SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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PHILOSOPHY FIELD OF STUDY

Vytautas Magnus University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:
1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Peter Jonkers   ………………………... (signature)
2. Academic member: Prof. dr. Michael Brady
3. Academic member: Prof. dr. Tomas Kačerauskas
4. Social partner representative: Rūta Elijošaitytė-Kaikarė
5. Student representative: Carlo Mazzini

SKVC coordinator: Radvilė Blažaitytė

Report prepared in 2025
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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal.On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: **Prof. dr. Peter Jonkers**
2. Academic member: **Prof. dr. Michael Brady**
3. Academic member: **Prof. dr. Tomas Kačerauskas**
4. Social partner representative: **Rūta Elijošaitytė-Kaikarė**
5. Student representative: **Carlo Mazzini**

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 17th of October, 2025, onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies);
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER;
- Teaching staff;
- Students;
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was no need for translation and the meetings were conducted in English.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Vytautas Magnus University (henceforth: VMU) was founded in 1922 and re-established in 1989. VMU offers all three levels of study - Bachelor, Master and Doctoral - covering a broad spectrum: from the humanities, social sciences and the arts to basic, environmental and biotechnological sciences. The VMU has two collegiate governing bodies - the University Council and the Senate - and a single-person governing body, the Rector. The Council is the collegiate governing body that approves the vision, mission and strategy of the University, as well as financial and other strategic issues. The Senate is the collegial governing body for the academic affairs of the VMU.

There are 14 academic divisions at VMU: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Faculty of Economics and Management, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Informatics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Agriculture Academy, Education Academy, Music Academy, Institute of Foreign Languages, Botanical Garden.

Overview of the study field

The programme evaluated here is administered by the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Humanities. The Faculty of Humanities consists of five departments, six research centres and one institute. The mission of the Faculty is to foster humanistic and humanitarian culture and values, to explore the uniqueness of Lithuanian culture and disseminate it internationally, to cultivate civic, national and European consciousness, and to promote Lithuanian studies and multilingual research, in the spirit of the *Artes Liberales*.

Some of the staff of the Department of Philosophy carry out research at the Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute. The advantage of the structure of the VMU for the implementation of study programmes, including philosophy studies, is that it encourages internal cooperation between faculties and departments. Lecturers from several departments can participate in the practical implementation of the study programmes. This allows for the development of flexible and interdisciplinary study programmes.

Previous external evaluations

The Practical Philosophy degree programme has been evaluated by an international panel of experts in 2017. All areas of the assessment were scored 3 (on a 4-point scale) and the study programme was accredited for a period of six years.

The recommendations of the external evaluation in 2017, and the Programme's responses:

- Study aims, outcomes and content:
    - o Recommendation 1: The Department should consider running programmes that provide students with additional skills useful in the labour market, particularly in the private sector. In addition, the Department should offer selected specialisation modules, such as business ethics or philosophy and law, at least as free electives, in order to encourage more career guidance.

- o Response 1: This recommendation has been taken into account by adjusting the content of some of the courses: the intersection of law and ethics is partly included in the content of the courses Contemporary Ethical Issues and Ethics, and Narrative Theories, and a critical perspective on contemporary business ethics is partly included in the content and discussions of the courses Philosophy and Practices of Contemporary Art, and Ethics of Post-Humanism. In the absence of funding, however, additional courses are not possible, but the department and the curriculum committee systematically review the content of existing courses and take into account the skills and knowledge needed in the contemporary private sector.
  - o Recommendation 2: More institutional mechanisms should be applied for the joint definition of objectives and planning of the programme, i.e., involving staff and students. At the same time, an information campaign should be launched, inviting the private sector, ministries, international organisations, and the public sector to inform staff and students about possible professional requirements in the labour market.
  - o Response 2: After the renewal of the study programme committee, it now includes a mandatory student representative, who is elected democratically. The study programme committee holds regular meetings in which student comments are taken into account. The situation of the study programme is regularly discussed in department meetings. In the meetings of the programme committee, the student representative is always heard first. The second part of the comment (regarding information on labour market requirements and their changes) was addressed primarily by encouraging cooperation between programme lecturers and state institutions (programme lecturers cooperated with the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the Ministry of Education and Sports). During this cooperation, lecturers become acquainted with new goals and trends and convey this information to students.
- Links between science (art) and study activities
  - o Recommendation: None
- Study admission and support
  - o Recommendation: The Department should think about feasible ways to improve the participation of students in available schemes of international mobility and exchange. It is vital to be able to offer students high-quality exchange programmes that are fully integrated in their course of study at home. Particularly recommendable are ERASMUS-schemes providing for practical training abroad. Staff and students need to familiarize themselves with the diversity of EU-schemes fostering mobility, of which ERAMUS is but one. Exchange and cooperation schemes as ERASMUS Mundus and TANDEM should be more systematically explored and, taken more advantage of whenever possible.
  - o Response: The Department of Philosophy has succeeded in improving student mobility numbers. During the period of self-evaluation, the Department had three outgoing student exchange mobilities to foreign Universities and has received one incoming student as well. Plus, three students from the second cycle Philosophy studies had also used an opportunity to have an Erasmus+ funded traineeship. All of this was achieved through a combination of different means: the staff familiarized themselves with the diversity of EU mobility schemes; the Department established new partnerships with other universities, expanding our cooperation network; and the communication with students regarding exchange possibilities was improved. ERASMUS Mundus and TANDEM possibilities were discussed at the department level. A Joint Masters programme possibility with Sofia University (Bulgaria) was considered and some initial talks with the partners of that university were held, but

the process was largely postponed because of significant institutional differences and any further cooperation plans remain for the future.

Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested/provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- Summary of student evaluations
- SWOT analysis

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	Practical Philosophy
State code	6211NX040
Type of study (college/university)	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 2 years
Workload in ECTS	120
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master in Humanities
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	1997
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **second cycle** of the philosophy field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	5
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	5
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
	Total:	31

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI

FACTUAL SITUATION

The Department of Philosophy was established in 1990 and currently administers one study programme, Practical Philosophy (Master's level), as well as PhD studies in Philosophy.

1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

According to SER, 7, the overall aim of the study programme is to foster philosophical competence relevant to today's digital and pluralistic society by promoting analytical thinking, ethical sensitivity, and a deeper understanding of the philosophical dimensions of human experience. Graduates can apply their knowledge in teaching, education, and academic research, and are proficient in practically addressing and analytically discussing current societal issues. The programme emphasizes values that are considered essential for Lithuania's future, such as a sense of community, respect for human dignity, and the development of creativity in various domains.

According to SER, 8, the programme responds to the needs of the labour market by fostering a person's ability to adapt and critically assess the changing global environment and its trends. This is reflected in the diverse profiles of the programme's students – often professionals with successful careers in non-philosophical fields – who seek a more comprehensive and contemporary education in philosophy as a means of integrating into an increasingly dynamic and rapidly evolving professional landscape.

The programme distinguishes itself from other MA programmes in philosophy through its emphasis on applicability, interdisciplinary orientation, and adaptability to a wide range of student profiles. The programme aims to remain faithful to its original mission, namely to train professionals who possess a solid understanding of the philosophical tradition and the current debates in this field. SER, 8 gives several examples of how the philosophical core of the programme is ensured: graduates possess the skills to analyse and interpret philosophical texts; they are able to apply phenomenological, analytical, and other methods to address various humanities-related problems; they are skilled in fostering interpersonal and intercultural dialogue; they are capable of critically evaluating the current political situation.

