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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF STUDY FIELDS AT VILNIAUS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Description of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures of Fields of Study of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter – the Description) establishes the quality assurance processes for the development, implementation, evaluation and improvement of study programmes in accordance with the requirements of the respective field of study.

2. The internal quality assurance of study fields is based on the responsibility of Vilnius UAS for the quality of studies and its improvement as well as the principles enshrined in the Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania and the Statute of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences.

2.1. The Description has been prepared in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, the Methodology for External Evaluation of Study Fields, the Methodology for Evaluation of Planned Study Programmes, Orders of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on the approval of descriptions of study fields, the General Requirements for the Execution of Studies, the European Higher Education Area Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines, the Regulations of the Appeals Commission of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Study Procedures of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, the Description of the Procedure for Feedback to Improve the Quality of Studies, and other legal acts regulating internal quality assurance of study fields.

3. The terms used in the Description correspond to the terms defined in the Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania and its sub-legislative legal acts.

4. The Description shall apply when conducting the following at Vilnius UAS:

4.1. internal quality assurance in the preparation of the planned study programmes;

4.2. internal quality assurance of the studies carried out in the field;

4.3. external evaluation and accreditation of study fields;

4.4. follow-up to the external evaluation and accreditation of study fields;

4.5. submitting appeals following the external evaluation and accreditation of study fields.

5. Areas for assessing the quality of the field of study:

5.1. Study objectives, outcomes and content;

5.2. Links between research (art) and study activities;

5.3. Student enrolment and support;

5.4. Studying, learning outcomes and graduate employment;

5.5. Teaching staff;

5.6. Material resources for studies;

5.7. Managing and publicising study quality.

6. Internal quality assurance entities for study fields:

6.1. **Rector** - takes care of the quality of studies organised at Vilnius UAS and the level of higher education provided.

6.2. **Academic Council** - approves the internal quality assurance system and monitors its implementation.

6.3. **Deputy Director for Studies** - organises quality assurance activities of the fields of study at Vilnius UAS.

6.4. **Study Office** - monitors the quality of studies.

6.5. **Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office** - coordinates quality assurance activities of study fields at Vilnius UAS.

6.6. **Dean** - organises quality assurance of study fields at the Faculty.

6.7. **Vice-Dean** - coordinates the implementation of the internal quality assurance system for study fields at the Faculty.

6.8. **Faculty Council** - discusses the fields of study and makes proposals to the Dean; discusses and submits to the Academic Council for approval the study programmes to be implemented by the Faculty.

6.9. **Study Field Committee** (hereinafter – Study Field Committee) is a group of competent persons who ensure the quality of the study area conducted by Vilnius UAS. In cases where one study programme only is conducted in a field of study, the Study Field Committee also performs the functions of the Study Programme Committee.

6.10. **Study Programme Committee** (hereinafter – Programme Committee) - a group of competent persons formed to ensure the quality of the description of the study programme to be implemented and to substantiate the needs, and after the programme has been registered in accordance with the procedure established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania - to ensure the quality of the study programme offered.

6.11. **Department** - supervises study programmes in one or more fields of study. It organises and conducts studies, ensuring their quality.

6.12. **Teaching staff** - cooperate with other internal quality assurance entities of the study field(s) to improve the quality of studies, develop new and update existing study programmes and provide feedback to the departments supervising the study programmes on the improvement of the study programmes offered.

6.13. **Social stakeholders** - natural and legal persons who have an interest in the training of professionals, who can influence the institution and who have a social responsibility (administrative and academic staff, students, graduates, employers, representatives of professional associations, public authorities, trade union representatives, etc.)

6.14. **Social partners** - representatives of employers, professional associations or similar organisations that work with a higher education institution and have an interest in the quality of the professionals it trains.

6.15. Other entities responsible for the quality of studies within the areas of responsibility and functions delegated to the administration, academic units and academic self-government bodies.

7. Data necessary for the internal quality assessment of activities of Vilnius UAS are collected in an integrated information system administered by Information Technology Centre of Vilnius UAS.

8. The Deputy Director for Studies, the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office, Deans and Vice-Deans supervise the internal quality assurance of study fields.

CHAPTER II INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PLANNED STUDY PROGRAMMES

9. The development of the planned study programme is initiated by the Dean of the Faculty where the study programme is to be implemented, on the proposal of the academic community and/or the administration and/or social partners of Vilnius UAS.

