

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE FOR STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

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

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE PROCESS OF STUDY PROGRAMME DESIGNING

7. New study programmes shall be designed at the University in accordance with legal acts of the EHEA, the Republic of Lithuania and the University for each cycle and form.
8. The preparation of new study programmes may be initiated by the University's researchers, teachers, students, alumni or employers taking into account VMU's strategic study directions. The idea of the study programme and the need for the programme are presented at the Rectorate in the first half of the calendar year.
9. After the approval of the Rectorate regarding the idea of the new study programme, the initiators shall address the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy (if the study

programme is intended to be implemented not by one Faculty – to the Deans of those Faculties, Chancellors of the Academies) with a request to include the issue of the new study programme in the agenda of the nearest meeting(s) of the Faculty, Academy Council(s).

10. Initiators of the new study programme shall present the Faculty(-ies), the Academy (-ies) Council (-s) the conception of the programme, which shall include the following main parameters:
 - 10.1. The need for the new study programme based on research of the programme initiators, employers, social partners or other institutions, survey results and labour market demand forecast. It is essential to present perspective insights of the study programme and compare it with similar study programmes in the same field in the institutional, national and international context. Compliance of the study programme with the strategic VMU goals shall also be justified.
 - 10.2. A preliminary project of the learning outcomes and the study plan of the study programme (including duration, volume in study credits, courses necessary to achieve learning outcomes).
 - 10.3. Estimation of resources (material and human) necessary for the implementation of the new study programme and a plan of their development.
11. Having evaluated the presented information, the Faculty (-ies), Academy (-ies) Council (-s), in the presence of study programme initiators, shall make an argumentative decision by open voting to approve or disapprove the idea of the new study programme.
12. After the Faculty (-ies), the Academy (-ies) Council (-s) approves (approve) the conception of the new study programme, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy shall form a Study Programme Development Group and oblige them by October 30 of the current academic year to prepare and following the procedure discussed below submit a study programme description and its annexes in compliance with the methodology by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) (if an external expert evaluation is not required, the following information is provided in the appendices instead of the teachers' curriculum vitae: academic degree, research or artistic interests and the most significant works, planned study courses, pedagogical and practical work experience) or in the cases specified in paragraph 14, other documents of the study programme description are provided. If the study programme is intended to be implemented by several academic divisions, the Study Programme Development Group shall be created by the Vice-Rector for Studies.
13. The members of the Study Programme Development Group shall be the representatives of the initiators of the idea of the study programme, teachers, students and employers. The Chairperson of the group shall be appointed to lead the work of the group. The Study Programme Development Group shall terminate its work when the study programme is registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications, and also if the decision is taken by SKVC not to accredit the study programme or if the University makes a decision not to submit the programme for evaluation and/or registration.
14. When designing a study programme in a study field that has been accredited for a period of 7 years in the last 3 years, when 2 or more study programmes that participated in the external evaluation of that field of study are joined, the description of the new study programme is prepared according to Appendix 1 of this Description. The following documents are also attached for further consideration: an explanation about the need to prepare the programme and plans to complete the implementation of the joined study programmes when all students admitted to these study programmes have completed them; self-analysis of the field of study, which was submitted for external evaluation.

15. The Study Programme Development Group shall be consulted and advised on the issues regarding the preparation of the description of the new study programme, receive comments and recommendations by VMU Study Organisation Unit, Study Quality Unit, International Cooperation Department, Innovative Studies Institute and other University units responsible for studies.
16. The prepared description of the new study programme and its annexes shall be revised by the Study Quality Unit, which evaluates and submits written comments before the Rectorate meeting, ascertaining whether the study programme documents comply with the requirements for study programme preparation and institutional, national and international legal acts regulating studies.
17. Having evaluated the presented description of the new study programme and its annexes as well as taking into account the comments of the Study Quality Unit, the Rectorate shall take a decision to approve or disapprove the implementation of the new study programme. In case of approval, the Rectorate may commit the Study Programme Development Group to make amendments in its documents according to the submitted comments.
18. If the Rectorate approves the new study programme, the Chairperson of the Study Programme Development Group shall present the study programme description and its annexes to the Study Quality Unit at least 4 weeks before the Senate meeting. The Study Quality Unit shall review the documents in accordance with the evaluation requirements for new study programmes and draw the conclusions of the internal evaluation on the basis of the form set out in Annex 2. If the description of the study programme is evaluated as “insufficiently” according to at least 1 area or “partially” according to 3 and more areas, or any of its annexes is evaluated as “insufficiently”, the study programme documents are submitted to the Development Group for revision. When the study programme documents meet the requirements, they are submitted to the Senate and its committees for consideration together with the conclusions of the internal evaluation.
19. The Senate shall make decision to approve or disapprove the implementation of the new study programme, having evaluated the description of the study programme and its annexes as well as regarding the comments of the Senate Committees and the conclusions of the internal evaluation.
20. After the Senate makes the decision to approve the new study programme, the Chairperson of the Study Programme Development Group shall submit the study programme description and accompanying documents to SKVC to be accredited or to VMU Study Organisation Unit to register the programme. In the latter case, the Study Organisation Unit sends a request to SKVC regarding the registration of the new study programme.
21. If the Senate disapproves the new study programme, the Study Programme Development Group shall be obliged either to take the comments into account and improve the description of the study programme or terminate the process of the new study programme designing.
22. After the study programme has been registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications by the Study Organisation Unit, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy shall appoint the Study Programme (Field) Committee (hereinafter – the Committee), consisting of at least 1/3 of the Study Programme Development Group members. If the new study programme is an interdisciplinary, dual degree or joint one and is intended to be implemented by more than one academic unit, the composition of the Committee shall be approved by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