1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

According to SER, 9f. VMU's mission is to provide liberal learning conditions for individuals, foster partnerships, actively participate in Lithuanian public life, shape its future, and contribute to the development of global culture and science. Its strategy for the coming years focuses on maintaining a sustainable and united community, participating in international research, offering interdisciplinary study programmes, and assuming a responsible role in societal development. The SER claims that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme align with VMU's mission and strategy by creating

an inclusive and motivating working environment, strengthening interdisciplinarity, providing conditions for students to develop professional skills and their practical application, contributing to the overall identity of VMU, and developing an open and multifaceted collaboration with society.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The SER convincingly argues that there is a real need for a programme in practical philosophy in Lithuania. The Panel also agrees with the SER's position that this programme differs from other MA programmes in philosophy in Lithuania. The programme of VMU is focused on practical philosophy and the applicability of philosophical expertise in various societal fields, and it is also flexible (see Interview with the students and the alumni; Annex 1: SER, 61f.; SWOT-analysis). The VMU programme is faithful to its philosophical core and its academic level in general. The programme's uniqueness is also demonstrated by the fact that students who are living in or in the neighbourhood of other universities (e.g. Vilnius) prefer the practical philosophy programme of VMU over other philosophy programmes. During the interview with the Panel, students demonstrated a strong personal motivation to follow the practical philosophy programme, not only for personal enrichment, but also for the professional opportunities it offers. Although the programme does not prepare students for a specific profession, the job opportunities for graduates are fine, and a magazine even rated the programme as the second most desirable philosophy programme in Lithuania, and argued its graduates have the same employment rate as those of the philosophy programme of Vilnius University (SER, 39f.). In summary, the Panel deems that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme indeed align with the needs of society and the labour market.

The interview with the senior management concerning their roles and the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme convinced the Panel that the programme indeed contributes in a meaningful way to the mission and strategy of VMU. VMU, from its side, confirms that philosophy and an interdisciplinary approach are indeed strategic priorities for the university (as attested in the Panel's interview with management). The teaching staff confirmed that the Department is a real community, and that the collaboration with the management is fruitful and without authoritarianism.

1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

SER, 10-12, and Table 1 demonstrate how the study programme complies with the legal requirements; SER 12-13, Tables 2 and 3, and Annex 1 detail the aims, learning outcomes, and contents of the programme and the individual modules, and demonstrate how they align with the teaching/learning and assessment methods; SER, 13f. explains the coherent development of the students' competencies; SER, 14 gives a succinct description of the opportunities for students to personalize their study programme; finally, SER, 15f. gives an overview of the rules and procedures in preparation for the MA thesis, and Annex 2 provides an overview of the titles of the MA theses and their supervisors. Upon request by the panel, soft copies of the theses were submitted.

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

According to SER 10, the study programme consists of 9 compulsory courses, 5 elective courses (from which students must choose three; students may also select courses from other master's programmes of VMU), 3 research projects, and an MA Thesis. The interdisciplinarity of the programme is ensured through the involvement of lecturers from other departments of VMU. The programme is structured around theoretical studies and research projects, including the MA thesis. SER 10f. explains how the learning outcomes of the programme comply with the requirements for second-cycle programmes, as outlined in the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy. The programme ensures compliance with the first requirement, "knowledge and its application," because graduates acquire a solid foundation in philosophy, including its current developments. Furthermore, they are capable of initiating and conducting research within the discipline, engaging in interdisciplinary research, and applying philosophical knowledge to various professional contexts. Second, the programme ensures the development of research skills (the second requirement of the Descriptor) by requiring graduates to be capable of identifying research problems, formulating them clearly, selecting appropriate methodologies, and locating relevant theoretical frameworks to analyse research material. The programme complies with the third requirement (specific competences) by fostering the ability to apply innovations from the field of philosophy to practical domains in society, as well as to lead innovative, interdisciplinary research projects and introduce new methods or principles of communication. The Descriptor's fourth requirement is ensured through seminars, discussions, and writing assignments, enabling students to develop the ability to communicate complex information and philosophical ideas clearly and persuasively to both academic and non-academic audiences. Finally, the programme encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning process by expecting them to select elective courses, research topics, philosophical areas, or methodologies of personal interest early in their studies (fifth requirement of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy). Table 2 (SER, 12) details how the five legal requirements of MA studies in philosophy are included in the learning outcomes of each module of the programme Practical Philosophy. As Table 1 (SER, 10) and Annex 1 (SER, 61) demonstrate, the total workload of the programme is 120 ECTS (equally divided into 30 ECTS per semester and 6 ECTS per module), including the MA thesis with a workload of 30 ECTS. The volume of contact hours is 23,5% of the student's total workload, while the rest (76,5%) is for individual work. SER, 11 and Annex 3 (SER, 65f.) show that all teachers in the programme have a PhD and are active researchers.

1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

SER, 12f., Tables 2 and 3, and Annex 1 (SER, 61) explain how the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme comply with the academic and professional requirements of the MA type of studies. The main objective of the study programme is to prepare researchers and members of society to be critical thinkers, to have a solid understanding of the history of philosophy and its main traditions, to be capable of engaging in interdisciplinary dialogues, and to be able to apply philosophical reflection across various fields of contemporary life. Table 2 demonstrates how the general requirements of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy align with the expected learning outcomes and competencies of the individual modules of the programme. Table 3 (SER, 13) gives an example of how these learning outcomes are implemented in the intended learning outcomes, the teaching/learning methods, and the assessment methods of the module "Ethics and Narrative Theories", and Annex 1 offers an overview of the assessment methods of all courses.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

SER, 13f. explains the coherence of the study programme. The curriculum is designed to equip graduates with soft competencies applicable in a wide range of fields of activity. Since many students come without having studied philosophy at an undergraduate level, the first semester includes a course on Philosophy and Methodology in the Humanities, which introduces the specific methods, academic requirements, and terminology that characterize philosophy. Another way to bridge the possible gap in prior philosophical knowledge is the module Ancient Practical Philosophy, taught in the first semester. In this module, students not only get a deeper insight into the main trends and theories of ancient philosophy, but are also stimulated to rethink the principles of the main areas of philosophy (ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics) at a different level than the BA. In the second semester, this new understanding of philosophical theories, suitable for MA studies, is further enhanced by the course Modern Practical Philosophy. From the second semester onwards, the curriculum includes modules that reflect on contemporary issues (Philosophy and the Practices of Modern Art, Ethics of Technology, Political Philosophy and Social Practice, Critical Theory and the Philosophy of Symbolic Thinking, Ethics of Posthumanism, Problems of Contemporary Ethics, Philosophical Ethics of Life and Death, Ethics of Dialogue, Ethics and Theories of Narrative). These compulsory and optional modules are structured in such a way that students can choose the field of research that is of most interest to them and gradually gain more experience in this field. The study programme includes writing three research papers: in the first research paper, the students learn more about how to write a philosophical research text, and the other two (in the second and third semesters) encourage students to become aware of their own personal goals and objectives of their studies. These research papers prepare students to write their MA thesis.

1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

According to SER, 14 and Annex 1 (SER, 61f.), students can choose one of two electives offered in the second semester ("Philosophy and Contemporary Art Practices" and "Philosophical Ethics of Life and Death"), and two of three electives offered in the third semester ("Ethics and Theories of Narrative", "Ethics of Dialogue", and "Ethics of Technology"). In addition, in accordance with the VMU's procedures, students are allowed to take courses in other study programmes. Students, regardless of the specifics of their chosen study programme, may also choose studies of additional competences complementing the VMU's formal studies: the Transform Europe Alliance of European Universities, Academic Kaunas, Coursera, and other self-learning studies, as well as practical activities leading to the award of a certificate and/or micro-credentials. The acquired competences can be credited to students as part of the course or assessed separately. Finally, students can opt for an Erasmus exchange programme at one of the foreign universities with which VMU has an agreement for student exchange.

