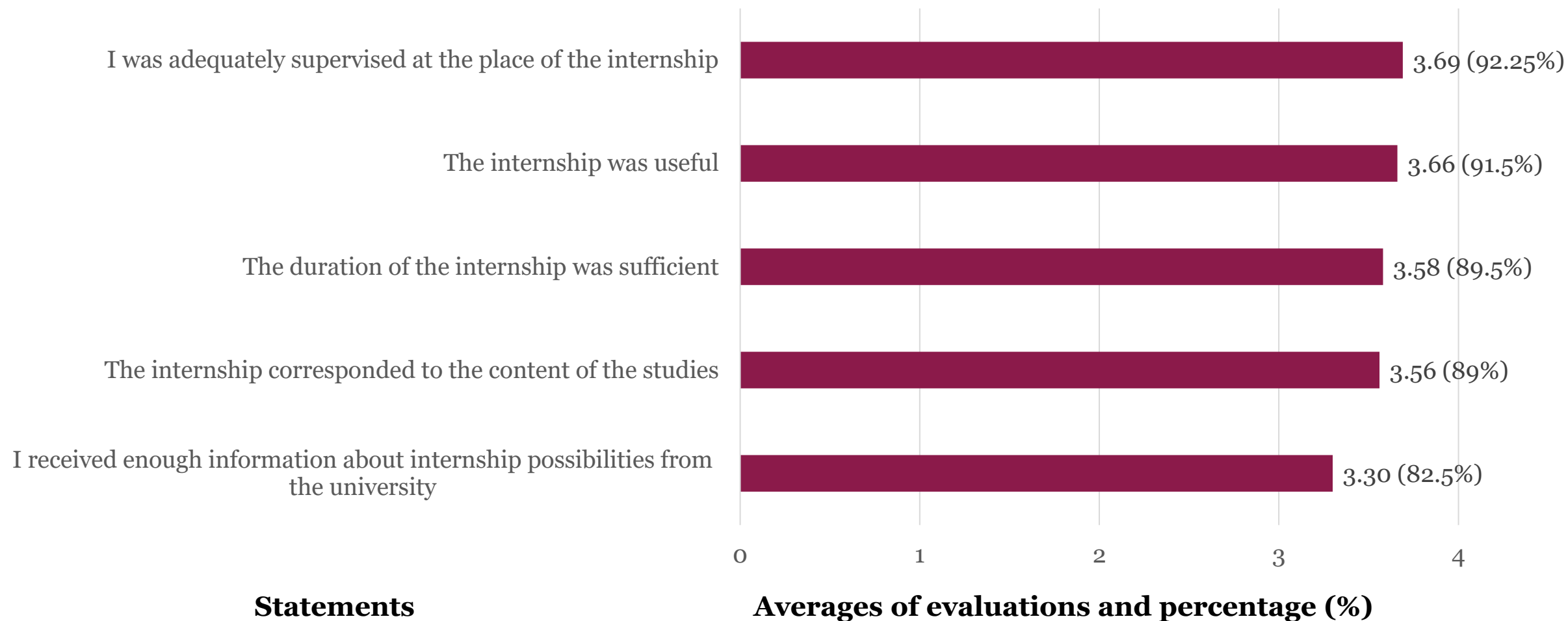
Summary of Respondents' Comments about Study Internship

Positive comments:

Internship offers an opportunity to apply knowledge gained during studies in a real work environment, develop practical skills, observe the daily routines, processes, and challenges of a specific field firsthand, gain a better understanding of career opportunities, explore various roles, and choose the right career path.

A positive internship experience motivates students to achieve better academic results, boosts self-confidence, and enhances their satisfaction with their studies.

Sufficient attention, constant support, and constructive feedback from internship supervisors ensure the smooth completion of internship tasks.

During the internship, connections are established with potential employers and colleagues, which can be valuable in the future when seeking for job or collaboration opportunities.