23. The Committee shall provide information to Marketing and Communication Department, International Cooperation Department and the Study Organisation Unit to make the programme publicly available and organise the admission of students.

III. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE IMPLEMENTED STUDIES

24. The University shall implement only the study fields and study programmes which have been accredited by the procedure regulated by the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.
25. The Council of the Faculty, the Academy shall be responsible for the quality assurance of the study field, and once in the academic year it shall discuss the issues of the study field and make decisions on the improvement of the field regarding the requirements of external quality evaluation and the criteria mentioned in paragraph 34 of the Description (summarizing them in the scope of the study field). If study field studies are carried out in more than one Faculty, Academy, a joint Council meeting shall be organized to discuss the field. The decisions of the meetings shall be made public to the study field stakeholders (intranet or other means) and shall be stored in the Academic Unit conducting the studies.
26. The Faculty, the Academy and the Committee implementing the study programme shall be responsible for the quality assurance of the study programme. The Faculty, the Academy shall be responsible for the organisation of the programme study space, technical administration, dissemination of information, calculating the teachers' workload, students' registration, study documentation, etc. The main activity of the Committee shall be to monitor the implementation of the study programme and assure study quality. The Committee shall supervise the study programme implementation, perform internal study programme quality evaluation, renewal and improvement, prepare study programme improvement plans and implement them.
27. The Committee shall consist of at least 5 members: study programme teachers, students, and the representatives of the employers, who divide responsibility areas among themselves. The composition of the Committee shall be published on the website of the Faculty, the Academy. The Committee activity shall not be terminal; however, taking into account the activity results, under decision of the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy or the Vice-Rector for Studies (when the programme is under more than one Faculty, Academy) the composition of the Committee shall be updated and changed. The motivation and enhancement of the Chairperson of the Committee and its members shall be performed on the basis of their activity results under the Order of Rector of Vice-Rector for Studies. VMU Students' representative Council shall delegate student members to Committees in accordance with the established procedure.
28. Each member of the Committee shall act according to his/her responsibility area. Each person's activity and suggestions shall be discussed in the Committee meetings and decisions regarding further activity shall be made. Minutes shall be taken of all Committee meetings and records shall be kept in the Academic Unit which implements the studies and in the information system of the University study programmes.
29. The decisions of the Committee meetings shall be made public by the Chairperson of the Committee to all teachers of the study programme and, if needed, to other stakeholders (the Head of the Department, the Director of the Institute, the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy, social partners, etc.). The Student representative of the Committee shall

publicize the decisions taken during the Committee meetings to other students of the study programme.