1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

SER, 14f. details VMU's general procedures for the preparation and defence of the final theses. Regarding the study programme in practical philosophy, thesis topics are suggested by the lecturers, but students can also formulate a research topic that meets the individual demands of their specialisation. All thesis topics are discussed in a collegial manner and approved by the Department of Philosophy. The meeting also assesses the compliance of the topics with the requirements of philosophical research, their novelty and relevance, the actual implementability of the research, and the relevance to the outcomes of the study programme. Annex 2 (SER, 64) details the variety of the chosen topics. The SER notes that two MA theses were recognised among the best in the final thesis competition organised by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and one final thesis written in this

study programme was recognised as the best master's thesis in two national competitions. Students can write their thesis in English or Lithuanian. During the period under review, at least a quarter of the final theses were written in English.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The Panel checked whether the structure of the study programme indeed complies with the qualitative and quantitative criteria of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy. Starting with the quantitative aspects of the programme, its total size (120 ECTS), division of the workload over three semesters (4 x 30 ECTS), workload of the MA-thesis (30 ECTS), and percentage of contact hours versus individual work (23,50% versus 76,50%) comply with the Descriptor's requirements. The programme comprises more than 60 ECTS in philosophy modules (actually, the programme has 120 ECTS in philosophy modules), as required by the Descriptor. The number of elective modules is limited but acceptable given the programme's size and specific character. All elective courses aim to connect philosophy with other disciplines and fields of interest (contemporary art, life and death, narratology, dialogue, and literature), thus ensuring the coherence and philosophical focus of the programme, while at the same time making students familiar with its interdisciplinary character. The Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy stipulates that an MA programme in philosophy aims to train highly qualified philosophy specialists who are prepared to continue their studies at the doctoral level and to carry out research and analytical work in organisations that require a broad general education, deep theoretical training and analytical thinking skills, which enable them to independently formulate and creatively solve theoretical and practical problems in the fields of philosophy, culture, politics and society. SER, 11 substantiates how the Descriptor's general aims are included in the specific focus of this programme, and the panel deems that the programme management has realized this integration very well. Moreover, to combine the philosophical focus of the programme with the requirement of interdisciplinarity, the Panel deems it a very good idea to analyse and discuss other disciplines and fields of interest from a (practical) philosophical perspective. The best proof of the very successful compliance of the programme with the legal requirements for the philosophy study field is offered by the MA theses, which connect deep philosophical expertise with various topical societal questions, like violence, propaganda, cinema, the cancel culture, sexuality in the public sphere, artificial intelligence, the Anthropocene, etc. (see Annex 2 (SER, 64) and the submitted theses).

The Panel studied Table 2 (SER, 12), the student and graduate feedback (Additional Document), and the interviews with several stakeholders to check whether the learning outcomes of the study field align with the intended learning outcomes, teaching/learning methods, and assessment methods of the modules. Teachers, students, and alumni confirmed that they were indeed able to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the modules, as most of their classes are taught as seminars and discuss topical case studies involving social partners. These teaching/learning methods ensure that students are trained in the application of their philosophical knowledge and develop research skills and social skills. The fact that students come from different professional backgrounds, some of them working at a high level, is advantageous for the interdisciplinary character of the programme. The interview with the students and the teachers evidenced that all of them are very involved in the programme. They also confirmed that the amount of ECTS of the modules corresponds with the actual workload. Table 3 (SER, 13) elaborates how general learning outcomes of the study field, intended outcomes of the module, teaching/learning methods, and assessment methods are aligned in the case of the module "Ethics and Narrative Theories." Although this example is quite convincing, the SER lacks any detail about this alignment for other modules. Moreover, the chosen module is an elective and not a compulsory core module. Annex 1 gave the Panel the impression that there is very little diversity in the assignment methods. Therefore, the

Panel recommends that the study programme pay more structural attention to how the learning outcomes align with the teaching/learning methods and the assessment methods of *all* modules and to the diversity of assessment methods.

SER, 13f. demonstrates the careful design of the programme. The panel commends the way in which the programme has succeeded in enabling students with a limited prior knowledge in philosophy (typically, university BA programmes include 6 ECTS of philosophy) to familiarize themselves with specialized and in-depth philosophical theories and methods in the first semester of the programme. The interviews with the teaching staff, the students, and the alumni confirmed that this approach, although challenging, works very well. The fact that most modules are taught as seminars helps the students to consistently develop their competencies. The second and third semesters of the programme comprise modules that familiarize students with a philosophical approach to various topical questions (art, technology, politics, life and death, etc.), thus enabling them to choose the field of research that interests them most. Finally, the requirement to write three research papers in semesters 1 to 3 prepares students very well for writing their MA thesis in semester four. The MA thesis is also required to be devoted to a philosophical approach to topical questions (see Annex 2 (SER, 64) with the list of the titles of MA theses).

The number of elective modules in the programme is limited. Yet, at the same time, the way in which the programme has managed to link these electives and their specific topics to the philosophical core of the programme is to be commended. Participation in Erasmus Exchange programmes as an alternative way for the students to personalize their study is not very popular because of professional and/or family obligations of the students (during the interview with the students, however, it turned out that two of them were on Erasmus leave). The Panel welcomes VMU's initiative to set up so-called "mobility at home" programmes and traineeships abroad for a shorter period. Finally, the choice of the topic of the MA thesis is a welcome opportunity for the students to personalise their studies.

The procedure for planning, contents, supervision, and assessment of the theses complies with the requirements for the study field. The students commended the teachers for the quality of their supervision work and their accessibility. The Panel studied (the English summaries of) the theses and concludes that their topics align very well with the focus and goals of the programme. All MA theses succeed in connecting important questions of systematic philosophy or the thinking of a prominent philosophical author to a topical societal question in a meaningful way. The fact that several theses gained recognition from the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and won a national competition, demonstrates that the theses fully comply with the requirements for an MA thesis in the field, defined by the Descriptor of the Study Field of Philosophy.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The practical philosophy programme offers a welcome and viable alternative to the existing programmes in philosophy in Lithuania.
2. The way in which the (practical) philosophical focus and coherence of the programme is ensured.
3. The panel appreciates the way in which students with a limited prior knowledge of philosophy are made familiar with specialized and in-depth philosophical theories and methods in the first semester of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The Panel recommends that the study programme pay more structural attention to how the learning outcomes align with the teaching/learning methods and the assessment methods of *all* modules and to the diversity of assessment methods.

AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND
HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

FACTUAL SITUATION

SER, 17-24 describe the links between science (art) and study activities, including Table 6. These parts of the SER describe, in turn, evaluate the adequacy of the scientific activities for the philosophical field of research; the link between the content of studies and the latest scientific developments; and an assessment of the opportunities for students to be involved. These will be addressed in turn below, in relation to the SER and to questions asked during the visit, and meetings with staff and students.

2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

According to SER, 17f., research within the field of study is very good, and more than sufficient for the programme. This is evidenced in the most recent MOSTA assessment in 2023, where the department received a rating of 4 out of 5. There was praise for the quality of the research outputs, as well as participation in international conferences, and (as will be discussed below) involvement of students in research. The rate of quality publications has been growing in the past few years, with Philosophy outperforming other departments in the University. Given the relatively small size of the department, this represents significant research activity and a thriving research culture. The organisation of research into three clusters, as described on SER, 18, will further strengthen research quality, allowing for focused philosophical and interdisciplinary work in these areas. The SER lists an impressive number and range of publications from staff, participation in conferences, and service work for the profession. There is good financial support, and valuable networks involving staff at VMU and philosophers in Europe and North America. There is, in addition, strong support from the senior management and faculty administration for research in the relevant clusters, international research partnerships, and a thoughtful and strategic approach to improving research quality. The value of philosophical research is clearly recognized by senior management, which is very encouraging. Communication within the Department, and between Department and senior management, is also good, as evidenced in the Panel's meetings with staff.