Summary of Respondents' Comments about Study Internship

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Proposals for improvement:

Ensure that all internship locations comply with the study program requirements and provide students with the opportunities to acquire the necessary practical skills.

It is essential to provide students with more information about potential internship companies, their activities, internship conditions, requirements, as well as feedback from students who have completed internships previously.

Strive to provide students with the opportunity to choose from a wide range of internship placements that align with their interests and career aspirations.

Ensure equal opportunities for all students to participate in internships, consider offering financial support options, such as reimbursement for travel expenses.

Participation in Study Exchanges and Internships Abroad

Replied those students, who indicated that they participated in study exchanges and / or did internships abroad. Respondents were able to choose multiple answers.

Statements	Response number (N=196) and percentage
1. Studied under the Erasmus programme	103 (52.55%)
2. Did a traineeship under the Erasmus programme	36 (18.37%)
3. Other*	27 (13.78%)
4. Studied under the VMU bilateral exchange programme	22 (11.22%)
5. Did a Lituanistic traineeship in a Lithuanian community, school or centre abroad	6 (3.06%)
6. Did a traineeship under the VMU bilateral exchange program	2 (1.02%)

*By choosing *Other*, the respondents indicated participation in Blended Intensive Programmes, Transform4Europe, AISEC, double degree and other programmes.

Gained or Developed Skills while Studying at VMU
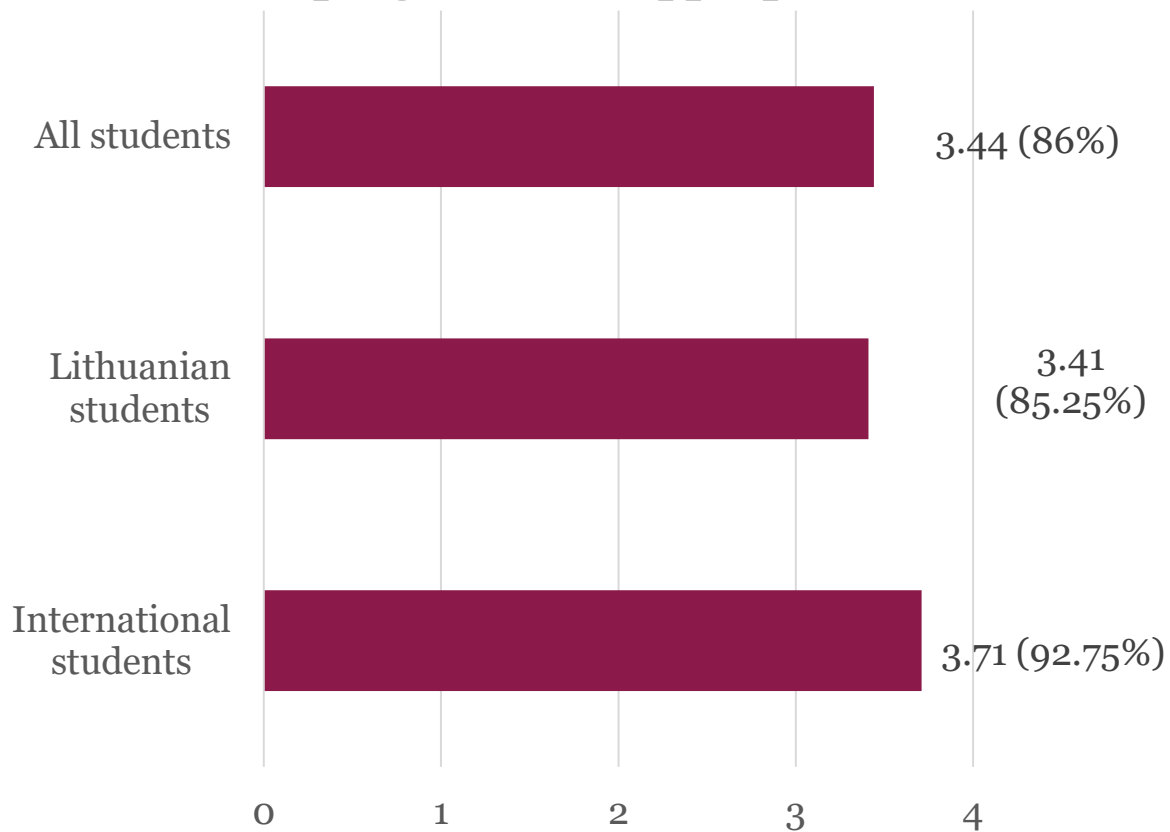
Respondents chose 1-3 skills.

