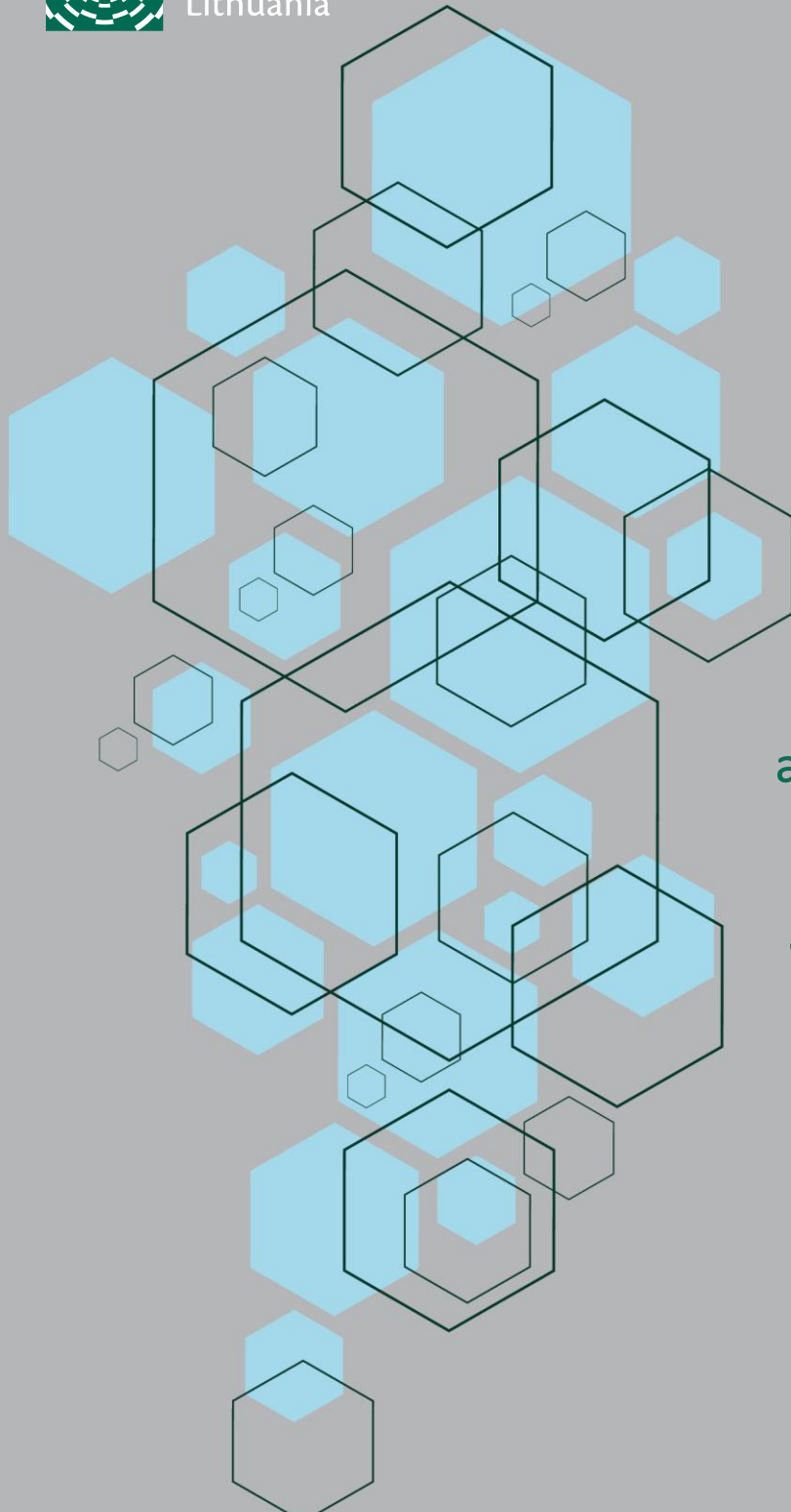




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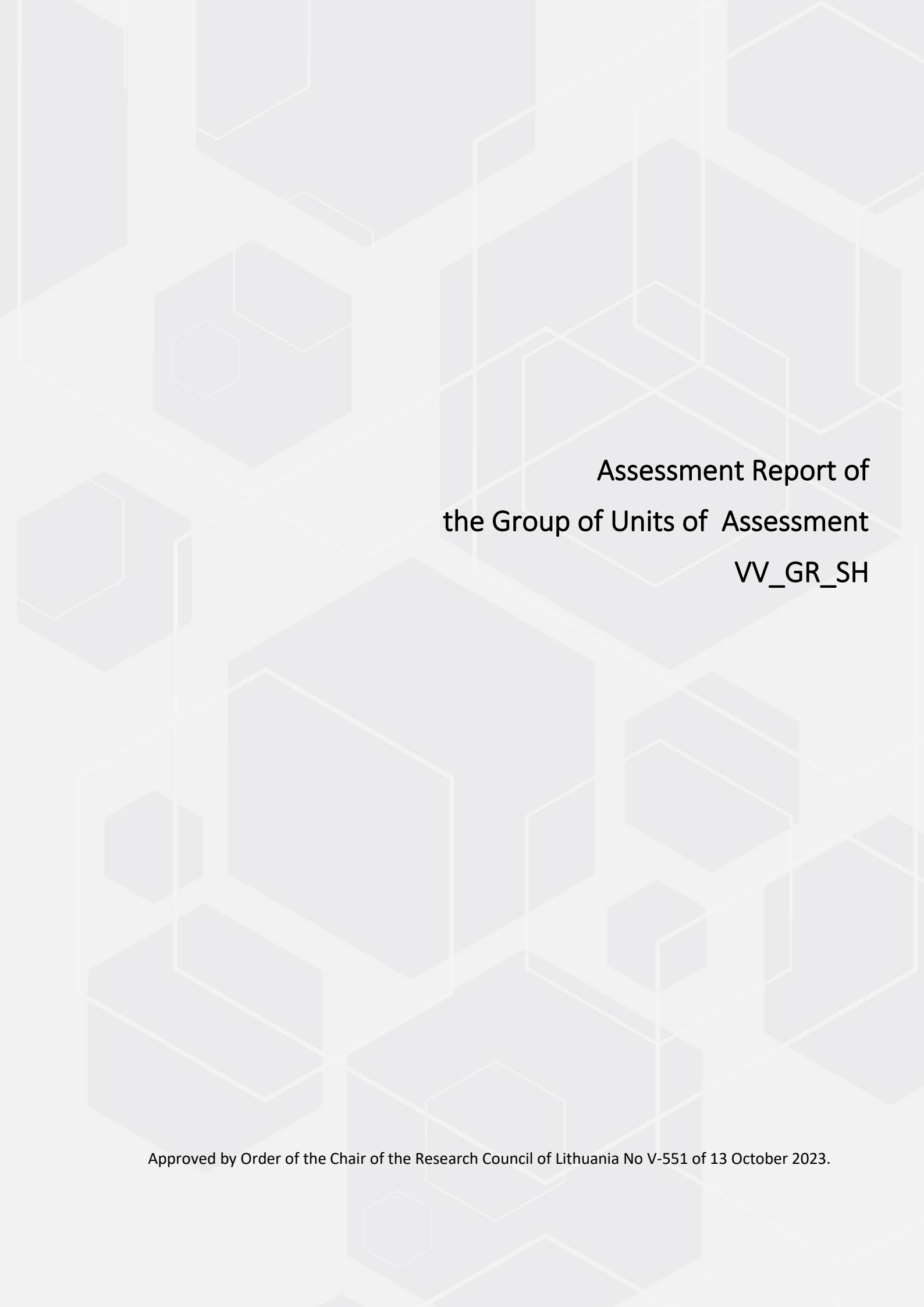
**Assessment Report of
Comparative Expert
Assessment of Research
and Development Activities
Carried out by Universities
and Research Institutes for
the Group of Units of
Assessment VV_GR_SH**

Vilnius 2023



2014-2020 Operational
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**Assessment Report of
the Group of Units of Assessment
VV_GR_SH**

Approved by Order of the Chair of the Research Council of Lithuania No V-551 of 13 October 2023.

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Terms & Abbreviations

CEA – Comparative Expert Assessment of research and development activities carried out by Lithuanian universities and research institutes

FTE – Full-Time Equivalent

Institutions – Lithuanian universities and research institutes

RCL – Research Council of Lithuania

R&D – Research and Development

UoA; Unit(s) – Unit(s) of Assessment

FTE¹ – the number of working hours worked during the year by a certain group of employees divided by a number of working hours in the 12 months of that year, as set by the Minister of Social Security and Labour (with a 5-working-day week). <.> The FTE unit – a person per year.

FTE(SD)¹ – the sum of the FTE of teaching staff members with a science degree divided by 3, and the FTE of research workers and other researchers with a scientific degree.

Research areas:

N – Natural Sciences; **T** – Technology; **S** – Social Sciences; **H** – Humanities

Universities:

KU – Klaipėda University

LCC – LCC International University

LKA – Military Academy of Lithuania

MRU – Mykolas Romeris University

¹ Description of the Comparative Expert Assessment of Research and Development Activities by Universities and Research Institutes approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose, Scope, Goals of the Comparative Expert Assessment

The Comparative Expert Assessment of research and development activities carried out by universities and research institutes of Lithuania (hereinafter – CEA) was carried out in 2023 by Research Council of Lithuania (hereinafter – RCL) in accordance with the *Description of the Comparative Expert Assessment of Research and Development Activities by Universities and Research Institutes* approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021 (hereinafter – the Description), the *Regulation on Procedures for the Comparative Expert Evaluation of Research and Development Activities Carried out by Universities and Research Institutes* approved by Order No V-486 of the Chair of the RCL of 8 August 2022 (hereinafter – the Regulation), and other related legislation.

The purpose of CEA is to provide a picture of research and development (hereinafter – R&D) performance, socio-economic impact, and the development potential of Lithuanian universities and research institutes (hereinafter – Institutions) based on their R&D activities during the period of 2018–2022.

The scope of CEA encompasses both state and non-state Institutions operating in Lithuania. All state universities (in total eleven) and all state research institutes (in total eleven as well), four non-state universities and two non-state research institutes were participating in the CEA in 2023. The Institutions or parts thereof were assessed as the units of assessment (hereinafter – UoA or Units). The CEA facilitates the comparison of R&D performance of the UoA against international standards and within the national context. It provides valuable evidence to R&D policymakers at different levels, as well as offers the Institutions involved in the assessment a significant incentive to enhance their performance.

Since 2018, the CEA has been an integral part of assessment of R&D activities of Lithuanian institutions. The annual assessment of R&D activities carried out by the Institutions together with CEA conducted every five years constitutes the Lithuanian assessment system of R&D activities. The results of the two-step assessment are used to allocate state funding for R&D activities for Institutions. The results of the CEA implemented in 2023 will determine 70% of state budget funding for R&D activities of Institutions for the subsequent five years.

The assessment results will also determine the continuity of doctoral studies as well as the new rights to carry out doctoral studies at Institutions in accordance with the *Regulations on Doctoral Studies* approved by Decision No. V-739 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 18 May 2020. Moreover, the findings from the CEA might serve as a trusted source of evidence on R&D performance of the Institutions for assessments concerning other funding instruments or higher education studies.

1.2. Comparative Expert Assessment Organization and Assessment Criteria

The CEA relies on international peer review panels to evaluate Lithuanian Institutions' R&D activities. Using panels rather than individual peers creates a possibility for discussion and debate within the peer group and enabling comparison within the group.

The assessment is carried out on the UoA level, which is the organisationally defined structure – ranging from a whole Institution to a division of an Institution corresponding to the faculty or other formal structures of the Institution. In accordance with the Description the rules for the formation of the UoA are as follows:

- the UoA should be interrelated by common R&D activities and might operate in one or two research areas;
- the minimum size of the UoA should be no less than 5 full-time researchers with scientific degree (FTE(SD)) and the maximum size of UoA should not exceed 75 FTE(SD).

The exceptions could be made for better reflection of R&D activities in the Institution. If an Institution had a UoA with a higher number of FTE(SD) or/and UoA operated in three research areas, it should have submitted arguments and obtained RCL approval for participating with not typical composition.

Following the instructions, Institutions have formed eighty-five UoA. All these UoA were split into thirteen groups resulting from four to nine UoA per Panel. The interval of the UoA size ranged from slightly above 5 FTE(SD) to UoA of more than 150 FTE(SD). The number of research areas and research fields one UoA was operating in also varied, i. e., while most UoA operated in one or two research fields, there were outliers where Units were involved in up to five research fields. The variations in size, composition, and research areas among the UoA within each group posed challenges for comparison and required careful consideration by the Expert Panel.

The assessment of the Units is based on three criteria:

- The quality of R&D activities (weight 0.65) of UoA in the research field(s) (group of research fields);
- The economic and social impact of R&D activities (weight 0.2) of UoA;
- The development potential of R&D activities (weight 0.15) of UoA.

The quality of R&D activities is assessed either in each research field or the group of research fields within the research area while economic and social impact as well as development potential are assessed on the UoA level. Each assessment criterion is scored on a five-point scale, namely, ranging from excellent [5] to poor [1] or no R&D [0]. The description of the values of the scores for each criterion are provided in the Description. Half point scores were allowed, and that provided a possibility for more nuanced assessment when necessary.

The quality of R&D activities of the Unit is assessed following these rules: if UoA has at least 10 FTE(SD) in the research field or has between 2 and 10 FTE(SD) and has the right to provide doctoral studies (or intends to seek such right in the next 5 years) in the research field, then the research quality is assessed in the research field; if UoA does not meet these criteria, then the research quality is assessed in the group of research fields within the research area. In the latter case, the assessment considers the collective quality across the research fields within the group.

