SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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JOURNALISM FIELD OF STUDY

Vilnius University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION DRAFT REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: prof. Adrian Hadland
2. Academic member: prof. Maria del Carmen Garcia Galera
3. Student representative: Greta Namentkevič

SKVC coordinator: Greta Misevičiūtė

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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. Adrian Hadland, University of Stirling
2. Academic member: Prof. María Del Carmen García Galera, King Juan Carlos University
3. Student representative: Greta Namentkevič, Klaipėda University

4. Evaluation coordinator: Greta Misevičiūtė (SKVC)

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 21 October 2024 onsite in Vilnius. In addition to VU's new academic campus, the panel visited the Scientific Communication and Information Centre (SCIC) and were shown a video of VU's TV studio, radio studio and radio auditorium facilities. These facilities were located in central Vilnius and some distance from the location of the interviews and site visit.

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

Vilnius University was founded in 1579 and is the oldest and largest higher education institution in Lithuania. The University's governance structure is defined in the Statute of Vilnius University which stipulates that the self-governance of the University's community is implemented by the governing bodies of the University – the Senate, the Council, and the Rector – in their respective capacities. The University has 15 core academic units (11 faculties, 1 institute, 1 centre, 1 academy and 1 business school) and 12 core non-academic units.

Overview of the study field

The study of Journalism falls under VU's Faculty of Communication which was established in 1991. A Study Programme Committee is responsible for the implementation of the study programmes in the field of Journalism. The committee has an international composition, including a social partner from the University of Tampere (Finland). Research work relevant to the implementation of the study programmes in Journalism is mainly carried out at the Centre for Journalism and Media Studies; some research relevant to the field of study is also carried out at the Centre for Political Communication Studies and the Department of Digital Cultures and Communication.

Currently, the Faculty of Communication employs 164 staff members: teaching, research and administrative staff (17 professors, 44 associate professors, 16 assistant professors, 1 junior assistant professor, 64 lecturers, 22 administrative staff members), and 1,139 students (2022–2023 year of study).

The field of study under evaluation comprises one first-cycle (bachelor's degree) study programme in Journalism and one second-cycle (master's degree) study programme in

Analytical Journalism. The first-cycle programme began in 1949 at the Faculty of History when Lithuania was still a Soviet-occupied country. After independence, the journalism study programme was transferred to the newly established Faculty of Communication where it was fundamentally restructured and modernised. The two-tier system was introduced in 1997 in response to market demands for qualified professionals. The current undergraduate (BA) programme was registered in 2002, and the postgraduate (MA) programme in Analytical Journalism was registered in 2012.

VU has long been considered the pre-eminent journalism programme in Lithuania, with a strong reputation for training the nation's journalists. It also seems to be mostly respected within the university, with structural support for the faculty and programmes on an institutional level.

Previous external evaluations

The BA and MA journalism study programmes underwent external evaluations in 2010, 2014 and 2020. During the last evaluation for accreditation, the study programmes were accredited for three years. While both cycles received generally positive evaluations in 2020, some areas of weakness were identified by the panel. Notably, these included the only "satisfactory" rating for intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum for both cycles. Specifically, the panel noted a disconnect between practical instruction and theoretical/critical thinking and a lack of strong ties to the labour market. In addition, the evaluation panel highlighted a lack of technical skills upgrading among the teaching staff, a shortage of research publications in quality journals and an over-reliance within both cycles on summative assessment. A number of recommendations and suggestions were made to assist VU upgrade its evaluation status.

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
- Various legal documents including descriptor study cycles.
- Ministry requirements for the provision of studies and information on the accreditation and evaluation procedure
- SKVC information on the context of Lithuanian Higher Education and guidelines for the review process
- Agendas and list of participants
- Final theses

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

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

- Updated schedule of International teaching and learning (Erasmus) visits
- Updated information on student satisfaction rates by semester
- List of scholarly publications by staff.

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**Journalism**
State code	6121JX025
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full time, 4 years
Workload in ECTS	240 ECTS
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	14 June 2002
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	**Analytical journalism**
State code	6211JX032
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full time, 2 years
Workload in ECTS	120 ECTS
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Bachelor's degree
First registration date	29 May 2012
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the Journalism field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
	Total:	25

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points*
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
	Total:	25

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

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

Vilnius University operates the first-cycle Journalism study programme and the second-cycle Analytical Journalism study programme in the Journalism study field. The first-cycle Journalism study programme adheres to the principle of educating journalists who can work across all platforms, including TV, print, radio, multimedia, and social media channels of news organisations. Rather than focusing on specialisation in a single medium, the programme provides a diverse range of subjects designed to develop the skills needed to understand how stories can be told and news reported in integrated and varied forms of media, including social media. The BA programme in Journalism is among the top 10 most popular study programmes at Vilnius University, according to 2022 data. It does not have any significant competition nationally.