10. Procedures and responsible entities for assessing the relevance of the planned study programme (Annex 1):

10.1. **Dean** sets up a working group and assigns it the task of preparing a justification of the need for the planned study programme and the formulation of the expected learning outcomes.

10.2. **Working group**, in cooperation with stakeholders (social actors), assesses the need for the professionals to be trained in the country and/or region, and formulates the expected learning outcomes. The working group submits its conclusions on the need for the planned study programme and the expected learning outcomes to the Dean.

10.3. **Faculty Council**, on the recommendation of the Dean, assesses the relevance of the planned programme to the mission and strategic objectives of Vilnius UAS. The Faculty Council makes a decision to approve or disapprove the preparation of the description of the planned study programme. Subject to the approval of the Faculty Council, the Dean prepares a proposal to the Rector for the approval of the composition of the Programme Committee.

10.4. **Rector** approves the Study Programme Committee and entrusts it with the task of ensuring that the description of the planned study programme complies with the requirements set out in the Methodology for the Preparation of the Description of the Planned Study Programme, its External Evaluation and Accreditation approved by Director of the Centre for Study Quality Assessment (hereinafter – SKVC).

10.5. **Programme Committee** prepares a description of the planned study programme and submits it to the Dean, the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office and, if there is more than one study programme in the field, to the Field Committee.

11. Procedures for assessing the quality of the intended study programme and the responsible entities (Annex 1):

11.1. **Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office** assesses the compliance of the description of the planned study programme with the requirements set out in the Methodology for the Preparation of the Description of the Planned Study Programme, its External Evaluation and Accreditation approved by the Director of the SKVC. In the event of deficiencies in the description of the study programme, the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office instructs the Programme Committee to eliminate them.

11.2. If there is more than one study programme in a field of study, the Study **Field Committee** also evaluates the planned programme, assessing the compliance of the study programme with the strategic objectives of Vilnius UAS, general and special study programme requirements (if any) approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, and professional qualifications (if any). If the Field Committee identifies any deficiencies, it instructs the Programme Committee to eliminate them.

11.3. **Dean** submits the description of the planned study programme to the Academic Council, having reviewed and adjusted it in light of comments no later than by 1 December of the current year.

11.4. **Academic Council** carries out the internal quality assessment procedure of the study programme on the basis of the Dean's recommendation and decides on the compliance of the planned study programme with the general and specific requirements for study programmes and on the approval of the description of the study programme. The Chairperson of the Academic Council signs a declaration of compliance of the planned study programme with the general and special study programme requirements.

11.5. The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council and the Declaration are submitted to the Rector. Copies of the minutes of the Academic Council meeting are submitted to: the Study Office, the Dean, the Field Committee and the Programme Committee.

11.6. The description of the planned study programme approved by the Academic Council is transferred to the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office, who is responsible for the transfer of the planned study programme to SKVC.

11.7. **The Dean** organises the accreditation of the planned study programme in accordance with the procedure established by the SKVC.

CHAPTER III

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE CONDUCTED FIELD STUDIES

12. Vilnius UAS offers solely those study fields and/or study programmes that have been accredited in accordance with the procedure established by legislation of the Republic of Lithuania.

13. The quality of the study field is ensured through internal quality monitoring – continuous monitoring and evaluation of studies, which ensures that the implementation of the field of study complies with quality requirements and responds promptly to observed shortcomings and the relevant context.

14. The internal quality monitoring of the study field is carried out annually in accordance with the Methodology for External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the SKVC. It defines the areas to be evaluated, the objectives and the indicators used to determine the quality of the study field (Annex 2).

15. The Dean organises and the Vice-Dean coordinates internal quality assurance of study field(s), in cooperation with the department(s) supervising the study programme(s) (hereinafter – the Department(s)), the Field Committee and the Programme Committee, if there is more than one study programme in the field.

16. The quality assurance procedures of the conducted study field and the responsible entities (Annex 1):

16.1. **Dean and Vice-Dean** are responsible for ensuring internal quality of the offered study field(s) within the Faculty, in accordance with their assigned functions.

16.2. **Field and Programme Committees** are responsible for ensuring that the objectives, results and content of study programmes are in line with the needs of the society and/or the labour market, for internal evaluation of the study quality, and for making recommendations for the updating and improvement of the study programme.

