Report of the ENQA panel of the external review of The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)

June 2012

Report of the ENQA panel of the external review of The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) March 2012

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Executive Summary

This report analyses the compliance of the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) with the European Standards and Guidelines for external quality assurance agencies and with the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). It was conducted at the request of SKVC by an expert panel approved by the ENQA Board.

The assessment procedure involved production of a self-evaluation report by SKVC and a two-day visit by the panel, during which it pursued questions raised by the self-evaluation report.

Using the well-prepared self-evaluation report, the legislation and other essential documents as its starting point, the panel interviewed all of the SKVC's bodies (Including representatives of the Management Board, the Director, representatives of the Council) and staff, ministry representatives, and members of the representatives of institutions, students, and other stakeholders.

The Panel was impressed by the manner in which the site visit was conducted and was offered every opportunity to discuss the work of SKVC fully with all of the main stakeholders, as well as a good range of permanent staff and experts.

This report includes a slightly longer section on contextual background than might be normal but the panel considered it important to emphasis the considerable extent of the legal framework within which SKVC works and the extent to which this has and continues to be in a state of significant flux. The report includes a summary of evidence and analysis that provided the bases for the Panel's findings against each of the ESG Part 3 standards. A small number of recommendations are also included.

In the light of the evidence provided by the documentation and the interviews, and confirmed by the panel, it reached the following conclusions and recommendations on SKVC's compliance with ESG Part 3 standards and ENQA membership criteria:

ESG standard	ENQA criterion		Level of compliance
3.1	(part of 1)	Use of external QA procedures	Substantially
3.3	(part of 1)	Activities	Fully
	1		
3.2	2	Official status	fully
3.4	3	Resources	fully
3.5	4	Mission Statement	fully
3.6	5	Independence	fully
3.7	6	External Quality Assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies	substantially
3.8	7	Accountability procedures	substantially
	Miscellaneous		fully

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Glossary

CEEN Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

Centre, SKVC Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

ENIC European Network of Information Centres in the European Region

ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ESF European Social Fund

ESG European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the

EHEA European Higher Education Area

EQAR European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

EURAXESS European Network of Researchers' Service Centres

HE Higher Education

HEI Higher education institution

INQAAHE International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

KPMPC Centre for the Development of Qualifications and Professional Training (former Methodological Centre for Professional Training)

LMT Lithuanian Research Council

Government Government of the Republic of Lithuania

MOSTA Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre

Law on HE&R Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania adopted on 30 April 2009, effective since 12 May 2009 except for the Articles the entry into force of which was postponed (see Official Gazette, 2009, No 54-2140)

NARIC National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union

Seimas The Lithuanian Parliament

SER Self Evaluation Report

SVK Higher Education Evaluation Commission

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania

Council of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the review

The review of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) undertaken in March 2012 was initiated by SKVC itself. The aim of SKVC was to undergo an external review which would entitle it to submit an application for joining the ENQA as a full member. There are two types of review: Type A whose sole purpose is to fulfil the periodic requirements of ENQA membership / EQAR listing; Type B which is a review which has a number of purposes one of which is to fulfil the periodic external review requirements of ENQA membership / EQAR listing.

SKVC opted for a Type A review with the intention of subsequently submitting an application for ENQA membership and for registration on the EQAR. SKVC made its self-evaluation documents and its various appendices available to the panel in February 2012 and the site visit in the SKVC offices in Vilnius took place on March 14-15, 2012.

1.2. The review process

ENQA's regulations require all full member agencies undergo an external cyclical review at least once every five years, in order to verify that they fulfil the membership provisions.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its regulations. Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for Full membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005.

The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies. The external review was coordinated by ENQA. The external review of SKVC was conducted in line with the process described in Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference.

SKVC produced a self-evaluation report the panel used as the basis for the discussions during the site visit. This material in the report that was validated during the site visit, and additional material that was also acquired during the site visit provided the panel with the evidence required for its conclusions. The review panel produced a draft final report, on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site-visit and its findings, with SKVC having an opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of that draft report. A final report was produced subsequently and submitted to ENQA.

The Centre additionally asked that particular attention be paid to its internal quality management system and the quality management mechanisms. These are covered as an integral part of the evaluation, particular with regard to ESG 3.8. To avoid any imbalance with the commentary and conclusions on the other Standards in the main text some additional comments are appended in Annex A.

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The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

1.3. The Review panel
The review panel for the external review of SKVC was composed of the following members:

Nick Harris. HE consultant; formerly Director QAA UK, UK Bologna Expert
Andy Gibbs. UK Bologna Expert, Edinburgh Napier University U.K.
Vaidotas Viliūnas. Director of Marijampolė College, Lithuania
Giedrius Viliūnas. Vice-Rector for Education of Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania
Julian Hiller. Student Representative, Hannover Germany

1.4. The Self-Evaluation Document
SKVC produced a self-evaluation report (SER) which described in detail how it considered it met the ENQA membership criteria. This SER provided the basic source of information for the review panel, and was made available online to panel members. A hard copy was also available. The document consisted of 101 pages and 27 annexes.

The initial self-evaluation report was written by a working group within SKVC between July 2010 and February 2011 and overall the majority of staff was involved in the production of the report. In general the report analyses a period of 6 years from 2005 until 2010, but also includes information from earlier periods, where it was felt that greater clarity would be achieved in terms of demonstrating trends and activities.

Due to various delays, the services agreement and terms of reference with ENQA was concluded only in December 2011, and site visit was planned for March 2012. As a consequence a need emerged to supplement the self-analysis report, to highlight the recent changes in law and the achievements in SKVC since completion of the initial self-evaluation report. This additional information consisted of a 14 page Amendment and 10 further annexes.

1.5. Site visit
The panel met with a range of staff and stakeholders to supplement information provided in the self-evaluation report, to explore SKVS's performance, to gather and evaluate further information on site, to formulate preliminary findings and to prepare information for the draft report.

The site visit took place on 14th and 15th March and the visit schedule is attached as Appendix One.

1.6. The preparation of the Panel's report
During the visit and after the programme finished the panel members thoroughly discussed compliance of SKVC with all of the ESG and ENQA membership criteria. They reached high consensus on each criterion separately.

After the visit the review secretary prepared the initial draft report in cooperation with the chair and panel members. It was submitted to SKVC for comment on its factual accuracy.

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After receiving SKVCs comments further revisions to the report were agreed between the Review Chair and Review Secretary, in consultation with the panel.

2. The Context of the Review

2.1. The Changing Context
The number of legislative and other changes that are highlighted in the amendments to the evaluation report reflect a system that is in transition. The initial self-evaluation report was completed in February 2011 and the legal amendments introduced major changes to the context of the organisation. These are exemplified by 13 items under the heading of Changes in the Legal Basis under which SKVC operates.

Some of these impacted marginally on the external quality assurance activities of SKVC and were based around recognition of foreign qualifications (for which SKVC has responsibility) and of double and joint degrees. Others were amendments to and development of existing processes and procedures which are updated based on experience and evaluation of practice. Examples include the Procedure for experts' selection, and the Methodology for preparation of new study programme documentation, its evaluation and accreditation.

A major change occurred in the Procedure for external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes whereby, in some circumstances, new study programmes can be accredited following an application but without any external evaluation procedures.

2.2. Higher Education in Lithuania
The Lithuanian HE system is characterised by a strong participation of the State and a high degree of legal regulation.

Changes to the former Soviet based education system started after the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990. Reforms included the introduction of the credit system, the ten-point student assessment system and the updating of the curricula. Introduction of the three study cycles in higher education and the appropriate degree system started around 1993. The reform involved the restructuring of the existing HEIs, the establishment of new HEIs and the re-establishment of certain former higher education institutions

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania guarantees free access to higher education based on positive academic achievement. However, the inadequate basic financing for studies and research has led to HE institutions gradually introducing fees at their own initiative (e.g. fees for processing admission applications, resitting of examinations, extended studies, etc.). By 2000 the percentage of students paying for their studies came close to 50 per cent.

The system of external higher education reviews emerged in Lithuania in 1995 with the establishment of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). SKVC was entrusted with the tasks of organising peer evaluation of the research and teaching activities of HEIs, evaluating higher education qualifications and providing information relating to qualification recognition. In 1998, Lithuania ratified the Council of Europe and UNESCO Convention on the

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Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (popularly known as the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention). Lithuania signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and the Law on Higher Education (2000) introduced two types of higher education institutions – universities and colleges, effectively the beginning of the binary system of higher education in Lithuania.

The National Strategy of Education for 2003– 2012 (amended later in 2005, 2007 and 2010) defines three general long term objectives for education development:
- creating an effective and sustainable system of education based on responsible management, well-targeted financing and rational exploitation of resources
- developing a universally accessible and socially equitable education system capable of ensuring life-long learning
- assuring quality education which should meet the needs of any member of open civil society under the conditions of market economy and of the modern world community as a whole

The further reform of Lithuanian higher education, which started in 2009, and impacts most substantially on this review, focuses on the enhancement of quality, effectiveness and accessibility. It aims to ensure quality education and to create opportunities for the development and use intellectual potential. It is envisaged that competitive higher education institutions will stem the emigration of the most talented and active members of the academic community. Quality HE is understood as a guarantee for state competitiveness; there are four factors underpinning quality in higher education – professional teaching staff, adequate learning facilities and resources, guaranteed financial support to students and adequate halls of residence for students.

Additionally the introduction of the education voucher system is a major change to HE funding which created opportunities to receive state support for studies also in private higher education institutions. Since 2008, the number of places at HEIs funded by the state has been decreasing; the proportion of education vouchers allocated to universities and colleges has been changing in favour of the colleges. There are also loan and social support systems in operation. Research funding is increasingly based on programme competitions while basic state funding is declining to emphasise the importance of research results.

According to the law on H&E higher education institutions received special legal status (particularly in respect of asset management) and their governance is being restructured. A large number of the reform principles are spelled out in the new Law on Research and Higher Education. The restructuring of higher education in Lithuania receives considerable assistance from the EU Structural Funds.

2.3. Higher Education Institutions
According to the census of early 2001, 11% of the 3.48 million population had HE qualifications. From 1992 onwards the population has been decreasing, whilst until 2009, the number of students in HE increased steadily. A slight decrease in the number of students was noted in 2010.

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HE qualifications can be acquired only in HEIs. University HE qualifications are acquired by completing university study programmes or doctoral studies. College HE qualifications are acquired by completing college study programmes. The right to provide HE and to conduct pertinent activities (announcing admission of new students, advising students on issues related to academic studies, issuing diplomas, etc.) is subject to a licence.

The majority of HE institutions are located in major cities. The network of colleges has been designed so that each region has at least one HE institution of this type. As at 1st January 2011, licences to provide higher education had been issued to 22 universities (14 state universities and 8 private universities) and 23 HE colleges (13 state colleges and 10 private colleges).