30. The Chairperson of the Committee shall organise meetings when needed but at least one per semester, i.e. at least twice per year. The representatives of all the groups of the Committee, i.e. teachers, students and employers shall attend the meetings of the Committee. Participation can also be done remotely. If a representative of a group is not able to attend a meeting, he or she shall delegate to the Chairperson of the Committee another member of the same group who may represent the group in the meeting.
31. Each semester, the Committee shall discuss the results of teaching quality, based on data from the student survey "Teaching and Learning Evaluation" (the Student Survey) and other information sources. The Committee shall review the reasons why students positively or negatively evaluated teaching and learning, and take the following actions:
 - 31.1. The Committee shall initiate the sharing of good teaching examples at the Faculty, Academy meetings at least once per semester.
 - 31.2. In cases of unfavourably evaluated teaching (when the average score in the Student Survey on at least one question in the course is *weak* and worse, and it is influenced by student dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching or student complaints have been received by other sources of information), the Committee shall discuss the reasons of such evaluation together with the teachers. Recommendations and actions shall be planned to improve the quality of teaching.
 - 31.3. If unfavourable evaluation is repeated in the next semester, and the reasons are related to the insufficient quality of teaching, such cases shall be discussed at the Faculty, Academy Council meeting in the presence of the Chairperson of the Committee, the Committee representative of students and teachers. Decisions shall be taken to ensure that the causes of insufficient quality of teaching are eliminated.
 - 31.4. If the teaching quality is poorly evaluated for two semesters (in the Student Survey, the overall teaching evaluation per semester is *weak* and worse), an extraordinary teacher certification may be initiated.
32. When discussing the results of teaching quality at the Institute of Foreign Languages (hereinafter – the Institute), the provisions of paragraph 31 shall be applied to the structure of the Institute.
33. Each academic year, the Committee shall conduct a study programme analysis, identify shortcomings highlighted during the academic year, evaluate the results of internal and external quality evaluation and recommendations made by international experts, the Study Quality Unit, employers and other interested parties, make decisions to improve the quality of the study programme and review how previous improvement decisions are implemented. In the year when the external evaluation of the studies is planned, a self-evaluation shall be prepared according to the methodology of SKVC.
34. The aim of the annually performed study programme analysis shall be to provide a timely response to the emerged study organisation problems, implement innovations and improve study quality. On the basis of the outcomes of the performed analysis, a study programme improvement plan shall be designed and implemented (Annex 3). While performing the analysis of study programme implementation, it is recommended to follow the requirements of external evaluation of studies and take into account these criteria:
 - 34.1. Compliance of the study programme to the latest tendencies of science (art) – the analysis shall aim at investigating if the study programme learning outcomes, curriculum and methods reflect the latest tendencies of science (art).

- 34.2. Compliance of the study programme to labour market demand and the needs of society – alumni employment indicators shall be evaluated as well as strengths and weaknesses of practice organisation; employer survey results and their application for the renewal of learning outcomes and curriculum shall be analysed.
- 34.3. Demand for the study programme – indicators of student admission to the study programme shall be assessed, as well as efficiency of the study marketing activities; employer survey results which reveal the demand for the programme shall be analysed.
- 34.4. Suitability and sufficiency of the study programme material resources – it shall be evaluated if there is enough literature, software and laboratory equipment to implement the study programme and analysed if these resources are appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- 34.5. Professionalism of the study programme teaching staff – teaching quality evaluation results shall be analysed as well as teachers' preparation and compliance of their research (art) interests with the content of the taught course, etc.
- 34.6. Student progress – students' learning achievements shall be assessed, dropout indicators and reasons analysed together with students' research, art, social and other achievements; difficulties which arise during the final thesis preparation and defence processes shall be explored.
- 34.7. Student and teacher mobility – the statistics of the incoming and outgoing students and teachers as well as conditions for mobility shall be analysed.
- 34.8. Other relevant study programme criteria – the criteria shall be identified and analysed if the programme organisation and implementation processes comply with them.
35. Information for study programme analysis shall be provided by the Study Organisation Unit, Study Quality Unit, International Cooperation Department, Marketing and Communication Department and other units.
36. The analysis of the study programme and decisions of the Committee shall be recorded, and the minutes taken shall be kept in the study implementing unit. Analysis results shall be presented, improvement plans discussed and approved by the Faculty, Academy Council. The Committee submits the improvement plan of the current academic year to the Study Quality Unit (in accordance with Annex 3 of the Description): if the plan is prepared in the spring semester, it shall be submitted by June 30; if the plan is prepared in the autumn semester, it shall be submitted by October 10. The improvement plan of the previous year and information on implementation of that plan shall also be provided in accordance with Annex 3. The Study Quality Unit summarizes the received information and proposes insights to the Vice-Rector for Studies to initiate recommendations for the improvement of studies.
37. In the autumn semester of each academic year until October 30, the results of the analysis of the currently implemented study programmes and improvement plans are presented in the Rectorate, and it shall be recommended the continuation or termination of the students' admission to the study programmes. Insights on studies are also provided by the Departments of Marketing and Communication, Studies and International Relations. When approving the admission plan to the University, the Rectorate evaluates the proposals and makes decisions on the perspectives of the study programmes.
38. The study programme renewal and development shall be performed in compliance with national and international documents governing studies, VMU Study Regulations and Quality Manual as well as Description of Procedure for Study Course Attestation.