Gained or developed skills	Response number (N=5673) and percentage
1. Specialized knowledge and skills	1082 (19.07%)
2. Communication and collaboration skills	978 (17.24%)
3. Problem solving skills	739 (13.03%)
4. Time planning skills	723 (12.74%)
5. Responsibility	622 (10.96%)
6. Creativity skills	549 (9.68%)
7. Information literacy	521 (9.18%)
8. Foreign language skills	417 (7.35%)
9. Other skills	42 (0.74%)

*By choosing *Other skills*, the respondents mentioned critical and analytical thinking, academic writing, information gathering and application, public speaking, improvization and other skills.
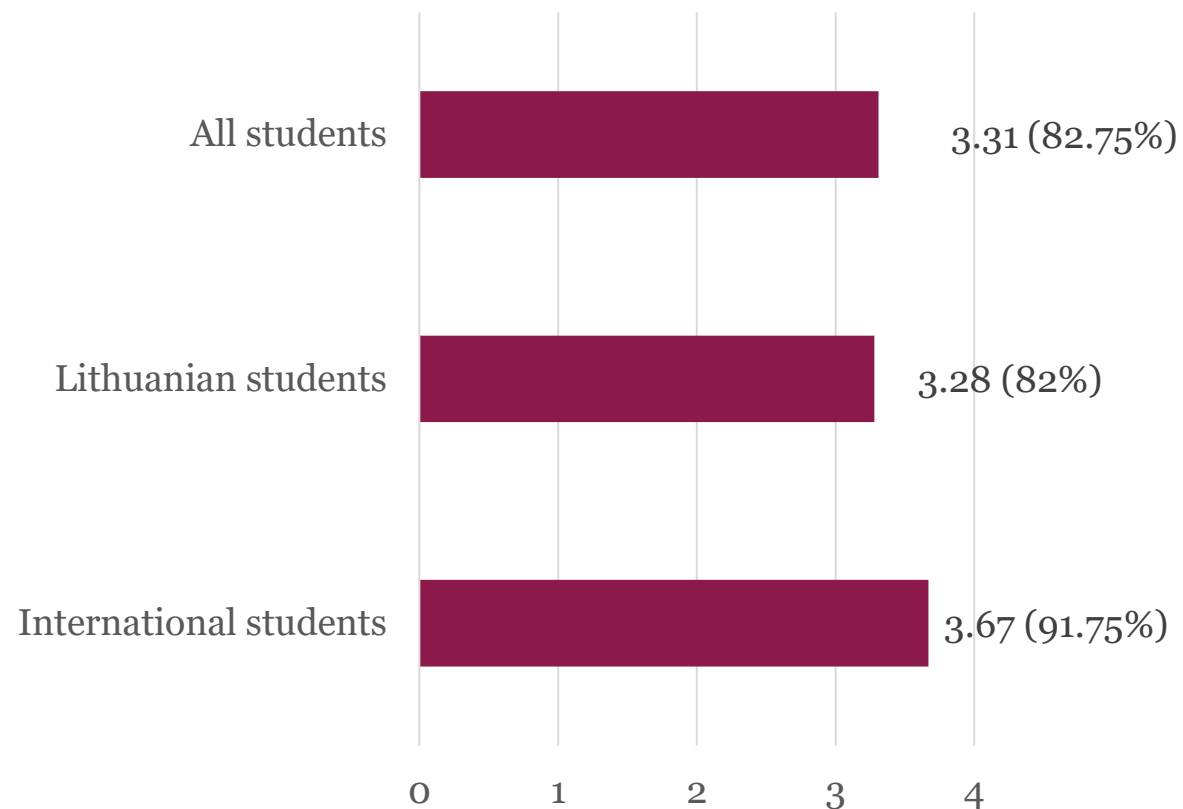
Summarised Evaluation of the Studied Programmes

2 statements, answers from "agree" – 4 to "disagree" – 1; "I do not know, hard to say" (0) – eliminated.