There are three professional associations: the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference (14 members including all the state universities), the Lithuanian College Principals' Conference (23 members including 13 state and 10 private colleges) and the Lithuanian Association of Private HEIs (13 members). In 1996, two major universities initiated the development of a national unified admissions system. In 2000, an association was established for this purpose. By 2010, all the Lithuanian HEIs had joined the association and the services of the system had been used by 36.5 thousand applicants.

One of the objectives of the on-going higher education reform is the restructuring of the network of research institutions and their integration into universities. An objective of reducing the number of HEI has also been announced.

2.4. The national quality assurance system in Lithuania and the place and functions of SKVC

Founded in 1995, with a remit, *inter alia*, to implement the national policy in research and HE and to contribute to the harmonisation of the Lithuanian HE system with the principles of the EHEA, SKVC is an independent organisation financed from the State budget with, in recent years, an increasing proportion being provided through what is termed in the SER 'project funds'. In practice these 'project funds' are allocated by the government to SKVC on a non-competitive basis from within the national European Social Fund allocation.

The main objectives of SKVC have remained essentially the same since the adoption of the first SKVC Regulations. These are to promote the quality of HE through external reviews and accreditation of HEIs and study programmes; and to create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons by organising and performing the assessment and/or recognition of foreign HE qualifications in the Republic of Lithuania.

SKVC activities are founded on partnership, professionalism and quality. These concepts are defined by SKVC as;
- Partnership is a mutual respect between those undergoing evaluation and the evaluators. In our work we rely on external experts. We seek to maintain mutually beneficial cooperation with institutions active in the education area or availing themselves of the results of education, students 'organisations and other social partners.
- Professionalism in our activities means responsible, objective and transparent dealing with tasks entrusted to us.

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- Quality in our activities is ensured by our efforts to attain the best results through analysis and adjustment of our goals. We seek new knowledge and experience by continuous learning and sharing. We never lose sight of the proper functioning of the internal quality assurance system.

SKVC vision is to become an influential generator, implementer and disseminator of ideas.

In 2009, after the introduction of the new legal framework for the implementation of HE, SKVC reviewed and refined its functions as the activities related to the evaluation of research and art were assumed by the Research Council of Lithuania (LMT).

SKVC has participated in 30 projects financed under various programmes by the European Commission, the European Social Fund, governments of other countries, various foundations and the State budget of Lithuania. In the 16 years since its foundation, the staff of the SKVC has increased from 3 to 34 employees; there has been an appropriate increase in its budget, which in 2011 stands at over LTL 4.6 million (over EUR 1.3 million). Since its foundation, the Centre has been an active participator in various activities of international organisations; at present it is a member of 6 international networks.

2.5. SKVCs processes in quality assurance of higher education

The national policy in HE is moulded by the Seimas and implemented mainly by the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Lithuanian Research Council, the State Higher Education Fund and the SKVC (Article 12, Law on HE&R). According to its Statute, the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the organisation, coordination and control of the implementation of the national policy in the following areas: formal and non-formal education, life-long learning, assistance to education, research and experimental (social and cultural) development. The Higher Education Council is an advisory institution composed of various representative of the general public whose function is to advise the Ministry of Education and Science on the strategic issues of higher education development.

SKVC is one of the four institutions responsible for the implementation of the national policy in HE. Its funding, detailed functions and governance are laid down in the Law on HE&R (2009). Of the above-mentioned four institutions the SKVC is the only organisation subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science; the Law does not mention any other body subordinate to the Ministry, which demonstrates the exceptional role of the SKVC in HE and contributes to the continuity of its activities.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Science established the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) to carry out the following tasks:
- to monitor the higher education system, organise and perform analyses of its status,
- to provide information necessary for the implementation of the higher education policy and   recommendations for its improvement.

MOSTA is financed from the state budget, but the greater part of its funding comes from projects. Several projects implemented by the MOSTA and

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supported by the ESF are related to study programme evaluation and HEI reviews, which causes a certain degree of confusion in the allocation of functions between the SKVC and the MOSTA.

According to Article 37 of the Law on Education (1991) responsibility for the quality of education rests with the education provider. The Law on Research and Higher Education defines the duties and actions of higher education institutions in respect of quality in greater detail:

- A higher education institution is obliged to inform its founders, members of a legal person, and the public about the measures to ensure the quality of academic studies and research; state higher education institutions must also report on their financial, economic and scientific activities and the use of funds as well as the results of the external evaluation of their study programmes and accreditation.
- The Senate of a state university approves the internal quality assurance system and monitors its implementation; under the same article similar functions are performed by the academic council of a state college.
- Responsibility for the quality of research (art activities), academic studies and other activities rests with the higher education institutions.
- HEIs must make their quality indicators publicly accessible and, together with evaluation institutions, foster the quality culture of research and academic studies. Each HEI must have an internal quality assurance system based on the quality assurance principles of the European Higher Education Area and its own strategy for quality enhancement as well as means and methods to ensure the provision of quality higher education.

Thus, responsibility for the quality of HE rests first and foremost with HEIs. Under the law, the State shares responsibility for formal and, partly, informal education. The role of the State in HE quality assurance has found expression in the establishment of the SKVC as an external body for quality evaluation.

Quality evaluations started with the evaluation of study programmes and were gradually extended to institutional reviews. At present, the SKVC organises evaluations of both kinds, which are obligatory both to state and private HEIs.

In 1999, by a Governmental resolution, SKVC was made responsible for the evaluation of foreign qualifications, but the decision on the recognition of foreign academic qualifications was to be taken by the Ministry of Education and Science and the decision on the recognition of professional qualifications by an appropriate authorised institution.

In 1996, the Ministry of Education and Science established the Centre for the Development of Qualifications and Professional Training (KPMPC), the mission of which is to render assistance to education providers, teachers and students and to implement the national policy of professional training development. In 2009, this body was entrusted with another task –management of the Lithuanian system of qualifications. By participating in the activities of the relevant international networks, the KPMPC performs the coordination functions of the Quality Assurance National Reference Point for Vocational Education and Training, the National Coordination Point and the ReferNet of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

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Since the re-establishment of its independence in 1990, Lithuania has not had an inspectorate or a similar external audit body for dealing with problems in HE. In 2007–2008, by way of implementing the National Education Strategy for 2003–2012, the National Audit Office carried out an audit of the education reform including the HE sector. The conclusions of the audit emphasise the inadequate financing of HE and the inadequate assurance of HE and research quality as there are HEIs where the internal quality assurance system is not in place. In 2009–2010, the National Audit Office conducted an audit of information systems integration and restructuring in HEIs (the audit report is not publicly available yet). The Law on Research and Higher Education of 2009 stipulates the establishment of an Ombudsman's office for academic ethics and procedures, but so far the Seimas has not taken any decision on its establishment.

The establishment of HEIs is regulated by the Law on Higher Education and Research, the Procedure for the issue of licences to provide higher education and to conduct relevant activities approved by a parliamentary decree (2009) and the Procedure for dealing with applications for a licence to provide higher education and to conduct relevant activities approved by the Minister for Education and Science's order (2010).

It is possible to establish state and private HEIs (universities, colleges, academies or seminaries). A state university is established by the Seimas at the Government's recommendation; a state college is established by the Government at the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science. Private HEIs may be established by natural persons or legal entities, except for state or municipal institutions or bodies and branches of companies incorporated in other state parties to the Economic

2.6. The organisation and funding of SKVC

The right of SKVC to perform external reviews, accreditation of institutions and study programmes, evaluation and/or recognition of higher education qualifications is governed, inter alia, by Article 17.1 of the Law on HE&R, where the tasks of the Centre are defined. No fees are required from natural persons or legal entities for evaluations performed by the Centre.

The right to initiate evaluation of foreign qualifications belongs to the holders of such qualifications or persons (both natural and legal) authorised by them. In forwarding the documents to the Ministry of Education and Science, SKVC applies the one-stop shop principle: the Ministry takes decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications based on the evaluation of the qualifications performed by SKVC, but the applicants submit the required applications and documents only to SKVC and then collect the decisions of the SKVC on the evaluation of the qualifications and/or orders of the Minister for Education and Science on the recognitions of the qualifications from SKVC or the documents are sent to the applicants by post.

Before the new Law on HE&R, the right to initiate study programme evaluations belonged to the Ministry of Education and Science, which used to approve annual plans of study programme evaluations at the recommendation of the SKVC. Since 2009, study programme evaluations are initiated by the HEIs by submitting an application to SKVC. HEIs may also approach another evaluation agency which is a member of the EQAR. In both cases, however, decisions on

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accreditation are taken exclusively by SKVC. At present, no fee is required for evaluations carried out by SKVC, which is quite beneficial to HEIs. Most often SKVC invites international expert panels for study programme evaluations, which contributes to the objectivity of the evaluations and the confidence of the HEIs in the evaluation outcomes.

Before the entry into force of the Law on HE&R, HEI reviews used to be initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science at the recommendation of the KPMPC, later, i.e. from 2006, at the recommendation of the SKVC. In 2009, the Law on HE&R established that an external review of each HEI should be initiated every 6 years by the Ministry of Education and Science. In late 2010 and early 2011, the Ministry initiated external reviews of 3 universities and 1 college. In 2011, the Centre set dates on which each HEI was expected to submit its self-evaluation report and undergo an external review. Regular university and college reviews will be performed by panels consisting of Lithuanian and foreign experts.

Before the entry into force of the new Law on HE&R in 2009, in case of a conditional accreditation of a study programme, a repeat evaluation of the programme used to take place in approximately two years to evaluate the measures taken by the HEI to implement the recommendations of the previous evaluation. If a study programme had non-essential shortcomings, it used to be accredited for 3 years. Towards the end of this period, the programme was evaluated again to see how the HEI had taken the recommendations of the experts into account and how it improved the programme.

In case of a limited accreditation of a study programme, admission of new students used to be suspended and the HEI was required to submit to the Centre a plan of urgent measures to improve the quality of the programme and to ensure at least the minimum knowledge and competences of the remaining students. Such plans were evaluated by an expert group set up by the Centre. If the plan received a positive evaluation, the HEI was allowed to continue the provision of the programme until the graduation of the last class of students admitted before the limited accreditation of the programme. If the plan received a negative evaluation, the study programme was discontinued immediately and the students were given an opportunity to continue studies under another study programme.