39. The change of the study programme title, study field (branch), awarded qualification degree, professional qualification, study duration or study programme structure regulated by the Study Regulations, creation or withdrawal of study specializations shall be discussed in the Faculty, Academy Council, submitted for review by the Study Quality Unit, discussed and approved in the Rectorate and Senate. The Committee shall prepare a justification for the need for amendments and a brief description of the study programme in accordance with the form provided in Annex 1, and submit these documents to the Rectorate by 30 October of the current academic year. When submitting the question of changing the title of the study programme in which the students are studying, all accompanying documents must be submitted before the meetings of the Senate committees, including the written consents of all (except the last year) students. With the approval of the Senate, the Study Organization Unit shall apply to the manager of the Register of Studies, Training Programs and Qualifications for the validation of changes in accordance with the procedure provided by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports and SKVC.
40. The changes performed during the study programme renewal and development shall be made publicly available by posting them in the University's study programme information system.
41. While performing the monitoring of the study programme implementation and improvement, the Committee shall be assisted by the Study Quality Unit, which shall perform various internal quality assessment surveys, acquaint the Committee with research results and provide recommendations on the improvement of study programme quality.

IV. EXTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION OF STUDIES

42. External quality evaluation of studies is the analysis of the quality of studies and making conclusions as well as recommendations for its improvement in the context of national and international experience.
43. External quality evaluation of studies shall be performed by SKVC or other higher education quality evaluation agency which is included into the European Quality Assurance Register for higher education (EQAR). At least 12 months before the end of the studies accreditation period, the Vice-Rector for Studies, having discussed the Committee's suggestions, shall make decision on the selection of an external evaluation agency. Having made the decision, the Study Quality Unit shall coordinate the participation in the external assessment process according to the Description of Procedure of External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport.
44. At least 6 months before the submission of the self-evaluation report to the external evaluation agency and upon the provision of the Dean of the Faculty, the Chancellor of the Academy, the Rector shall approve the Self-Evaluation Group which shall consist of active, experienced and competent administration members, teachers, students and employers. It is recommended to form a Self-Evaluation Group of 5–12 persons, taking into account the number of study programmes that make up the field of study and the cycle. The monitoring of the self-evaluation preparation process shall be performed by the Study Quality Unit. If needed, the Study Quality Unit shall consult the Self-Evaluation Group, provide suggestions and methodological recommendations and participate in the meetings of the group.
45. The work of the Self-Evaluation Group shall be organised by the Chairperson of the group. The scope and responsibility of each group member's work shall be determined by common consent and group working plan shall be designed. Self-evaluation report shall be prepared in

compliance with the methodology for evaluation approved by the Order of the Director of SKVC.

46. The results of the self-evaluation prepared by the Self-Evaluation Group shall be presented and discussed with students, teachers, administrative staff, alumni and employers of the study programme. The Self-Evaluation Group shall take into account the comments received during the discussions and make corrections in the self-evaluation report.
47. At least 2 months before the submission of the self-evaluation report to the external evaluation agency, the Chairperson of the Self-Evaluation Group shall submit the self-evaluation report to the Study Quality Unit for the revision of its compliance with the requirements set in the methodology for evaluation approved by the Director of SKVC, and other legal acts. Within 2 weeks the Study Quality Unit shall present comments and recommendations for the improvement of the report.
48. The Chairperson of the Self-Evaluation Group, taking into account the comments of the Study Quality Unit, shall initiate the improvement of the self-evaluation report and prepare the final version of the report. The Chairperson of the Self-Evaluation Group shall submit the self-evaluation report together with the cover letter to the external evaluation agency upon receipt of the approval of the Study Quality Unit stating the prepared documents comply with the evaluation methodology approved by the SKVC Director and other relevant legal acts.
49. The self-evaluation report corrections (if necessary), the visit of experts, discussions of initial conclusions and other activities related to external evaluation shall be organised and performed by the Self-Evaluation Group which shall be consulted and assisted by the Study Quality Unit.
50. Having received the conclusions of the external evaluation experts and decision of the accreditation institution authorised by the Republic of Lithuania regarding the accreditation of studies, the evaluation results shall be discussed in the Committee and studies providing academic unit. Evaluation and accreditation results shall be made publicly available by posting them on the University website and Study programme information system.
51. Taking into account the accreditation period of the study field and cycle, the Committee shall within 1 year (if the field studies are accredited for a period of 3 years) or 2.5 years (if the field studies are accredited for a period of 7 years) from the accreditation of the studies prepare a progress report of 1-3 pages on the implementation of the external evaluation recommendations. It lists expert recommendations, implementation results and planned actions. In case the recommendations have not been implemented or have been partially implemented, the progress report shall indicate the reasons and / or circumstances that led to the recommendations not being implemented (not fully implemented). If a field of study and a cycle includes more than one study programme, a progress report shall be prepared in cooperation with all relevant Committees.
52. The Committee(s) shall present the progress report to the Study Quality Unit that shall, within one week, submit to the Committee(s) comments and recommendations (if necessary) for the improvement of the report. The Committee(s) shall prepare the final report, and the Study Quality Unit shall submit it to SKVC and publish on the VMU website.