In general, the quality of the study programme is appropriate

- All students: 3.44 (86%)
- Lithuanian students: 3.41 (85.25%)
- International students: 3.71 (92.75%)

I would recommend this study programme to others

- All students: 3.31 (82.75%)
- Lithuanian students: 3.28 (82%)
- International students: 3.67 (91.75%)

Summary of Respondents' Comments about Studies

Positive comments:

Students constantly emphasize their teachers' competence, professionalism, and engaging teaching style. Teachers not only convey theoretical knowledge but also share practical experience, actively involve students in discussions, and foster friendly and supportive learning environment.

Students have a unique opportunity to study minor programs at no cost, thereby gaining additional knowledge and skills. The university offers extensive opportunities to explore different cultures, broaden horizons, learn foreign languages, participate in exchange programs, and attend lectures by international teachers.

The studies are characterized by flexibility, allowing students to combine education with work, family, or other activities. Students appreciate the opportunity to choose elective study courses, flexibly create their own schedules, and attend lectures remotely.

Students appreciate the modern infrastructure, including updated classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities, as well as the opportunity to participate in various events, join student organizations, and develop their talents and interests. Studies at VMU promote not only students' professional growth but also their personal development.

The university has a strong community that offers support and assistance to students. Students appreciate friendly atmosphere and positive interactions with their peers, teachers, and administrative staff.

Summary of Respondents' Comments about Studies

Proposals for improvement:

Integrate more practical tasks, projects, and field trips into the learning process to help students better understand theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and prepare for the job market.

Encourage teachers to use innovative, engaging, and contemporary teaching methods that present information in a more interesting and effective manner; involve students in the learning process, and promote their critical thinking. Additionally, improve teachers' English language skills.

Distribute the study load more evenly between semesters and academic years; this would help students avoid excessive workload and stress, especially in their final year of study.

Ensure clear, consistent, and timely delivered information. Create a centralized information source where students can find all the necessary information about their studies, lectures, deadlines, requirements, and more.

Support dynamic mentoring activities that help new students adapt to university more quickly and receive assistance from upperclassmen.

Smoothness of Cooperation with the Supervisor of the Final Work (Art Project) (1)