3. Findings

Compliance of SKVC with the Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

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> **ESG 3.1 USE OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES**
> **Standard**:
> The external quality assurance agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance procedures described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.
>
> **Guidelines:**
> The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the process applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should, together with the standards for quality assurance agencies, constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Evidence and Analysis

The following sections include the Evidence and Analysis of each of the components of ESG 3.1, namely the standards in ESG part 2
ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality procedures
ESG 2.2 Development of quality assurance procedures
ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions
ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose
ESG 2.5 Reporting
ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures
ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews
ESG 2.8 System wide analysis

> **ESG 2.1 USE OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES**
> **Standard:**
> External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.
>
> **Guidelines:**
> The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

Evidence
The SER informed the panel that SKVC does not perform an evaluation of the internal quality assurance systems of a HEI. As part of programme evaluation SKVC always ascertains that the study programme is administered in the proper way and the internal quality assurance of the programme is effective and

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transparent. Similarly external review of an HEI always includes an analysis of the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system. In both cases (programme and institutional evaluation), SKVC takes into account a majority of the standards of ESG Part 1. This involves consideration of quality assurance policy, the conformity of the qualifications awarded by the HEI to the national and European qualifications framework, evaluation of the quality of study programmes, assessment students' achievements, improvement of the competencies of the teaching staff, student support, organisation of data accumulation and provision of information.

The existing legal acts provide for only one exception to ease external review. After the accreditation of a HEI, the new study programmes of that HEI will be accredited without external evaluation procedures.There are, however, some exceptions to this and these exceptions are clearly described in the Orders of the Ministry regarding external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes. In other cases following submission of evaluation reports, the responsibility for the improvement of quality assurance processes rests with the higher education institution. Study programmes which receive good evaluation are subjected to evaluation procedures at longer intervals, i.e. they are accredited for longer periods, which reduce the number and frequency of obligatory external evaluation procedures.

The new (2009) law states HEIs must have an IQA. This is okay for most colleges and some universities but some other later joining the system. The expectation of IQA is that the HEI must have a strategic overview that includes IQA and the usual steps of self-evaluation to taking actions.

Analysis
Generally the whole system is only beginning to develop of developing internal quality assurance systems. The level of development of the internal quality assurance systems in colleges and universities is quite different. There have previously been some internal quality assurance systems within HEI's, however they were rather informal. HEI's themselves report that, prompted by competition, they are starting to develop their own formal internal quality assurance systems. The sector is relatively inexperienced in this area and this has led to a diversity of approaches and this diversity creates difficulties in adopting consistent and comparable approaches to evaluation. In particular the level of development of the internal quality assurance systems in colleges and in universities is quite different. To improve the methodology SKVC organises conferences from time to time, however it is most likely that a change in legislation will be needed to harmonise approaches as the current arrangement looks extremely varied.

In its evaluation of study programmes and HEI reviews, SKVC takes into account internal quality assurance, amongst other issues, and study programmes which receive good evaluation are subjected to evaluation procedures at longer intervals, i.e. they are accredited for longer periods, which reduce the number and frequency of obligatory external evaluation procedures.

To this extent the existing arrangements do take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European

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Standards and Guidelines and this results in less intensive external procedures, however this could be more explicitly stated. Additionally the role of SKVC in training and preparing HEIs in developing internal quality assurance systems is commended however over time this may produce a conflict as they will also be responsible for evaluating such measures.

Conclusion:
The panel noted that SKVC has been instrumental in promoting Internal Quality Assurance systems and ESG part one within institutions. It also noted that Internal Quality Assurance is taken into account and that this may result in external processes than may be less intensive than otherwise, however this could be made more explicit. For this reason the Panel concluded: **Substantial Compliance**

Recommendations
SKVC noted in its SER that "*The level of development of the internal quality assurance systems in colleges and universities is quite different*." It is taking active steps to promote an increased awareness of the needs of IQA systems within HEIs; activities welcomed by the HEI representatives the Panel met. SKVC should continue in this work but will need to avoid any conflict-of-interest issues between their roles in supporting institutions that they subsequently evaluate. 'Networks' for senior staff concerned with IQA within HEIs, with good links to but

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ESG 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

Standard
The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

Guidelines
In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as evidence of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions

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separate from their QA agencies, have been established in a number of countries.

Evidence
The SER provided a number of published processes which also prescribed the objectives, principles and procedures. These included;
- Procedure for study programme evaluation and accreditation
- Methodology for the evaluation of on-going study programmes
- Methodology for the evaluation of new study programmes,

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- Procedure for the external review of higher education institutions
- Methodology for the external review of higher education institutions

All of these documents are in the public domain. Whilst they were being developed, all the stakeholders had an opportunity to read their drafts and submit proposals for improvement. All the legal acts, including methodologies, relating to quality assurance regulation, are published, first, on the SKVC website, then in the Official Gazette and the parliamentary database of legal acts; they are also presented to the staff and experts of HEIs at various public meetings organised by the SKVC.

For the purpose of creating new methodologies or procedures, the SKVC invites experts and stakeholders from universities and colleges, also from the Ministry. Draft methodologies and procedures are sent out to all the HEIs for comments and proposals.

The SKVC also publishes information on the methodologies and other publications related to quality assurance in newspapers and journals (e.g. the Mokslo Lietuva, the peer-reviewed journal Aukštojo mokslo kokybė / Quality in Higher Education), brochures, press releases, newsletters and its own annual reports.

Analysis
The Panel has studied the documentation carefully and discussed the issue with the various groups it interviewed. In particular it was interested in the views of HEI representatives. It is clear that the goals and objectives of external evaluation are established and published in advance. Quality assurance methodologies are produced and amended with an active participation of stakeholders; discussions of proposals are always publicly available. Evidence was presented that demonstrated active participation by stakeholders in the form of written comments and suggestions related to proposed methodological changes. Additionally proposals had also been presented and discussed at the Lithuanian Rectors Conference. Overall the panel concluded that SKVC has promoted active consultation and discussion of proposed methodologies which contributed to the development of relevant legislation.

The panel also noted that the Council for the Centre which consists of all Higher education stakeholders has the potential to play a major role during consultation and the development of procedures and methodologies, in particular when considering the impact of these on institutions. The panel noted passivity in this regard on the part of the Council and noted that if they enacted the standing orders that they had themselves set, that this could be addressed.

It was pointed out that on occasions, discussions of new methodologies take too long leaving no possibility for timely response to changing situations in HE.

Conclusion:
The panel concluded that the aims and objectives of quality assurance processes are determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and are published with a full description. **Fully Compliant**

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Recommendations

There is a stipulation that all methodologies must be reviewed by the Ministry and approved by the SKVC Council and the SKVC Director to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the production of documents relating to evaluation. However, SKVC note that this requirement has its downside in that the process takes a long time, which delays response to the situation in hand and hold up changes in the methodologies according to the requirements of the time. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is outside the control of SKVC, but noting the constructive manner in which the Agency is able to work with the Ministry, it is recommended that consideration is given to streamlining consultation processes to facilitate more timely responses.

ESG 2.3 CRITERIA FOR DECISIONS
Standard:
Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

Guidelines:
Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interest of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

Evidence

Criteria for the **evaluation of new study programmes,** the **evaluation of on-going study programmes and Study programme accreditation criteria** are defined within legal Acts and are publicly available (on the SKVC website and the parliamentary database of legal acts) so that both HEIs and experts can find all the information they need on evaluation procedures, criteria and possible decisions.

Careful attention is paid to the training of experts so as to ensure their proper understanding of the evaluation criteria, which should lead to the clarity, transparency and validity of their judgements. The judgement of the expert team is generally agreed by all the experts involved. In the event of a dissention, the dissenting expert may present his/her own substantiated variant. The SKVC supervises the process of its writing and adherence to the rules to ensure consistency.

The validity of the expert's judgement on the quality of on-going programmes is discussed by the Commission for quality evaluation in higher education, which is the SKVC's advisory body. Acting on the experts' proposal and the SKVC advice, the Director takes a decision on the programme's accreditation/non-accreditation in accordance with the **Procedure for the evaluation and accreditation of study programmes**. The higher education institution is advised of the decision, which is also published on the SKVC website.

The new Law on HE&R (2009) brought about a number of new legal acts governing criteria and decisions for external reviews of higher education institutions. By a resolution taken in 2010 the Government approved the

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Procedure for the external review of higher education institutions and the **Accreditation procedure of higher education institutions**. To implement the resolution and following consultation with stakeholders, SKVC, in cooperation with the academic community and the Ministry, produced and published a **Methodology for the review of HE institutions** (2010).

As in the case of study programme evaluation, organisers of reviews of HEIs will give special attention to the training of experts so as to ensure their proper understanding of the evaluation criteria, which should lead to the clarity, transparency and validity of their judgements. If the performance of the higher education institution receives positive evaluation, the SKVC Director takes a decision to accredit the higher education institution in accordance with the **Accreditation procedure of higher education institutions.** The information on the decision is published on the websites of the SKVC and the higher education institution, the parliamentary database of legal acts and *the Official Gazette*.

Evaluation of applications for a licence to provide higher education and to conduct activities relating to higher education is organised in accordance with the **Procedure for the issue of a licence to provide higher education and to conduct activities relating to higher education** approved by a Government resolution (2009) and the **Procedure for the evaluation of applications for a licence to provide higher education and to conduct activities relating to higher education** approved by the order of the Minister for Education and Science (2010). The latter legal act lays down the criteria and methods of evaluation and the appeals procedure. After the experts complete the evaluation of an application for a licence to provide higher education and to conduct activities relating to higher education, the SKVC sends the evaluation report and the proposal on the judgement to the higher education institution and the Ministry. The evaluation report is published on the SKVC website. The Ministry takes a decision on the issue of the licence and informs the higher education institution and the SKVC accordingly.

Analysis
The panel confirms that all relevant information is published on the SKVC website. Criteria are interpreted consistently through a number of measures which include careful selection of experts according to specified criteria, effective training of experts, preparation of institutions prior to review, good open communications with experts and institutions during the review process and the oversight and moderation of decisions by an advisory panel. That this approach is active and inclusive was confirmed through discussion with SKVC staff, representatives of experts, HEIs and students.

The panel concluded that formal decisions taken by the SKVC on the evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and higher education institution reviews are based on publicly available criteria in compliance with Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines for external quality assurance agencies.

It was noted by the panel that the criteria for taking a decision on the evaluation of applications for a licence to provide higher education and to conduct activities relating to higher education are not quite clear, however this is a decision taken at Ministry level and beyond the control of SKVC.

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Conclusion: Fully Compliant

ESG 2.4 PROCESSES FIT FOR PURPOSE
Standard:
All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

Guidelines:
Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance. Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:
- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts;
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts;
- the use of international experts;
- participation of students;
- ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached.
- the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review;
- recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement; policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.