The assessment was based on the material provided by the UoA to the RCL information system “Vieversys” and covered the period 2018–2022, as well as summarized results of the annual assessment of R&D activities of Institutions (for 2018–2021) provided by RCL, alongside the information obtained during the visits of the Panels to the Institutions and meetings with the representatives of the UoA. Following the Description and the *Procedure for the Submission of Data on Results of Research and Development Activities Carried out by Universities and Research Institutes for the Comparative Expert Assessment* approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021 (hereinafter – the Procedure for Submission of Data) relevant data was examined when assessing the UoA against each of the CEA criteria. In most cases the number of provided outputs for the assessment depended on the size of the UoA varying from a minimum of five to maximum of eighty-two outputs.

It should be noted that since the previous round of CEA in 2018, several organisational improvements of assessment have been made, therefore caution should be exercised when comparing the results of these two assessments. Some of them are worth mentioning:

- 85 UoA were formed and grouped into 13 Expert Panels in 2023, while the first CEA resulted in 117 UoA formed and grouped into 6 Expert Panels. The cause is mainly due to the change of rules for setting up a UoA. During the 2018 CEA, forming a UoA was allowed in only one respective research area, i. e., if the UoA operated in two research areas, it had to be split into two Units for the assessment purposes. In 2023 this restriction was eliminated, and Unit could easily operate in two (and in some cases in three) research areas. As well UoA formation was influenced by changing landscape of Institutions during the assessment period as mergers of several institutions took place: Aleksandras Stulginskis University and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences merged with Vytautas Magnus University since 1st January 2019; Šiauliai University was merged with Vilnius University, as well as the Institute of Law, the Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics and the Lithuanian Social Research Center were merged into Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences since 1st January 2021.
- The CEA scoring system has also undergone some changes. While five-point scales were used in both assessments, in 2023 half points were allowed, while in 2018 only whole numbers were used.
- There were some changes in the requirements for documentary input. In 2023 one list of Unit's R&D outputs for a five-year period was required while in 2018 a list of R&D outputs for each assessment year (from 2013 to 2017) and an additional list for the entire assessment period were required, resulting in a large volume of data.

1.3. Expert Panel for the VV_GR_SH Group of Units of Assessment

The Expert Panel for the VV_GR_SH group had to assess four UoA from four Institutions:

- **Klaipėda University** – 1 UoA:
Social Sciences and Humanities (abbr. *KU_SOCHUM*);
- **LCC International University** – 1 UoA:
LCC International University (abbr. *LCC-M*);
- **General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania** – 1 UoA:
General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania - (NTMAS) (abbr. *LKA-NTMAS*);
- **Mykolas Romeris University** – 1 UoA:
Faculty of Human and Societal Studies (abbr. *MRU_ŽVSF*).

The Units were operating in the Philosophy, Theology, Philology, Ethnology, Law, Political Science, Management, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Communication and Information, Mathematics, Informatics, Electric Engineering and Transport Engineering research fields, and considering these research fields RCL has appointed the Expert Panel members with the main responsibility to assess UoA against three criteria and provide recommendations for UoA future development. The Panel consisted of twenty members affiliated with institutions abroad:

- Wojciech Sowa (*Panel Chair* from July 20th 2023), Institute of Classical Philology, Jagiellonian University Krakow, Poland
- Benő Csapo (1953–2023) – (*Panel Chair* until June 25th 2023), University of Szeged, Hungary
- Ivars Austers, University of Latvia, Latvia
- Erik de Gier, Radboud University, Netherlands
- Maria Paz Espinosa, University of the Basque Country, Spain
- Jakub Fischer, Prague University of Economics and Business, Czech Republic
- Iiro Jääskeläinen, Aalto university, Finland
- Leif Kalev, Tallinn University, Estonia

- Łukasz Konopielko, Lazarski University, Poland
- Äli Leijen, University of Tartu, Estonia
- Mario Llanos, Salesian Pontifical University of Rome, Italy
- Přemysl Mácha, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Science, Czech Republic
- Sirke Mäkinen, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Miklos Zoltan Nyiro, University of Miskolc, Hungary
- Elna Oinas, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Renate Pajusalu, University of Tartu, Estonia
- Zbynek Raida, Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic
- Helena Ruotsala, University of Turku, Finland
- Johanna Swennen, VU Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Anna Tatarczak, Maria Curie Skłodowska University, Poland

1.4. Assessment Organization for the VV_GR_SH Group of Units of Assessment

Timeline of the assessment organization for the VV_GR_SH Group of UoA:

Submission of data. Institutions participating in the VV_GR_SH Group submitted data on R&D activities of their UoA to the information system “Vieversys” by the 21st of February 2023 following the Procedure for Submission of Data.

Individual assessment. Prior to the visit to Lithuania, the data of each UoA submitted for the assessment was individually evaluated by at least three experts from the Panel. The number of experts assigned to assess each UoA would increase based on the number of research fields within the UoA. The individual assessment of the Units within the VV_GR_SH Group was conducted till the 20th of March 2023.

Visit to Lithuania. The Panel members for the VV_GR_SH Group visited Lithuania from the 25th to the 30th of March 2023. The main objectives of the visit included discussing the results of the individual assessment within the Expert Panel, ensuring a uniform and consistent application of the assessment criteria among the Panel members; visiting and familiarizing with the academic and administrative staff, PhD students, and research infrastructure of the UoA (at least three experts from the Panel had to visit one UoA); and collectively agreeing on all scores for the Units within the group in the joint session.

Final report. After the visit to Lithuania, the preparation of the Panel report took place. The coordination of the preparation was done by the Panel chair. Before the submission of the Panel’s report, the institutions were given an opportunity to provide comments on the factual errors if any observed in the written justification of the scores for UoA. Taking into consideration the comments, the Panel's report has been adjusted where necessary. In addition, the Panel prepared a reply to the commenting authorities. The report was submitted to the RCL with the agreement of all Panel members.

Appeals. Upon receiving the final results on each Unit, the Institutions had the right to submit a substantiated appeal to the RCL if they believed there were factual errors in the justification of the UoA assessment and/or if they suspected a breach of the assessment procedures that may have affected the assessment outcome.

RCL has established an external Board of Appeal, comprised of seven members selected from the candidates nominated by the Lithuanian Research Academy, the Conference of Rectors of Lithuanian Universities, the Conference of Directors of the Lithuanian National Research Institutes, and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports. The Board of Appeal was responsible for determining whether the appeals adhered to the specified provisions and in case of favourable decision to examine the appeal thoroughly.

The Panel VV_GR_SH has received one appeal. The Board of Appeal dismissed the appeal due to non-compliance with the established appeal provisions.

Approval of the report. The final report of the VV_GR_SH group is approved by the Order of the Chair of the RCL in accordance with the Regulation.

2. ASSESSMENT REPORTS

2.1. KU_SOCHUM Unit of Assessment

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of the institution | Klaipeda University |
| Official abbreviation of the name of the institution | KU |
| Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA) | Social Sciences and Humanities |
| Abbreviation of the UoA name | KU_SOCHUM |
| The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD)) | 24,34 |
| Research area(s) | S 000 - Social sciences, H 000 - Humanities |

Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

Social sciences

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 003 - Management | 6,48 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The character of research output in the period 2018-2022 varied and was linked with the strategic goals of KU. Much of the research carried out has the character of applied research subsidized by external parties. The Management section collaborates with several institutions and firms and has an important role in the industrial and business fabric of the region. These collaborations set the research agenda of the Management section.

The nature of the research, tailored to the needs of local firms and institutions, together with the researchers' stated objective to combine publications in Lithuanian and in English, makes it difficult to reach sufficient international visibility.

The scholars in the Management section published their research output in international peer reviewed journals (Tourism Management Perspectives, Human Technology, Sustainability, Energies) and a book chapter by an international publisher (Palgrave Macmillan). The 4 journal articles are written in English by multiple authors. The share of the Unit in the book chapter is 75%. The shares of the Unit in the 4 journal articles are 100%, 80%, 66,7%, and 25%. Overall, this output reflects a lack of publications in top journals in Management and a limited international visibility.

The University reports having a support program to help researchers with publications in high-ranking journals. To be effective, this support should be extended to mobility programs to strengthen international co-authorship.

Management researchers have been able to secure both international and local/regional funding, even though the sums are moderate. Projects are mainly focused on capacity building and cross-border

cooperation and are not specific for research. One international project was carried out within the framework of the Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme, another in the framework of STENetY, The Council of the Baltic Sea States Project Support Facility (CBSS PSF), and the third one as an ERASMUS+ Strategic partnership project. The two domestically funded projects were financed by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Research Council of Lithuania, respectively. In the period 2018-2022, there was a good diffusion of research outcomes through conferences and workshops, although researchers do not attend the top conferences in their fields. The 5 submitted items reflect a rather modest presence of the Management researchers on prestigious large-scale international scientific events. There are two smaller events reported among the 5 best conference participations for a 5-year period. The researchers did not participate in conferences organized by leading international scientific associations, societies, etc.

Three doctoral theses were defended during the period 2018-2022. This result is relatively low considering the average number of students, 5.7 (weighting part-time students by 0.5). The yearly average number of defended PhD theses (0.6) was below the average number of entering new PhD students (1.4). The doctoral studies program of the field was not able to attract PhD students from abroad.

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 004 - Economics | 4,79 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA is small, with 9 persons with a scientific degree with 4.79 FTE(SD); 5 persons employed as researchers, and 7 persons as teaching staff.

The faculty has 5 PhD students, with one admitted each year. There was only one doctoral defence in the period under review; it is impossible to assess the quality of the defended theses based on a single thesis. The only foreign PhD student was admitted to the study in 2022.

The outputs (best papers and conference outputs) correspond to the research direction of the evaluated Unit (maritime-oriented seaport research, sustainability, green growth in the EU and the shadow economy) and align with its strategy.

Presented articles do not give the impression of a significant international impact. The first of the top five articles was published in a journal with a swift peer review process. The outlet for the second paper is a Q4 level journal indexed in the CA WOS. The third and fifth outputs are in Q2 level journals in Scopus, and the fourth is indexed in CA WOS Emerging Sources (ESCI), however discontinued in SCOPUS database. There is a complete lack of outcomes in top-level journals.

The five submitted items to the conferences reflect a solid presence of the researchers of the UoA at large-scale international scientific events. All these events occurred in Europe (Romania, Poland, Sweden, Latvia, and Greece). The scope of all of them reached beyond occasional conferences: the researchers participated in three events of various conference series – organized by an international scientific organization (Sustainable Solutions for Energy and Environment, EENVIRO), by Polish universities (on Contemporary economic problems), and a series devoted to Social Sciences for Regional Development; furthermore, they also participated in a large conference of the scientific association IAME (International Association of Maritime Economists), and a symposium of the Baltic University Programme.

Data on national or international awards are not available.

However, despite the not very impressive publications, the Unit participates in a HORIZON project and some other projects. It is worth emphasizing that the researchers' attention shifted towards young people and the

green economy, with appropriate models for this purpose and the added value of promoting the youth sector through digital and informal tools for innovative education. The EU-CONEXUS-RESEARCH FOR SOCIETY project (approximate amount: EUR 500 thous.) transforms the partners with respect to new avenues of interaction with ecosystem innovation in a key to youth participation. The Umbrella project attracts and engages people in CBC networks, teaches them how to take their first steps in that context, and helps them overcome barriers (language, skills and competencies, bureaucracy, networking, knowledge exchange). The project pays attention to developing know-how skills so that local and regional organizations in the Southern Baltic program area can participate more actively and benefit from cross-border cooperation on a day-to-day basis.

The results of the projects involve actors in cross-border micro-activities and awareness-raising events that build capacity for knowledge of the South Baltic Programme by organizing newcomers to integrate also through an online platform, a training curriculum to strengthen the capacity of newcomers for participation in ad hoc projects.

The fund-raising activity of the Economics research field is high. The total amount of funds acquired by the UoA from five competition-based R&D projects was approximately EUR 869 thous. during the assessment period, all international.

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 002 - Political Science | 2,26 | 3,5 |

Reasoned justification of the score

Political Science makes up a small community of teachers and researchers within the given UoA at KU. They have two researchers (FTE 0.38), eight teachers (FTE 5.64) and eight other employees (FTE 5.21); eight of them with a scientific degree.

They have published in international peer-reviewed journals, such as *Emerging Science Journal*, *Organizacija*, *Politics in Central Europe*, *Defence and Security Analysis*; the first of which belongs to the Q1 level of Scopus ranked journals; the rest to Q2 level. In addition, among the top five of their publications, they list one chapter in an edited book published by Palgrave Macmillan. They address important and topical questions in their publications, such as city diplomacy in the Baltic countries, participatory budgeting in Lithuania during the pandemic, independent mass media in post-Soviet countries, the participation of the Czech Republic and Lithuania in NATO, i.e., their research is regionally focused on Central and Eastern Europe as well as the post-Soviet space. It should also be mentioned that all publications listed are co-authored, and one co-author appeared in all five publications. Another one is co-author in three of them, i.e., publishing in international peer-reviewed journals seems to be concentrated on the shoulders of very few scholars. During the site visit, the Panel also learnt about the demands for publishing both in Lithuanian and in English, and for safeguarding Lithuanian identity and making contribution to Lithuanian society. As for international publishing, the ambition level concerning the targeted journals could be higher, i.e., to aim to publish in the first quartile of Scopus ranked journals, in the fields of Political Science, International Relations and Area Studies.

Political Science scholars have attended both leading international conferences (European Consortium for Political Research) and smaller ones and disseminated their research results to the members of international academia, which strengthens their opportunities for networking and thus also for co-authoring or co-applying for research (or other) funding in the future.

The amount of external funding has so far been rather modest but taking into account the number of teachers and researchers in Political Science, the result is quite good. The biggest project as to the amount of funding has been a project funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region funding regarding participatory budgeting. There have also been smaller projects such as Erasmus+ project regarding students' civic engagement as part of the EU-CONEXUS university network. The importance of this network was emphasized during the Panel's site visit. They have also been able to attract national funding, both from the Research Council of Lithuania and Klaipėda City Municipality administration. The project funding has focused on policy relevant activities (or applied research), and/or contributing to societal impact, rather than on basic research (the Research Council of Lithuania funded project on political discourse in Lithuania and Ukraine is an exception). During the site visit, the Panel learnt that approximately 54% of all projects of the UoA (incl. Management and Economics) were related to research. It might be good to think about the ways in which funding for research activities (in particular, basic research) could be increased, e.g., in collaboration with political scientists from other Lithuanian universities or from abroad.