Smoothness of cooperation
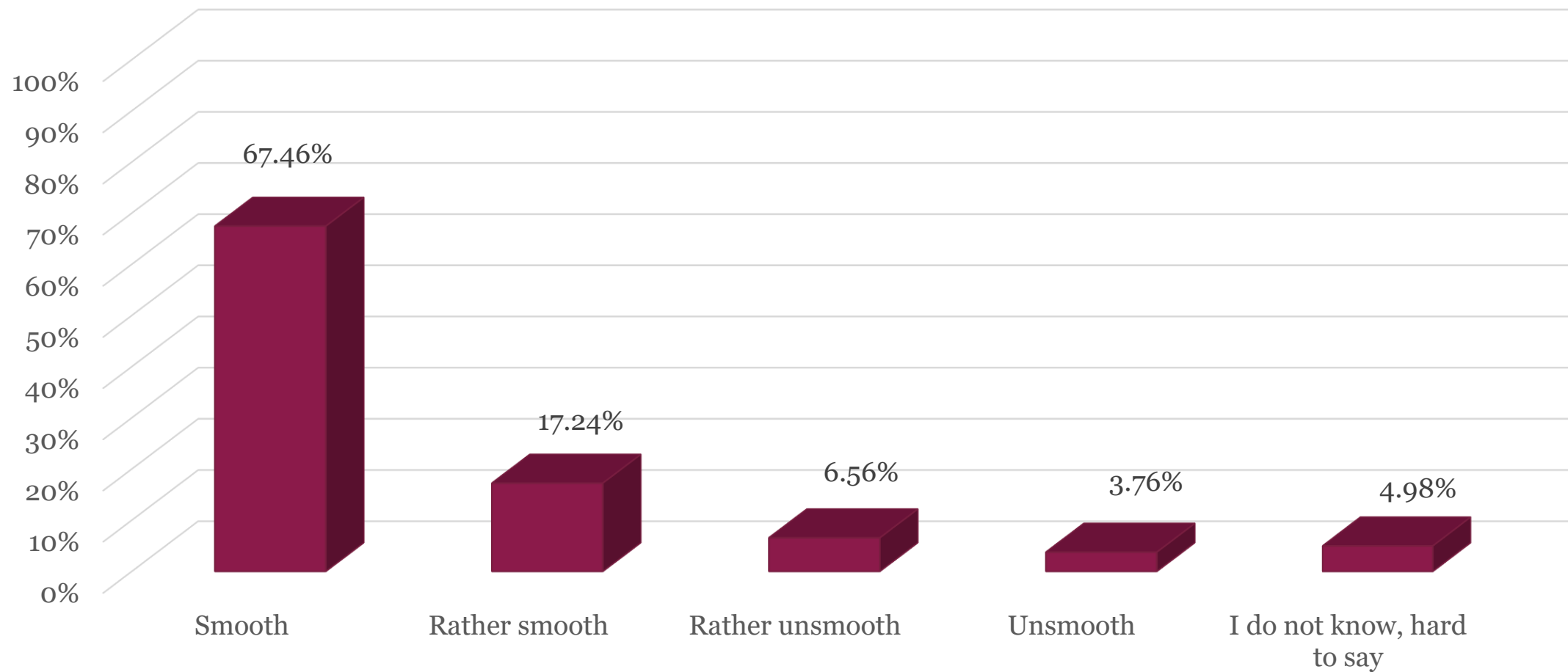
Reasons of Sufficiently Smooth and Insufficiently Smooth Cooperation with the Final Work (Art Project) Supervisor (2)

Reasons of sufficiently smooth cooperation	Response number (N=2208) and percentage	Reasons of insufficiently smooth cooperation	Response number (N=203) and percentage
1. The supervisor has made sufficient efforts to ensure smooth cooperation	1088 (49.28%)	1. The supervisor did not put in enough effort to make the cooperation smooth	86 (42.36%)
2. I have made sufficient efforts to make the cooperation smooth	989 (44.79%)	2. Other (the absence of a single supervisor, instead of that - consultations with several teachers who provided different insights; supervisor's high workload; supervisor's lack of knowledge of VMU requirements for final theses; supervisor's slow communication; lack of critical, essential comments for the thesis)	82 (40.39%)
3. Other (precise consultation schedule; clear terms; mutual cooperation; fast communication; supervisor's empathy and constant motivation; student's inner motivation)	131 (5.93%)		
		3. I did not put in enough effort to make the cooperation smooth	35 (17.24%)