Evidence
Clear guidelines for the selection of experts undertaking external quality assurance activities are published in the **Order Regarding the Approval of the Expert Selection Procedure**. This order specifies the need for a creation of a list of experts selected by applying general and specific criteria according to the function that the expert will undertake. Additionally there are clear guidelines regarding conflicts of interest and confidentiality. The database of experts is regularly reviewed and updated.

All experts are prepared to participate in external evaluation, through attendance at a daylong seminar and also by receipt of written information providing methodological materials. The SKVC advises experts on legal issues and, if necessary, facilitates access to additional help from other institutions. The nomination of foreign experts by European Quality agencies is sought in order to eliminate bias and introduce expertise and differing national perspectives.

Students are involved in both advisory groups within SKVC and also have been gradually included in expert groups for external study programme evaluation. The involvement of students in the activities of advisory institutions is a regular on-going process, while their involvement in external evaluation has been fragmentary because they are invited to participate only in Lithuanian expert groups. In the latter part of the year 2010, students participated in 5 international expert groups, but such cases have, not been frequent since.

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Attempts to include students in international groups have not been very successful mainly because of their poor command of foreign languages. In 2011, the SKVC worked out plans for a seminar cycle dedicated to the training of students for the participation in external evaluation.

The methodology for external evaluation includes production of a self-analysis report, a site' visit by experts, writing and publication of the evaluation report. SKVC considers that this procedure ensures the validity of the experts' decisions because they are based on the facts presented in the self-analysis report supplemented by additional information obtained during the visits. Moreover, the higher education institutions are given an opportunity to read the draft evaluation report and give their comments on factual errors, if any. Additionally HEIs may reject the appointment of any expert whom they think may not be an appropriate appointment.

With regard to the recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement; policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality. In the period between regular reviews and evaluations, the SKVC does not perform any evaluation of the improvement plans of HEIs, but it advises on the removal of the deficiencies found. The implementation of the recommendations of the previous evaluation is verified during a repeat evaluation According to law, the Ministry may authorise the SKVC to monitor the implementation of the previous recommendations and the removal of deficiencies.

Analysis
Discussion with experts who had participated in reviews confirmed that good and rigorous training took place prior to each session of evaluations. Feedback was given to experts after every evaluation from colleagues and from institutions. An absence of complaints, being retained on the list and invitations to join SKVC projects were seen as indicators of doing the job well. Experts reported very good two way communications between the team and that the coordinator from the agency is excellent before and during the site visits with the logistics being well organised.

There was a strong feeling amongst stakeholders that the system has improved considerably and is still improving. Generally the Panels are considered to be well composed and the report recommendations generally thought to be useful. The perception is that there is definitely a movement towards enhancement and that the focus of reports is increasingly based on ways to improve rather than non-compliance.

The agency offers sessions for HEIs whose programmes are coming up for review and are described as being very effective in supporting in college's preparations for (institutional) review. HEI stakeholders also reported that the programme methodology is getting overly heavily and bureaucratic, in particular that the self-evaluation documents are far too big and complicated. It was suggested that it would be more effective if the Self-evaluation Reports focussed on what really matters (although this was not specified) and make generally for the reports to be shorter. The overall perception is that the methodology could be and ought to be more straightforward.

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Experts find most reports are largely descriptive, with little self-evaluation. This was mentioned in other discussions. The issue is really around the link to accreditation. There is no application for accreditation (that is needed) is going to be too honest about the weaknesses and the natural tendency will be to present a positive picture. Consequently the need to be accredited drives a positive view in Self Evaluation Reports, thereby placing a greater emphasis on accreditation rather than improvement.

There is a clear external evaluation process which includes regular training and coaching of experts. The selection of experts is clear and careful. There are a large number of international expert groups involved in external evaluation.

Students are involved in the activities of advisory bodies but generally their role is underdeveloped as not all external evaluation groups include students. Student themselves were unclear about the basis on which they had been appointed although it was clear that there had been an open call and a selection process. Students are involved in various advisory groups, such as the Committee for Study Programme Evaluation and expert panels. The student representatives felt that the language issue is not so much of a barrier in participating in international panels. They were aware that SKVC had an intention of involving students even more and they welcomed this idea, suggesting that a general awareness raising of quality issues amongst students may help recruitment, as would amending the current criteria which only allows the selection of students with "good" grades. Students also reported a good level of training and preparation which included theoretical part and practical / simulations, however this was separate from the main group of experts for students undertaking programme evaluation. The panel concluded that students are actively involved at various levels of SKVC however this involvement could be accelerated and that including students in the general training of experts would further improve consistency.

Conclusion: The panel concluded that all external quality assurance processes are designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. The panel were impressed by the manner in which SKVC had led the sector more towards an improvement rather than a deficiency model and note the benefit of this developing further. In doing so maintaining the balance between accreditation and improvement should be kept in view, as should the balance between thoroughness and bureaucracy. The panel also appreciated the steps forward in student participation and although recognising the challenge, encourages SKVC to further develop this. The panel did consider that student involvement could be further developed as not all external evaluation groups include students. This coupled with underdeveloped mechanisms of follow-up monitoring led the panel to conclude that SKVC is **Substantially Compliant**

Recommendations
SKVC should find ways to overcome perceived barriers to student involvement which prevents their full involvement in all activities. This may include a review of the current criteria for student involvement to widen the available pool.

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SKVC should engage with stakeholders to ensure that guidelines for preparing SERs maintain an acceptable balance between reflection and appropriate factual information to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy**.**

ESG 2.5 REPORTING

Standard:
Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

Guidelines:
In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone.
In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

Evidence
All evaluation reports are published on the SKVC website except for the reports on the evaluation of new study programmes and evaluation of applications of new higher education institutions for a licence to provide higher education as such reports concern only the intentions of a HEI, but not their actual implementation. In addition, since 2011, streamlined procedures have been introduced with regard to the evaluation of new study programmes (as mentioned in Section 2.1.
The aim of an evaluation report is to help the HEI to improve its performance therefore it must be clear and understandable, above all, to the HEI community. However, as the report must be written in English, the communities sometimes face a difficulty in understanding or interpreting it correctly.

SKVC determines and advises the experts on the structure of the evaluation report and the criteria to be applied. All the reports must meet the same requirements. A report must have an introduction to the evaluation process which must cover all the required areas and provide recommendations to the HEI. In addition, the draft evaluation report is always sent to the HEI for comments. The SKVC employee responsible for the coordination of the evaluation process reviews the report and, if necessary, asks the experts to modify it. All those measures contribute to the integrity of the evaluation reports

It is planned that in 2011, while composing an expert group for institutional reviews, to assign secretary functions to one of the experts, who would be responsible for preparation of a review report. This way, review reports will be kept clear and consistent.

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Analysis

Evaluation reports follow the same structure and are published on the SKVC website. Effective training is given on the structure of reports to promote consistency. Emphasis is placed on stressing the improvement and enhancement aspects of the report to focus their relevance.

The panel noted in various discussions (with students, HEI stakeholders and experts) that although they are technically publically available, navigation to the reports on the website is not straightforward and in this respect the accessibility was restricted.

SKVC noted in their SER as a weakness that *"International expert groups write their evaluation reports in English, which may lead to inaccuracies in their interpretation. According to the Law on the Official Language, evaluation reports can be published only in Lithuanian; the SKVC lacks funds for such translations."* The panel had noted earlier that one reason for not involving students in all international reviews was due to language difficulties. If SKVC are to conduct reviews in English they need to find ways to ensure involvement and engagement as well as accessibility for non-English speaking stakeholders and students. In most cases this would require translation services

Conclusion: The panel concluded that SKVC is **substantially compliant** as the spirit and principle of the standard is applied however both the web site navigability and the provision of translation services would improve accessibility.

Recommendations

The SKVC website should be reviewed so that reports are easily accessible to interested parties.

Translation services should be used to ensure that reports are understandable to non-English speakers.

The panel noted the recent appointment of a member of staff to address PR issues and the intention of SKVC to make the results of the agency's work more 'accessible to the different relevant audiences through different forms of communication

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Evidence

According to the SER, the experts' proposals and recommendations are first and foremost intended for HEIs to help them improve quality in higher education. Therefore the responsibility for follow-up activities rests with the higher education institution. It is its duty to determine measures for the improvement of its performance by removing the deficiencies found in the process of self-analysis and external evaluation.

In the event of a repeat evaluation, SKVC asks the HEI to submit its self-evaluation report and a description of the ways how the previous recommendations have been taken into account.

Pursuant to the new Methodology for the review of higher education institutions, SKVC is obliged to advise HEIs on the best ways of removing the deficiencies found in the process of self-evaluation and external review. The higher education institutions are obliged to publish the measures they intend to use for the removal of the deficiencies. The Minister for Education and Science may authorise the SKVC to monitor the recommendation implementation process and the removal of deficiencies In cases where deficiencies are found in the performance of a HEI, the follow-up activities include the repeat evaluation performed by experts, but the requirement to publish the measures taken by the HEI after the evaluation should also make the HEI give careful thought to its actions.

As has already been mentioned, the follow-up activities may be regarded as one of the weaknesses of the SKVC. In order to make the follow-up more effective, the SKVC should have more human and financial resources. To achieve at least some improvement in its performance, the Centre recommends in its methodologies that higher education institutions establish and publish their own measures for the removal of deficiencies and for the improvement of their performance. In the future, after the decision on accreditation, the Centre will discuss with the HEI how much time it will need for the publication of the measures to improve its performance. The SKVC will review the documents before their publication and, if necessary, will suggest ways for their improvement

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In concluding its self-evaluation of ESG 2.6 SKVC noted its strengths as; "a repeat evaluation takes into account the way the HEI has implemented the recommendations made by the experts." and weaknesses as "inadequate *funds for the implementation of such activities" "insufficient human resources for the follow-up activities"*

Analysis

The panel noted the acknowledgement in the self-evaluation report that follow up procedures are weaknesses in the quality assurance system and agree that this is the case. SKVC noted that whilst a repeat evaluation takes into account the way the HEI has implemented the recommendations made by the experts, there is insufficient funding and inadequate human resources to undertake follow up activity in a meaningful way. The panel also noted that the language used, of deficiencies, contrasted with the general emerging focus of their work, centred on improvement. Whilst it is clear that within its own resources SKVC has attempted to address the issue, and with some success, the follow up procedures could be substantially strengthened.

The panel also noted the planned activity that it would encourage. SKVC is planning to visit the institution after the end of its review. The purpose of the visit is to discuss with the institution the process of the review and the decision taken. During the visit we will discuss the terms and conditions of publication of the plan for means and measures for the improvement of institutions activities. It was foreseen to start follow-up activities at the end of 2011, but due to late results of evaluation of learning resources and related infrastructure, the activities were delayed till the second quarter of 2012.