V. FINAL PROVISIONS

53. Analysis and improvement of studies shall be based on the data of systematically performed feedback from the University stakeholders (students, teachers, alumni, employers). Feedback types and frequency shall be determined by VMU Description of Procedure of Feedback for Improvement of Quality of Studies. Study programme level research and analysis shall be performed by the members of the Committee according to their responsibility areas. University level research and analysis shall be performed by the Study Quality Unit as well as other units according to the areas of their activity.
54. The study quality assurance processes and this Description shall be reviewed at least every 2 years and updated if necessary to ensure their conformance with study priorities, legal regulation and the needs of social stakeholders.

The form of the study programme description

Title of study programme	
Code of study programme	
Area of studies	
Field of studies	
Specializations of study programme (if any)	
Cycle or type of studies (first or second cycle, or professional studies)	
Form of studies and duration (in years)	
Volume of study programme in ECTS	
Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded	
Minimum educational background	
Study programme language	

Annotation of the study programme (up to 700 symbols)

A short description of the study programme is presented including the goal of the programme, its purpose, professionals to be trained, the main skills and qualification degree to be acquired as well as other information.

Coherence of the programme learning outcomes with the programme courses

Description of study cycle learning outcomes	Learning outcomes of the programme	Courses of the programme
Knowledge and its application		
Research skills		
Special abilities		
Social abilities		
Personal abilities		

Description of practice

The description presents the type of the study practice (cognitive, qualification, pre-diploma, pedagogical or other practice) and introduces its main parameters (practice goal, time, place, etc.).

Career opportunities

Possibilities of further studies or professional activities are discussed.

Curriculum: study plan

The study courses are presented in study years and semesters: the titles, codes and credits of the courses as well as teachers are introduced. The courses are assigned to a specific field of studies (except of A and B group courses), they are divided into obligatory and elective ones. The study plan of undergraduate studies also presents the number of credits of general study courses. If both full-time and part-time studies are implemented, two study plans are attached.

Study plan*

STUDY COURSES: TITLES AND CODES		STUDY FIELD**	ECTS	TEACHERS
I semester				
General university study courses				
A and B groups' courses		Depending on the study course		
Study courses of the main study field and another study field(-s)				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				
Study courses of X specialization				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				
Study courses of Y specialization				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				
Totally in the semester:				
N semester				
General university study courses				
A and B groups' courses		Depending on the study course		
Study courses of the main study field and another study field(-s)				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				
Study courses of X specialization				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				
Study courses of Y specialization				
Compulsory:				
Elective:				

Totally in the semester:	
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Totally in the programme:	
Totally for the main study field courses:	
Totally for the study courses of another study field(-s):	
Totally for general university study courses:	
Totally for the practice:	
Totally for the final theses:	

** Unnecessary lines of the plan shall be deleted, additional lines shall be inserted.*

*** If a study course is interdisciplinary, no more than 3 study fields shall be identified for such a course.*

The form of internal evaluation of a new study programme

1. General information

Title of the study programme	
Field of the study programme	
Qualification degree or (and) professional qualification	
Study cycle	
Volume, duration, study form	

2. Compliance of the study programme description with the requirements of external evaluation

Areas of evaluation	Evaluation (<i>sufficiently, partially or insufficiently</i> requirements are met) and comments
1. Study Objectives, Outcomes and Content	
2. Links between science (art) and study activities	
3. Student admission and support	
4. Studying, academic achievement and graduate employment	
5. Teaching staff	
6. Study facilities and learning resources (material resources)	
7. Study quality management and publicity	
Annexes of the document	

3. General comments.

Prepared by:

Date:

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

STUDY PROGRAMME ... *(the title is entered)*

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

* To be completed if the actions relate to the results of a specific survey, discussion and other feedback or external evaluation. The title of the survey, the topic of the discussion, etc. and the results on which the proposed action is based shall be stated or a recommendation of the external evaluation (or its number) shall be entered.

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

Date of plan preparation: ...

Date of plan monitoring: ...