16.3. **Social actors** submit an evaluation of the study programme and proposals for its improvement to the Field Committee depending on their role in the study process and/or their commitments (supervisors of internships, supervisors/ advisors/ reviewers, employers, etc. of course works and final theses).

16.4. **Teaching staff** provide feedback to the Department on the objectives and expected learning outcomes of the study programme, the course of study and its evaluation, material resources, etc.

16.5. **Students** periodically (once a semester) submit to the Department, directly or through their representatives, the offered study programme, their comments and suggestions for its improvement.

17. At the end of the current academic year, the **Field Committee** discusses and approves summarised conclusions of the annual study field quality monitoring and recommendations for improvement of the field on the basis of the annual study field quality monitoring report (Annex 3) prepared by the Department (s), the opinion and suggestions of the Programme Committee and/or social actors. If the field of study is carried out at more than one faculty, a joint meeting of the Deans, Vice-Deans and the Field Committee is organised to discuss the issues of quality monitoring and improvement of the field of study. The Chairperson of the Field Committee submits a report on the monitoring of study

field quality with summarised conclusions and recommendations for improvement of the field of study to the Dean(s), Vice-Dean(s) and the Department(s) no later than 30 September.

18. The Programme Committee makes a proposal to the Field Committee for updating the study programme; the Field Committee prepares a proposal to the Dean for updating the study programme. Amendments to the study programme are approved by the Dean's order no later than by 15 March of the current year, except for the following cases:

18.1. if there is a change in the subject(s) and/or name(s) of the subject(s) in the study programme, and/or in the arrangement of the subjects in the Study Plan, the changes shall be approved by an order of the Director;

18.2. if half or more of the study programme outcomes are changed, and/or specialisations are introduced, and/or the name of the study programme (specialisation) is changed, the changes shall be approved by the Academic Council and shall be published by the Rector's order no later than by 15 March of the current year;

18.3. changes to the joint study programme shall be approved in accordance with the requirements of the joint study programme implementation agreement.

19. An internal control and risk assessment specialist of Vilnius UAS may conduct a periodic monitoring and evaluation of the offered study field in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania regulating internal control.

CHAPTER IV EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF STUDY FIELDS

20. SKVC organises external evaluation of study fields with the help of external experts.

21. A university of applied sciences wishing for SKVC to evaluate its field studies submits its application for evaluation and accreditation of the field studies and a summary of the self-evaluation to SKVC within the time limits set out in the external evaluation plan for fields of study.

22. If a university of applied sciences closes studies in the field (does not enrol and does not intend to enrol new students), the Study Quality Coordinator informs SKVC thereof in writing at least 6 months before the submission of a self-evaluation summary.

23. The process of carrying out a self-evaluation and preparing a summary report involves the following steps:

23.1. setting up and approving a Self-Evaluation and Summary Preparation Group (hereinafter – the Self-Evaluation Group). The Self- Evaluation Group shall be brought together by Order of the Rector.

The recommendation is for the Self-Evaluation Group to be composed of no more than 9 persons and to include at least one student and at least one social partner. The Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office supervises the process of preparation of self-evaluation at Vilnius UAS;

23.2. collecting and analysing the information needed for the self-evaluation and summary;

23.3. preparing a draft self-evaluation summary;

23.4. submitting a draft self-evaluation summary to the Dean(s), the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office, the Rector, and including their comments into the final draft;

23.5. presenting a draft self-evaluation summary to the Faculty Council(s);

23.6. translating and editing the text of the self-evaluation summary;

23.7. submitting a self-evaluation summary signed by the Rector to SKVC.

24. The Self-Evaluation Group is responsible for ensuring that a self-evaluation is conducted properly and in a timely manner, that a self-evaluation summary is prepared and submitted to SKVC within the deadlines set out in the external study field evaluation plan. A minimum of six months shall be allowed for the preparation of a self-evaluation summary.

25. In cooperation with the Field Committee, the Dean(s) or Vice-Dean(s) coordinate(s) the process of carrying out a self-evaluation and the preparation of a summary report, involving all stakeholders (teaching staff, students, alumni, employers, social actors):

25.1. in cooperation with the Field Committee, the Dean sets up a Self-Evaluation Group. The composition of the Self-Evaluation Group and the deadlines for the preparation of a self-evaluation summary shall be approved by Rector's order;

25.2. the Self-Evaluation Group conducts a self-evaluation and drafts a draft self-evaluation summary;

25.3. The draft shall be discussed with all stakeholders (teaching staff, students, alumni, employers, social partners). Based on the comments made, the Self-Evaluation Group shall adjust the draft self-evaluation summary.