Conclusion: The panel noted and agreed with SKVCs observation that there is a weakness in follow up arrangements and concluded that in this regard they are **partially compliant**

Recommendation

SKVC has identified approaches and activities that could improve follow-up but have been constrained both by financial and staffing issues and the rapid pace of change in which other matters had to be prioritised. With the prospect of a more 'stable' environment SKVC is encouraged to consider the most 'cost-effective' ways in which follow-up can be developed, both at the level of individual evaluations and in the cross-evaluation analyses that they are intending to initiate. The 'language issue' could remain a problem whilst there continues to be an expectation by some for the need for extensive 'bureaucratic' monitoring; identification of the most important/critical aspects and a focus on these should be considered as a means of improving impact of evaluations and support SKVC in its aim that The experts' proposals and recommendations are first and foremost intended for HEIs to help them improve quality.

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Evidence
All study programmes must undergo evaluation at least every six years, according to the law on Research and Higher Education. Generally the evaluation cycle is six years.

Study programmes in certain areas may undergo evaluation more frequently than others as this depends on the end of their accreditation period (all the new programmes must be evaluated within 3 years of the start date of their provision). In addition, evaluation of different programmes in the same study field may take place at a different time, for example, if some programmes in the same study field are accredited for 3 years while others are accredited for 6 years because they receive very good evaluation, their next evaluation will proceed in two groups and this will require more human and financial resources. Study programmes in certain study fields, for example, education, have been subjected to evaluation several times (practically every two or three years), which, due to the insufficient human resources, has delayed evaluation of study programmes in other study areas, for example, study programmes in art were first evaluated as late as in 2010–2011.

The first cycle of institutional reviews of colleges started in 2004 and was completed in 2008. Its main aim was to ascertain that colleges have met all the requirements set at the time of their foundation. The new Law on HE&R establishes a six year cycle for college institutional reviews. The year 2011 will see the beginning of the second cycle of college reviews and the first cycle of university reviews. Their aim is to improve quality in higher education and to strengthen the reporting function of higher education institutions.

Analysis
It is clear that evaluation cycles are defined in legislation and the length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used are published in advance

Conclusion: 2.7 Fully Compliant

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ESG 2.8 SYSTEM-WIDE ANALYSIS

Standard:
Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments, etc.

Guidelines:
All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

Evidence

A range of evidence was presented in the SER which highlighted summary reports and other analysis undertaken by SKVC. This included summaries of study programme evaluations by study field, active provision of information on SKVC activities and good international links and opportunities to attract foreign experts to evaluations and public events. SKVC staff have published in Quality focussed journals. Additionally analytical studies are published, the last of these being in 2007.

The annual report is includes summaries of the reports on study programme evaluations and reviews of higher education institutions complete with graphics and illustrations. Every year since 2003, SKVC has organised public presentations of its annual reports for members of the academic community, representatives of public administration authorities and partner organisations as well as the media. The attendees are briefed on SKVC performance in the previous year and have an opportunity to hear presentations by SKVC employees on various subjects of interest.

Analysis
The panel noted that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken with regard to system wide analysis. It noted that the annual reports and the dissemination events associated with them were good sources of information. It further noted that over a fifteen year period, as described above, there had been a number of relevant and informative publications. It is clear that SKVC publish summaries of study programme evaluations by study field. Seminars and presentations promote active provision of information on SKVC activities. There are good international links and opportunities to attract foreign experts to evaluations and public events.

However the panel gained an overall impression that there is fragmentary systemic analysis and insufficient publicity of evaluation. The appointment of a Public Relations officer who has been in post since last July is a positive development in this regard and has the potential to promote links between

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SKVC, stakeholders and society. It will be necessary to define target audiences, and to make it easier to identify students and their interests in relevant study programmes. The planned increasing use of social media and outreach through student associations and their newspapers will assist in this.

Conclusion: Overall whilst there are pockets of activity there needs to be coherence and attention paid to the overall task to ensure that information is correctly targeted and for this reason the panel concluded that SKVC were **Substantially Compliant**

Recommendation
Consultation with stakeholders should be undertaken to develop a more systematic production of summary reports based on stakeholder needs and with a clear focus rather than as part of the annual reporting cycle.

ESG 3.1 USE OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES – CONCLUSION.

Standard:
The external quality assurance agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance procedures described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines:
The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the process applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should, together with the standards for quality assurance agencies, constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Evidence and Analysis
In concluding its self-evaluation of ESG 3.1 SKVC noted its
- Strengths: The procedures of external quality assurance cover nearly all the standards of Part 2 of the ESG
- Weaknesses: Implementation of ESG standards on follow-up and systematic analysis should be improved.

The analysis above indicates clearly that whilst SKVC does indeed '*cover nearly all'* of the Part 2 Standards within ESG 3.1 there are areas where this is incomplete, not fully developed and/ or still in transition. The complexities of the rapidly changing context are in part responsible but it should be noted that SKVC has both recognised its limitations in follow-up and system wide analysis and has specific actions in hand.

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In summary the Panel reached the following conclusions:

Component of ESG 3.1	Compliance level
ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality procedures	SUBSTANTIALLY
ESG 2.2 Development of quality assurance procedures	FULLY
ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions	FULLY
ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose	SUBSTANTIALLY
ESG 2.5 Reporting	SUBSTANTIALLY
ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures	PARTIALY
ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews	FULLY
ESG 2.8 System wide analysis	SUBSTANTIALLY

In view of the evidence and analyses presented above
Conclusion for ESG 3.1 (overall): **Substantial compliance**

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS
Standard
Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

Evidence
SKVC was founded by the Ministry of Education and Science in 1995 as an independent public body funded from the State budget. The remit of SKVC is higher education and it covers the entire sector (both public and private HEIs at the university and college level).

In the Law on Higher Education adopted in 2000, the SKVC was defined as an expert institution responsible for the evaluation of higher education, in the Law on Education amended in 2003, the SKVC was defined as an institution responsible for the quality of higher education.

The status of SKVC is referred to in a number of laws, these include;
- The Law on Higher Education and Research (2009):
- Article 12 refers to the Centre as one of the institutions implementing, within its remit, the national policy in research and higher education;
- Article 17 defines the main tasks of the Centre: (1) to promote the quality of higher education institutions through external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and institutions; (2) to create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons by organising and performing the evaluation and/or recognition of foreign qualifications relating to higher education and to perform other functions entrusted to it by the Government; the Law also defines the governing bodies of the Centre;
- Article 36 grants the Centre the right to evaluate applications for higher education provision and for the conduct of activities relating to higher education;
- Article 42 grants the Centre the right to perform external evaluations of HEI study programmes.

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A number of further elaborated documents which establish and define the legal status of SKVC are found in the appendices to the self-evaluation report.
Thus, the legal basis for the Centre's activities is well-defined. Decisions of SKVC have a binding force.

Analysis
SKVC is established by legislation and is formally recognised by Ministry of Education which is the competent public authority.

Conclusion: Fully Compliant

ESG 3.3 ACTIVITIES

Standard:
Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

Guidelines:
These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.

Evidence
External evaluation is enshrined within legislation and has been one of the main functions of SKVC since its foundation. Its regular activities include:
• Evaluation of study programmes at the request of HEIs;
• Accreditation of the study programmes of Lithuanian HEIs;
• External review of HEIs of the Republic of Lithuania;
• Accreditation of Lithuania's HEIs;
• Evaluation of applications for licences to provide higher education and perform activities related to higher education submitted by Lithuanian HEIs and branches of foreign HEIs.
Regularity of institutional reviews and study programme evaluations is determined by the Law on HE&R: all the study programmes and all the HEIs must be evaluated and accredited at least once every 6 years. A new HEI must be accredited within 2 years of its foundation.

Analysis
The activities related to evaluation, accreditation and other similar activities are defined within the national legislation on Higher Education and Research. These are described in detail in the self-evaluation report and confirmed during interviews with staff and stakeholders as taking place on a regular basis.

Conclusion: Fully Compliant

ESG 3.4 RESOURCES
Standard
Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process (es) in an effective manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures **and staff**.

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Evidence

SKVC is principally financed from the State budget. The funding of SKVC from the State budget is governed by the Budget Law of the Republic of Lithuania (1990, as amended in 2004) and legal acts on the financial accounting of budgetary bodies. An annual process of financial planning occurs based on an estimation of planned activities. The budget is approved by the Ministry and the approved budget cannot be exceeded nor used in a discretionary way. The accounts are regularly audited.

In addition to State funding, SKVC also draws income from events, projects, services and other legal sources. Since 2004, the EU Structural Funds have been a significant source of SKVC's revenue. SKVC has participated in various externally funded projects from its foundation and this is seen as an important source of revenue and staff development.

In 2010, the greater part of the state funding went for the salaries, including social security, and the operating expenses (utilities, transport, office supplies), while the expenses for the core activities were covered from what are described as project funds.

The core staff of the centre is civil servants. The numbers of such staff that can be employed is regulated by Government resolution which restricts the number of staff that can be paid by the State budget and public monetary funds. Consequently additional staff are employed on fixed term contracts from what is described as project funds. There are currently 29 civil servants employed by SKVC and four staff employed on fixed term contracts.

The SKVC has adequate tangible resources to guarantee the continuity of its activities and takes regular efforts to improve and upgrade them. SKVC has adequate premises for the organisation of external evaluation activities. In 2010, the Centre moved into new larger premises with better general office conditions, meeting and conference rooms, storage and networked facilities.

All SKVC staff have university qualifications, the majority at Second cycle level. Average age is 35. SKVC endeavours to create opportunities for staff to develop their competencies by attending training courses and seminars in Lithuania and abroad. As the national ENIC/NARIC representative staff attend related international seminars and as members of a number of international networks (ENQA, INQAAHE, CEEN) employees attend general assemblies and seminars. Participation in externally funded projects provides additional staff development opportunities.

In 2009, a considerable reduction in state funding led to an exceptional event in SKVC activities, the suspension of study programme evaluations. The increasing scope of external quality evaluation and reducing state funding forced the Centre to turn to project funds as a source for financing study programme and HEI evaluations on the basis of which preliminary financial plans have been drawn up until the middle of 2012 and these have now been converted to a signed financial agreement securing funding for study programme and institutional review which is planned in detail until September 2014.

Analysis

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The funding and budget of SKVC is governed by relevant national legislation. The panel noted in the self-evaluation report a tone of uncertainty regarding resources. In particular, the panel were concerned at the reliance on so called project funds to secure the on-going activities of SKVC. . The panel was reassured to discover that these project funds are non-competitive European Structural Funds specifically designated to support SKVC to undertake and develop processes related external quality assurance processes.

Furthermore the panel was impressed by the commitment made by the Vice Minister for Education with regard to support for the on-going work of SKVC.