Adequacy of the Final Work (Art Project) Defense Procedure

Adequacy of defence procedure
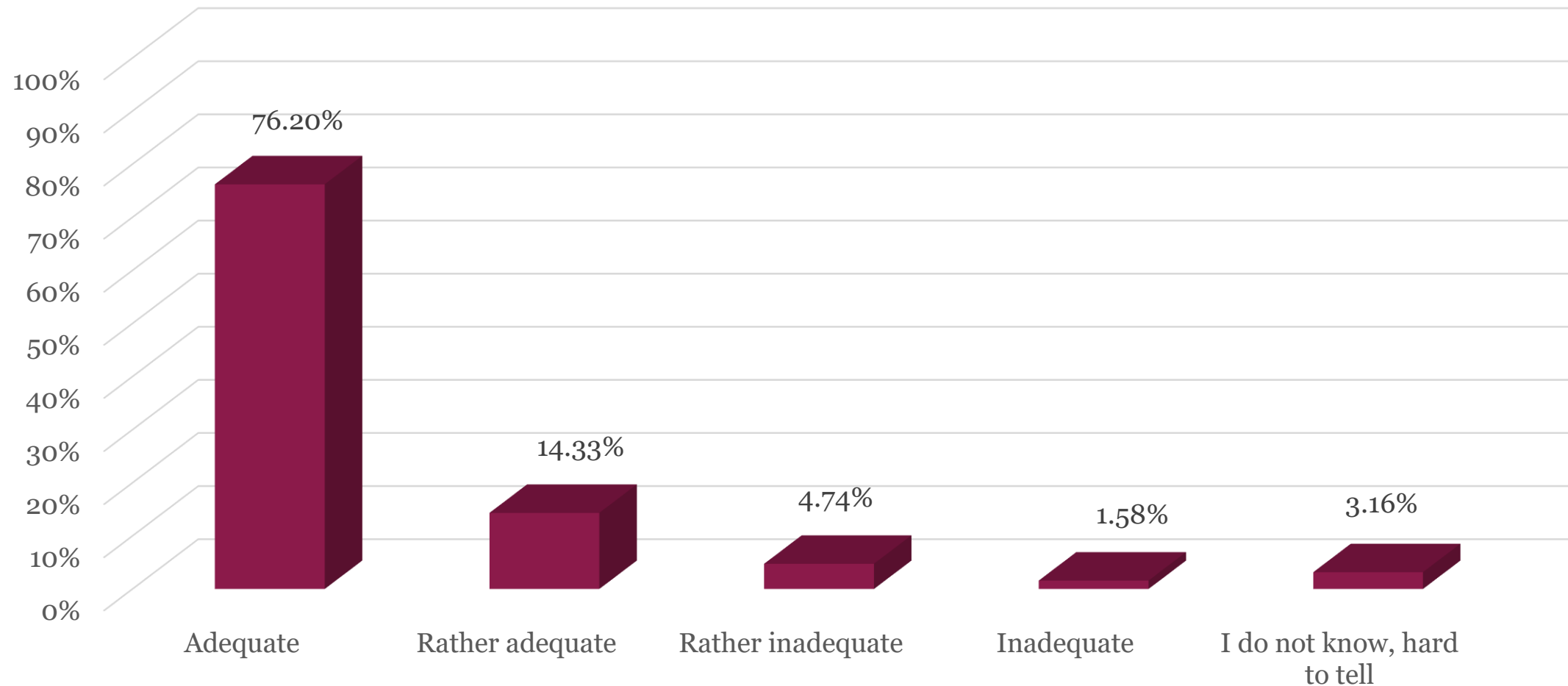
Reasons of Inadequate Defense Procedure

The question was given for those, who indicated the defense procedure was not sufficiently correct. Respondents were able to choose all matching reasons.

Reasons	Response number (N=184) and percentage
1. The defense committee applied unclear evaluation criteria	47 (25.54%)
2. Other*	46 (25%)
3. The defense committee took an unethical approach during the defense (rude, disrespectful)	38 (20.65%)
4. The reviewer's feedback was unclear to me	19 (10.33%)
5. The work of the defense committee was unstructured and ill-planned	19 (10.33%)
6. The reviewer's response was given to me late	12 (6.52%)
7. I was not properly prepared for the defense procedure	3 (1.63%)
8. I behaved incorrectly during the defense procedure	0 (0%)