2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

According to SER, 23f, there is a strong link between the latest research development and interests of the staff, and curriculum development. New research filters into the content of the lectures and modules, with students getting a balance of classical and very contemporary research. Technological innovations further help in the classroom, and a range of courses are listed in the SER as having been revised and updated in recent years to incorporate latest developments. In their meetings with the Panel, students were very positive about the relevance of the curriculum for the understanding of themselves and their lives, and for social and ethical issues outside of academia. The relevance of practical philosophy to contemporary issues, as reported by students, thus reflects the way that developments are embedded into what the students are taught.

2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

There are very good opportunities for students to engage in research. This is evidenced by work that students do in their courses with staff, but also through opportunities funded by the Research Council of Lithuania; several students have taken advantage of this funding in the last few years. Another welcome element of provision is the invitations extended to students to attend research talks and presentations by national and international speakers. Students are given guidance on publication, and there have been recent and award-winning publications by students on the programme; and it is also good to see that at least one student each year has gone onto doctoral studies. In all, this suggests a healthy and supported student community, and one which has ample opportunities to enage with research.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The Panel was very impressed with the range and quality of research and research activities, both as described in the SER, and in meetings with senior management, staff, and students. There is a good support structure and a strong financial setting for research, with the senior management firmly behind the Department, and aware of the value of philosophical research. It is impressive to see so much research activity by the staff, and the involvement of students to a significant degree. Equally, research is embedded in the curriculum, which is revised and adapted to meet important new research findings, as well as student interests. The fact that students speak very highly of the way in which the programme equips them to appreciate theoretical and practical philosophical issues is good evidence of this. In all, the Department is very good in this area, and is to be commended for its work here.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The quality of the research and the range of research activity.
2. The high levels of support for the programme from senior management, and clear lines of communication both within the Department, and between management and department.
3. The engagement with students, and provision of opportunities for them to be involved in research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

1. Staff could be even more ambitious in seeking to publish in major international journals
2. There could be more inter-Lithuanian research cooperation and collaboration with philosophy departments in other institutions.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1.	Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

Admission information is publicly available on VMU and faculty channels, with procedures governed by national legislation, VMU study documents, and annually approved Rector's rules. Eligibility includes BA graduates in Philosophy or related humanities, social sciences, or arts; applicants from other fields may enter with a relevant minor or by completing supplementary/bridging studies. Selection is competitive and based on academic performance (including bachelor average and thesis) and a motivation letter, with decisions made by the Department Admission Committee; the number of state-funded places is set by government.

3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

Admission information is published on VMU's website and faculty channels, with procedures regulated by national legislation, VMU study documents and annually approved Rector's rules. Eligibility covers holders of a BA in Philosophy or in the humanities, social sciences or arts; applicants from other fields may be admitted with a relevant minor (e.g., Philosophy, Political Science, Public Administration, Communication/Journalism) or after completing supplementary studies. Selection is competitive: the ranking score is calculated as $K = 0.5\,A + 0.3\,B + 0.2\,D$, where A is the bachelor weighted average, B the bachelor thesis evaluation, and D the motivation letter; candidates are queued in descending order. Recent intakes report highest, lowest and average scores (e.g., 9.79 / 5.83 / 8.24), indicating a competitive pool. The Department Admission Committee conducts admissions; state-funded places are limited by government decisions by field/mode.

3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

Recognition of foreign qualifications is carried out centrally by the International Cooperation Department under VMU policies and procedures, aligned with national regulations and the university's rules for admission of persons educated abroad. Recognition of partial studies follows VMU's validation procedure; as a rule, up to 75% of programme volume may be recognised, while the final thesis and/or final exam are not validated. Current students use learning agreements; credits earned according to the agreed plan are recognised on return. In the period reviewed, MA students in Practical Philosophy had Erasmus study credits fully recognised (e.g., 34 ECTS across two consecutive mobilities; 24 ECTS at the University of Bologna) and traineeship hours recognised (e.g., 394.5 h ≈ 14.7 ECTS in France; 500 h ≈ 18.75 ECTS in Germany; 385 h ≈ 14.4 ECTS in the UK). There were no applications in this field for recognition of non-formal/informal learning or for recognition of parts of studies completed at another Lithuanian HEI.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The admissions framework is clearly public, rule-based and competitive. Its eligibility pathways (direct entry from Philosophy and related fields, plus minors/supplementary studies for others) are appropriate for a research-oriented MA, while the ranking components – bachelor average, bachelor

thesis, and motivation letter – are relevant indicators of academic preparedness and commitment aligned with the programme's aims and expected learning outcomes. Published score ranges and steady applicant interest support claims of transparency and adequacy. Procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications and partial studies are formalised and consistently implemented, with quantitative examples of recognised Erasmus credits and traineeship hours. The 75% ceiling (with thesis/exam excluded) and the use of learning agreements ensure coherence with programme outcomes while maintaining standards; the absence of non-formal/informal recognition cases in this field reflects usage patterns rather than procedural gaps.

Conclusion

The student selection and admission system, including recognition provisions, is transparent, and excellently aligned with the learning outcomes; the aim is fully met.

3.2.	There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress

FACTUAL SITUATION

VMU ensures academic mobility through Erasmus+ study and traineeship schemes and a wide partner network; short-term blended options introduced in 2022 are expanding. In the Practical Philosophy MA, a small number of outgoing study periods and Erasmus-funded traineeships were completed, and one incoming student joined the programme; many students work, so evening/online delivery and shorter formats are preferred to longer exchanges. Academic support includes clear programme and course information (website, Student Portal, Moodle), regular teacher consultations on-site and online, scheduled feedback on examination results, and periodic meetings with programme leadership. Financial support covers fee reductions and instalments, dormitory services, reimbursement for representation, and a broad portfolio of scholarships; concrete cases for Philosophy students are recorded. Social and personal support comprises mentoring, a well-being coordinator, disability support, free psychological counselling, chaplaincy, and support for student organisations. Students report approachable staff and effective feedback channels.

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

At university level, VMU ensures mobility through Erasmus+ study and traineeship schemes and a wide partner network (≈485 EU/EEA partner institutions and 126 outside the EU), with about 200 VMU students per year using study exchanges and about 130 using Erasmus+ internships; since 2022, short-term (5–30 days) blended mobility has been introduced and is expanding rapidly (14 participants in 2022, 84 in 2023, 162 in 2024).

Within the Practical Philosophy MA programme in the evaluated period, two outgoing study mobilities were completed (two consecutive semesters at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland; one semester at the University of Bologna, Italy) and three Erasmus-funded traineeships took place (United Kingdom, Germany, France), for a total of six mobilities; one incoming MA student arrived via Erasmus+ from the University of Ibadan (Nigeria) for one semester in 2024.

The Panel noted during meetings with students that many are employed and value the evening/online scheduling; as a result, longer-term exchanges are often perceived as less attractive than home-based or shorter formats.

3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

At university level, academic support combines clear study information (via Moodle and the student portal), regular teacher consultations (in person and online), scheduled discussions of examination results, and periodic meetings with the Dean, Head of Department, and Programme Committee. The blended delivery (Teams/Moodle) is supported by user guides and enables evening scheduling to accommodate working students.

Financial support is coordinated by the Student Affairs Department and includes tuition and accommodation fee reductions (competitive, with the option to defer or pay in instalments on request), dormitory housing administration, reimbursement of expenses for students representing the university, and a wide portfolio of scholarships (encouragement, mobility, one-time social/achievement, donor, and rector's nominal scholarships). The SER records concrete cases of full and partial tuition-fee reductions for Philosophy students during the period under review.

Social, psychological and personal support includes the "Students for Students" mentorship programme, a student well-being coordinator offering free confidential consultations, disability support (policy and a dedicated coordinator), free psychological counselling at VMU Psychology Clinics, academic chaplaincy, and institutional backing for student organisations through project competitions.