In the light of its interviews with staff and management the Panel found that the income derived from the state budget and other planned activities is adequate for the resourcing of external quality assurance activities.

SKVC has incurred no unexpected budget cuts, when cuts are mentioned these have been pre-planned. The significance of this is that the European Social Fund money is allocated from the fixed / non-competitive source held by the ministry. The ministry clearly indicated that SKCV is a priority for SF based developments and is tied in to agreements made with the EC on the use of structural funds. The panel did not underestimate the significance of this commitment. This commitment should be communicated clearly to SKVC staff as this may bring more certainty to their actions. Overall it can be judged that SKVC makes successful use of alternative financing sources to secure its operations. This compensates for inflexible regulations on matching the number of the staff with the scope of activities and inflexible regulations on the use of state budgetary funds.

SKVC is perceived as an attractive place to work, particularly with the status of a civil servant. SKVC has well qualified staff and adequate basic technical resources. There is a staff development scheme and staff are regularly appraised. A Senior Specialist, responsible for both human resources and administration monitors activity to show what has been and is being done and ensuring that data provided reflects that public service institution targets are met. This is achieved by monitoring progress against work plans, achieving effective delegation of tasks and ensuring customer services complaints and issues are dealt with on timely basis.

Particular resourcefulness has been demonstrated in maintaining and facilitating staff development opportunities through international networks and externally funded projects

Conclusion: The panel noted concerns and uncertainties regarding the funding of SKVCs activities, however after full consideration and based on an examination of current and future planned activity, together with reassurances from the Ministry of Education, it concluded that SKVC is **Fully Compliant**

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ESG 3.5 MISSION STATEMENT

Standard
Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contains analysis of the agency meeting each criterion

Guidelines
These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

Evidence
This section in the SER was entitled 'Mission' rather than as ESG 3.5 is - 'Mission Statement'. The evaluation then reflects, interestingly, on the (wider) 'mission' rather than on a clear exposition of the mission statement itself.

SKVC has a mission which takes into account the goals and objectives of its activities and is operationalised through its annual plan. The SKVC mission statement has been formulated by taking into consideration the general goals and objectives of its activities and is implemented through annual operating plans. The mission and its implementation are regularly reviewed by analysing the activities of the previous year in annual reports.

SKVC is an organisation contributing to quality improvement in higher education in Lithuania and free movement of persons in the world. It is necessary to emphasise that the SKVC emphasises that it not only contributes to but also implements the national policy of external quality assurance in higher education. Activity areas and its general management model are laid down in the Law on HE&R, which testifies to the importance of the organisation.

SKVC is an active participator in the development and improvement of the legal environment and quality in the country's higher education. Their goal is to make quality important not only to higher education institutions, but also for the development of individuals, their civic engagement, the country's prosperity, its economic competitiveness and national security.

SKVC analyses the benefits and challenges of academic and professional mobility for individuals and the society as a whole. By performing the functions of the national information centres (ENIC/NARIC) and the Lithuanian Researchers' Service Centre (for the period January 2005 until June 2011), the SKVC acts as a facilitator and an intermediary between individuals and institutions in Lithuania and abroad.

In its daily activities, the SKVC avails itself of the international good practice, seeks continuous institutional and individual professional improvement. It is important that its participation in the process of quality assurance in higher

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education should be based on professionalism, objectivity and international practice.

Analysis
SKVC has a mission statement which is elaborated in an annual operating plan and performance against its mission is reviewed on a yearly basis.

The panel found in its discussions and meetings with various groups that the activities of SKVC reflected the mission and actively contributed to the development and improvement of Quality in HE.

Conclusion Fully Compliant

ESG 3.6 INDEPENDENCE

Standard
Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Guidelines
An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:
- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments;
- is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);
- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

Evidence
According to the SER, SKVC acts as an independent institution for quality evaluation in higher education. Its independence is guaranteed by several factors. First, it is ensured by its governance system. It is governed by the Director and a collective management body, the SKVC Council. The Director is elected on a competitive basis by a committee composed mostly of the Council members. The Council is composed of persons delegated by different institutions and organisations. Second, the participants, stages, deadlines and other elements of the evaluation process are laid down in various legal acts, which leave no room for free interpretation or dissimilar practices.

The Centre selects experts for evaluation independently of HEIs, the Ministry or other authorities in accordance with the Procedure for Expert Selection approved by the SKVC Director's order.

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Decisions on accreditation are taken by the Director also independently of the Ministry or HEIs, exclusively on the basis of the evaluation results and the opinion of the Study Programme or Institutional Evaluation Commissions. Appeals against the Centre's administrative legal acts on study programme evaluation should be lodged with independent pre-trial institutions or courts (the Appeals Commission on Study Programmes, the Chief Administrative Disputes Commission, Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania) rather than a political body or a public authority.

Appeals against decisions on the evaluation of foreign qualifications should be lodged with an inter-institutional appeals commission or courts. The only exception is appeals against the evaluation of HEIs and applications for a licence to provide higher education and perform activities, related to higher education, which are examined by special appeals commissions set up by the Ministry on an ad hoc basis.

An important element in the activities of the Centre is consultations with the Ministry, the Council of the Centre and social stakeholders. The final decisions, however, are taken by the SKVC Director, who is responsible for the performance of the Centre.

In its self-evaluation of this important standard SKVC noted that
- The SKVC status is enshrined in legal acts
- Decisions on accreditation are taken independently by the SKVC Director
- Independent selection of experts
- Operating methodologies are approved by the SKVC

Whilst there was the weakness that
- Not all kinds of appeals are examined by the SKVC

Analysis
The panel were concerned to explore the issue of independence in some detail as the understanding gained from the self-evaluation and other documents revealed a system heavily governed by legislation. The legislation clearly established the independence of SKVC but was also extremely prescriptive in terms of the methodology of reviews and as far as could be ascertained the role of SKVC was to implement the legislation. At the crux of the matter the issue seemed to be to identify whether the ministry influenced implementation. The panel confirms that SKVC has autonomous responsibility applied in such a way that its conclusions and recommendations are not influenced by third parties (and no such suspicion was articulated by representatives of HEIs or other stakeholders during the site visit). Central to this was the attitude of the ministry and the role of the SKVC Council. Linked to these were the perceptions of stakeholders and experts who participated in evaluations.

Everyone who was interviewed was asked the question whether SKVC was independent of the ministry and everyone answered that they considered SKVC to be independent. The panel could find no evidence of undue influence from the ministry. Experts confirmed that they had never been asked to modify any decisions and considered themselves free of political influence. Stakeholders identified that SKVC is in transition, moving from control (looking for wrongs) towards enhancement and empowerment. This was exemplified by increased

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amount and depth of discussion regarding enhancement and increasing involvement (of institution's, faculty and stakeholder's perspectives) in the process.

Whilst the role of SKVC is on one hand to implement legislation, it is clear that they have a strong and beneficial influence in the shaping of legislation and an enthusiastic empowering approach to enacting legislation. SKVC is now universally regarded as one of the main actors in the development of quality culture due to the manner in which it performs its duties. It is clear that both the ministry and SKVC have moved away from merely enacting legislation, to enlivening it.

The SKVC Council was identified as an opportunity in securing more freedom from the ministry and a way of consolidating greater independence. Disappointingly the Council, which is comprised of all HEI stakeholders has failed to realise the potential and importance of their task and describe their role as limited by the law when in fact, had they attempted to undertake the tasks they had set themselves, they could be strong contributors to the reforming process. Whilst their establishment secures SKVC independence, their inertia represents a lost opportunity.

Conclusion Fully Compliant

Recommendation
The performance of the Council should be evaluated against their standing orders and steps taken to ensure that these are appropriate and that the Council members have the capacity to fulfil them. This would reinforce the Councils position as the body ensuring SKVCs independence.

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ESG 3.7 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CRITERIA AND PROCESSES USED
BY THE AGENCIES

Standard
The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and
publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:
• a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance
process;
• an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student
member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
• publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal
outcomes;
• a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality
assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Guidelines
Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular
purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all
times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed 29(41)
professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent
manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people.
Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions or conclusions which have
formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the
appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each
agency.

Evidence:
The processes, criteria and procedures used by SKVC are enshrined in
legislation. The main legal acts governing these are
The Law on Research and Higher Education; General requirements of first
higher education degree and integrated studies; General requirements of
master's degree studies; General requirements of joint study programmes;
Procedure for the evaluation and accreditation of study programmes
approved by the Minister for Education and Science; Procedure for the external
evaluation of higher education institutions approved by a Government resolution
Methodology for on-going study programme evaluation approved by the
SKVC Director's order;

Methodological instructions for drawing up a procedure for the evaluation of new
study programmes and its compliance with the general and special requirements
for study programmes approved by the Minister for Education and Science;
Methodology for the review of higher education institutions approved by the
SKVC Director's order.

These documents are available on the SKVC website, the Seimas database of
legal acts and the Official Gazette. Additionally SKVC advises HEIs of the draft
methodological documents and, later, of the approved documents by organising
seminars.

After the approval of a legal act, there is usually a transitional period before its
entry into force to allow HEIs a grace period for restructuring according to the

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new requirements. The on-going processes are usually completed in accordance with the previous rules.

The evaluation process organised by SKVC includes the following stages: the self-evaluation of HEIs, setting up an expert team, examination of the self-evaluation report, visit to the HEI, preparation of the draft evaluation report, its presentation to the HEI, examination of the HEI's comments and correction of errors, drawing up the final evaluation report, its examination with the advisory committee, decision on accreditation and the publication of the evaluation report. There is also an appellant procedure, which may take place before the decision on accreditation.

Responsibility for self-evaluation rests with the higher education institution. SKVC methodological instructions define the requirements for the self-analysis report and the information it should include. They also give recommendations on what should be examined in the process of self-evaluation. SKVC organises seminars on self-evaluation for institutions. Higher education institution can get advice by telephone, e-mail or in person. Information on the deadlines for the submission of self-evaluation reports is sent to universities and colleges well in advance.

Expert teams are formed in accordance with the Procedure for expert selection approved by SKVC. The Centre has used international expert teams since 2002. Now the majority of expert teams are composed of international experts (in 2010, 41 teams out of 52 were international). If an expert team consists of five members, each of them must come from a different institution (in the event of an international team, in most cases from a different state). It is desirable to include employers from Lithuania, but this is not always possible, as it depends on the willingness of the employers and in some study areas it is difficult to identify them.

Similar problems arise with students' participation. In the future, the SKVC intends to intensify its cooperation with students' organisations and always include students in expert teams. It is also desirable that a mixed expert team should include one member from Lithuania and one from a Central or East European state. Usually two members are from West European states. In 2005–2010, 455 experts participated in study programme evaluations 221 of which came from 26 different countries.