As to PhD studies, Political Science is an efficient Unit. Even though the number of PhD students has not been high (varied between 3 and 6), six PhD dissertations have been defended within the period of five years. This is a very good number, also when compared with other disciplines in Social Sciences in the given UoA. All dissertations have been monographs in Lithuanian and themes have varied from information warfare (the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in German media) to political leaders' rhetoric in Lithuania. In addition to having a joint PhD program with other Lithuanian universities, it was good to learn about the plans for further international collaboration in PhD studies within the framework of EU-CONEXUS Plus. This might be one way to internationalize PhD studies in the absence of international PhD students and other researchers (or very few of them). KU Science and Student Support Fund seems also to be an important instrument in supporting young scholars in international publishing and grant applications. According to our experience of the site visit, PhD students seem to be happy with their supervision, research environment and institutional support for their PhDs.

There are no individual or Political Science specific awards listed in the report.

As a whole, Political Science is nationally strong but not yet internationally recognized.

Humanities

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| H 004 - Philology | 4,68 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The assessment of the research activities carried out in the research field of Philology at the Unit is generally satisfactory. The research activities carried out are of good quality and are recognized on the national level. It seems, however, that the level of international visibility is still underdeveloped. There are interesting publications presented in the section 'Best research outputs' of self-assessment report, but they are rather short and the international impact of them does not seem very strong. Two of the listed articles are in Lithuanian. Publishing in the Lithuanian language is very important, of course, but this does not help to increase international visibility. The subjects are mostly connected with cultural identity of the larger geographic region (Lithuania, Poland), the Jewish tradition, and teaching English as a second language. The Unit did not report in their self-assessment about any volumes or book chapters, which is surprising even if the scope of the Unit is rather small (4.68) FTE(SD).

The 5 submitted items in the section of conferences reflect a strong presence of the researchers of the Unit at prestigious large-scale international scientific events. All 5 listed conferences were large events. All of these events took place – or were organized by entities – in Europe (Slovakia, Latvia: virtual, Italy, Ukraine, and Ukraine-Poland-Great Britain: online). The scope of all these events reached beyond occasional conferences: the researchers of the Unit participated at an event of a large onomastic conference series, an annual conference of the International Congress of Balticists, at an actual session of ISCAH (International Scientific Conference on Art and Humanities), and two other large international scientific events.

PhD studies are effective. The number of PhD students is not big (4-5 depending on the year), but there is a defence almost every year. The subjects of PhD dissertations include literature, semiotics, and linguistics. On average there were 4 doctoral students and 4 doctorate promotions in the period 2018-2022.

The Unit carried out a project, which concentrated on study of the Lithuanian language (Semantic system and nomination of the somatisms of the North Žemaičiai dialect), which is probably very important for the linguistic and ethnolinguistic studies of the region. Other projects are mostly connected with Lithuanian language policies and teaching. There is a project of preparation of a new Lithuanian grammar, which could be a useful publication, when it will appear.

The broader academic activity of the UoA is also noticeable. A project on the organization of the Lithuanian language and culture courses for Ukrainian citizens was realized with the support fund for educational exchanges. In addition, the researchers reported during the visit of the expert committee that they organize seminars on Lithuanian terminology for researchers from other departments, which is a very important thing to do these days.

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| H 006 - Ethnology | 2,50 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The research field of Ethnology is part of the Department of Philology. In terms of personnel, the research field is very small, consisting of only 3 researchers with a scientific degree. Despite this small number of researchers, Ethnology has a doctoral program which it shares as part of a larger consortium together with Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas and the Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius.

The number of PhD students is small but grew relatively significantly during the assessed period (from 2 in 2018 to 5 in 2022). However, there were three dissertation defences in 2018 but none after that. Also, the program does not seem to be able to attract international students. The students appear to be satisfied with the program in all respects – supervision, instruction, support for research and conference travel, availability of software for data analysis. Students have the opportunity to discuss their research with other students across the shared doctoral program. However, they do not seem to meet regularly with students from other fields at KU.

The quality of research activities in the field of Ethnology is generally satisfactory. The research activities are of good quality and are certainly recognized at the national level. The international impact of research outputs, however, leaves much to be desired. The publications are all in English, to be sure, but the journals are either Lithuanian or of predominantly regional relevance. No publications in the most respected Ethnological journals were presented.

This is also true for conference participation. Researchers took part in international events but those were rather of minor importance. Which is more, some of the presented papers were not even on Ethnological topics.

The recognition of the researchers' work was only partial. All four entries were letters of appreciation, three of them to the same person. The faculty members have not received national or international awards.

Among the reported projects, there were no genuine competitive research projects. The provided list includes only educational, popularization, and institutional building projects.

The Ethnology program maintains an archive of folk song recordings, now fully digitalized, which is a unique collection in the context of Lithuania. It could serve as a good starting point for international comparative research projects as well as for cooperation with other national institutions (e.g. Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) and for public outreach within Lithuania.

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| H 001 - Philosophy | 3,63 | 2 |
| H 002 - Theology | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

The Philosophy-Theology group of research fields at KU comprises of 8 researchers and teaching staff with scientific degree (2 and 6, respectively). The UoA does not carry out doctoral studies.

The reported research outputs include two international journal articles (both in English, published by the Technological University Dublin and the University of Latvia), a large monograph (in English, published by Klaipėda University Press), an article published in a national journal (in Lithuanian), and a multilingual atlas (share of the UoA is 9,1 %; in Lithuanian and English, published by Vilnius Art Academy). For a period of five years, these best research outputs are rather modest and seem to find resonance mainly on the national level. The level of international visibility is still underdeveloped.

The level of participation in conferences abroad is also below the average, especially with respect to the capacities of the fields at the Unit. The reported events include two seminar series (a number of lectures given by a researcher), two participations on one day long conferences, and the list also includes a participation in a domestic virtual conference (although data was required about reports delivered in conferences abroad). These events took place in Ukraine (twice), Kazakhstan, and Latvia, and only one of them was an event of an established conference series. Accordingly, the researchers of the Unit did not participate in events of scientific associations, societies, congresses, or other prestigious large-scale conferences which are more likely to attract the attention of a wider scientific community. With respect to publications and conference participations, the UoA has so far been rather weak in terms of international visibility.

The Unit did not report any awards received.

The report lists one modestly funded participation in competition-based R&D projects. It was carried out within the frames of the National science program "Modernity in Lithuania" and resulted in an article written in Lithuanian and published by a domestic entity. Unfortunately, the Unit did not represent itself on the Researchers-Experts Panel, thereby leaving no space for discussing their activities. Also, the Unit's research directions have not been specified in its report.

The UoA clearly needs to reconsider its research strategy in both fields. The Panel encourages the Unit to increase the level of participation at good international conferences, and to improve its presence in

international scientific societies, associations, and networks, treating them as potential means to establish solid international collaborations as well as opportunities for more prestigious international publications, which are needed for obtaining funds for the research activities.

In sum, the R&D activities carried out by the UoA are assessed satisfactorily at the national level.

Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

KU in general and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in particular are in a unique position in western Lithuania, being the only institution of higher education with such a wide range of research fields in the region. The reported socioeconomic impact of the Unit is undoubtedly high and very important for the development of the region.

The Unit carries out interesting and relevant scientific research, but the interactions with external groups outside Academia are still underdeveloped (or not properly presented). The Unit reported a number of applied research projects with direct relevance for the city of Klaipėda and the wider region, including assessing the impact of Covid-19 or promoting Klaipėda's culinary and musical traditions. However, much of the evidence provided in the report rather belongs to the domain of dissemination or communication of research results - no real examples of knowledge exchange activities leading to potential various forms of impact were provided. There are, nevertheless, significant differences between individual disciplines and their engagement with public and private actors.

Researchers in the Unit are members of local, regional and national commissions and working groups, contributing their expertise in policy formulation. They provide consultations predominantly at the local and regional level, with some national-level involvement as well. However, one would expect examples of concrete change introduced due to the influence of research results and researchers' participation.

The Unit has organized many local or national events with some international participation. Some of these were organized in cooperation with international entities – such as the University of NSW Sydney; University of Latvia, TalTech, Harz University of Applied Sciences, University of Liepaja, Humboldt University of Berlin, the Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, and Kyiv National University of Linguistics. However, it appears that in many cases, KU researchers only served as members of scientific committees of international conferences organized by someone else.

The presence of researchers on editorial boards is not sufficient, there were only three entries for less important journals, one possibly being a predatory journal (Diamond Scientific Publishing). Greater attention should be paid to the quality and reputation of considered journals.

Scholars of this Unit have mainly been regular members of international associations. Only a few management positions in project boards were mentioned.

Methods of popularization are diverse and extremely important for the region and Lithuania. Dissemination activities include public lectures, organization of an international e-camp, events related to regional traditions, participation in Klaipėda forum, popular science articles, a series of documentary films, participation in a series of TV shows, a public discussion abroad, and a virtual discussion. Especially notable are the cooperation with the Little Lithuania Foundation and Society in Chicago, the international e-camp on

clean transportation, the events related to the singing tradition of Klaipėda region, and the participation in StartUp Klaipėda Forum on business startup opportunities. Topics of other science popularization activities include, e. g., an economic research study of COVID-19 impacts, the latest results in linguistics, ecology and sustainability (also presented in schools), corruption in Lithuania, "Vanishing villages of Klaipėda region" (documentary film series), the future of media in Europe, and cooperation between separate branches of government. The public engagement and communication activities are of a good level - some of them could become a solid starting point for developing a concrete impact-oriented knowledge exchange strategy (cf. the COVID topic with the political literacy of young people - the objectives presented in the short descriptions, if successfully executed, could become an excellent example of social impact, however only under the condition that they can produce measurable effects). The Panel therefore recommend building stronger relationships with non-academic partners and external stakeholders to develop these strategies.

The Unit has many non-monetary cooperation agreements with public schools and other institutions. To what extent are these agreements transformed into reality, it is not possible to judge.

The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

KU is a relatively young university, having been established only in 1991. Internally, faculties were reorganized, and the current structure brought together Social Sciences and Humanities under one faculty. This created both challenges and opportunities. The challenges include the need to build a reputation at the national and international level and find a common ground within the faculty across the diverse disciplines. The small size of the faculty, however, creates opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative research ideas and methodologies. This is already happening, but there is still a great room for improvement.

The Unit appears to have a significant disbalance in the representation of men and women among researchers and professors. Although the University had a gender equality plan for the assessed period, it does not appear to have been put into practice in the assessed Unit successfully. Furthermore, there is an age gap with researchers under 35 and partially also under 45 being significantly underrepresented. This may create problems in the near future as older researchers gradually retire.

The research infrastructure of the Unit could not be judged adequately, as the main building was undergoing repairs and many offices and laboratories were located in provisional spaces. Accessibility to all spaces for physically impaired has to be a priority and hopefully it will be resolved in the reconstruction. The overall impression was, however, that the infrastructure was fairly standard. No exceptional high-tech or cutting-edge technology was shown. However, some labs seem to be very innovative and deserve further investment (e.g., Participatory Budgeting, Consumer Research).

The English version of the University website still requires a substantial effort to bring it up to date and make it possible for an international audience to learn about research activities of individual researchers and their departments.

The Unit appears to have a proactive research support policy. A point-based system derived from the Lithuanian Research Council criteria for the assessment of research outputs motivates researchers to focus on high-quality results. The faculty provides additional support to researchers for open-access fees, project applications, editing services and student research. Researchers confirmed that the system works well and

provides them with the support they need. Overall, researchers and doctoral students appreciated the friendly environment at the faculty.

There is a systematic difference in the scientific performance of social sciences and humanities, the former showing a stronger scientific impact and a greater degree of internationalization. Bringing the humanities up to par with the social sciences needs to be a priority, including small programs such as Ethnology, Philosophy, and Theology. Interdisciplinary and interinstitutional projects and events could be a good tool to achieve this goal. KU aims to become a leader in research with particular objectives for this sector; intensive cooperation with other faculties or universities should be initiated or continued in all these disciplines across KU.

The Unit does not have its own strategic plan. It presented only the strategic plan of the entire University. It is therefore not entirely clear which parts of the University plan and to what extent have been, and will be, applied to the Unit itself.

Membership of the University in the EU-CONEXUS network as well as other international partnerships give the Unit significant opportunities to become more internationally involved.

Defined strategic themes are numerous and reflect the disciplinary diversity of the Unit. Continuing commitment to regional development and research is very important, particularly if related to the international context. While some themes are relatively concrete and clearly scientifically and socially relevant, others are only vaguely described.

Overall, the Unit has a great development potential. It has correctly identified its strengths and weaknesses while watching carefully for the arising threats and opportunities. As a young institution, it is not hindered by tradition as older institutions often are, and its disciplinary diversity and small size create a potentially very innovative and creative environment. Together with its commitment for the development of the Klaipėda region, it can, with time, become one of the key institutions of higher education in the Baltic region.

Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

The Unit has performed well in all areas of its activity, and it has a solid foundation to build on in the future. In the coming years, nevertheless, it should focus on several aspects of its structure and policy to create a more innovative and international work environment. In general, researchers of the University should focus more on competition-based research grants at national as well as international level, perhaps in the form of cooperation of several departments. More attention should also be paid to increasing the impact of all disciplines. Some specific recommendations are below.

First, the Unit needs to focus particularly on increasing its international research performance. This requires a solid understanding of the factors which prevent researchers from publishing in top journals and from applying more vigorously and successfully for international research funding. The Unit should adopt the publication strategy which could result in increasing the level of good, internationally recognized papers and, in consequence, provide the opportunities for collaboration at the international level. Participation in international conferences should be encouraged and tied to high-quality publication results.

Second, the Unit should promote its vision of becoming a leader in the research on social and cultural processes in the Baltic coastal regions by building an intensive cooperation with institutions in other Baltic states. This regional cooperation has a great potential for the internationalization of all KU disciplines and can be a steppingstone to a truly global reach in the future.