The second-cycle Analytical Journalism study programme focuses on the development of analytical skills while applying knowledge gained during bachelor studies, after having worked for a few years or after having studied something else at the bachelor level. The Masters programme permits a broad spectrum of individualisation in studies and facilitates the creation of interdisciplinary specialised programme variants as required. While there are other providers in the market for second cycle programmes (such as Vytautas Magnus University), the offering at VU is unique in Lithuania, emphasising competencies in the production of quality media content while preparing professionals with interdisciplinary knowledge to analyse facts and phenomena in politics, economics and culture. The programme also prepares graduates for leadership and innovation in the media sector.

The study programmes, in terms of their content and orientation, satisfy Lithuanian society's need for new broad-profile journalists, who can further advance their analytical journalism skills by continuing their studies in the second cycle.

Both the first and second-cycle programmes hire experienced academics and well-known mass media professionals, ensuring theoretical and practical skills are embedded within the programmes.

The panel noted there has been a clear expansion of practical opportunities, both mandatory and voluntary, for both programmes and in response to earlier recommendations. These include simulated press conferences, student visits such as to the Lithuanian Parliament as well as the creation of smaller groups for practical work and a closer connection with local radio and TV stations and alumni. The decision to switch from Summer to September work experience and also to begin with regional news organisations and then move to national news organisations, appears to be working well and has enriched students' skills and experience. The time available for internships has also been increased. There is a much stronger linkage to employment than was evident in the previous evaluation.

According to the SER, in 2021, both Journalism and Analytical Journalism ranked in the Top 20 of Vilnius University programmes in terms of student employability. Within 12 months after graduation, 94% of graduates from the BA programme in Journalism and 100% of graduates from the MA programme in Analytical Journalism were employed.

While the Learning Outcomes are under review, we would suggest the addition of one or two Learning Outcomes which are more practical in nature. This would reinforce the move to a greater emphasis on practical skills and their integration into both programmes. At present, the Learning Outcomes for the BA programme are very generic and not specifically journalistic, such as "Ability to recognise cross-cultural misunderstandings and offer rational solutions". Where are the Learning Outcomes to, for example: Demonstrate creativity and innovation in generating ideas and producing work for publication or broadcast – displaying an understanding of media forms, structures and audience needs. Or: Generate story ideas, research them and write them up for specific publications, platforms and audiences. These are examples from comparable programmes. We would suggest the Study Programme Committee consider these options.

Similarly, the Masters programme highlights very broad competencies such as "Ability to prioritise the public's right and interest in access to quality information against the backdrop of the challenges facing global and local media markets". While useful, it is suggested at least one or two Learning Outcomes are introduced which specifically address core journalism skills involved in the identification and production of (multi)media content.

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

Vilnius University has the largest journalism study field in Lithuania involving almost 100 members of staff and 1,000 students for the First Cycle and Second Cycle programmes. The University contributes a substantial number of graduates and postgraduates each year to the broad media industry in Lithuania and across the region and therefore holds an important position in the field. The evaluation panel noted how proud the staff are of recent alumni already making a name for themselves in the Lithuanian and international mass media. These alumni include Sigita Vegytė winning a Third Coast International Audio Festival prize in 2022/23 for the world's best radio documentary of the year and Inga Janiulytė winning the PRIX EUROPA award in 2024 for Best European Audio Documentary of the Year.

The Masters programme "Analytical Journalism" was restructured in 2018 to fill a gap in the training of media analysts. The practical part of the first-cycle study programme has been improved by inviting practitioners as lecturers, improving the infrastructure for practical studies, increasing work experience opportunities, and giving practical instruction in smaller groups.

The significant restructuring suggests HEI support and a synergy of interests. It has also resulted in the increasing popularity of the two programmes. It is planned to move the radio and television training studios opened in 2016 to the new campus, something which will require institutional support going forward.

VU's mission "to strengthen the cognitive and creative potential of Lithuania and the world, foster academic and other spiritual and social values, educate active and responsible citizens and social leaders of Lithuania" are addressed in the objectives and study outcomes of the study programmes in the field of journalism. These are also in line with the strategic directions of VU's mission, as set out in its Operational Plan of 2021-25.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The evaluation panel notes significant improvements since the 2020 assessment in terms of achievement of learning outcomes, enhancement of practical instruction, expansion of work experience opportunities and connections between the programmes and employers in the Lithuanian media sector. These improvements have been achieved with the support of the institution. The improvements have resulted in the increasing standing and popularity of the two programmes both among prospective students but also among potential employers.

The panel believes the Learning Outcomes should be revised to add one or two which are more focused on practical outcomes.

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

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements.

The ECTS per module, contact hours and qualification structure all meet the legal requirements. A single study credit represents 25-30 work hours with 240 ECTS required for the cycle 1 programme and 120 ECTS for the Masters.