25.4. No later than 2 months before the deadline for the submission of a self-evaluation report set by SKVC in the study field external evaluation plan, a draft self-evaluation summary shall be discussed with the following stakeholders: the Rector, the Deputy Rector for Studies, the Dean(s), and the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office. Each of the stakeholders shall have 5 business days to read it and to provide comments to the Self-Evaluation Group.

25.5. The Self-Evaluation Group shall revise a draft self-evaluation summary taking into account the comments of the Rector, the Deputy Rector for Studies, the Dean(s) and the Study Quality

Coordinator of the Study Office. The self-evaluation summary shall be presented to the Faculty Council(s).

25.6. Following the presentation of a draft self-evaluation summary to the Faculty Council, the text shall be translated and edited. The text of the summary should be consistent with the terminology of the study field under evaluation.

25.7. The head of the Self-Evaluation Group shall submit a self-evaluation summary to the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office, who shall submit the self-evaluation summary signed by the Rector to SKVC no later than 5 business days before the deadline set by SKVC in the study field external evaluation plan.

26. The self-evaluation summary (Annex 2) is an analytical document that reveals the ability of Vilnius UAS to critically assess its activities and to anticipate the prospects for their improvement. The parts of the self-evaluation summary are as follows: introduction, analysis of the field and level studies, and annexes.

27. The self-evaluation summary shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in the Methodology for External Evaluation of Study Fields. The text of the general part of the self-evaluation summary shall be provided in a "docx" or "pdf" document. The self-evaluation summary shall be submitted in both Lithuanian and English.

28. The self-evaluation is carried out in accordance with the methodology of external evaluation of study fields approved by Order of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. If any indicator does not apply to a field of study, this shall be indicated in the self-evaluation summary.

29. The analysis of each evaluation area concludes with recommendations from the previous evaluation (if provided for a specific area under evaluation) and a description of how they have been addressed. The strengths and areas for improvement of each area under evaluation are summarised.

30. The self-evaluation summary contains data for the last 3 academic years. If field studies are delivered for a shorter period of time, data for the entire period of delivery of the study field shall be provided.

31. The self-evaluation summary provides a generalised analysis of all study programmes in the study field, highlighting the specificities of each of the study programme under evaluation.

32. If the field of study and the level of study are delivered as full-time and part-time, the differences in their delivery shall be disclosed in the self-evaluation summary.

33. If there is a joint study programme among the studies of the field being evaluated, the features

of the joint study programme shall be clearly indicated in the self-evaluation summary, also indicating the resources (human and material) to be used in each of the HEIs delivering the joint study programme.

34. The self-evaluation summary must contain information required for the evaluation in a targeted manner, not exceeding 40 pages (excluding annexes) of the self-evaluation summary. The length of the self-evaluation depends on the number of study programmes in the field of study under evaluation.

35. The Self-Evaluation Group shall submit a corrected self-evaluation summary to SKVC no later than 15 days after the submission of the self-evaluation summary to SKVC and after having been informed of the discrepancies.

36. Vilnius UAS may provide information on substantial changes in the field of study that have taken place since the submission of a self-evaluation summary to SKVC, at least 2 weeks before the visit of the expert team.

37. Vilnius UAS shall ensure suitable facilities and equipment for the meetings and the work of the expert group during the visit.

38. Vilnius UAS shall, where possible, create conditions for all interested members of the community to meet the expert team by publicising information about the visit. One member of Vilnius UAS community may participate in one meeting of the expert group during the same visit only, except in cases agreed with the evaluation coordinator in advance.

39. Vilnius UAS students and/or employees shall not participate in meetings with alumni and employers.

40. Members of the Student Representation of Vilnius UAS may also attend meetings with students.

41. The visit includes meetings with the administration of Vilnius UAS or the faculty(ies), the drafters of a self-evaluation summary of the field studies, teaching staff of the field studies, students, graduates and their employers. During the visit, experts inspect the material base for the implementation of field studies, read students' written work, final theses, examination materials and other documents.

42. When an international group of experts carries out the evaluation, meetings are usually held in English. Vilnius UAS ensures high quality translation services if needed. A translator takes part in meetings with students only when agreed with the evaluation coordinator.