So far, employers and students participated in international expert teams only occasionally mostly because of their inadequate linguistic skills. From 2011, the SKVC will make greater efforts to find students who meet the requirements and are proficient in English, the main language of international expert teams.

During the site visit experts meet with administration, the self-evaluation group, the teaching staff engaged in the provision of the study programme, students, graduates and their employers; they also make themselves familiar with the learning and teaching resources, premises, students' projects, final theses, examination papers, etc.

Following the visit, experts draw up a draft evaluation report and send it to the higher education institution. The providers of the study programme can make

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their comments on the report and point out the errors in it, if any. The expert team must examine such comments, draw up the final version of the report and present it to the Study Programme Evaluation Commission (in case of a study programme evaluation) or to the Higher Education Institutions Review Commission (in case of an institutional review). The Commissions composed of representatives of HEIs, civil servants, employers or professional organisations and students examine the reports for their objectivity, completeness and validity. After the Commissions' approval, the report is sent to the higher education institution.

If the higher education institution does not agree with the final evaluation report, it may lodge an appeal with the SKVC. Appeals are examined by an Appeals Commission for Study Programmes composed of persons delegated by the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference, the Lithuanian College Principals' Conference, the Lithuanian Research Council, the Lithuanian Association of Private Higher Education Institutions and SKVC.

If the higher education institution agrees with the evaluation report (or the Appeals Commission decides to uphold the appeal), the SKVC takes a decision on the accreditation of the programme and published the evaluation report on the SKVC website

In a repeat evaluation, SKVC experts must evaluate how the higher education institutions took the comments of the previous evaluation into consideration and how it implemented its recommendations for improvement.

In its self-evaluation SKVC concluded the section on Standard 3.7 with
Strengths
- External evaluation procedures and criteria are predefined and published in advance.
- The appeals procedure for the evaluation of on-going study programmes is in place.
- Expert selection procedure and criteria have been defined
- Evaluation reports are publicly available
- Repeat evaluations consider the implementation of the previous recommendations for improvement
Weaknesses
- Legal acts do not provide for opportunities to file appeals regarding the accreditation of new study programmes before the Appeals Commission for Study Programme
- Inadequate preparedness and involvement of employers and students in expert teams

Analysis
The panel confirmed that generally external evaluation procedures and criteria are predefined and published in advance. It did however note a lack of clarity regarding MOSTA and a potential the overlap with SKVC activities, with regard to institutional evaluation. This impacts on Institutional Evaluation of colleges and subsequently Universities. MOSTA has responsibility to undertake the first stage of the evaluation, which largely concerns human resource and infrastructure issues, mainly focusing quantitative indicators. They then report to SKVC, who then commence the Institutional Evaluation and organise a site visit using the

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MOSTA report as one source as evidence. At the moment there is a pending revision of criteria for this assessment methodology, involving discussions with the Ministry and a decision is awaited. The issue is awaiting resolution because HEIs are appealing against the MOSTA data sets/conclusions. To date the Government resolution was not very clear about how final decision in institutional evaluation would be reached or who would 'sign off' the evaluation. SKVC raised that the matter is not clear and nor is the evidence and 'weighting' between MOSTA and SKVC for institutional evaluation at the moment. This is delaying the process and brings a lack of clarity to the procedure. Whilst it is recognised that this issue is outside the competence of SKVC to resolve it is a matter of concern, however it may be viewed as a preliminary event to the actual evaluation and to that extent does not put the agency outside of the standards.

Issues of student involvement and follow up are mentioned elsewhere both as areas in which improvement can be made. However overall the panel found the approach of SKVC to be highly professional and orientated towards the ESG and their activities with institutions and expert panel members to be supportive and facilitative.

The panel was particularly interested to explore whether the overall programme about control and/or enhancement, and to what extent this was proportioned. It became clear that the system is in transition and is increasingly including recommendations which seem to be driving towards improvement. This is driven by SKVC through the training and guidance issued to experts and institutions.

Conclusion: The lack of clarity regarding the role of MOSTA clouds the overall criteria and process. Whilst acknowledging that SKVC have worked hard to develop these, and that resolution of the issue is not in their control the panel concluded that in this regard SKVC is Substantially **Compliant**

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Evidence:
SKVC has a published policy for its own Quality Assurance. This, together with the procedure are described in the Regulations of SKVC and published on the SKVC website in English and Lithuanian.

SKVC engages in forward annual strategic planning based on its mission and goals which involves all staff. It subsequently conducts an analysis which reflects on its performance. An annual report is published which is disseminated widely including presentations at public events for the founder, other stakeholders and the public at large.

There are published procedures to manage potential conflicts of interest. The Procedure for the Selection of Experts approved by the Director's order in 2007 requires that experts declare the potential conflicts of interest by completing a special form. Sanctions may be taken against experts who fail to declare a conflict of interest. Discussions with staff, experts and stakeholders reflected an awareness of these and cited examples of their enforcement.

The Agency has reliable means to ensure the quality of the performance and data produced by its subcontractors. This is primarily achieved through the appointment of an evaluation coordinator whose role is to ensure the proper performance of the experts, for each expert panel. The co-ordinators duties include the organisation and coordination of its activities and compliance with the evaluation procedure, but also the participation in the discussions of the

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evaluation report and also its compliance with the terms of reference. A second stage in assuring the quality of expert performance is the submission of the draft evaluation report to the HEI being reviewed for comments on errors found in the report. Any errors are corrected prior to commencement of the third stage, which is discussion of the evaluation report by the Evaluation Commission in Higher Education. This Commission is composed of various stakeholders who work in HE and have an interest in quality assurance. Their main function enshrined in the rules of the Commission is to ensure the objectivity, completeness and validity of the evaluation conclusions.

SKVC has an employee incentive and motivation system. All employees are subject to yearly appraisals which cover their performance, competencies and professional development. The responsibility for continuous appraisal of employees rests with the line managers. Financial circumstances permitting, monetary incentives are used to reward employees for good job performance. At the end of the year, the management appraises employees employed as civil servants

SKVC has plans to improve its internal quality assurance system by introducing written documentation of feedback from experts and HEIs, which will contribute greatly to the improvement of the evaluation process.

The new Law on HE&R of 2009 lays down that an external review of the SKVC should be carried out at least once every 5 years. The outcome of the reviews should be made publicly available. So far, no such review has been performed except for ad hoc performance audits carried out by the founder (the Ministry) and financial audits carried out by other institutions.

This external review for the purpose of which ENQA producing this self-evaluation report will be the first external review of the SKVC.

SKVC organises cross-section integrated project planning activities as projects are an important source of financing. The annual plan of the SKVC is brought to the attention of the founder and the academic community. Data on the activities of the units are summed up at least once a quarter or when and as necessary. Internal meetings on project monitoring are also called approximately once a quarter or according to need. Each Monday morning starts with a general meeting to discuss the most important tasks of the previous and current weeks, problems and achievements. The speakers include not only the representatives of the management, but also curators of specific activities, for example, the evaluation coordinator may report on a visit at a higher education institution. In this way, the staff is informed about the goings-on at the Centre and important external events.

Feedback procedures include the following:
- internal feedback mechanisms (e.g. collection of regular feedback from the staff started in 2007
- internal reflection mechanism (daily meetings of the administrative staff to discuss and consider internal and external recommendations for improvement)
- external feedback mechanism (formal feedback from experts). The Centre began the collection of such feedback in 2002 mostly during meetings

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with expert teams to discuss the results of evaluations. Collection of feedback from HEIs has been fragmentary, usually during seminars organised by the SKVC.

Internal and external feedback Amongst the internal quality assurance procedures for collecting feedback from the staff are general weekly meetings or division meetings to discuss activities and complicated issues, share experience and draw up plans for the coming week. At such meetings, the employees may always voice their opinions and reasoned arguments; a lot of time and attention is given to the discussion of recent evaluations, problematic cases and their prevention. Evaluation discussions are regularly organised in the divisions responsible for the organisation of evaluation exercises to share good practice, analyse the problems and ways to prevent them.

In 2010, the SKVC carried out a survey of the stakeholders' opinion about their performance and its impact on the improvement of quality in higher education. They state that " *The favourable outcome of the survey has been a great support to our efforts, while the deficiencies in our activities pointed out by the respondents and their proposals have given us reason to look for new ways of improvement.*"

The new Law on HE&R of 2009 lays down that an external review of the SKVC should be carried out at least once every 5 years. This current review is the first of what is planned to be cyclical reviews.

SKVC noted the following in concluding its self-evaluation regarding accountability procedures:
Strengths
- Public availability of the SKVC quality assurance policy
- Conflict of interest prevention mechanism
- Quality assurance mechanism in expert reviews
- Implementation of the internal quality assurance system
- Cyclical external review of the Agency is a statutory requirement

Weaknesses
- The first survey of the clients' opinion was carried out as late as 2010
- Lack of systematic collection of feedback from HEIs (and partly from experts)

Analysis
The SKVC quality assurance policy is publicly available and an internal quality assurance mechanism is implemented. There is a strong conflict of interest prevention mechanism which is published and clearly sets out processes and procedures.

The preparation and publication of an annual report reflects the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurances

There are mechanisms for both internal and external feedback. Expert reviews have a Quality assurance mechanism.

The panel found it difficult to follow an audit trail of responsibility in the accountability processes that were described. The panel were reassured to

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discover that the accountability processes in practice were more rigorous and extensive than appeared in the self-evaluation report. Overall there is much activity but it lacks clear coordination and coherence and may benefiting from reformulating within a single document.

The role of the Council of the SKVC is unclear. Officially it fulfils the functions of supervision and consultancy. It has delegates from different stakeholder groups and oversees the functions (of SKVC) and guards the interests of the groups. The Council viewed its function as being very restricted (by Law). On one hand it is viewed itself as the guarantor of the dialogue between the agency and the ministry and instrumental in coordinating views but the panel noted the Council's inability to articulate its role, its failure to deliver on its own operating plan, and its general inertia in terms of its function. This seemed to be at odds with the perception of the Council held by the Ministry and SKVC. The panel concluded that the Council had not realised its potential contribution and may benefit from some focussed induction activity.

Mechanisms are in place to ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, in particular the experts who contribute to reviews. A review coordinator is appointed who oversees all activities of review panels. Draft reports are submitted to institutions for comment on accuracy and content. Reports are considered and reviewed by an evaluation Commission who are independent of the review panel. Each of these steps was verifies in interviews with experts and Evaluation commission members. Feedback to SKVC is provided by experts via an online survey of expert's views/experiences each year.