The panel noted during meetings that students experience staff as approachable and responsive, with effective feedback channels (including class representatives), and that evening/online scheduling is perceived as supportive for those in employment.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Information on the study programme and its requirements is provided through multiple university channels. Prospective students are introduced to master's studies during an "Information Week," while newly admitted students attend library seminars on resources and services. Ongoing programme information is available on the VMU website and via personalised emails, the bilingual Student Portal, and the central Student Centre. At course level, Moodle provides full descriptions (aims, learning outcomes, teaching/assessment methods, and reading lists).

Continuous counselling is organised at several levels. According to VMU Study Regulations and internal procedures, teachers hold regular consultation hours in person and online (e.g., MS Teams/Zoom/email), and examination results are discussed with students at scheduled times. The Dean, Head of Department, and Programme Committee meet students periodically on study and career matters. Student progress and participation are monitored during the semester; where difficulties or absences are identified, faculty administrators contact students and, if needed, arrange individual assessment schedules, offer additional consultations, and allow one free retake of a failed midterm or final exam. Moodle supports ongoing feedback and self-monitoring of learning throughout the semester.

The panel noted in meetings that students considered the programme responsive to feedback and described active communication channels.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The evidence shows a comprehensive, multi-layered system for student information, counselling, and support that is embedded in VMU regulations and practice. Programme and course information is consistently available via the website, Student Portal, and Moodle (with aims, outcomes, methods, and assessment detailed), and students receive personalised updates through institutional channels. Consultation hours are mandated by the Study Regulations; teachers discuss examination results at set times. These arrangements are complemented by a library introduction for new entrants.

Financial, social, psychological, and personal support is broad in scope and used by Philosophy students. Provision includes scholarships and fee reductions, dormitory administration, reimbursement for representation costs, free psychological counselling at VMU Psychology Clinics, disability coordination, chaplaincy, career seminars and one-to-one guidance (LT/EN), as well as structured peer mentoring ("Students for Students," launched 2025) and support for student organisations. The SER records concrete cases of tuition-fee reductions for students in this field.

At the institutional level, opportunities for academic mobility are clearly ensured and well publicised (Erasmus+ study and traineeships, exchanges beyond the EU/EEA, and, since 2022, short-term 5- to 30-day mobility with strong uptake).

The panel noted that many students are mature and employed, and that evening/online scheduling and "mobility at home" are valued; staff described ongoing work with the International Office to widen short-term/virtual formats and rebuild partner links. Students and staff also described close, approachable teacher–student interaction. These contextual factors help explain the relatively low uptake of longer-term exchanges despite ensured opportunities, and they align with the SER's own identification of inbound mobility as an area for improvement.

Conclusion

Considering the robustness of information and counselling arrangements, the breadth and use of academic/financial/social/psychological support, and the clear institutional frameworks that ensure mobility, the aim under 3.2 is **excellently met**, with improvement recommended primarily in increasing student participation, especially inbound and longer-term mobility, within the constraints of the programme's mature working-student profile.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 3	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle					x

COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel commends the approachability and accessibility of the teaching staff, who maintain open and supportive communication with students through regular consultations, prompt feedback, and flexibility in arranging meetings both in person and online. This fosters a

positive learning environment and contributes to students' sense of being academically and personally supported throughout their studies.

2. The Panel commends the Programme Management for requiring prospective students to write a motivational letter, aimed at preventing students with unrealistic expectations from entering the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. The Panel recommends that the programme include electives courses (concentrated in one semester) in English to attract more incoming foreign (Erasmus+) students.

AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

The teachers use diverse contemporary teaching methods appropriate for the philosophical field (SER, 34). According to SER, 35, special attention is paid to students' independent work. The legal and physical environment is favourable for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs (SER, 36–37).

4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

According to SER, 34, teachers use presentational, hermeneutical, analytical, comparative, contextual, paradigmatic, problem-centred, and other methods that integrate digital tools and multimedia. As stated (ibid), the studies aim to expand the conceptual understanding of philosophy, to convey the results of the development of philosophical traditions, to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the goals of the study programme, as well as to increase professional competence. It also employs group discussions, group work, and online presentations. Methods employed in the seminars vary from course to course, but most of the courses employ independent research, group work, writing of individual essays or thematic papers, and preparing for individual presentations (SER, 34). As stated (SER, 35), conditions are created to effectively influence the productivity and quality of students' independent work. Tasks for independent work are presented during the first lectures, and their results are constantly monitored to ensure consistent work throughout the semester. Students' independent work is assessed by the teacher of the course, and the assessment is included in the cumulative score (SER, 35).

Since there was no admission in 2021, the study programme was reformed, including the replacement of the head of the study programme committee, the change in the schedule preparation procedure, changes in the material and study methods of some courses, amongst other changes.

4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

SER, 36 presents the documents concerning socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs. The "University of Inclusive Opportunities" is about increasing the accessibility of studies and work by properly adapting study and working conditions for the VMU community members with disabilities. Socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are allowed to study according to an individual study schedule, with the possibility to extend or postpone assessments if needed. Studies according to the individual study schedule are regulated by the Description of Procedure for Submission of an Individual Study Schedule at VMU (SER, 36). Socially vulnerable groups (orphans, people with disabilities, students from large families, families receiving social benefits, and low-income families) receive various discounts for tuition or dormitory fees, and scholarships are provided for these students. According to SER, 37, students with disabilities are advised on a variety of issues by a disability coordinator. These students are allowed to park their cars near the University buildings, infrastructural access to the buildings is constantly maintained and updated. Libraries are equipped with facilities that meet the needs of people with disabilities,

creating designated workspaces for them; classrooms are furnished with furniture adapted for students with physical disabilities; and students can settle in specially adapted dormitory rooms, if necessary, with an accompanying person. Where necessary, the study process is organized according to the individual needs of students. After assessing the student's situation, the individual is marked as a student with a disability in the University's internal data system. This allows teachers to see the type of disability, individual needs, contact person, comments from the Disability Coordinator, and necessary study process adjustments. Where necessary, teachers extend the time for the colloquium/exam, adjust the tasks or their assessment form, and in addition explain the tasks or consult the students (SER, 37).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

After meeting both with students and teachers, the Panel confirms that appropriate methods, including philosophical ones, are used in the teaching/learning process. In general, teaching and learning address the needs of students very well and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes. The Panel welcomes the reforms of the study programme after zero admission of students in 2021.

After visiting the main building and meeting with students, the Panel confirms that access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is very well ensured through both legal acts and the physical environment.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

FACTUAL SITUATION

Monitoring of learning progress is carried out in various ways and stages (SER, 37–38). The feedback is provided to students after intermediate assessments and exams (SER, 38). According to SER, 40, graduates choose the third study level or gain employment at schools, universities, municipalities, the Lithuanian Government, or start their own businesses.

According to SER, 40, the principles of integrity are defined in the relevant legal acts and ensured in practice. According to SER, 41, appeals and complaints regarding the study process were regulated by legal acts and tested in practice.

4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic

According to SER, 37–38, monitoring of learning progress is carried out in the following ways and stages: 1. The analysis of first-year students' preparation for studies; 2. The analysis of students' registration to study courses; 3. The analysis of the reasons for the students' non-participation in interim and final examinations; 4. The analysis of students' intermediate and final evaluations; 5. The analysis of the data obtained from periodic surveys conducted at the University; 6. The monitoring of students' learning progress, social integration, and study experiences. After evaluating the data collected while monitoring students' study progress, improvement of study organization and study quality, promotion of academic engagement, assurance of social integration, and implementation of preventive measures to manage students' underachievement are carried out. During the semester, the learning achievements of students are monitored by teachers of the study courses. Where

necessary, an individual assessment schedule is drawn up, and the deadlines of study course assignments and midterm exams may be postponed. In case of poor intermediate study achievements, students are offered additional consultations by the teachers of the respective study courses. It is possible to retake the negatively evaluated midterm or final examination once, free of charge (SER, 37-38).