The BA programme, at qualification level 6, has a sufficient number of contact hours for first-cycle programmes of no less than 20%, while the number of direct contact teaching hours with students (not including online) is no less than 10% while the number of self-study hours is no less than 30%. This complies with formal requirements and is considered sufficient to achieve the learning outcomes.

For the second cycle programme, at qualification Level 7, no fewer than 60 study credits are allocated to the field course units (modules) that contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes specified in the field of study description. This too complies with formal requirements.

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

In terms of the objectives and expected learning outcomes of the study programmes, these clearly align with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, the learning outcomes characteristic of each level as described in the Descriptors of Study Fields as outlined by the SKVC, with professional standards and with the standards and regulations of international organisations, particularly UNESCO guidelines for journalism education.

The evaluation panel notes the valuable work of the Study Programme Committee, inputs from Social Partners as well as the support of the Advisory Board, which includes international representation, in ensuring the curriculum and learning outcomes are aligned with employer and sectoral requirements.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences.

The curriculum of the BA in Journalism offers a logical sequence of competencies beginning with more theoretical topics early in the programme and gaining practical and workplace competencies as it develops. Professional internships take place from Semester 3 in small

and medium-sized editorial offices in Lithuania. The students spoke highly of these internships to the evaluation panel and agreed they created a direct pipeline through to employment after graduation. This attitude is supported by the employment statistics both for the BA and for the Masters programmes where few graduates are left without employment on completion of their studies.

A broader range of course options become available from Semester 4 onwards including "Data Journalism", "Internet Media and Journalism" and "Media Management", among other courses.

Students take "Communication and Media Research Methods" in Semester 6 which equips them with the research skills they will require to carry out their dissertations. The competencies developed not only enhance students' capabilities as future journalists but also enable them to develop as journalism and media researchers and to continue their research at other levels of study (masters or doctoral).

The panel notes that study credits are reviewed annually as part of the annual updating of the curriculum. The study credits for the BA programme were substantially reviewed by the Study Programme Committee and the specially established Study Improvement Group as part of the updating of learning objectives and outcomes.

Journalism study programmes at both levels of study appear to consistently develop students' competencies while ensuring the coherent development of the general and subject-specific competencies outlined in the study programmes.

To develop subject-specific and general competencies for the MA programme, a distribution of contact and independent work time is planned, with contact work accounting for 30%, and independent work for 70% of students' study time. According to the SER, the Masters programme is conceived as a "broadening" study programme – designed in such a way that journalism education can be acquired by graduates of other fields of study, who bring their knowledge and specialisations from their bachelor studies.

The Masters programme begins with core courses such as "Philosophy of Communication" and gradually incorporates practical elements. These practical elements continue in Semester 2 and are followed by the internship in Semester 3 and the dissertation in Semester 4.

According to the SER, "the wide array of courses and methods of study, the diversity of students' experiences and the comprehensive combination of journalistic practice and theory, as well as the specialisations offered ensure that graduates of this study programme receive a broad education and a wide range of competencies applicable in the market".

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

The personalisation of studies in the first cycle takes place largely from Semester 5 with choices available from two blocks of courses, Block A being more practice-oriented and Block B being more theoretical. There are a number of additional ways in which students can personalise their studies. These include the creation of individual study plans, participation in exchange programmes and internships and in the incorporation of various foreign languages.

Both the MA and the BA programmes allocate a specific number of credits available for elective studies. The BA programme has 45 credits for elective courses and 15 credits of General University Courses in the second, fourth and fifth semesters. The MA programme has 15 credits for electives (3 in the first, second and third semesters). Students do, therefore, have good opportunities to individualise studies, both within the field and in General University Courses.

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

The final thesis represents an important element of both the Bachelors and Masters programmes. Students choose their topics and are expected to defend their work. Topics from theses provided were contemporary and relevant to modern society in both cycles with First Cycle thesis topics including the reliability of social media content, social media communication strategies, and artificial intelligence and the Second Cycle theses including topics such as "Ethical issues in Lithuanian social documentary", and" The influence of politicians' communication on Facebook". The theses looked comparable with work being produced at other European universities in this field.

For the First Cycle, no fewer than 15 credits are allocated to the final thesis (project) or the final thesis (project) and final examinations (in the cases specified in the descriptions of the study fields). For the Second Cycle, no fewer than 30 study credits are allocated to the final thesis (project) or final examinations.

The principles for the preparation of the final thesis, establishment of theses defence committee and the theses defence process comply with requirements and are set out in: (1) Regulations for the Preparation, Defence and Storage of Written Academic Papers of Vilnius University Students approved by the Senate of the University, as well as (2) Procedure for the Administration of Research Papers in Vilnius University Study Information System approved by the Vice-Rector of Studies of the University.