Third, internationalization does not only include publishing internationally or taking part in conferences abroad but also bringing in researchers and students from other countries. The Unit should create a plan for attracting foreign scholars and students and integrate them in the activities of the faculty to foster an international work environment at the everyday level.

Fourth, research productivity and effectiveness could be increased by reducing disciplinary and topical fragmentation and by promoting interdisciplinary research clusters centred around key topics with a potential for international impact and collaboration. Also, synergy between departments should be promoted. At a small institution such as KU, it is not possible to cover all topics and do them well, but it is possible to specialize in some and be the best in them. The potential for joint trans- and interdisciplinary projects between departments located in different KU faculties should also be explored.

Fifth, humanities need to be brought up to par with the social sciences in terms of their research quality. This is especially true for the programs in Philosophy and Theology. A clear plan for this goal should be prepared, including the future implementation of a doctoral program in Philosophy and Theology.

Sixth, the UoA submitted for review should be an organic Unit, not an ad hoc selection of disciplines. Correspondingly, such a Unit should have its own strategic plan laying out a clear path towards excellence.

Seventh, address the gender and age gap and remove obstacles preventing younger and male researchers from joining the University. Create incentives for young people to join the faculty.

Eighth, promote the exchange of ideas and methodologies among PhD students from different disciplines through formal and informal meetings. Early interdisciplinary discussions among students can serve as a foundation for future interdisciplinary appreciation when these students become researchers and professors.

Finally, in order to increase the overall socioeconomic impact, focus on building meaningful partnerships with non-academic stakeholders and promoting knowledge exchange activities to ensure future impacts not only in the Klaipėda region but beyond.

2.2. LKA-NTMAS Unit of Assessment

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|--|--|
| Name of the institution | General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania |
| Official abbreviation of the name of the institution | LKA |
| Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA) | General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania - (NTMAS) |
| Abbreviation of the UoA name | LKA-NTMAS |
| The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD)) | 20,03 |
| Research area(s) | N 000 - Natural sciences, T 000 - Technology, S 000 - Social sciences |

Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

Natural sciences

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| N 001 - Mathematics | 0,66 | 1,5 |
| N 002 - Physics | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

In the area of Mathematics, the team consists of five instructors, equivalent to a total of 1.98 FTE. During the period between 2018 and 2022, the team published two papers in the Q3 AIS MDPI Mathematics, as well as one paper in the Lithuanian Journal of Physics, which is a Q4 level journal. The researchers have also contributed to well-respected international conferences such as SPIE, IRMMW-THz, and Cyber-watching. However, the publication output of the team on a national level is deemed poor, considering the 0.66 FTE(SD) in Natural Sciences. It is worth noting, though, that the group has not engaged in PhD studies, and its research and development (R&D) endeavours are somewhat limited, as indicated by its absence from R&D projects over the last five years. Additionally, the team has not been awarded any academic accolades in the aforementioned time frame.

Regarding the publication activities, it is clear that the mathematics team has made some modest contributions to the field, with papers published in both national and international journals. Despite this, the team's output on a national level is deemed poor when factoring in the size of the team. On the other hand, the team's participation in notable international conferences indicates that they have the potential to expand their research impact beyond Lithuania's borders.

It is worth noting that the team's lack of involvement in PhD studies and R&D projects could be a contributing factor to their limited publication output. The absence of a structured research program and the opportunity to engage in more substantial projects with multiple collaborators may limit the team's research productivity. In addition, the absence of academic awards indicates that the team's research output has not been recognized at the national level.

To improve their impact and productivity at the national level, the mathematics team should consider exploring new research topics and collaborating with other teams or institutions to expand their research portfolio. This can help to increase their visibility and attract more funding and resources. Additionally, the team may benefit from seeking mentorship or guidance from experienced researchers in the field. Expanding their international presence can also have a significant impact on the team's reputation and research impact. By continuing to participate in notable international conferences and building relationships with researchers from around the world, the team can increase their visibility and attract more opportunities for collaborations and funding.

In conclusion, while the Mathematics team has made modest contributions to the field, their output at the national level is considered poor when factoring in the size of the team. However, their participation in international conferences suggests that they have the potential to expand their research impact beyond Lithuania's borders. To improve their impact and productivity, the team should consider exploring new research topics, collaborating with other teams or institutions, seeking mentorship or guidance, and continuing to participate in notable international conferences.

Technology

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| T 003 - Transport Engineering | 0,42 | 1,5 |
| T 001 - Electrical and Electronic Engineering | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

Technology comprises Transport Engineering and Electrical & Electronic Engineering. In the group of Transport Engineering, research is performed by A. Juozapavičius (H index = 2) and D. Kriauciūnas (on Web of Science, there is no link in between D. Kriauciūnas and LKA). The total workforce corresponds to 0.42 FTE(SD). Research topics comprise topical and interdisciplinary items like climatic impact of military vehicles, unmanned ground vehicle EOD robot assessments, and similar. In the group of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, K. Ikamas (H index = 8) was active with 0.17 FTE(SD). Research was focused on terahertz technologies. Unfortunately, the same research is associated with the Physics (Natural Sciences) group.

Publications of the group comprise top journals like IEEE Electron Device Letters and IEEE Transactions on Terahertz Science and Technology, but the share of the institution is below 10% in both cases. On the other hand, journals like Advances in Military Technology are not indexed on the Web of Science. The terahertz group publishes at recognized conferences with the share of the institution below 20%, the transport engineering group does not have any conference paper related to their research.

From the viewpoint of the long-term focus, the research of the group is interdisciplinary and promising. Unmanned vehicles, climatic impact of vehicles in combination with millimetre-wave and terahertz / optical technologies can significantly contribute to autonomous driving and similar approaches. Unfortunately, the total workload of the research group is very small. Moreover, no doctoral studies are carried out and no bachelor or master students contribute to the research. The size of the group therefore does not reach the critical mass needed to perform reasonable research.

Even with a strong potential, there is surprisingly no cooperation between the group of Transport Engineering and the group of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Such a cooperation might have a strong impact since the application of microwave sensing is very topical in transport applications. The visibility of the research is limited since the group of Transport Engineering does not have relevant publications. And moreover, group members are active neither in national projects nor in international ones.

Summarizing the above facts, research might be rated to be approaching the satisfactory national level. In order to reach that level, the team is recommended to create a larger interdisciplinary group (even now, A. Juozapavičius contributes to Management) and to extend the research focused on field of autonomous driving (combining microwave sensing and driving of unmanned vehicles). If a larger interdisciplinary group is created, the chance of establishing a common interdisciplinary doctoral program can be increased. If group members join consortia of international projects and publish outputs in more visible journals, a higher visibility can start an independent funding. Definitely, the position of Military Academy is specific. On the other hand, attractive research opportunities in relation to the operation of military vehicles surpass the drawbacks.

Social sciences

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 002 - Political Science | 7,53 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

In the field of Political Science, the group consists of 20 persons with a calculated 7.53 FTE(SD) and runs the PhD program. This makes it the key field in the Military Academy in terms of research and development capacity, but the Unit is not large in the broader academic context of Political Science in Lithuania. It seems that the academic staff is more focused on teaching than on research. The focus is on international and security studies, which is understandable given the profile of the institution.

The number of PhD students is relatively high (1 to 4 in each year of study), there are only full-time students. There are no international students. PhD training is carried out jointly with other universities. However, compared to the size of the senior teaching staff, the number of PhD defences is small; only two doctoral dissertations have been successfully defended in the last five years. The dissertations are written in the Lithuanian language. Thus, the efficiency of doctoral studies and their international dimension can be increased.

There are relatively high-level international publications and conference presentations. The articles are published in international peer-reviewed journals, such as Europe-Asia Studies (Q2 in Sociology and Political Science), and two other papers were published in Q3 level journals. The books or chapters are published by international publishers (Routledge and Oxford University Press). Considering the relatively high FTE(SD), the publication output is not sufficient. The number of international publications should be increased, and the quality of papers should be shifted to higher quartiles. Political scientists have also participated in major international conferences such as ECPR, CEEISA & ISA. The theme of the presentations includes military and intentional relations topics. All conferences took place in Europe, so the scope and intensity of conference participation could be improved. These activities indicate a visible international networking, but there is also a clear space to expand this.

The number of research and development projects is small and external funding is very moderate. The Unit has been more successful in national than in international competitive funding, participating in several national projects and one HORIZON 2020 project. These projects are usually awarded with relatively small amounts. Understandably, research funding is mostly linked to the military. There are no awards for research and development.

Discussions with academic staff during the site visit revealed that there is a strong interest in a national contribution. There seems to be further scope for the use of academic knowledge in the military structures and for the military to support the work of academic staff and, in particular, PhD students.

Taken together, these arguments lead to the conclusion that the Unit is a sufficient national actor with some international connections. The peculiarity of the international cooperation is that the academic staff members participate in the international cooperation networks of the defence sector. This doesn't replace academic cooperation in Political Science. There could be further room for reflection on the desired balance between nationally oriented, international defence network oriented and international Political Science academic cooperation oriented activities.

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 003 - Management | 6,32 | 2,5 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The Management Unit is comprised of a team of 22 people with scientific degrees of whom 9 work as researchers and 20 as teaching staff. The Unit does not have any PhD students at the moment; however, they have published numerous articles in both national and international peer-reviewed journals, with papers submitted for evaluation written in English. This is indicative of the Unit's range of expertise in the field and the relatively high quality of their publications. It is worth noting that the majority of their publications have appeared in international journals such as Sustainability and Energies, which are highly regarded within the field.

The Unit has attended European conferences that are relevant to security studies, rather than general Management issues, resulting in some presentations that were not fully anchored within primary research results. While attending conferences is an important aspect of academic research, it is important to ensure that the presentations are grounded in solid research findings. It is recommended that the Unit re-focus their conference attendance on those that are more relevant to their primary research interests. By doing that, the UoA can increase the impact of their research by presenting their findings to an audience that shares their research interests. This approach can enhance their reputation in the field and attract potential collaborators, ultimately leading to more opportunities for research and funding.

In terms of funding, the Unit has secured a considerable amount of external funding, particularly the over EUR 1 mil. project from the EU funds. The Unit's funding from national sources is also considered to be good. However, it is concerning that the Unit lacks international funding, as this can have a significant impact on their ability to compete with other research institutions in the field. The Unit should consider applying for international funding to expand their research activities and increase their international recognition.

The Unit has been granted several quality awards; however, these have only been at the national level and seem to be more appreciation letters than actual prizes awarded on a competitive basis. While it is always positive to receive recognition for one's work, it is important that the awards granted are meaningful and awarded on a competitive basis.

In conclusion, the Management Unit at the UoA has performed satisfactorily at the national level, but there is limited international recognition. The Unit's research outputs demonstrate their range of expertise and the relatively high quality of their publications. However, the Unit should re-focus their conference attendance to those that are more relevant to their primary research interests, consider applying for international funding to expand their research activities and increase their international recognition, and work towards obtaining competitive quality awards.

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| S 004 - Economics S 005 - Sociology S 001 - Law S 007 - Education S 006 - Psychology | 5,10 | 2 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The group of 20 employees working in the Unit is primarily focused on providing curriculum and teaching materials related to five specific fields. However, their engagement in research tasks is minimal, and only a fraction of them contribute to research activities. This lack of focus on research has resulted in a limited presence of the Unit in major Social Science meetings (e.g. conferences organized by scientific associations), and they have not actively engaged in international and competitive research and development projects. To enhance the Unit's research and internationalization efforts, introducing PhD studies in the long term would be a wise move. Offering PhD studies will provide a boost to the research activities and enhance international recognition, but in order of achieving such a goal, in one of the fields involved in this UoA, the number of researchers should be increased significantly.

The absence of research and development projects and the limited number of presentations at major conferences in the general area of Social Science highlights the fact that the Unit's research activities are quite limited, if any. While there are mixed publications and conference appearances, these tend to appear mostly in secondary and paid journals. Additionally, the topics covered in these publications tend to focus on the application of research areas to military contexts, which limits the significance of the output.

The lack of external funding and engagement in projects also highlights the need for the Unit to increase its participation in international projects and secure more funding. The current state of affairs indicates that the research produced by the Unit is of a low level and has only been recognized at the national level. This low recognition restricts the Unit's access to funding and research opportunities, which can impact the quality of the research.

In light of these challenges, it is essential for the Unit to prioritize research and development activities to increase recognition and funding opportunities. Researchers of the Unit should improve the participation in major Social Science meetings to engage with the broader research community and enhance their research skills. Additionally, introducing PhD studies in the long term could enhance research and internationalization efforts. The introduction of PhD studies will enable the Unit to engage in more competitive research and development projects, which will strengthen their publication output and increase their international recognition.

In conclusion, the Unit's current focus on providing curriculum and teaching materials related to specific fields is essential. However, the Unit needs to prioritize research and development activities and engage in international and competitive research and development projects. They also need to secure more funding and engage in more projects to strengthen their research output and increase their international recognition.

Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The projects implemented by the UoA-s address a number of issues of high social importance. The topics of some of these projects are more closely related to the profile of the University, such as military technology, cyber-watching and cybersecurity, security studies, preparation of national and public security specialists, civil defence, as well as issues such as society-military relations. Some other studies deal with issues that have broader societal impact, such as sustainability and energy security. The topics discussed in publications and conference presentations focus on applications of specific research areas to military contexts. Some other research and development activities have regional or even broader impact.

The researchers associated with these Units contribute their knowledge and skills to a number of national and international working groups, including the European Defence Agency and the Swiss National Science Foundation. They also offer their expertise through consultancy services, such as training sessions, and are sought after by national media outlets. While researchers from the Units are not heavily involved in working groups or committees beyond the national level, there is one exception in the form of a Research Fellow at the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence. The lists of consultations provided by the UoA-s include a number of relevant training activities and lectures for teachers, while other items refer to brief consultations or participation in discussions.