* By choosing *Other*, respondents mentioned the following reasons for the incorrect defense procedure: committee members were not familiar with the content of students' theses; reviews were written with the help of AI; committee members' prejudice against some students; too little time for defense; unfair, biased evaluation.
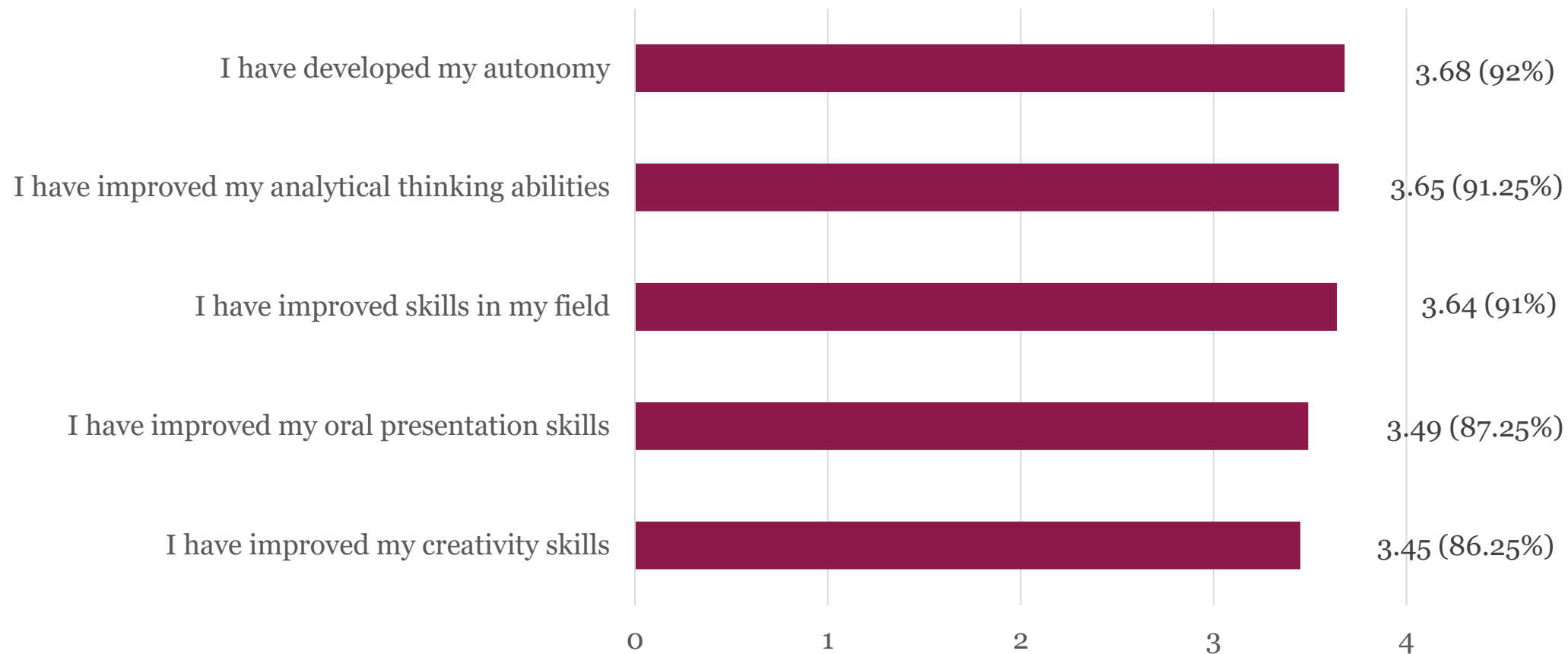
Proposals for improvement of the preparation and defense of final theses (art projects) processes:

Ensure that all information related to the preparation and defense of final theses is continuously updated and shared with students.

Assign one responsible supervisor for each student's final thesis to provide consistent support throughout the thesis preparation process.

Clearly define the possibilities and limitations of using artificial intelligence in the writing of final theses and their reviews.

To save time allocated for the thesis defense, do not read the reviewer's feedback; instead, suggest that the reviewer prepares brief questions to be asked during the defense.

Emphasize the importance of respect and attentiveness among committee members when communicating with students during the thesis defense. Encourage a constructive dialogue during the defense to achieve an objective evaluation of the final thesis.