The Council of the Faculty of Communication has also approved the procedure for the defence of final theses at the Faculty. Another document, relevant for students preparing their final theses, is the Methodological Instructions for Written Theses of the Vilnius University Faculty of Communication, which are periodically reviewed in the light of the latest research developments. These documents describe both the formal requirements for BA and MA theses and the criteria for the assessment of final theses.

BA and MA theses in Journalism are supervised by teachers from the Journalism study programmes. Undergraduate students usually choose the themes and/or specific topics of their theses from a list proposed by the teachers, while postgraduate students formulate the topics.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The evaluation panel found the First Cycle and Second Cycle Journalism programmes fully complied with legal requirements. The programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods were appropriately aligned. The curriculum ensures the consistent development of student competencies. The programmes do provide opportunities for students to personalise the curriculum according to their personal learning goals while intended learning outcomes are ensured. The final theses for both the BA and the Masters programme comply with the requirements for the field and cycle.

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

			X		
First cycle			X		
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Learning Outcomes have been largely updated and modernised with help of close attention of the Programme Committee and the Advisory Group.
2. Much improved incorporation of practical skills.
3. Strengthened internship and work experience opportunities.
4. Good links with employers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The panel believes the Learning Outcomes should be revised to add one or two which are far more focused on practical outcomes.

For further improvement

1. The nature of international journalism is that it moves quickly. We suggest the teaching team continues to work hard to reflect new developments within the curriculum such as writing for social media, covering business and economics, employing data journalism and the development of strong numeracy skills.

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

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

The areas of research at the Faculty of Communication related to the studies of Journalism are mostly carried out at the Centre for Journalism and Media Studies. Research themes include very different topics, all related to communication and journalism, and of great scientific interest. In the SER, the Faculty talks about the increasing internationalisation of research activities relevant to the field of study. Professors have 5 years to obtain their certification, so they have 5 years to publish in high-impact scientific journals. According to the information provided by the centre, there is a great interest among professors in publishing in scientific journals. A large number of professors have recent publications in national and international scientific journals.

The university provides funds to its professors so they can conduct international research. The University offers support for travelling, such as with the Erasmus programme. It has an established system to obtain research funds and provides incentives for research. Professors also receive funding for translations.

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

The Faculty of Communication is aware of the need to adapt content to the reality of contemporary journalism. The evaluation panel notes that it can be observed that the Faculty has made a great effort to update the curriculum with more current content. However, it seems that further effort is still needed in this area as content related to more traditional journalism, which is somewhat removed from current journalism, still predominates. Journalism is in continuous change and adaptation to social reality. Therefore, journalism studies also need to work on new areas to adjust, amend, and update. Thus, more content should be added which focuses on areas such as writing for social media, business and economics, analytical skills, data journalism and numeracy.**The evaluation panel notes that following the previous experts' reommendations, significant progress has been made to reflect new trends in the course content. These include incorporating Data Journalism and Business Journalism into the First Cycle curriculum and Economic and Financial Analysis, Internet Media and Journalism and Media Analytics and Big Data in the Second Cycle programme.**

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

The Study Programme Committee for Journalism studies and the programmes' researchers motivate students to engage in research activities. Students who write term and final papers have the opportunity to prepare conference presentations and publications for research journals. The evidence presented demonstrates student involvement in research, both at the Bachelor and Masters levels.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

Journalism is constantly evolving. Therefore, it is important for the Faculty of Communication to show signs that it adapts its content to the needs of contemporary journalism. Additionally, students have opportunities to participate in research. The professors have recent publications and research lines relevant to the field of study.

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
First cycle				x	
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

Good progress is noted in encouraging academic staff to publish their research in international journals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. While a good start has been made to create an environment conducive to publishing research in international journals, further progress is required.
2. There should be greater student involvement in research.
3. Course content needs to be updated to meet the needs of current journalism practices including such areas as writing for social media, business and economics, analytical skills, data journalism and numeracy.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The university website gives students applying to Vilnius University the opportunity to learn about different specialisations and career expectations. In journalism, the entry competition score was at least 5 in the previous year, but in the year in question the person with the lowest score was admitted with a 7.90. This is likely to be a sign of high competition, a higher entrance tariff and a good level of learning.

There is access to testimonials from former students about their experience at the university. Communication and distribution of information have been strengthened, with leaflets distributed with students feedback on study programmes.

During the interviews, the evaluation panel were told of the VU journalism team's innovative approach to recruitment procedures. This included the "Student for a Day" programme – in which young people could visit the university for a day to attend classes and get a feel for what is like to be a student at VU - and also creating a system which allowed prospective students to communicate with current students to discuss classes, lecturers and career options. This approach was considered an example of best practice by the evaluation panel.