In terms of conference organization, it appears that the Unit is primarily involved in arranging one-time events with a regional or local focus, often centred around topics related to security and multidisciplinary issues. Regarding journal editing, approximately 30% of cases involve editors affiliated with the Unit's own institutions, while the remaining cases involve editorial boards of regional journals from countries such as Poland, Latvia, and Hungary. Memberships in various associations and expert groups appear to be primarily individual in nature. The Unit has provided an adequate record of knowledge dissemination, including information on the number of public lectures, television and radio appearances, and social media outreach. The Unit's collaborations are largely with local institutions, and appear to have some links to research and development activities or the typical Erasmus exchange agreement.

In summary, based on these considerations, it can be concluded that the research conducted by this University has a noticeable social impact especially on the military-related social issues. The applicability of the Social Science studies is good. However, due to the nature of the research, the University does not attract many cooperation partners from outside the academic community.

The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

2,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The age distribution of the faculty of LKA is not favourable, so the Unit could benefit from the inclusion of more junior scholars. While the gender distribution appears to be broadly representative, the Unit mainly consists of mid-career academic staff. However, the presence of over ten PhD students and successful

defences indicates a level of basic academic sustainability. Therefore, given the size of the Unit, it may be useful to explore possibilities for expanding the PhD program.

It is positive to note that the Unit primarily recruits full-time scholars and their teaching load does not exceed 30%. However, it is unclear whether the Unit has already met its strategic goals, particularly regarding identity, number of applications, and international standards in research. Additionally, it is unclear what measures have been taken to develop research training within the Unit. As such, there is a question regarding why the Unit should be allowed to launch doctoral training in Management in 2024, given the limited experience in doctoral training in Political Science, which has been organized jointly with other Lithuanian higher education institutions.

The research topics chosen by the Unit are well-justified, and the concept of small states is common to all of them. However, it appears that other Lithuanian higher education institutions also employ the small states concept, which does not necessarily make the Unit stand out. While the research activities of the Unit are commendable, it would be beneficial to hear more about how they plan to take better account of the expertise and intellectual potential of military officers to improve their research output.

The LKA is located on a 7-hectare site in the Antakalnis district of Vilnius, and it schedules military training at centrally managed training grounds throughout Lithuania, similar to other military units. The academy carries out its main activities in nine buildings, and in recent years, it has given particular attention to the modernization of IT systems and the improvement of working conditions.

From 2018-2022, the Military Academy actively participated in various international and national organizations, including the Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change (GMACCC), NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, NATO Science and Technology Organization, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), The European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), European International Studies Association (EISA), and European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST). This active participation in international and national organizations indicates a commitment to fostering collaboration and contributing to the broader community.

In conclusion, the LKA has made commendable efforts to modernize its infrastructure and participate in various international and national organizations. However, there is a need to explore the possibility of including more junior scholars in the Unit to improve its research output. Additionally, the Unit should take measures to better utilize the expertise and intellectual potential of military officers to further enhance their research activities. Expanding the PhD program could also be a potential way to sustain and develop the Unit's academic research efforts.

Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

It is recommended that the UoA take certain measures to improve its research output and achieve its strategic goals. UoA should explore possibilities for including more junior scholars in the Unit to bring fresh ideas, perspectives, and diversity of thoughts. While the gender division appears to be broadly representative, the Unit mainly consists of mid-career academic staff. Therefore, UoA should also consider expanding the PhD program to increase academic sustainability and explore new research topics.

It is crucial for UoA to assess its current position and establish its strategic goals, including a clear plan to achieve them. UoA should invest in the development of research training within the Unit to improve the research output and productivity of its academic staff. Additionally, UoA should take measures to better utilize the expertise and intellectual potential of military officers to enhance their research activities.

The lack of a clear system that would take into account the achievements of doctoral students need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable and high-quality doctoral education.

It is commendable that UoA primarily recruits full-time scholars, and their teaching load does not exceed 30%. However, there is a need to hear more about how UoA plans to take better account of the expertise and intellectual potential of military officers to improve their research output.

Furthermore, UoA should actively participate in various international and national organizations, including the Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change (GMACCC), NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, NATO Science and Technology Organization, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), The European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), European International Studies Association (EISA), and European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST). This active participation in international and national organizations indicates a commitment to fostering collaboration and contributing to the broader community.

In conclusion, UoA should take the recommended measures to improve its research output and achieve its strategic goals. The inclusion of more junior scholars, investment in research training, utilization of military officers' expertise, exploration of new research topics, and active participation in international collaborations will help UoA sustain and develop its academic research efforts. Expanding the PhD program could also be a potential way to sustain and develop the Unit's academic research efforts. While UoA has made commendable efforts to modernize its infrastructure and participate in various international and national organizations, there is a need to explore the possibility of including more junior scholars in the Unit to improve its research output. By taking these steps, UoA can enhance its academic reputation and contribute significantly to the field of military studies.

2.3. MRU_ŽVSF Unit of Assessment

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| Name of the institution | Mykolas Romeris University |
| Official abbreviation of the name of the institution | MRU |
| Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA) | Faculty of Human and Societal Studies |
| Abbreviation of the UoA name | MRU_ŽVSF |
| The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD)) | 33,69 |
| Research area(s) | S 000 - Social sciences, H 000 - Humanities |

Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

Social sciences

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 007 - Education | 12,23 | 3,5 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA is part of the MRU which is located in Vilnius and Kaunas. The UoA as a whole consists of Social Sciences and Humanities. Social Sciences is comprised of Educational Science and Psychology. Educational Science is a medium sized institute with seven (3.26 FTE) researchers and twenty-nine (26.91 FTE) teaching staff with a scientific degree. MRU is currently in an ongoing transition from a teaching university towards a research university. Researchers are encouraged to undertake research on personal interest. Allocated time and money depend very much on the kind of project.

Educational Science profits from the increase in research and is assessed between 'good' and 'very good'. The focus is on themes like Well-being of learners, Innovative educational technologies and Lifelong learning. It is characteristic for Educational research in general to be published on a national (serving the nation's Education development) and international level. In the case of MRU's Educational research there is a good balance between national, regional and international publications.

The six most significant publications that are listed included two books with international academic publishers) Peter Lang and Springer), one chapter in a book published by an international publisher (Cambridge Scholars Publishing), one article published in an international Q1 journal (Studies in Higher Education), one in an international regional journal and one article in a Lithuanian/English journal.

Educational researchers take part in and present at a variety of European research conferences, including recognized conferences such as European Conference on Educational Research. However, for further develop it is recommended that they take a more active role in journals (as reviewers or editors) and educational associations (in administrative boards or in special interest groups).

Six projects have been funded during the assessment period, these included funding from National Agency of Education and Lithuanian Research Council. Educational Science did not list international projects and it is

therefore recommended that Educational Science actively applies for international projects or participates visibly in international projects.

There is quite a high number of doctoral students, but in the assessed period just 7 PhD students defended their theses. This is rather a modest result. PhD students participate in Educational research. PhD students who were present at the interview are satisfied with the supervision they received and with the possibilities to travel and to collaborate.

There is good communication between researchers and management. Researchers report that they have quite some possibilities. There are various means of funding and a variety of ways to collaborate.

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| S 006 - Psychology | 12,08 | 4 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The following list of arguments is based on the information provided by the UoA, the information gathered during the visit and other official sources. The assessment of the research activities carried out in the research field of Psychology is, with reference to the capacities of the Unit, very good. The research projects have been of high quality, they are very important, and they have been both nationally and internationally recognized. The intersection between various individual disciplines (e.g., Psychology and Education, etc.) in the form of a dialogue and cooperation is definitely worth noting. The published papers are of a high standard. Six most significant publications were listed in the documents provided to the Panel. These included several articles published in Q1 – Q2 journals in the field of Psychology. All six articles were published in journals that have high citation indexes according to Scimago Journal Ranking. The academic staff has participated in international research conferences. All the reported conference presentations were events of large international scientific organizations – of the European Association for Work & Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), the European Congress of Psychology, European Association for Research on Adolescence Conference (EARA), as well as scientific meeting of International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development. The Unit has been very successful in attracting funding. Six projects have been funded during the assessment period, these included funding from international and national sources: Horizon-RIA, European Structural Support Funds and Lithuanian Research Council. The low rate of defended PhD theses seems to be a major concern: there are more than 20 PhD students per year, yet very few defences per year. A total of five PhD theses were defended during the five years of assessment period. PhD studies incorporate a strong international dimension – the students are encouraged to gain international experience during visits to foreign research centres, external thesis supervisors from the leading international universities, as well as by obtaining a joint degree. There were no PhD students from abroad entering doctoral studies during the years of the assessment period. The submitted list of main national and international awards received for R&D consists of four items. Two researchers of the Unit were awarded The Best Qualitative Study in Lithuania prize for their co-authored article that appeared in a journal published by Wiley-Blackwell (USA). Two PhD students won the Best Dissertation of the year in Lithuania in Social sciences and Humanities. Also, a researcher of the Unit was awarded the ‘Best Idea for Practice’ prize for an oral presentation at the Young scientists of psychology conference. Taking those arguments together it is concluded that the Unit of Psychology is strong with an international recognition.

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| S 005 - Sociology | 5,81 | 3,5 |
| S 008 - Communication and Information | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

The enumerated five best published items include one book chapter and four journal articles. The book chapter appeared in an edited collection of English language scientific essays published by Bingley: Emerald Publishing Ltd. (UK). The four articles appeared in journals published by Oxford University Press, SAGE Publications, Universidad de Alicante, and University Nitra, respectively. The H-Indexes of these journals are 52, 39, and 4 (the last one is not listed Scimago). The five submitted items with respect the presentations at conferences reflect a strong presence of the researchers of the UoA on prestigious large-scale international scientific events. The conferences include a final conference of the twelve years' joint research activity conducted at the NCCR LIVES, an annual event of an international conference series (on Enterprise and competitive environment), an event of a European Conference series (on Social Networks), an International University Congress of CUICID (Communication, Innovation and Teaching), and an event of a World Conference series of MEDCOM (Media and Mass Communication). All the five enumerated conferences were large events. Participation in competition-based R&D projects is of high level. The five enumerated participations in competition-based R&D projects include two larger projects and three smaller projects. All five projects fell entirely within the assessment period. A Horizon2020 project was related to operating a Knowledge Hub for Citizen Science in Europe (appr. amount: EUR 38.5 thous.), and a project funded by the Research Council of Lithuania (for research on the reasons and solutions for non-take up entitled financial social support (appr. amount: EUR 70 thous.). The 3 smaller projects were funded by The Baltic-German University Liaison Office, a national economic association, and a company (altogether appr. amount: EUR 11.3 thous.). Thus, the total amount of funds acquired by the UoA from competition-based R&D projects was approximately EUR 120 thous. during the assessment period (international: EUR 38.5 thous.; domestic: EUR 81.3 thous.). The meetings with the different staff categories during the site visit and visiting the laboratories gave a positive impression of the dynamic and dedicated staff and creative, active engagement in interdisciplinary research. The leadership has a strong and clear vision, and staff seems to react well to the instruments of support and rewards. The Sociological expertise remained slightly less invisible in the otherwise ambitious social science Unit, leading to a somewhat weaker but still good assessment. Sociology as well as Communication and Information does not have a PhD program. There were also no data on national and international awards supplied.

Humanities

| Research field | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| H 004 - Philology | 2,34 | 2,5 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The research field of Philology is assessed between 'satisfactory' at the national level and 'good', i.e., as strong with limited international recognition. There is no doubt that the research activities at the Unit have been of very good quality, they are important, and they have been nationally recognized. Here also, one may observe the tendency to engage with technology, mostly applied to the new IT tools which may be used in the language science, which is very successful strategy given the European framework (demands of current funding schemes aimed at application). This transdisciplinary dialogue and mutual cooperation are definitely worth noting.

The Unit seems to be already established at the national level, the publications provided have however limited international reach and resonance, the publications in the leading journals in the respective disciplines are still missing. The 5 enumerated items include 1 book, 1 book chapter, and 3 journal articles. The monograph was published by the Cambridge Scholars Publishing House (share of Unit - 66%) and the book chapter appeared in an edited volume of Selected Papers from the CLARIN Annual Conference 2021, published by Linköping University Electronic Press (Utrecht). Out of the 3 journal articles, one was jointly authored and appeared in a journal published by Springer Netherlands. The other article was published in a journal of Lodz University Press, Poland, and the remaining article was published in a domestic journal (of MRU).

The members of the Unit take an active part in the scientific discussion (by taking part in the international scientific conference), but more attention should be paid to the top, leading conferences in this field.

The Unit has already developed some networks of cooperation (mostly at the regional level), however the possibilities to become more active in various European networks should further be developed as the current international visibility of the Unit is somehow limited.

Three projects have been funded during the assessment period, all funded by Lithuanian Research Council, two of them are post-doctoral research projects, no examples of a real scientific collaboration with foreign partners have been demonstrated by the report.

The number of PhD students on the research field drastically decreased during the assessment period: from 5 (2018, Full time (FT)+Part time (PT)) to 1 (2022, FT+PT), while the trend of the entering (first year) PhD students (FT+PT) remained 0 throughout the assessment period. A total of 2 PhD theses were defended during the 5 years of assessment period. 1 PhD student entered the doctoral studies of the field from abroad, during the 5 years of assessment period.

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| H 001 - Philosophy | 1,23 | 3 |

Reasoned justification of the score

The Philosophy research field at MRU comprises of 5 researchers and teaching staff with scientific degree. The UoA does not carry out doctoral studies.

The listed best publications include two international journal articles (published by Routledge, and a Latvian university), and three items published by national publishing houses, namely, a book (in Lithuanian, published by MRU, share of the UoA is 33.5 %) and two further journal articles (one in English). Some of these publications are closely related to the ongoing projects of the Unit, and it is noteworthy that some of them elaborate interdisciplinary, even transdisciplinary perspectives (e. g., jointly applying philosophical and juridical interpretations, and again, offering a phenomenological-ethnographical description of certain aspects of a medical praxis). The one article published in a prestigious international journal is certainly a commendable achievement. Nevertheless, the whole output is rather modest in terms of international visibility for a period of five years, even with reference to the small number of employed academic staff.