According to SER, 38, feedback is provided to students systematically: after intermediate assessments and exams, students are introduced to evaluations and comments on how they succeeded in completing the tasks; the aspects that need to be improved are indicated.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

According to SER, 40, students who graduated from the MA programme can continue their studies at a doctoral level in Philosophy or related sciences in Lithuania and abroad. Moreover, graduates gain employment at schools, universities, municipalities, the Lithuanian Government, start their own businesses, or start working in various business fields.

According to SER, 38, VMU alumni have access to a dedicated interactive platform, VDU Alumni ID, where they can view all the benefits and opportunities available to them, information about events tailored for them, read University news, and network with other alumni. Graduates regularly receive newsletters with updates on the University and its activities, and are invited to various events (SER, 38). They are also supported by an alumni coordinator, who handles the planning, organization, and coordination of alumni-related activities. Collaboration with VMU graduates takes place through alumni clubs and specific University departments, along with their associate deans, who are responsible for maintaining alumni relations within their departments. Every year, members of the club attend the University events. Alumni Club members also organize club meetings, various events (SER, 38–39). Each year, with the help of the University, the club organizes VMU Alumni Day to bring together VMU alumni. Each year VMU Career Centre performs an online survey for alumni, one year after their graduation. The focus of attention is their current work situation and satisfaction with the studies they have graduated from (SER, 39). Most students enter the study programme already well established in their careers, and many of them pay for their studies (SER, 40).

4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

According to SER, 40, the principles of integrity are defined in the following legal acts: Statute of VMU, the Code of Academic Ethics of VMU, VMU Provisions on Prevention of Plagiarism in Student Written Works, and VMU Study Regulations. Measures to avoid discrimination are regulated by the Code of Academic Ethics of VMU. Furthermore, the VMU has the Gender Equality Plan for 2021-2025 that outlines the activities and measures planned to promote cultural and systematic change in the University at both institutional and department levels to maintain a gender balance. The GAI-generated content is also a subject of ethics. VMU Provisions on Prevention of Plagiarism in Student Written Works identify types of plagiarism, methods of determining plagiarism, and consideration procedures, as well as recommendations for teachers and students on how to prevent plagiarism in written works (SER, 40). Both teachers and students have the right to appeal to the University's Academic Ethics Commission, which makes final decisions on academic integrity. One case of academic dishonesty (plagiarism in the MA thesis) was registered during the assessment period (SER, 41).

4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

According to SER, 41, appeals and complaints regarding the study process were regulated by VMU Regulations for Submission of Appeals Regarding Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and/or Assessment Procedure until 2023, and currently these issues are solved according to VMU Regulations of the Dispute Resolution Commissions of VMU; the mentioned issues have also been determined by VMU Provisions on Prevention of Plagiarism in Student Written Works and VMU Study Regulations. Students have the right to submit an appeal regarding the assessment of learning achievements and the violation of assessment procedures (SER, 41). During the evaluated period, there were two formal complaints about the final evaluation process of the master's thesis. After reviewing these complaints, the commission, formed by the Faculty of Humanities, has decided to back the decision of the defence committee as fair, and recognized that the procedures were done accordingly to the requirements, rejecting the appeals (SER, 41).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

After meeting with students and teachers, the Panel confirms that monitoring of learning progress is realized very well at different levels, and the feedback to students to promote learning progress planning is provided after every intermediate assessment and exam. It is laudable that the university's goal is to prepare students to be part of the community and to be responsible members of their society. On the one hand, these are practical studies; on the other hand, they allow for the shaping of discourse.

After meeting with graduates, the Panel confirms both their great satisfaction with philosophical studies and good employment of graduates in different areas, first at schools and universities. The Panel encourages the involvement of graduates in academic life to improve the programme.

The Panel confirms that the policy to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination is very well ensured by both legal acts and practice.

The procedure for submitting and processing appeals and complaints is transparent. Additionally, it works, since two students had appealed during the evaluation period.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 4	Unsatisfactory – 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory – 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good – 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good – 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional – 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The appropriate methods, including philosophical, are used in the teaching/learning process.
2. The access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured through both legal acts and the physical environment.

3. The employment of graduates is very good, and graduates are satisfied with their studies. It shows that the programme meets the needs of the labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. Although the graduates are interviewed and informed about the VMU events, they could be more included in academic life to improve the programme.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

SER, 42-48 describes the teaching staff in the field study programme. There is a focus on three elements of assessment – as detailed below – and three tables. We met with staff during the visit and asked a range of questions; we also got feedback about teaching staff from students and external partners.

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

There are nine lecturers on the programme, with a majority of these being professors. This might strike some as 'top-heavy', but a positive perspective is that it ensures research and teaching are done by people with significant experience in the subject, as the SER notes. This also helps to support a valuable administrative culture. All staff have the relevant qualifications to teach on the programme, and most teach on the programme full-time. There is a broad range of teaching interests and expertise, and the appointment of new lecturers to the programme is a very good thing. This indicates that senior management is serious about supporting Philosophy, and brings new ideas and new perspectives into the Department.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The aim is exceptionally well met. As noted above, this is a well-supported, experienced, highly-motivated, and engaged collection of teaching staff. There has been significant thought going into the curriculum development, staffing, and ensuring that staff who have left are replaced with new staff working in areas that are attractive to students. The Panel was impressed with the range of mentoring and support for new staff, and the service to the profession by many experienced members of staff. Student-teacher ratio is around 2:1, which is very good indeed. Staff turnover is fine. In conclusion, it is a well-balanced and experienced teaching cohort, and one about which students and alumni are extremely positive.

5.2.	Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

FACTUAL SITUATION

SER, 43-44, and tables 11 and 12, address staff mobility. SER, 45-47 address staff development. These items were also discussed in the session with staff.

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

There are ample opportunities for academic mobility, through the Erasmus+ programme which is open to all staff. There are both learning and teaching visits. Staff also have mobility opportunities through the Baltic University Programme and NordPlus Philosophy network. This is an impressive

range of options and supporting programmes for moblity. The tables list the Erasmus visits in the past few years for three staff, and other academic visits and internships for four staff. The Department has also hosted three teachers from India, Bulgaria, and Estonia. The staff presentations at international workshops and conferences are also opportunities to travel and make contacts in other countries, which is likely to further facilitate mobility.

5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

There are significant opportunities and support for staff development in the University, in line with the VMU professional development procedure, and its recommendation that academic staff devote 20 hours per academic year to development activities. There are a number of monthly training activities available to staff free of charge, and (given funds) opportunities for staff development at other institutions and via the Erasmus+ programme. At the Departmental level, staff have participated in a range of training modules, and gain further development experience through internships and lectureships at institutions around the world. In their meeting with the Panel, staff were very positive about development opportunities and support, and the good communication about these from senior management and administrators. It was also good to hear that the Department will be strongly encouraging and pushing for more involvement by staff in international conferences, collaborations, programmes, and alliances.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The Panel thought that staff were given excellent opportunities – with respect to mobility and career development – and significant support for both from senior management and from the Head of Department. There is a very good uptake by the Philosophy department of training, and over half of the staff have been involved in exchanges, internships, or visits (some with Erasmus+) in the period under review. There is an excellent system of periodical evaluation, with meetings conducted by the Head of Department, who then discusses these with senior management. There is also a lot of discussion at departmental meetings, and in 121 meetings, about issues, support, and policies and mechanisms. Communication is key to a flourishing teaching operation, and this seems to be very much in place in the department, as evidenced by the SER but also by meetings with senior management, the SER team, and staff.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 5	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle					x

COMMENDATIONS

1. Excellent student-staff ratio.

2. Excellent communication and support for staff, both within the department, and between department and senior management.
3. Very good opportunities for mobility, career development, and training.
4. Very good mentoring for new staff, and careful planning and support strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. Build on existing international networks, and make VMU a leader in the country for collaborative research in the three main areas
2. Improve student recruitment so that more students can benefit from the excellent teaching provision in Philosophy