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

Seminars should be organised for students to talk about and explain mobility opportunities. They should explain exactly how to improve or gain other qualifications. This way, everyone can find out about the aspects that are of particular interest to them, and all interested parties can share their experiences and the opportunities offered by other countries. The panel notes that students at both levels are introduced to mobility opportunities during Integration Week and then invited to gain more information later in their programmes. However, during the interviews with the students it was evident that there remains uncertainty regarding these mobility opportunities and that communication on mobility can be enhanced.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The admission of students to the Faculty of Communication is carried out through the procedure established by the University for the admission of all students. The conditions for admission are advertised in various ways, ensuring transparency. VU has a procedure for the recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and acquired in the educational programmes implemented in other countries and international organisations. Although no more than 50% of the volume of a study programme can be recognised.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1   Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured.

The University offers students the opportunity to go to other countries to study on an exchange programme. There are opportunities for long-term and short-term studies. Students can choose to study abroad on 6 different programmes. **Students at both levels are informed about these opportunities during Integration Week and later in their programmes are encouraged to look for relevant information on mobility opportunities on the VU60 website, Facebook account and in newsletters sent to the VU community.**

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

In the panel's session with students from VU, it became clear that adequate academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support is provided. All the students noted the approachability of the teaching staff and confirmed they were confident about how to access more specific support should it be required. The induction sessions at the beginning of the programmes were important vectors for this kind of information and should continue to emphasise the channels and avenues students can access to receive assistance throughout their university careers.

What was particularly noteworthy for the panel – and indicative of best practice - was the efforts of the staff and Faculty to facilitate the creation of a "community of practice" among students at VU studying journalism. Evidence for this was provided by the students themselves in the interviews as well as by senior management and included initiatives to create a sense of community such as the establishment of an active student journalism club, participation in a national journalism forum, more opportunities for internships and for volunteering for work experience and the provision of a grant to encourage student involvement in research. This is a very positive initiative that will serve to enhance the student experience at VU, strengthen ties with industry and promote employment.

3.2.3.   Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient.

Most of the lecturers actively interact with students. At the beginning of the year, all students are told about the course of their studies and have their questions answered. Throughout the year, lecturers also actively engage with students, involving them in projects and answering questions. Some lecturers also provide feedback by explaining mistakes and taking time in lectures to answer questions that have arisen during the course of the assignments. However, not all lecturers use this method and there is no mandatory feedback after the assignments.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

In general, the communication between teachers, administration and students is structured and active. A lot of relevant information about studies and study exchange programmes is available on the website. Mobility programmes offer many opportunities, but in order to reach more students, communication should be strengthened and more information should be shared at conferences, seminars and other meetings. After exams or major assignments, it is useful for students to understand and learn from their mistakes, but not all lecturers consistently take the time to discuss mistakes with students. In general, the above-average level of learning of students enrolled in journalism studies is a significant indicator for the university and its reputation. The university is welcoming of communication with other countries. The professionals working at the university produce specialists in their field who have the potential for smooth career progression in the future.

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
First cycle				x	
Second cycle				x	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Strong communication between teachers, administration and students.
2. Admission tariffs are high as students that are admitted have higher marks than requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Feedback from the lecturing staff can be improved. This should be mandatory following exams. This would help students to better understand their mistakes.
2. There should be greater transparency regarding the panel of assessors working on the recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and acquired in the educational programmes implemented in other countries and international organisations. More information should be made available about how the members of this panel of assessors are selected.
3. Communication about student mobility programmes should be strengthened and more information should be shared with students about these opportunities at conferences, seminars and other meetings.

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

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity.

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The entire study process is organised with an emphasis on student-centred studies and the importance of students' independent work. It can be observed that the teaching methodology is very varied and includes innovative teaching techniques that ensure students acquire knowledge. Professors are required to establish office hours for student consultations, with a minimum of two hours per week. Professors have a wide variety of courses to complete their training. This training also ensures the quality of the teaching provided. Additionally, some professors take students to the media outlets where they work. This helps students become closely familiar with these media.

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

In 2020, Vilnius University adopted the "Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025", adapting its study process for vulnerable groups and students with special needs. This includes improving accessibility, providing compensatory equipment, and offering individualised study plans. The Disability Coordinator oversees the needs of students with disabilities and facilitates necessary adaptations. Financial and emotional support is also provided to other vulnerable groups. The university has welcomed Belarusian and Ukrainian students and teachers, and it promotes gender equality through a specific plan for 2021-2025. In the long term, the university plans to provide more accommodation that is accessible for people with disabilities.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The information provided by the Faculty clearly outlines the learning objectives as well as the competencies that students must achieve. Additionally, the presented evidence demonstrates that there is alignment between the learning objectives, the courses, and the evaluation methods.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Faculty of Communication has systematised progress in student learning. At Vilnius University, students' progress is monitored at three levels: course, group, and study programme. At the course level, teachers assess progress through feedback and cumulative

assessments, adjusting teaching methods based on students' needs. A virtual environment is used to organise the process and allow continuous tracking.

At the group level, the administration monitors the average performance of students, identifying assessment trends to make necessary adjustments.