This is all the more surprising because research findings have been presented in various prestigious and large-scale international conferences. All enumerated conferences were large events (1 lasted for five days, 2 for three days, and another 2 for two days) held in Mexico and Europe (Ukraine, Serbia, United Kingdom, and Greece), and they include annual events of philosophical societies, also congresses, and an event of a conference series. The discrepancy between the limited international publishing activities, on the one hand,

and the good number of attendance at relevant conferences, on the other, reflects some problem as far as the publication patterns are concerned. The Panel encourages therefore the Unit to reconsider its publishing practices and to develop a strategy aiming at the attainment of a more substantial international visibility.

The UoA did not report received awards for the assessment period.

All five competition-based R&D projects of the UoA have been funded by the Lithuanian Research Council. As it is the case with the Unit's publications, here one may also observe a tendency to cooperation across the disciplines. Such an inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue (involving Philosophy and jurisprudence, and again, Philosophy and History) is definitely worth noting, especially because it offers chances for a reinforcement of the UoA's scientific potential and participation in European schemes, where emphasis has been put on the transdisciplinary aspects in order to assure the fulfilment of the applied aims. Notable is furthermore an international collaboration (with a researcher from France) within the frames of a project, and also the Unit's post-doctoral research project (even if the funding of the latter was modest).

In sum, the R&D activities carried out by the UoA is of high level and nationally recognised, with a so far underdeveloped international visibility and thus limited international recognition.

Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The capacity of the UoA is used for socially important studies. The scientific projects have been conducted on as diverse fields as a platform for citizen science, bilingual automatic terminology extraction, inclusion in academic communities, health promotion services for seniors, self-development of managers, the implementation of the European child and adolescent health strategy, and uncovering child sexual abuse. Other important research topics include critical thinking, the link between adult literacy and labour market participation in Lithuania, cyber law terminology, aspects of radiological praxis, profiles of women survivors of partner violence, and the storytelling on the Ukraine war. Overall, research on critical thinking and adult literacy can provide valuable insights into how individuals learn and develop key skills that are essential for success in today's rapidly changing world. By identifying effective strategies for promoting these skills, researchers can help individuals and organizations improve their performance and achieve their goals. The researchers of the Unit are represented in the Editorial Boards of international journals published by, to give the most important examples, UNESCO, Taylor & Francis, De Gruyter, Palgrave Macmillan Studies. One researcher serves as an associate editor at a journal of SAGE. Three researchers are members of scientific advisory boards/committees at international and national journals. The UoA has been engaged in a number of contracts with the state sector. Consultations have been provided for three ministries of Lithuania, for Lithuanian institutions of higher education, Vilnius City Municipality and a Vilnius social care home, as well as other state and municipal educational institutions. The list of collaborations includes also business enterprises such as Blue Bridge, ElektroBalt, and Šviesa. Topics of consultations include various fields, like, social policy analysis, inclusion and multidimensional education, the national situation of higher education, recommendation on distance learning, self-assessment practices in schools, mediation training, conflict resolution, roundtable on women's human rights in cases of domestic violence, involving fathers in family life, development of a digital careers guidance platform, improving staff career management system, and creating a support system for employees. The UoA have organized a relatively large number of conferences, particularly, five international conferences. Some of these conferences were organized in cooperation with

international entities – such as the Baltic Korean Studies Association, the Academy of Korean Studies, the Central and Eastern European Society of Koreanology, University of Latvia, and Penn State University (USA). The UoA has organized science popularization activities include, e. g., on European identity, cyber security, digital marketing, the war in Ukraine and the NATO, the project DVITAS (Bilingual Automatic Terminology Extraction), and COVID-19 pandemic and communication. In sum, the Unit has been supporting the activities of a number of partners outside the academic world, however, fewer relationships were built with the business sector.

The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA within the field of Educational Sciences has plans to be developed in five research directions: (1) process of educational change; (2) well-being of the learner and educational success; (3) innovative educational technologies and didactic solutions; (4) lifelong learning; (5) training and professional development of educators. The field of Sociology will be developed within three research areas: (1) social policy; (2) social well-being; (3) social services. The field of Psychology will be developed in six directions: (1) psychological well-being; (2) environmental psychology; (3) organizational psychology; (4) legal and criminal psychology; (5) developmental psychology; (6) the experiential research of health and illness. The field of Communication and Information will be developed within four research areas: (1) consequences of the digitization of communication channels; (2) impact of the digitization of information on people's identities and self-perceptions; (3) consequences and trends of the digitization of marketing tools; (4) nuances of the communication impact of environmental awareness and sustainability. The field of Philology will be developed in three directions: 1) synchronic and diachronic linguistic research; 2) literature and translation research; 3) interdisciplinary research in the field of subject language and foreign language didactics, and in the field of information and media literacy in higher education in the field of educational research. Those prospective topics have a good potential for being funded. Policy of training of the new generation of researchers has been implemented, particularly, the UoA carries out PhD programmes in the fields of Psychology and Education in which MRU doctoral students can obtain the European Doctorate (Doctor Europaeus) certificate. There are some structural threats that the UoA has voiced including limited funding opportunities for research (particularly, at the current stage of development the acquired funds are not distributed evenly among various research subunits). At the current stage of development, the UoA is monitoring closely how many articles are published in WOS and Scopus databases. Beyond focusing on publishing in journals that are listed in these databases, the quality (the impact of the published journal articles and monographs) of the publications needs attention. MRU's Strategy is a structured action plan, foreseeing steady growth in the majority of respects. Academic departments do not have a separate departmental strategy, but are responsible for the achievement of all the indicators of the strategic directions. The Unit certainly has potential to reach very good ratings. The overall strategy of the development of the UoA and the provided SWOT analysis is generally sound – it points to the UoA far-reaching plans in becoming a more noticeable research institution at the European and even global level. Taking into account the current performance, the human resources, strategy, organization of activities and infrastructure of the UoA will ensure conditions for very good ratings in the next research evaluation exercise.

Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

Since MRU is a large university with diverse research areas, and since the UoA-s vary both in size and research intensity, the recommendations for the different Units may also differ. First of all, there are some Units with very small research capacity, e.g., Philosophy and Philology. These areas could be merged either formally, by creating larger institutes/departments, or informally, by encouraging interdisciplinary research collaboration. Some cross-field collaborations have already been initiated, but overall, the separate directions of different fields are more visible than the potential synergies between the fields. A structural and thematic consolidation, a clear focus on important social questions from different perspectives could also increase the probability of winning competitive international research grants. In the area of Philosophy, the experience gained from participating in international conferences should be used to improve the publishing achievement, e. g., the results presented at meetings should also be published. Furthermore, international networking should be further developed in joint projects or grant proposals.

Sociology, Communication and Information is a good example of a multidisciplinary Unit that is more successful in obtaining research funding. However, its international network (as indicated by conference participation and publication activity) still seems to be regional; this should be extended to all of Europe or even further.

Psychology is a much larger single-discipline UoA, and the benefits of this capacity are visible both in attracting research grants and in publishing the results. Nevertheless, the success rate of the doctoral training could still be improved. Education is also a single-discipline UoA, similar in size to Psychology, but researchers in this Unit should focus more on grant proposals. More efforts are also needed to publish original research results in high-ranking journals. There are researchers in the social science Units who have the necessary methodological and writing skills, and their expertise should be better utilized.

The proportion of defended theses also varies over time in each field; there are years in which very few PhD theses are defended. The reasons for the low defence rate should be systematically investigated and the conditions for successful doctoral research should be ensured. Involving PhD students in international activities, part-time studies abroad, inviting visiting professors can increase the success rate of the training. A clear motivational structure would be beneficial. For example, setting realistic goals for all stages of the PhD studies. Goals should be challenging but achievable and should be tailored to the specific needs and abilities of the PhD student.

Since the publication activity varies from field to field, support, motivation and incentives should be increased where needed. For example, in the humanities, more prestigious journals should be targeted.

Collaboration between researchers with different experience of international publication, can also help to develop the skills needed to write highly cited papers.

Despite the objective obstacles (lack of competitiveness in salaries), the University can raise its international profile and potentially could also attract researchers from abroad. Foreign researchers bring different perspectives, knowledge, and skills that can enrich the academic community.

The academic staff could be more intensively supported in developing exceptional research papers rather than simply demanding publication in WoS/Scopus journals, as well the discussions on particular journals should be followed, e.g., Cambridge Scholars Publishing, which is quite controversial.

2.4. LCC-M Unit of Assessment

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of the institution | LCC International University |
| Official abbreviation of the name of the institution | LCC |
| Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA) | LCC International University |
| Abbreviation of the UoA name | LCC-M |
| The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD)) | 10,95 |
| Research area(s) | H 000 - Humanities, S 000 - Social sciences |

Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

Humanities

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| H 004 - Philology | 3,86 | 2,5 |
| H 002 - Theology | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

LCC is a relatively small, private liberal arts University in Klaipėda with approximately 800 students, most of them at the BA level. It was established with the name Lithuanian Christian College in 1991. As its current name says, it is a truly international university, both as to its faculty and students. The University, being the only higher education institution of North American liberal arts (Christian) in the national territory, cultivates a specific identity and uniqueness in the Lithuanian context. Its students come from Lithuania, the neighbouring countries and Eurasia, and their faculty mainly from Lithuania and North America.

The themes of research are linked to relevant issues, such as political economy (migrations), Psychology (trauma, mental health), Theology, international relations (conflict resolution). These topics are important for the society, however, taking into account the relatively small number of available researchers, they seem too many.

In both sectors of this University centre, it is possible to predict some improvement steps at the level of common and convergent research policies, following the joint choice to respond to the requests of local authorities as the third mission of the University. It is appropriate to plan the sabbatical year for teachers according to specific regulations, and it is equally important to grasp the possibility of maintaining the training of teachers with participation in international quality initiatives. A careful care of the permanent training of teachers will allow the opening of the University to international collaboration, co-creation and publication to thus give more weight to research activities.

The University, then also the sector Philology and Theology, does not count with the degree of doctorate.

In the realm of Philology in its traditional sense it is rather small. There are neither PhD studies nor any grants in the field, which means, that there could hardly be sustainable research in the area. During the visit to the University, the Panel heard that the students have possibility to study some languages (including Lithuanian,

which is very important for the international students to integrate into Lithuanian society). However, linguistics is not represented as a research area in LCC. Among the presented papers, there is a chapter on language choice for intercultural communication in Baltic States. This chapter could be considered (with reservations) as a sociolinguistic study. However, the contribution of the article is rather modest. There is also an article which could be considered as literature study (though it tends more to describe culture). This is a short and not an in-depth article either.

Among conference presentations there is one which could be considered as a sociolinguistic study (English as a global language in Dubai/Sharjah). However, the conference itself is probably not Philology-oriented, but deals more with cultural and sociological phenomena. Therefore, although some attempts at language and literature research are evident, this area would need to be developed to a very wide extent so that it could be internationally recognized.

The Theology faculty has interesting publications, especially on religion in Africa; they are publications in peer reviewed international journals and in books published by international publishers (Rowman & Littlefield, Routledge). The faculty of Theology has also participated in international conferences, in particular in biblical studies. There is only one project mentioned with very limited funding and it is not clear what the outcome of this project is (network grants). For the number of faculty's academic staff, the numbers of publications are not large enough. The publications for the period 2018-2022 were made in various international scientific journals and in two books: European Journal of American studies 2023, Teaching Philosophy 2019, and European Journal of Theology. The research topics were: Puritanism, Unbuntu (book), Theological interpretation, pedagogy of Lithuanian intercultural communication (book), Teaching moral Philosophy. Their research has been presented in several conferences in Hungary, Finland, Poland, Romania and at a virtual one.

In sum, the UoA demonstrates a good level of scientific research in the field of Theological; the international recognition, is albeit limited. The Theological research seems to be the strongest of this University and could deserve a better score, but the lack of the doctorate and the general conditions of the other sectors oblige the Panel to give less general consideration.

Social sciences

| Group of research fields within the research area | Scope (FTE(SD)) | Score (points) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| S 003 - Management | 7,09 | 2,5 |
| S 002 - Political Science | | |
| S 006 - Psychology | | |
| S 008 - Communication and Information | | |
| S 004 - Economics | | |

Reasoned justification of the score

According to the presentation given during the site visit, LCC has two main research fields, Humanities (Philology and Theology) and Social Sciences (Economy, Management, Communication and Information, Political Studies and Psychology). However, according to the publications and conference participation listed in the report all research output in Social Sciences originates from Communication sciences, Political Studies and Psychology (titles beginning with A Political Theory of Post-Truth; Implicit theories of Marital Relationships, Building Peace Through Facebook). The Panel could not assess the quality of research in Economics nor in Management and would recommend leaving these fields out of the assessment if they do not contribute to R&D activities.

As to their research output, the faculty in Social Sciences has published articles in international peer-reviewed journals, however, these journals mainly belong to the 2nd quartile of Scopus ranked journals. The level of ambition should be higher. There is also a monograph published by Palgrave Macmillan, and a chapter in an edited book published by Lexington Books listed among the top five publications. It should also be mentioned that two out of five listed publications have been authored by Dr. Kalpokas, whose research output was also counted at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. During the site visit, the Panel was told that LCC researchers co-author both with scholars from Klaipėda University and with US-, UK- and other Europe-based scholars. However, in the list of top five publications there were four single-authored and one co-authored publication.

The Social Sciences faculty has taken part in international conferences in the field of Political Science, Communication studies and Psychology both in Lithuania and abroad (e.g., Political Studies Association Annual Conference in the UK). As awards they had listed mainly fellowships or Fulbright scholarships.