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

Teaching takes place in centrally located VMU buildings with a large pool of classrooms (including lecture halls for large groups) equipped with computers, internet, projectors, and video-conferencing for hybrid/online delivery; additional computer labs are available for independent work. Facilities are fully accessible (lifts/ramps/adapted furniture and dorm rooms), with study and social spaces (cafeteria, individual and group work areas) close to teaching rooms. The digital environment includes a regularly updated Moodle platform for course delivery, assessment, and feedback, complemented by bilingual Student and Lecturer Portals that centralise study information; distance learning uses MS Teams/BigBlueButton with user guides and technical support. Library provision is organised through seven branches offering study places, university computers, reservable individual/group rooms, and assistive technologies; services include RFID self-service and 24/7 returns. Collections combine extensive print holdings with very large e-resources accessible on-site and remotely (EZproxy), supported by discovery tools (Virtual Library, CRIS) and training in digital literacy and academic integrity (Turnitin/iThenticate/Identific). Philosophy-specific resources comprise substantial print holdings and tens of thousands of ebooks and hundreds of e-journals; acquisitions are continuously updated with dedicated budgets. Resource planning and renewal are systematic: study resources are reviewed annually, IT hardware and software are regularly modernised (e.g., rolling replacement of computers, licensed software only), and library acquisitions are coordinated with programme staff and subject librarians; interlibrary loan is available where needed. During the site visit, the panel toured teaching and library spaces as part of its examination of learning facilities.

6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

Studies are delivered in centrally located VMU buildings in Kaunas (Donelaičio, Daukanto, Putvinskio), with classrooms sized to cohort needs and equipped with computers, internet, projectors, and video-conferencing to support hybrid/online delivery; 42 computer labs are available for independent work. The physical environment is adapted for students with disabilities (lifts, ramps, automatic doors, marked stairs, adapted furniture, and dorm rooms), under a university-wide Disability Policy focused on accessible study conditions and coordinated support.

The digital study environment combines Moodle for course delivery, assessment, and feedback with bilingual Student/Lecturer Portals that centralise study information; distance teaching uses MS Teams/BigBlueButton with user guides.

Library provision is organised through seven branches offering several workstations (including adapted spaces) and assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, magnifiers, Braille/tactile printers, height-adjustable self-service desks); RFID self-service and 24/7 returns are available. VMU provides extensive e-resources accessible on-site and remotely via EZproxy, discovery through the Virtual Library/CRIS, and training in digital literacy and academic integrity (Turnitin, iThenticate, Identific). For Philosophy specifically, holdings include ~18,300 print/physical items and 51,517 e-

resources (≈50,962 e-books; 555 e-journals), alongside domain-relevant licensed databases (e.g., JSTOR, Oxford, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Springer).

Opportunities for internships outside the HEI include Erasmus+ traineeships (2–12 months) and additional mobility schemes; VMU also supports internships with mobility scholarships outside the EU/EEA and practice in Lithuanian schools, communities, and centres abroad.

Financial and planning arrangements for resources are systematic: faculties submit annual resource requirement plans; IT renewal is centralised (e.g., ~20% of computers renewed annually); and library acquisitions are continuously coordinated with programme staff and subject librarians, supported by dedicated budgets.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

Resource planning and renewal are organised on a rolling, annual basis: faculties and academies submit resource-requirement plans each year, while VMU centrally monitors and renews technical and software resources (only licensed software is used and audited/updated at least every six months; commercial software is provided to students under educational licences).

Digital study infrastructure is regularly upgraded: Moodle is updated annually and server operating systems are maintained; the bilingual Student and Lecturer Portals are kept current as the university's one-stop interfaces for study information.

Library collection development follows a formal procedure and ongoing cooperation with programmes: needs are coordinated by teachers and subject librarians, requests are submitted via an interactive form, usage of programme-related documents is periodically analysed to target acquisitions, and interlibrary loan complements holdings where necessary.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The SER evidences a robust physical and digital learning environment proportionate to programme needs. Teaching is delivered in centrally located buildings equipped for hybrid/online delivery, supported by 42 computer labs for independent work; all premises are adapted for students with disabilities (lifts, ramps, marked stairs, adapted furniture, and dorm rooms). The library system provides seven branches with dedicated study spaces and assistive technologies, alongside extensive e-resources accessible on-site and remotely via EZproxy; discovery and integrity tools (Virtual Library/CRIS, Alma/Primo VE, Science Assistant, Turnitin/iThenticate/Identific) further strengthen access and academic practice. Informational and financial resources are planned and maintained systematically. Course delivery is anchored in Moodle and the bilingual Student/Lecturer Portals, with regular platform and server updates; resource renewal follows annual faculty plans and a central IT replacement cycle (approx. 20% of computers renewed annually; licensed software audited and updated). Library acquisitions are coordinated with teaching staff and subject librarians, guided by formal procedures and usage analysis, with dedicated budgets noted in the SER. Opportunities for practice outside the HEI are ensured through Erasmus+ traineeships and additional internship schemes (including outside the EU/EEA and placements in Lithuanian schools/communities), complementing the on-campus resource base. The Panel observed the teaching and library spaces during the visit and was impressed by their quality.

Overall, the evidence indicates that facilities, informational, and financial resources are excellent. They are very well suited for effective learning in the field, with continuous upgrade mechanisms in place.

The aim is **excellently met**, supported by accessible, well-equipped facilities, strong library and e-resource provision, and systematic planning and renewal processes.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 6	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle					x

COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel commends the high quality of the library resources and physical learning environment. The university provides well-equipped, centrally located buildings with accessible, modern study spaces, and a library system that offers extensive print and electronic holdings, strong discovery tools, and dedicated support services. Together, these facilities significantly enhance the learning experience and provide students with an excellent academic infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

None

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

FACTUAL SITUATION

As explained in SER, 34-36, the study system ensures that the assessment system is informative and understandable for students. Students help to design their own timetable by voting for the choice of elective study courses; some study courses are thus chosen to reflect the wishes of the majority. Collaboration with VMU graduates takes place through alumni clubs and specific University departments, along with their associate deans, who are responsible for maintaining alumni relations within their departments. The Panel's meetings with the stakeholders demonstrated that there is feedback from all of them. Studies are monitored by students, teachers, and alumni. Students emphasize that they constantly receive strong support from both lecturers and alumni.

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

As stated in SER, the study quality assurance at VMU encompasses purposeful and systematic planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of studies, aiming to meet the priorities of higher education, legal requirements, and the needs of social stakeholders.

In all meetings with administration, teachers, students, alumni, and employers the Panel heard that this system works excellently in the faculty.

The Practical Philosophy Study Programme Committee consists of 5 members: 3 teachers, 1 student, and 1 representative of employers. In panel discussions, the Panel noted the strong relations between the faculty administration, Head of the Department of Philosophy, students, and alumni.

Students can express their opinion about studies not only with the help of surveys, but also in conversations with teachers. They also have a student representative who is participating in meetings with VMU Council, Senate or various commissions.

7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

As noted in SER, 56, all stakeholders are involved in the assurance of study quality. VMU stands out from other universities due to its highly democratic environment. The admission procedure to the programme is also different: applicants write a letter describing their motivations, and prospective students are interviewed. A working group has been established to reflect on how to strategically strengthen this particular programme, and all perspectives are considered.

At the same time, some lecturers note that creating a new programme usually requires dedicating personal time to the task, and the same applies to updating existing programs. This represents a challenge for the teaching staff.