At the programme level, the International Study Programme Committee oversees internships, thesis results, and overall academic progress. Data is used to improve programme content, implement changes, and adjust the curriculum. One example is the modification of the journalism course to include specific modules in response to market demands.

Information is periodically collected from students. According to the information provided, there are up to 8 types of surveys conducted for different reasons: to know the satisfaction with the semester, with the internship, or surveys also for exchange students.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored.

The first step to getting a job for students is usually an internship. The internship is the result of an agreement between the university, the hiring company and the student. This internship is usually facilitated by the university, or the student can secure it independently. They can choose from the list of institutions with which the programmes in the field of Journalism cooperate (a list of regional editorial offices is sent to students in the first year of the BA studies) or have the option to find their own internship placements.

The University conducts a survey of graduates 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years after graduation. The latest data provided corresponds to 2022. In that year, 81% of graduates and 80% of students who completed the Master's found work in their field of study.

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

The Vilnius University Statute, the Academic Ethics Code of Vilnius University, and the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy are some of the documents that serve to guarantee academic integrity, tolerance, and ensure non-discrimination for any reason. Vilnius University teachers and students are obliged to follow the 'Vilnius University Code of Academic Ethics,' which defines the general norms of academic, teaching, study, and research ethics.

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

During orientation week, students receive information on how to submit and process appeals and complaints. In the interviews, the students told the evaluation panel they were familiar with the procedure and knew where to go if they had appeals or complaints.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The Faculty of Communication monitors the progress of both students and graduates. Additionally, it has been observed that the institution makes a significant effort to maintain direct contact with the academic development of students throughout the four years they spend at Vilnius University. While it appears that policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented, it should be noted that an effort should also be made to ensure that studios and sets are accessible for people with certain disabilities.

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
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. There is still some progress to be made in catering for students with disabilities.
2. Group-level monitoring or follow-up is required. This type of follow-up can be useful for assessing trends, identifying common needs, and adjusting strategies for the entire group based on collective goals.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Faculty of Communication has both research professors and professors with more professional, practitioner backgrounds. This combination seems to ensure student learning outcomes can be achieved.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The combination of associate professors and assistant professors is very positive for giving students a comprehensive view of the journalism profession.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured.

In recent academic years, teachers' mobility has increased, indicating that the University shows concern and interest in this matter. The Faculty has established Erasmus agreements with 93 foreign higher education institutions. The Faculty encourages its teachers to visit these

institutions for learning and teaching purposes and invites lecturers from these institutions to teach courses in the study programmes in the field of Journalism.

Through Erasmus or funding from VU, professors have sufficient opportunities to conduct stays at European universities and expand their professional development. This international openness is also reflected in programmes that enable invitations to be given to lecturers and researchers for a stay at the University, including inviting researchers from third countries to give lectures and seminars in the study programmes in the field.

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

Professors obtain their certification every five years. According to the information presented during the visit, all professors are aware of the requirements to obtain this certification. Each Faculty has a committee responsible for carrying out the certification process for professors. This certification ensures professors have the capacity and opportunity to conduct research and publish in scientific journals.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The university offers professors the ability to continue their education through training courses and research grants. These grants also include the possibility of international stays, which provide a broader perspective of the university system. Additionally, professors must obtain their certification every five years, allowing ample time to develop their academic careers.

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
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. The five-year certification system for professors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Establish a schedule of meetings between teachers to improve teaching content and avoid future problems.
2. Clearly establish a systematic schedule of meetings between teachers and faculty administrators.
3. Teachers should take a more active role in proposing training courses. This approach will address the training needs they have and understand first hand.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Faculty of Communication provides 24 classrooms with a total of 936 seats. All classrooms are equipped with stationary computer equipment (a stationary computer with a monitor, a stationary projector, and a screen) and internet access. If necessary, under a loan agreement, studies can also be carried out in classrooms belonging to other VU units, located in Saulėtekio av. 9, Building I, II and III. Many classrooms used by the Faculty are equipped with state-of-the- art and regularly updated technology, enabling extensive use of visual materials and active teaching methods (e.g. interactive whiteboards, multimedia projectors, TVs with video projectors, and professional studio cameras). In the absence of fixed multimedia equipment in the classroom, portable equipment can be used. All students and teachers in all areas of the University have access to Eduroam, the international high-speed wireless internet access provided for academic organisations. Over the past few years, equipment for the study process has been updated, more sound recorders (from 9 units to 20), attachable microphones (from 8 units to 17), radio microphone sets (from 4 units to 9) and other necessary things have been purchased. In addition, and as stated in the elf-evaluation report, new projectors (5 units), printers (2 units) and computers (6 units) were purchased during the period under review.