During the site visit, the Panel learned that since 2016 LCC has paid more attention to its research activities, e.g. by improving the research management and infrastructure (the establishment of LCC Research council, two research centres, providing more funding for research, taking part in the research assessment), and by allowing faculty to spend more time on research and trying to recruit more research-focused faculty. In their presentation during the site visit, the Panel were also told that LCC has more than tripled the number of publications since 2018, so the measures taken have brought some fruit. However, otherwise the Panel did not see that these efforts put into research would have contributed, e.g., to the amount of externally funded projects – there were only two with funding of approximately EUR 35 thous. in total. They were projects to work with the youth; to learn the youth in Klaipėda to create their own business, or to advance digital undergraduate research in Europe. Taking into account the number of teachers in Social Sciences, one would expect more project funding during the five-year period. For example, the incentive of having less teaching if you have a research project with external funding, has not yet brought the desired result.

One of the major weaknesses of LCC is the absence of PhD training and of any concrete plans at the need for a PhD program, but also the acknowledgement that they were not yet 'equipped for a doctoral program.' Also, the possibility of having a joint doctoral program in partnership with a university in North America was brought up. The Panel recommends also to consider taking part in a joint doctoral program with other Lithuanian universities.

Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

According to the Panel, LCC plays an important local, national and regional role also beyond the academic community. This is evident based on the report which describes their engagement with different actors in society, including policymakers. For example, the results of their research on donors and humanitarian workers, the class-ceiling effect in Lithuania or their project Youth for Better Klaipėda may potentially bring changes to policies and practices of decision-makers, businesses, young citizens. This research may also have international relevance. Based on the report, however, it was not evident how these results (e.g., those published as articles) were disseminated in order for them to have impact beyond academia, i.e., there was potential impact but no evidence of how this impact was being reached. During the site visit, the Panel learnt that they had used social media to disseminate their results and organized a workshop for the community

and meetings with senior citizens and students. An important part of their societal outreach was also the work with/related to helping Ukrainians after Russia's invasion, e.g., providing them with free Lithuanian language courses, and organizing trauma trainings. This kind of work is certainly appreciated, and the Panel encourages the University to continue with these activities. Other examples of popularization of their research are the participation of one member of the faculty in a Finnish TV show A-Studio as well as a book used in media writing courses, and a professional development webinar for English language teachers as well as participation of one member of the faculty in a parliamentary discussion about migration and equal opportunities.

The faculty has actively participated in various working groups at the local or national level: The Study Quality Evaluation Centre; Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Young Academics; Klaipėda city working groups/committees. The members of the Unit also act as editorial board members or editors in international journals, such as Challenges in Language Testing Around the World and Baltic Journal of Law and Politics, and Value Inquiry Book Series (Brill). The academic staff of the Unit have also provided consultations in the form of trainings, e.g., in the fields of psychotherapy and Management, both in Lithuania and abroad. LCC has also organized international conferences on themes such as biblical scholarship, mental and emotional health, peace studies. In addition to standard memberships in organizations such as International Studies Association and Neuromarketing Science and Business Association, one member of the faculty also acts as an advisory board member in John Wiley & Sons Business Education and Careers Strategic Advisory Board.

The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3

Reasoned justification of the score

The Panel would like to emphasize that one of the strengths of LCC is that the faculty is very international (has experience of working outside of Lithuania as well), and thus has a good potential for international collaboration in grant applications and publishing. Even though there are teachers from different age groups and genders, all but one member of the faculty is over 35, and 16 of them even over 64, so there is midcareer and senior faculty only. Furthermore, the absence of PhD students (and post docs) has a negative influence on the age structure of the academic staff. This is problematic for future perspectives in the field of research.

The University acknowledges recruitment problems as one of their weaknesses. Stronger research focus, opportunity to devote more time for research and strong support structures for research together with a competitive salary with additional benefits might be of help for a University not located in any major hub of humanities and social sciences research. LCC should put more effort into finding early career researchers, e.g., by setting up post doc positions and by acquiring funding for projects that could recruit post docs. Also, a doctoral program should be established (jointly with other universities). Teaching research skills to both BA and MA students and encouraging them to co-authoring with their teachers must be appreciated, and MA graduates with strong research skills may serve as a foundation for PhD recruitment in the future if LCC decides to improve its research capacity and plan to establish a doctoral program.

More research collaboration with other Lithuanian universities and universities abroad is also strongly encouraged (grant applications for a consortium). The Panel appreciated the human resources policy as to the presentation of promotion requirements which are fully transparent and that there is the opportunity of applying for a sabbatical after each five-year period. However, during the site visit the Panel learnt that this opportunity has seldom been taken. Regarding physical infrastructure, the Panel welcomes the plans to

renovate classroom space, student centre etc. (Flourishing Community Capital Project). LCC has made the best out of the current premises, but new premises would take the teaching and research infrastructure to the next level. During the Panel's site visit the president of the University kindly showed us the pictures of the new premises and they look very promising (e.g., coworking spaces as part of the library). The R&D infrastructure is rather good. There is a psychological lab, a computer lab, and a library with many e-journals subscriptions and databases relevant for research. For this small number of faculty (those active in research), they list a lot of research themes, for example, the Centre for Faith and Human Flourishing covers some 13 research topics, varying from migration, religious persecution, mental health to biblical studies. This seems to be really fragmented. The Centre for Dialogue and Conflict focuses its research on conflict and peace studies, which is more unified. Based on the materials available, research themes could also be grouped into four disciplines: themes related to political economy (migration), to Psychology (trauma, mental health), Theology, and international relations (conflict resolution). It might be worthwhile to discuss whether these four disciplines are those to which the University would concentrate in its research-related activities.

Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

As a whole, the observation of the Panel is that LCC is a teaching-focused University with a clear profile as an education provider, but its research profile is still in the making. It should make better use of its international faculty, and their networks in applying for external funding for projects and in co-authoring. Also, the interdisciplinary approach used in teaching could be strengthened in research. The University must preserve and increase its condition as an international faculty as far as possible, with an original philosophy that makes it an integrated, scientific and international learning community. The University may improve the culture of research if the restricted number of teachers focus on fewer topics instead of the many research issues that are reported. A review of the research project is recommended, the University should redesign the organization of research topics around a fewer number of more related issues. The most important action may be to create synergy and convergence at the level of policies, strategies, implementation of interdisciplinary research projects. Clear criteria for the promotion of teachers needs to be established. Furthermore, at some fields, the search for academic staff must be foreseen and planned, given the current senior faculty condition with possible difficulties in the future. At the level of infrastructure, it is highly recommended that the projects are completed to renew the space of the classrooms, the student centre, the library, etc. ensuring fundraising for this purpose. Pay attention to the care of the current Wi-Fi infrastructure that appears in need of an update. Some deficiencies reported in the paper and/or digital library ratio must be treated.

The Panel recommends to seriously consider the launching of the PhD training, where the academic staff is prepared for it. International cooperation may help creating conditions for this level of training. In the meantime, it is proposed that the University should find younger researchers in other universities.

For the next Comparative Expert Assessment, LLC should make a decision whether it wants to have Economics and Management as part of the UoA. Their contribution for the quality of research was null (no contributions from these fields for research output such as publications, or projects). When writing the report, please pay also attention to the way in which the dissemination of research results is described. Please give concrete examples of how the impact is expected to be reached. This would make it easier to assess the economic and social impact of their research.

The Panel recommends that LCC considers the following steps to improve the quality of their research and strengthen their development potential:

1. To make a decision on the research profile of the University – which fields/disciplines will be supported in improving the quality of their research.
2. To encourage and support the faculty in applying for research funding, and possibly in collaboration with researchers from other Lithuanian universities or abroad. This would also mean that they would have the opportunity to devote more of their worktime to research.
3. To recruit the kind of faculty which has experience of doing high-quality research and/or early career scholars who have convincing research plans and good competencies for conducting research.
4. To invest in the training of the next generation of researchers, e.g., by opening up post doc positions.
5. To aim higher in international peer-reviewed publishing (journals in the 1st quartile of Scopus).
6. To consider the possibility of opening up a doctoral program in collaboration with foreign university /joining the joint doctoral program of Lithuanian universities in the field of Political Science (and in other fields if joint programs are available) – to create a Road Map how to achieve this goal in the next five to ten years.

The Panel is grateful for the warm welcome from the president of the University and would also like to thank everyone who took part in the Panel discussions (representatives of the management and the faculty).

3. FINDINGS

Introduction and background

An interdisciplinary Panel SH assessed 4 different Units of Assessment, representing different fields of the Social Sciences (Management, Economics, Law, Political Science, Communication & Information, Psychology, Sociology and Education) and some fields belonging to the Humanities (Philology, Ethnology, Philosophy and Theology). Not only the involved disciplines vary, but also the size of the units differed considerably (from very small to relatively big), which may have the consequences while discussing the development potential of individual fields and their future, if connected with the number of the PhD students involved. An obvious, but nonetheless much needed disclaimer at the start of this part of the report is that drawing overarching conclusions “for Social Sciences and Humanities in Lithuania”, based on such a small number of very different cases, comes with considerable limitations. Such limitations are especially relevant when comparing the Units across different disciplines, which therefore will be done here. The following summary will be concluded by some general recommendations. The concrete recommendations can be also found throughout the text and have been highlighted in bold in the following way: “the Panel **recommends**” or “the Panel **advises**”.

On the other hand, the interdisciplinary nature of the SH Panel comprising various fields of the Social Sciences and the Humanities makes it natural to compare them with specialized Panels and formulate recommendations in alignment with the findings of other Panels, either of the Humanities or Social Sciences group. Therefore, in following report one may find the general insights concerning the respective fields as formulated by the S1, H1 or H2 Panels, as well as the specific findings concerning the interdisciplinary SH Panel.

Overall Quality of the Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and their level of Internationalisation

The Panel acknowledges the overall quality of the Social Sciences and Humanities domain in Lithuania: all Units performed research that was at least of satisfactory level, the majority being of good, some of very good level. As expected in the comparative assessment some Units (or fields) were already strong internationally, with high-level research that was internationally recognised while the others have not yet achieved the same level of international visibility. Some of the facilities were also very impressive, although in some UoAs the quality of library collections was clearly an enormous issue, and one that access to digital resources alone cannot entirely solve. The Panel observed a lot of shared office space, though there were varying levels of feedback about the extent to which this caused concern.

The higher performing Units were distinguished by a larger number of submitted articles and books published internationally (and generally speaking the Social Sciences were performing better than the Humanities within the Units). Clearly, some research will always be published in the national language. But given that only a proportion of the best published research is submitted for this evaluation of international research excellence, the Panel considered it to be a critical demonstration of international excellence that published work could demonstrate a wider, international academic reach. This would normally be in English as the international language of science, but in some cases where appropriate (depending on the lingua franca of the target academic audiences) it can also be in another language.

Crucially, the Panel was concerned by an over-reliance on Scopus as a measure of quality, a path that has led academics at some of the UoAs to publish very weak material in English in obviously predatory locations. According to the DORA principles, the Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment and other internationally recognised agreements on measuring research quality, the emphasis should be on peer-reviewed quality. The Panel would emphasize the importance of establishing a clearly articulated balance between writing in appropriate foreign languages to engage the international scholarly community and in

Lithuanian in order to serve the local society. But as stated above, given that only very few of the best publications needed to be submitted for this Assessment, the expectation of the Panel is that the balance of publications submitted in the CAE should demonstrate a contribution to international debates.

There was significant unevenness in the ways in which doctorate students were supported. In some UoAs there was very strong evidence of academic support of PhD students, with regular (sometimes even daily) interaction between students and supervisors. In others the quality of the mentorship raised concerns. It is important that all PhD cohorts in every institution have:

- regular supervision meetings with their doctoral supervisors;
- good academic support structures, including regular meetings (once or twice per year) with their doctoral committee, and the possibility of changing doctoral supervisors in case of a breakdown of relations;
- access to appropriate academic and transferrable skills training;
- encouragement (and are financially supported) to attend international conferences and symposia;
- access to regular workshops and seminars in their home institution, where they can also discuss their own work.

In the best programmes and UoAs this already happened fully or mostly – but this should be the norm across all PhD programmes.

Whilst much evidence for internationalisation and international collaboration was presented by many UoAs (e.g., conference attendance, engagement with international academic societies), the best UoAs had demonstrated the development of stable collaborations with foreign partners that were clearly meaningful and long-term, and that provided significant added value. Building on these examples, the Panel would have wished to see richer evidence of overseas researchers coming to Lithuania on extended stays including visiting fellowships, as well as joint publications with overseas partners.

In some of the strongest UoAs, the Panel saw encouraging and forward-looking evidence of interdisciplinary collaboration into other faculties and some Units presented strong evidence of interdisciplinarity across the Humanities and Social Sciences. But in other Units there was little evidence of such collaboration, an impression that was reinforced on many site visits that emphasized only the facilities of the individual UoA, not facilities that encouraged research collaborations across the university.

It appeared that the academic culture in most UoAs relied very much on informal discussions, as well as formal conferences or one-off seminars. In many, if not most, UoAs there appeared to be a relative lack of a regular opportunity to discuss each other's work (e.g., on a monthly basis) for faculty (and PhD candidates where applicable) in most UoAs.

The Panel is hugely appreciative of the publications it has seen in many units of assessments that have been published with major as well as widely recognised publishers and journals. It also notes that there is minimal evidence of publishing in predatory journals and publishers. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that publishing in journals that are listed in Scopus, by and of itself, is no marker of international quality. Indeed, this requirement encourages mediocre publishing, as journals with little international peer recognition can ensure they are in Scopus.

Therefore, **the Panel recommends** the Units to develop the meaningful publication strategies taking into account the potential, traditions and the realities of individual disciplines. As there is no objection to performing research activities in Lithuanian language and treat different scientific problems, even if they relate to the national/local reality there is a need to encourage further researchers to publish the relevant research outcomes in international peer-reviewed journals. The **Panel advises** that the dissemination of the research results and the knowledge exchange/outreach/communication activities are two different spheres

requiring completely different channels and means of communication. In the former case one presents the scientific results to the audience which shares more or less the same level of the competence (peers) in the latter, one shows the results to the wider audiences which, in many cases, lack the pure scientific competence. Therefore, one needs to develop a special way to target such groups and 'translate' the pure scientific descriptions into more accessible, understandable language. Keeping this in mind, even if the topics of scientific articles are within the broader interests of various groups of Lithuanian society (as the possible end-users of the results) there is a general conflict between the scientific purpose of the publication and the possibility to be understood outside the field. If the scientific institutions in Lithuania intend to become the part of the international scientific discussion, they should strive to publish more in the mainstream outlets. The incentives and the real support should be introduced in order to assure this. One should also try to strengthen various forms of already existing international cooperation towards more active and concrete research initiatives (taking part in research consortia/joint research projects/EU funding, etc.) and thus become more and more involved in the international research community.