43. Vilnius UAS may submit comments to SKVC on the actual errors contained in the draft evaluation conclusions and the evaluations based thereon no later than within 10 business days from the date of sending draft evaluation conclusions. Comments on actual errors and the evaluations based thereon shall be submitted in English and Lithuanian.

44. Vilnius UAS must make evaluation conclusions and the decision on accreditation public.

CHAPTER V ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING EXTERNAL STUDY FIELD EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION

45. Follow-up activities are an integral part of quality assessment of studies and are aimed at continuous improvement of field studies, taking into account legal regulation of the quality of study fields and the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Follow-up consists of: annual monitoring of the quality of the study field and follow-up activities.

46. Annual quality monitoring of the study field is carried out by the Department(s) in cooperation with the Field Committee. The Department(s) analyse the compliance of the study field with legal requirements and report to the Faculty Council at the end of each academic year, presenting an annual quality monitoring report on the field of study.

47. The follow-up activities are carried out in the following stages:

47.1. Identifying improvement measures. At this stage, following the decision on the accreditation of field studies, the Field Committee sets out measures to improve field and level studies and to address the weaknesses identified during the evaluation, in accordance with the recommendations made in the evaluation findings, by drawing up a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the external evaluation (hereafter – the Progress Report) in accordance with the model set out in Annex 4. The Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office publishes the Progress Report on the website of Vilnius UAS no later than 5 months after the publication of order of the Director of SKVC on the accreditation of a study field;

47.2. Implementation of the measures envisaged. At this stage, based on the Progress Report and in cooperation with the Field Committee and stakeholders (teachers, students, graduates, employers, social partners), the Department(s) implement(s) the measures foreseen for the improvement of the field and level studies.

47.3. Updating, approval and submission of the Progress Report to SKVC. At this stage, the Field Committee updates the Progress Report in cooperation with the Department(s), records the measures already implemented to improve the field and level studies, presents it to the stakeholders (students, teaching staff, social partners) and submits it to the Dean(s) for approval. The Dean submits the Progress Report to SKVC no later than 14 days before the deadline for the submission of the Progress Report to SKVC. If field studies are carried out in two faculties, one Dean submits a Progress Report by a common

agreement. The Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office publishes an updated Progress Report on the website of Vilnius UAS.

48. Progress reports are submitted to SKVC based on the field study accreditation period:

48.1. no later than 2.5 years after the accreditation of the study field, if field and level studies have been accredited for a period of 7 years;

48.2. no later than 1 year after the accreditation of field studies, if field and level studies have been accredited for a period of 3 years.

CHAPTER VI SUBMISSION OF APPEALS FOLLOWING EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF STUDY FIELDS

49. Disagreeing with the decision adopted by SKVC on the external evaluation and accreditation of a study field, Vilnius UAS may submit a reasoned appeal to SKVC within 20 business days from the date of sending a decision. If an appeal is lodged in respect of an external evaluation carried out by experts from foreign countries, an English translation of the appeal shall also be provided.

50. By his order, the Rector orders (within 20 business days from the date of sending a decision on the external evaluation and accreditation of a study field) the Self-Evaluation Group, in cooperation with the Field Committee, to examine the conclusions presented by SKVC and to prepare an appeal.

51. On the recommendation of the Dean(s), a member of the Self-Evaluation Group is delegated by Rector's order to represent Vilnius UAS at the meeting of SKVC Appeals Commission.

52. In cooperation with the Field Committee, the Self-Evaluation Group may, in the context of the examination of the findings presented by SKVC and preparation of an appeal, express dissatisfaction with the assessment process or the participants in the process, and may dispute the formal outcome of the process if it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that the criteria have not been properly applied, or that the processes have not been carried out in a consistent manner.

53. When preparing an appeal, the Self-Evaluation Group provides information and coordinates its actions with the Dean(s).

54. The Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office publishes the decision of the SKVC Appeals Commission on the website of Vilnius UAS.

**CHAPTER VII
FINAL PROVISIONS**

55. Information on processes of quality assurance of studies, results of the evaluation and accreditation of study fields, and programme updates is published on the website of Vilnius UAS by the Study Quality Coordinator of the Study Office.

56. The Vice-Dean publishes information on study fields, career opportunities, study quality indicators, the results of the external quality assessment of the study field(s) (the evaluation conclusion or its summary with recommendations) and the decision of the authorised accrediting body on the accreditation of the study field on the Faculty's website.

57. The Description has entered into force on 1 February 2021.