The VU Library Scientific Communication and Information Centre (SCIC) is an impressive and modern building, established in 2013. The premises are convenient for all users, including self-check-out and return of books using a state-of-the-art automated system. Students of all programmes in Journalism can access 109 workplaces in the VU Communication Reading Room, located in the SCIC. These include 43 computerised workplaces, 23 resting or mobile places, and 8 workplaces equipped with specialised software (packages for working with audiovisual materials, data processing, statistical analysis, and calculations such as Sony Vegas Movie Studio, Calibre, SPSS, R, RStudio, Solid Works, Pandoc, MikTex, MAtlab, and Origin Pro) and hardware, such as graphic tablets. SCIC is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In SCIC, students also have access to 5 seminar rooms (90 seats), 5 group work rooms (28 seats), and bookable individual private workplaces (50 seats).

According to the SER, the capacity and infrastructure of the premises for the conduct of studies, the tools and equipment used for the studies in the field are currently adequate and sufficient for achieving the study results, and the availability of e-books in the relevant subscription databases has been extended. In the future, there are plans to further adapt the study facilities to accommodate students with special needs.

In 2016, professionally equipped TV and radio training studios were established in the Old Town portion of VU (Maironio str.7). The studios have all the necessary technical and software equipment needed for students to perform their self-study tasks: computers, video cameras, photo cameras, headphones, different microphones, dictating machines, special panels, and other auxiliary hardware used to perform radio and TV studio work. While the equipment is of a professional standard, concerns were raised during the interviews about the ease of access to the studios, in particular for disabled students.

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

With most classes in the journalism programmes now taking place in the new part of VU, it is proving inconvenient for students to travel into the centre of Vilnius to make use of the facilities, studios and equipment. The evaluation panel notes that a plan for the reconstruction of the buildings of Vilnius University located on Saulėtekio campus has been prepared and submitted for a future public tender. This plan provides not only for the installation of a new video/radio studios, but also for the cinema hall and other additional rooms necessary for the study process. The panel notes that it is senior management's intention to effect these changes within the next two years. In the meantime, both cycles still rely on the Old Town resources. It is important that the tender process is implemented and that the plan is made operational within the stipulated two year period. Failure to do so may raise concerns over the university's appreciation for the important role of journalism in the context of Lithuania's political development, in particular the nurturing of a healthy, diverse press to contribute the consolidation of democracy in the country. The institution would also appear to be missing an opportunity to make use of the journalism programmes to provide communication resources for campaigns and marketing purposes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Overall, the journalism programmes at VU are well-served by facilities, informational and financial resources. The radio and TV studios are modern and will prepare the students well for entry into the media sector. However, the evaluation panel were persuaded during the site visit that plans to move the studios to the new VU campus should be facilitated. As well as being convenient for staff and students alike, this would improve poor levels of access for disabled students.

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
First cycle			X		
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Much of the equipment is state-of-the art and impressive, including the SCIC and the TV and radio training studios.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The plan to move the studios from Old Town to the new campus and upgrade the technical infrastructure should be implemented within two years.
2. Access to the studios appears to be difficult for disabled students, an issue that would be addressed by moving the studios.

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

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The VU Department of Study Quality and Development is responsible for monitoring and surveillance of the assurance of study quality. The Study Programme Committee is the main instrument for quality assurance.

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

The study programme committee analyses the feedback and opinions of students, graduates, teaching staff and social partners about the programme and its implementation, discusses with them the possibilities of enhancing the programme, and looks into the study-related challenges faced by the students. The Faculty assumes that the programme is everyone's responsibility; they try to make students see that they are also part of the study programme.

Student representatives are actively involved in the quality assurance activities of the study process: the Faculty Board, study programme committees, the College of Studies, Academic ethics and dispute resolution commissions, Teachers' Certification Committee, as well as various working groups for study quality issues formed at the Faculty. All of them include student representatives.

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

The internal quality assurance system involves all stakeholders. The Study Programme Committee is responsible for quality assurance. Information about the quality of studies is obtained from surveys conducted among students, from student representatives in this SPC, as well as from regular semi-annual meetings with lecturers and students, and individual feedback. The SPC reports to the College of Studies and to the Faculty Board. The reports are published in the VU information system, which is also visible to students, and students are informed about individual decisions of the SPC that are most relevant to them publicly and by e-mail.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed.

The VU Department of Study Quality and Development is responsible for conducting student satisfaction surveys. The surveys are conducted twice a year (at the end of each semester) for both BA and MA students. Information on the quality of studies and the evaluation of studies is collected through various channels: student surveys, as well as from student representatives in the Study Programme Committee, regular semi-annual meetings with lecturers and students, and individual feedback.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The internal quality assurance system involves all stakeholders. The centre reports that it collects information from students and alumni through surveys. However, while staff do get

the opportunity to raise qualify assurance issues during annual meetings with the Dean of the Faculty and with the Study Programme Committee, there are no surveys conducted among professors or staff. It would be advisable to also gather data from these stakeholders. The information that is collected is done through informal meetings.