Knowledge transfer: the problem of the socio-economic impact of research activities

The overall assessment of this criterion is higher than for research quality as such. Most Units are very active in engaging with various activities aiming at informing different audiences about their achievements and in many cases the potential for various forms of impacts is high. It is also true that this relatively new 'impact' oriented agenda causes for some problems, especially with the understanding of the term itself and even more importantly with a question how it should be documented and measured. One has to emphasize that the significance of research in both Social Sciences and in the Humanities to various stakeholders outside the academia, variously referred to as 'impact' and 'valorisation', is of growing significance and importance throughout Europe. It seems, however, that imposed impact agenda (deeply rooted in the British academic system) is difficult to understand in the non-English speaking countries, therefore the **Panel advises** to start the national discussion on such notions as 'impact', 'public engagement', 'knowledge exchange', 'outreach', etc. in Lithuania, involving all players: the Units, the Ministry and the Research Council in order to develop own, Lithuanian strategy on impact, explaining what the expectations lie behind this criterion, how the examples of impact may be documented and demonstrated, etc. As a consequence, completely different set of data would be needed in the next evaluation, but it would be good to start this discussion now. As the research impact is the effect research has beyond academia, it may be called the demonstrable contribution of research to changes that bring benefits to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life. It is therefore slightly misleading to enumerate the dissemination activities and other activities connected to the professional, academic life (membership in various bodies) since they should not belong here.

Given the credit to the Units that the entire concept is new and somehow blurred the Panel has been shown some very good examples of research with potentially high societal impact, as well as many interesting outreach activities by the Units. The latter is especially impressive if one takes into consideration that in the last part of the assessment period such activities were seriously affected by the Covid pandemic. The Panel also acknowledges the width of impact activities, which cover the full range of possible involvement: from media appearances to involvement in expert committees, and from popularisation events to expert consultations. The findings of the Panel confirm findings in earlier assessments: generally, Lithuanian Social Sciences and Humanities researchers consider outreach to society a high priority. Obviously, some researchers are more active than others, depending on skills, preferences and research topics. At the same time, the Panel, **recommends** considering the trade-off in the use of resources (especially time) between the two types of activities (research as such on the one hand, and outreach to society on the other hand) and providing training as far as communicating science/outreach/working with non-academic partners is considered.

The economic and societal impact (and all other forms of impacts) currently is mainly apparent at the local, regional and national government level, and in the general public domain. There is very little indication of structural involvement with (or research funding from) businesses. Also, generally, there are limited links to international and European institutions. The impact in the academic community, which is most directly related the quality of R&D activities and academic reputation, also can be improved. The Panel acknowledges that some individual researchers have important positions internationally (in editorial boards of high-quality journals, in international academic associations), but often involvement is regional or national and/or concerns in-house journals. Regarding impact, the Panel **recommends** the Units to look for ways to broaden and diversify their economic and societal impact and broaden the collaborations with non-academic partners and wider groups and communities to exchange ideas, evidence and expertise. The universities provide a forum for societal engagement that is sustained by academic freedom, led by evidence irrespective of economic, political, or other pressures: the capacity of universities to inform the public free of outside influence should be cherished, without a need to focus on economic parameters in the first place. It would be therefore advisable to establish the offices helping and supporting the researchers entering in such meaningful collaborations.

Infrastructure, funding, management, human resources (including career development and human resource management)

Management

The most highly-rated Units of assessment had very clearly developed SWOT analyses and strategies that evidenced how they would build on their strengths, and address their weaknesses. It is therefore a good sign to observe that some UoAs had begun to develop distinct strategies as appropriate to their history, location, size, and their institutional environment. At the same time, there were also cases where the Panel was disappointed with the depth of the SWOT analyses, and the extent to which these were reflected in institutional action and strategies apparent at the site visits. This is particular problem while focusing on the interdisciplinary aspect of this Panel, which includes various fields from the entire Social Sciences and Humanities domain. The Panel felt that with the reference to the Social Sciences the development strategies were more or less straightforward and balanced, based on the notion of their previous achievements, while at the same time there is a problem with mostly very small fields of the Humanities (as e.g., Philology, Philosophy, Theology, etc.). The Panel recommends the Units try to think very carefully about the strengths and weaknesses of the Humanities disciplines and try to find a place for them within these broad strategies leading to the meaningful interdisciplinary interaction between different fields in the Units which have many different fields grouped together. It is also the case, mostly in the Humanities, that the field is still very fragmented throughout the country, in many places very similar research is carried out. There are however hardly any initiatives trying to combine the efforts in the same field in different institutions. It would be advisable to try to strengthen the research potential by undertaking joint research endeavours.

It was encouraging to see that over the past five years, many institutions had adopted a Gender Equality Plan. In the best cases, researchers were aware of these institutional commitments, and management were conscious of the need to address possible gender imbalances in the UoA.

Some of the best UoAs could demonstrate good examples of a transparent bonus system to reward staff for their performance, but again this was not uniformly the case. Good examples for instance included an extensive points system to reward staff: these might be a bit complex on occasion, but they did have the advantage of fairness and staff buy-in as they recognised contributions in many different areas of academic activity. By contrast, in UoAs where such systems were not in evidence, the Panel were concerned that fair career possibilities were insufficiently articulated. The Panel therefore recommends introducing such

systems in a transparent way, including the support and training to the researchers in order to maximise the awareness.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure seen by the Panel was generally very good and the Panel witnessed for many UoAs excellent and appropriate infrastructure that enabled researchers of the UoAs to carry out their mission. The Panel was also delighted to see new e-infrastructure emerging. By contrast, in other institutions researchers did not have appropriate workspaces, and clearly the quality of the research infrastructure was not uniformly good (or excellent).

Funding

Third-party funding plays an increasingly important role in both the Social Sciences and the Humanities in Europe, and indeed globally, to provide additional support to key research projects. The RCL has clearly acquired a huge role in fostering innovative and important research projects. The Panel was persuaded by the very good level of the work funded by the RCL, and it is critical for the strength of the Social Sciences and Humanities domain in Lithuania that the RCL receives sufficient resources to continue to play this fundamental role in the future. Besides, there is a real risk that exercises like this one can privilege a focus on institutional policies over the conditions that promote the production of cutting-edge scholarship. It is critical, therefore, that institutional strategies articulate ways to support the creation of strong international research collaborations and enhance the conditions for scholarship.

The Panel also saw evidence of participation in actions funded by the Horizon 2020 framework and other sources (e.g., COST). Some UoAs had managed to participate in MSCA networks. Collectively across Lithuania there is clearly experience of success in major European funding schemes, and it would be important to find ways of sharing best practice within and between universities and institutes.

At the same time, funding applications (especially to Horizon, but also nationally) take up a huge amount of time and carry significant risk of not being successful. In a system that is driven by performance indicators and verifiable outputs, the Panel recognises that the time spent on applications (including the unsuccessful ones) betrays a significant commitment to research excellence but is barely (by definition) captured by this exercise.

The Panel was pleased to see that doctoral candidates in the Humanities and Social Sciences were supported financially. The increase in stipend for doctoral candidates had clearly been essential, and it is critical to maintain this funding into the future (probably adjusted for inflation). Moreover, the leading UoAs clearly provided a very good level of research funding (for conference attendance, research support, incidentals) support for PhD students, including by international standards, and it essential that all UoAs adhere to similarly high standards of PhD student support.

General Recommendations

Research Culture

The Panel would encourage UoAs to consider the creation of regular research seminars where these do not already exist, for instance on a monthly basis. This would enable researchers and PhD students to discuss each other's work on a regular basis and contribute to create sustainable research culture and support. The Panel would also like to encourage UoAs to find better ways of communication with each other, especially to facilitate the optimal use and development of research infrastructures and databases.

The Panel would encourage UoAs to build on existing examples of good practice (related to interdisciplinary research centres or disciplines with naturally strong interdisciplinary connections) to foster closer

collaborations with other disciplines within and beyond the Humanities or Social Sciences, to make a full contribution to addressing wider interdisciplinary research questions.

Lithuanian vs global perspective

The Panel welcomes the rich and diverse ways in which many researchers and entire UoAs connected the study of Lithuania, and the tackling of specific research questions inspired by a study of this country, to more general research questions. Against this background all UoAs should feel encouraged to see how their national missions to contribute, through their research, to knowledge about local and national culture, economy, society, literature, language, memory, and tradition, can be related to wider research problems. It is important that all UoAs develop a clear sense of the particular significance of Lithuania and questions that can be studied here, for wider research questions in the Social Sciences and the Humanities providing a unique perspective to the international discussion, a perspective based on different scientific paradigms, or historical (and other) experience.

Internationalisation

The Panel would encourage the Units and departments to engage in meaningful forms of internationalisation and research collaboration also beyond funded research projects (especially in the fields of the Humanities). These include research fellowships overseas and internationally co-published work. It is important to think about internationalisation not only in terms of Lithuanian colleagues spending time with their colleagues abroad. As important is the provision of opportunities for foreign scholars to spend time in Lithuania to work with their colleagues. This currently happens, but in relatively limited ways, and the Panel would strongly encourage developing the mobility further using already existing funding, for instance through Erasmus+ and European University alliances, and through possibly new, dedicated funding opportunities for such research stays – both within institutions, as well as by the RCL. The Units should actively seek to see how these can be further utilised for deepening international research collaborations, from doctoral level to joint research colloquia and other common research initiatives.

During the visits the experts were frequently reminded by some UoAs that Lithuania is a small country, a fact that was articulated as a justification for limited international engagement. Still, international collaboration and mobility are crucial to the quality of Lithuania's academic and intellectual culture (just as in any other country). Large numbers of international students are unlikely to enrol in doctoral programs, however, that are offered solely in Lithuanian or that are offered by faculties that focus almost entirely on Lithuanian topics (cf. the fields of Philology, Ethnology, etc.). Formal collaborative agreements offer one possible path for integrating Lithuanians into international scholarly networks, but there are also others. For instance, regularly occurring meetings of professional societies, which are conflated in the CEA with participation in one-off events, can be an equally effective means of developing international networks, even when scholarship focuses on Lithuanian subjects.

Strengthening Research Quality

The RCL is a signatory to the European Agreement on Research Assessment Reform, as are many (but not all) universities in Lithuania. This reform, which has committed its signatories to prioritise qualitative indicators, will have important implications for Lithuanian research institutions, and for Lithuanian science policy.

In particular, it raises the question about the co-existence of the annual, quantitative research assessment carried out, and the quintennial CEA, which is qualitative. The concurrence of both types of assessment constitutes an excessive administrative burden on universities. It also sends conflicting signals to the sector. Whilst the CEA rewards quality over quantity, the annual assessment does the opposite. It should be strongly considered whether, for instance, the current annual system could be replaced by an annual block grant to each institution to provide some stability (such stable funding could, for instance, be used by institutions to

incentivise risk-taking in grant applications), with the CEA presenting a dynamic funding element for the system.

At an institutional level, leading UoAs are already well equipped to embrace the Research Assessment Reform as they already recognise the diverse activities of researchers. It would be important for all UoAs to ensure their rewards systems recognise the many different contributions researchers are expected to make. This includes making funding applications even if they do not succeed.

The Research Assessment Reform strongly encourages an evaluation of quality, as judged by peer review alongside other qualitative indicators. This necessitates a further, continued move away from publishing outlets of dubious quality. For this reason, the Panel would strongly encourage policymakers and institutions to move away from encouraging publishing in Scopus-listed journals as a marker of quality. Instead, the Panel would recommend developing a national system of categorising publishers and journals according to the quality of their peer review practices, as happens already in other European systems (Norway, Finland, etc). Only when the quality of the peer review system is assured can publication outlets be considered a proxy for quality (and even then, further peer evaluation such as the CEA is important).

Social and Economic Impact

The contribution of the Humanities and the Social Sciences to the society has been truly rich, diverse and meaningful, though it appears to be different, i.e., both broad fields may activate different stakeholders and the forms of impact may vary as well. The value of the contribution of the Humanities to society and culture (and even the economy) is beyond question. On the other hand, the Social Sciences research may provide solutions and recommendations for local policies, or engage with business. Both domains may have an immediate impact upon the field of education, and thus mutatis mutandis on the development and innovation potential of the country. At present this 'value' is not measured or quantified. In many research systems, the term 'impact' refers to measurable change effected by the knowledge exchange activities, and it seems that the institutions do not apply this meaning in Lithuania (if it were, the measurement of impact would need to be much better resourced and supported). As some recommendations has been already suggested above the Panel would recommend to initiate the national discussion on the impact and developing Lithuania's own impact agenda, adopted to the national background (including the discussion on the terminology itself – and then adopting these to develop the framework for future evaluation exercise.

Publicly funded universities and other higher education entities should be able to describe their economic and the societal impact. Many of the UoAs had no capacity to discuss this. As already pointed above, the categories listed in the assessment exercise may have added to the confusion, as some institutions counted the same publications under both research and impact, and journal editorship was listed under impact rather than research. The Panel encourages the RCL to host discussions that involve academics from all career stages that spell out expectations for this category clearly to them. The good news is that most of the assessed Units are making such a contribution, whether or not they can articulate it clearly. It is therefore the need to support the Units by providing training how to document these important achievements as well.

Open Science

The Panel recommends that both the Social Sciences and the Humanities in Lithuania build on encouraging examples like CLARIN-LT to embrace Open Science, including through the curation of FAIR data according to generally recognised norms and protocols. This, too, must be valued in any institutional rewards system. Since the principles of the Open Science and Data Management belong to the requirements of public funding by the European Law, it would be needed to support researchers in this.