7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

The University has an open document "VMU Feedback Procedure for the Improvement of Study Quality." According to the SER, the collection of feedback information is coordinated, analysed, summarised, stored, and disseminated by the University units organising the specific feedback collection. Centralised study quality surveys are conducted by the VMU Quality Assurance Division; other surveys are conducted by faculty and academy administrations, committees, the student representatives, and by the Careers Centre. From Panel meetings, it is clear that all stakeholders are involved to get the feedback. Students and lecturers state that communication from the administration is excellent, sometimes, the information received is even excessive.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

As explained in SER, 57-58, "targeted discussions and conversations with students conducted by faculties and academies help to more clearly identify the strengths of studies and the challenges that arise, as well as to propose solutions." From the Panel meeting with students, it is clear that students have the feeling that the administration and the teachers listen to them. The opinions of students and the administration differ most regarding the first semester – in the students' view, it is quite challenging, and they communicate this to the lecturers. However, they settle into the course later on. Students state that the lecturers are very helpful, as they monitor the students and understand their needs. A collegial relationship is emphasized. Reading fairly complex philosophical texts begins from the very first day of studies, and without an individual approach, this would be impossible. The feedback from students is analysed and summarised.

Student feedback suggests that they value their lecturers highly. The fact that the majority of students come from Vilnius indicates that they are looking for a specific philosophy programme, and the VMU programme seems to meet their needs excellently. Students and alumni assess its excellent quality not only based on the offered programme but also on the lecturers.

A significant portion of current philosophy MA students come from the arts – for example, theatre or visual arts – as well as from other practical fields, such as medicine. It is important that when reflecting on the shape and design of the programme, applicants are considered from a broader perspective. The administration notes that people coming from other programmes enrich it.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Philosophy is one of VDU's priorities. There is a strong interest in the subject from senionr management, and students come to the programme eager to study. The university's decision to strengthen the philosophy programme is deliberate. This programme is important to the university, so it invests significant effort into it. After completing the master's programme, students have the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies. According to the SER, currently there is one doctoral student per year, but there is both desire and effort to have more.

The department is small, which makes it easier to communicate and interact on various matters. The university's programme stands out from other philosophy programmes due to its practical orientation, while succeeding to maintaining its academic (philosophical) level. Students are usually not recent BA graduates; most of them are people who already have careers. The programme is more of a horizontal study format, which means the university can dedicate appropriate attention to students. Classes are mostly small and seminar-style. The level and content of study does not necessarily

reflect previous academic activity; some students come from an arts background, for instance. Therefore, a challenge in the first semester is to bring students to the same level. MA theses often win various awards.

In small groups, the composition of students is very important, because weaker students can negatively affect stronger ones. Students ask what they need to do and how to prepare. Most students have typically completed an introductory course in philosophy. Students are closely monitored and expected to work from day one. If students wish to leave the programme, they are first invited to discuss the situation – the goal is to solve the problem together.

The feedback from current students and alumni is very positive. Therefore, when making any changes to the programme, it is important not only to take into account the comments of students, alumni, and social partners but also to preserve what the university has already established and what is trusted.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 7	**Unsatisfactory - 1** Does not meet the requirements	**Satisfactory - 2** Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	**Good - 3** Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	**Very good - 4** Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	**Exceptional - 5** Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. For the university administration, it is admirable that all perspectives are heard, and therefore that the programme can be said to be developed with consideration of what students need, what employers expect, and the advice of alumni.
2. The programme has a practical focus, but it succeeds excellently in maintaining its academic philosophical character.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. Find a way to create a closer connection between schools and universities, and to hear what future students expect from studies, to encourage them to choose Philosophy studies.
2. To encourage teachers to become more involved in programme development, while at the same time consulting with them on how to do so in a way that is convenient for them.

V. SUMMARY

The Panel wishes to thank VMU for organising the site visit and for the engagement of all stakeholders during the meetings. This summary addresses the individual areas, first highlighting the positive aspects of the programme under review, followed by identifying where there is room for improvement.

- Area 1

There is a real need in Lithuanian society for a programme in practical philosophy, focused on the applicability of philosophical expertise in various societal fields. The programme is faithful to its academic philosophical core and level, and contributes in a meaningful way to the mission and strategy of VMU. The structure of the programme complies with the quantitative and qualitative criteria of an MA programme in philosophy. To realize the interdisciplinary aim of the programme, its modules analyse and discuss other disciplines and fields of interest from a (practical) philosophical perspective. The teaching/learning methods ensure that students are trained in the application of their philosophical knowledge and develop research skills and social skills. The programme has succeeded in enabling students with a limited prior knowledge in philosophy to familiarize themselves with specialized and in-depth philosophical theories and methods. All MA theses succeed in connecting important philosophical theories to a topical societal question in a meaningful way.

The Panel recommends that the study programme pay more structural attention to how the learning outcomes align with the teaching/learning methods and the assessment methods of *all* modules and to the diversity of assessment methods.

- Area 2

The Panel was very impressed with the range and quality of research and research activities. There is a good support structure and a strong financial setting for research. Equally, research is embedded in the curriculum, which is revised and adapted to meet important new research findings, as well as student interests.

The Panel recommends the programme management and the teachers to explore the possibility of more inter-Lithuanian research cooperation and collaboration with philosophy departments in other institutions.

- Area 3

The admissions framework is clearly public, rule-based, and competitive. Its eligibility pathways are appropriate for a research-oriented MA, while the ranking components—bachelor average, bachelor thesis, and motivation letter—are relevant indicators of academic preparedness and commitment, aligned with the programme's aims and expected learning outcomes. Procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications and partial studies are formalised and consistently implemented, with quantitative examples of recognised Erasmus credits and traineeship hours. The evidence shows a comprehensive, multi-layered system for student information, counselling, and support that is embedded in VMU regulations and practice. Programme and course information is consistently available, and students receive personalised updates through institutional channels. Financial, social, psychological, and personal support is broad in scope and used by Philosophy students. At the institutional level, opportunities for academic mobility are clearly ensured and well publicised. The panel noted that many students are mature and employed, and that evening/online scheduling

and "mobility at home" are valued. Students and staff also described close, approachable teacher–student interaction.

The Panel recommends that the programme include courses (concentrated in one semester) in English to attract more incoming foreign (Erasmus+) students.

- Area 4

Teaching and learning address the needs of students very well and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured through both legal acts and the physical environment. The monitoring of learning progress is realized very well, and the feedback to students to promote learning progress planning is provided after every intermediate assessment and exam. The policy to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, and the procedure for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are very well ensured.

Although the graduates are interviewed and informed about the VMU events, they could be more included in academic life to improve the programme.

- Area 5

There has been significant thought going into the curriculum development, staffing, and ensuring that staff who have left are replaced with new staff working in areas that are attractive to students. There is a wide range of mentoring and support for new staff, and service to the profession by many experienced members of staff. Staff are given excellent opportunities and significant support from senior management with respect to mobility and career development. There is an excellent system of periodical evaluation and discussion at departmental meetings. Communication is key to a flourishing teaching operation, and this seems to be very much in place in the department.

The Panel recommends the programme management and the teachers to build on existing international networks, and make VMU a leader in the country for collaborative research.

- Area 6

Facilities, informational, and financial resources are excellent. They are very well suited for effective learning in the field, with continuous upgrade mechanisms in place.

- Area 7

Because of its small size, it is easier for all stakeholders to communicate and interact on various matters. The programme is more of a horizontal study format, which means the university can dedicate appropriate attention to students. Students are closely monitored and expected to work from day one. If students wish to leave the programme, they are first invited to discuss the situation – the goal is to solve the problem together. The feedback from current students and alumni about the information they receive from the programme is very positive.

The Panel recommends the programme management to explore possibilities to create a closer connection between schools and universities, and to hear what future students expect from studies.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

- The way in which students with a limited prior knowledge in philosophy are made familiar with specialized and in-depth philosophical theories and methods in the first semester of the programme.
- The quality of the research and the range of research activity
- Requiring prospective students to write a motivational letter, aimed at preventing students with unrealistic expectations from entering the programme.
- The high quality of the library resources and physical learning environment. The university provides well-equipped, centrally located buildings with accessible, modern study spaces, and a library system that offers extensive print and electronic holdings, strong discovery tools, and dedicated support services.