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
First cycle			X		
Second cycle			X		

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The quality system must involve all stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary to create a system that allows for the opinions of all interest groups, including professors and staff, to be known. For example, through surveys.

V. SUMMARY

After the site visit and the perusal of the documents and information supplied by the University, the evaluation panel were left with an overwhelmingly positive outlook about the Bachelors and Masters Journalism Studies programmes at Vilnius University.

We could see evidence that significant improvements have been instituted since the last evaluation in 2020, particularly in the areas of increasing opportunities for practical work, attention to learning outcomes, closer relations with the media sector such as through internships and in supporting academic staff to engage in more research and publish their work. These were the main areas of concern for the previous evaluation and excellent progress was noted.

The site visit to VU was handled efficiently. As well as being warmly welcomed, the evaluation panel was impressed with the honesty and passion of the interviewees, with the breadth of documents and information supplied in advance and in particular by the Self Evaluation Report which was an excellent and comprehensive piece of work. The panel asked for a few extra documents which were quickly provided. On the whole, everything needed was supplied in good time. The evaluation panel notes, too, the professionalism and high level of support they received from SKVC and its officials.

The facilities and equipment at VU, including the Scientific Communication and Information Centre, the radio and TV studios and the availability of working spaces, computers and learning resources - such as access to the high-speed wireless internet network Eduroam - were all of a high, internationally comparable standard.

The journalism courses at VU remain popular both for prospective students but also for employers in the media sector. As a result, applications are strong for both cycles and employment rates upon completion of qualifications are impressive. VU journalism graduates are valued and prominent in the workplace, testament to the quality of their education. Certainly, the panel feels the journalism courses at VU are important within the context of Lithuanian and regional journalism but also in training the next generation of communicators engaged across different sectors and activities in the media and communication sector.

Communication between teachers, administration and staff appears to be generally positive and active while the University website is well populated with information about studies, exchange programmes, and concerning other areas of activity. Students have good opportunities to structure their own personalised programmes according to taste and interest with a wide range of elective modules. Instruction both by academic lecturers but also from practitioners - some of whom are well-known media professionals - enables the achievement of a broad range of learning outcomes by students. It also exposes them to the demands and standards both of the University and of industry, blending theory and practice. There is generally a good alignment between the learning objectives, courses and evaluation methods.

There is evidence, too, that lecturers have become more mobile, taking up opportunities to learn from other educational and international contexts often through the Erasmus agreements but also to attend conference, courses and symposia hosted by a range of European universities and institutions.

The panel notes that there are, of course, areas that need further attention and strengthening. Like all journalism studies departments, it is important for the VU teaching team to keep up with rapidly changing global trends and to embed new practices into teaching, such as writing for social media and the use of data and artificial intelligence in the industry. In this respect, teachers should have more of a voice in proposing training courses to ensure their needs are

addressed. The panel advises, too, that the learning outcomes for both cycles are updated with one or two additional components which are practical and speak to the skills and competencies required by students for entry to the professional journalism workplace. This would be in keeping with other international universities' learning outcomes for these kinds of programmes.

While good progress has been made to increase the academic staff's mobility and improve publication of research in international journals and publications, this will continue to need support and encouragement from the Faculty and from the institution.

The evaluation panel notes that there should be more opportunities for students to be more involved in research. Students on both programmes also require a more consistent level of feedback, particularly to strengthen areas of weakness or to counteract errors or omissions in learning. In addition, more effective communication is required to encourage students to take up their own opportunities for mobility and international exchanges.

Students with disabilities continue to face challenges and obstacles. While improvements have been made, there is still some way to go to equalise access in particular to studios and equipment. A concerted plan to move the studios from the old part of Vilnius to the new campus should be prepared and funded as a matter of urgency within the two years identified by senior management.

In terms of communication between stakeholders, the panel recommends group level monitoring is improved while more frequent meetings between teachers and also between teachers and administrators should help to improve and calibrate teaching content and avoid organisational logjams. A more comprehensive system of data gathering is also needed, through surveys for instance, which would help to give managers and administrators the information they need to respond to the wishes and needs of staff.

Overall, however, the evaluation panel was impressed with the two programmes and with the administrators, teachers and students who populate them with such enthusiasm and dedication.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The evaluation panel observed that the efforts to facilitate the creation of a "community of practice" among students at VU studying journalism constituted an example of best practice. This initiative included the establishment of an active student journalism club, a national journalism forum along with significantly more opportunities for internships and work experience and some involvement of students in research. All these aspects will help to create and consolidate this community of practice that will in turn serve to strengthen journalism at VU and in Lithuania generally.

The evaluation panel were very impressed by the VU journalism team's innovative approach to recruitment, in particular the "Student for a Day" programme and also the enabling of prospective students to communicate with current students to discuss classes, lecturers and career options. This approach was considered an example of excellence by the evaluation panel.