Using the Survey Results: The Role of the Study Programme Committee (Field Committee)
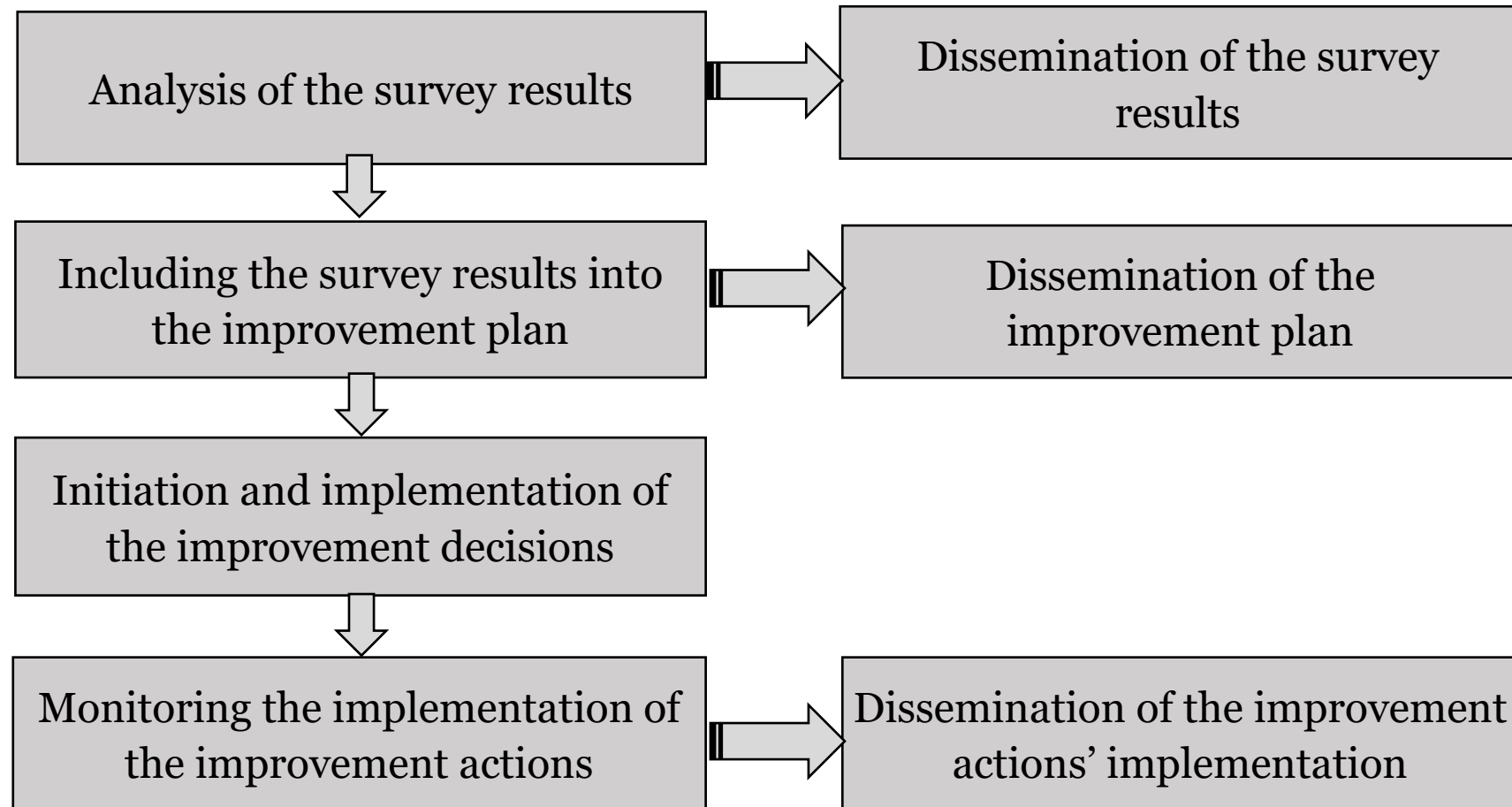
THANK YOU FOR COOPERATION

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