Conclusion The panel found that whilst a number of mechanisms were in place to ensure accountability, the overall process could be more coherent. Much of the internal feedback is informal and does not contribute to the "collective memory" of SKVC meaning that if staff left employment their knowledge would not be institutionalised. Additionally, collection of external feedback has not been systematic and whilst it is acknowledged that plans are in place, the panel concluded that SKVC is **Substantially Compliant**

ENQA Criterion 8 MISCELLANEOUS
I. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgements and decisions are reached in consistent manner, even if the judgements are formed by different groups;
II. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.
III. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

Evidence
Overall adherence to the declared principles

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The agency pays attention to its declared principles and tries to be consistent in the processes of decision making within the legislation, methodologies and procedures with which it works. Furthermore the panel found that despite the fact that the system is governed by a myriad of legislation, an enthusiasm to enliven these processes through engagement with the Higher Education community at home and abroad is developing so that they are implemented in a way that promotes a culture of quality. Whilst not demonstrating full compliance with every European standard, SKVC has developed a system that functions well, is transparent and is increasingly promoting enhancement. This was reflected throughout the interviews with both internal and external stakeholders conducted during the site visit.

Appeals procedure
All of the decisions taken by SKVC are open to appeal although the route differs according to the nature of the activity, and only some are undertaken within the responsibilities of SKVC. Opportunities for appeal were realised in 2004 with the establishment of the Appeals Commission on Study Programmes. Prior to this complaints, rather than appeals were usually submitted to the attention of SKVC Director.

Appeals against the Centre's administrative legal acts on study programme evaluation should be lodged with independent pre-trial institutions or courts (the Appeals Commission on Study Programmes, the Chief Administrative Disputes Commission, Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania) rather than a political body or a public authority.

Appeals against decisions on the evaluation of foreign qualifications should be lodged with an inter-institutional appeals commission or courts. The only exception is appeals against the evaluation of HEIs and applications for a licence to provide higher education and perform activities related to higher education, which are examined by special appeals commissions set up by the Ministry on an ad hoc basis.

The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA

SKVC has been an associate member of ENQA since 2000 and since the network's registration as an association, a candidate member since 2008. SKVC has a declared intention to be an active member of ENQA and to subsequently submit an application for registration on the EQAR. Representatives of SKVC have participated in the majority of general assemblies and have attended and been active in a wide range of ENQA seminars and activities. It views engagement with ENQA as an effective way to keep up to date with European developments in Quality Assurance.

SKVC is committed to the ESG and has contributed to the dissemination of the ENQA quality assurance principles by organising the translation of ESG and other key documents into Lithuanian as well as organising national seminars and events on dissemination and implementation.

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Analysis
The panel was impressed both by the commitment of SKVC to its declared aims, the alignment of its activities, as far as possible to ESG and its enthusiasm to be an active member of ENQA.

Conclusion: Fully Compliant

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS OF THE PANEL ON THEIR ENQA REVIEW OF SKVC

The Panel reached its findings based on the evidence provided by SKVC in its Self-Evaluation report and confirmed during the site visit to their offices on Vilnius 14-15 March 2012, and on additional corroborated information gathered from the meetings during that site visit, and some additional documentation provided during it. Whist primarily focused on evaluating the agency's performance against the ESG Part 3, the Panel concludes with a summary of findings set against the ENQA Membership criteria

ENQA criterion 1 (ESG 3.1, ESG 3.3)
With findings of for 3.1 of Substantial compliance (based on a mix of partial, substantial and full compliance for the different parts) and Full compliance for 3.3 the overall judgement for ENQA criterion 1 would be Substantial compliance

ENQA criterion 2 Official status: Fully compliant with ESG 3.2

ENQA criterion 3 Resources: Fully compliant with ESG 3.4 (it should be noted that whilst there is a heavy reliance on what are termed in the SER 'project funds' these funds are in fact non-competitively pre-determined by the government from its allocation of European social funds.

ENQA criterion 4 Mission statement: Fully compliant with ESG 3.5

ENQA criterion 5 Independence: Fully compliant with ESG 3.6

ENQA criterion 6 External QA criteria and procedures used: Substantially compliant with ESG 3.7

ENQA criterion7 Accountability procedures: Substantially compliant with ESG 3.8

ENQA criterion 8 Miscellaneous The panel noted that SKVC:
- Pays careful attention to its declared principles and sought to ensure both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgements and decisions are reached in a consistent manner even where judgements are formed by different groups
- Makes formal quality assurance decisions and conclusions that have formal consequences, and has relevant appeals procedures
- Contributes actively and enthusiastically to ENQA (and other networks) activities and their aims.

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Appendix One –

Additional comments on SKVC and its internal quality management system and quality management mechanisms.

SKVC had three aims when opting for a Type A ENQA review: 1) evaluation of how the internal quality management system and quality management mechanisms are working; 2) whether the Centre has the ability to operate in substantial compliance with the ESG; 3) the adequacy between the Centre's activities in view of ENQA and EQAR membership requirements.

Following submission of SKVC's Self Evaluation report a site visit was made by the ENQA evaluation panel in March 2012. The second aim, and the consequences of this in light of ENQA membership requirements (aim 3), are addressed in the main report. The Centre's internal quality assurance was considered particularly with regard to 'accountability procedures' (ESG 3.8 / ENQA Criterion 7) and such aspects are also considered in the main report. This Annex concerns some additional comments on 1) how well the internal QM system and quality management mechanisms are working at SKVC.

A delay in the period between the development of the initial Self Evaluation Report and the review itself required the production of an Amendment to the Report. This was developed during 2011 and documented the significant changes that had occurred both in the external environment in which SKVC operates and, it is important to note, in the very substantial changes that had taken place within SKVC. Included amongst these are the details of the newly implemented Internal Quality Management System, derived from a Quality Policy, and with its Quality Management Mechanism. Whilst these have only been in operation for a relatively short period, the Centre asked that some specific attention be paid to its internal quality management system and the quality management mechanisms and how it was working.

The SKVC Internal Quality Management System and Quality Management Mechanisms are designed in line with its stated Quality Policy to ensure continuous improvement of the quality of the Centre's services; the Centre's services being focused on its mission of contributing to the improvement of quality in Lithuanian higher education and the free movement of persons across borders. Expressed succinctly it concerns quality management systems and mechanisms to improve quality of services that are themselves designed to improve quality (in HE).

In such a 'pyramid of quality', and in a context derived from a background in which quality was previously often focused on compliance to 'input measures', it will be important to identify (and 'isolate') those elements that are 'still required' though of perhaps limited value to improvement, and those aspects that can most effectively and efficiently provide the greatest benefit to the intended 'target' of SKVC's mission: 'Lithuanian higher education and the free movement of persons across borders'.

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Having undertaken such an analysis the next step, particularly where resources may not be limitless, is to identify amongst those aspects that do provide benefit, which show the most (potential for) efficient/effective gains in terms of a cost/benefit analysis.

SKVC has based its approach to internal quality on ISO (including 9000 for 'vocabulary' and ISO 9001:2008 "Quality management systems. Requirements" and ISO 9004:2010 "Managing for the sustained success of an organisation – A quality management approach" for its quality model); the ESG for the EHEA; the Lisbon Recognition Convention; the ENIC / NARIC Charter; and the requirements of Lithuanian laws.
The System and its mechanisms area set out and supported through a (50 page) Quality Manual

The quoted aspiration is that by implementing the quality management system the SKVC brings benefit to the following interested parties:
- to the Founder – increased effectiveness and efficiency of the SKVC activities, better performance;
- to the managers – the quality management system covers the SKVC structure, objectives and procedures, therefore it is an effective means of management;
- to employees – a clear management structure, precise requirements, methods and aims contribute to the morale and spur efforts to improve the quality of the services provided;
- to clients – the effective and efficient service management system, a good monitoring system of relationships with clients and the decreasing number of errors make it possible for the SKVC to increase the degree of satisfaction among its clients;
- to public at large – the proactive SKVC position in regard to the quality of higher education in an environment which changes faster than the legal framework.

It is perhaps interesting to note that this list appears to prioritise the organisation rather than the 'clients', but this may be directly related to the 'Quality Policy' which states that: To ensure continuous improvement of the quality of the Centre's services, its management undertakes to:
•	follow the principles of legality, objectivity, transparency, timeliness and other principles in performing the evaluation procedures of higher education institutions, their study programmes and qualifications related to higher education and in taking decisions on the basis of data and information analysis;
•	provide detailed, timely and reliable information and consultations on issues related to the quality of HEIs activities, study programmes and qualifications related to higher education; seek mutually beneficial cooperation with the applicants, partners and suppliers participating in the evaluation process;
•	take an active part in the activities of foreign institutions and organisations which implement quality policy in higher education and contribute to the promotion of the free movement of persons; to adopt international expertise in its activities; ensure opportunities for its staff to acquire high professional qualifications and competences; increase the satisfaction of the staff

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with their work and encourage them to participate in the improvement of the quality management system and the Centre's activities;

• ensure a good working environment and provide the necessary resources for the attainment of quality policy objectives; provide information to the pubic on the implementation of its objectives and activities; improve its quality management system according to the requirements of its quality management model;

• ensure yearly revisions and evaluation of its quality policy so as to keep it effective and efficient.

This list does not include approaches or procedures directly relating to contributing to the improvement of quality in Lithuanian higher education and the free movement of persons across borders. Rather, it seems to be implicitly based on the premise that if SKVC has a good internal QA system this will automatically have a beneficial impact for SKVC's stakeholders.

The Centre has identified 18 aspects in its Quality Management Process against which it has identified specific 'Quality objectives' and 'Quality indicators', and identified a responsible member of staff. These are set out in the Centre's 'Quality Objectives and indicators' (Annex 7 to the Amendments document and in wider context in the Quality Manual, although in the latter 15, 16, and 17 are (slightly confusingly) mislabelled as PA8, 9 and 10 (see page 22).
The former document identifies the process manager responsible for the implementation of each quality objective and the later the 'responsible participants' – in some cases e.g. 'Feedback Management' listed as 'the whole staff'.

Annex 7 includes a column for 'Time limit for the implementation of the quality objective'. At the time of the review this column was blank. The panel were advised that concrete data input will occur at a later stage. This is, in part, because quality improvements will be based on the suggestions contained in this report. Detailed objectives, indicators and time lines will thereafter be included.

The system is an application of the ISO approach but for those unfamiliar with the detail of this, and particularly within the 'pyramid of quality', some the terminology and its use could be somewhat confusing. Other models /users of IQ systems might typically might be more familiar with 'strategic objectives', performance management, key performance indicators, etc. depending on any familiarity with different 'management models'.

The Quality Manual is detailed in its descriptions of, for example, Process, Planning and Management and Process, Powers and Responsibilities. It is less detailed however when it comes to what is actually being done, by whom and at what (identified and agreed) cost to the Centre. We are told, for example, under 7. IMPROVEMENT OF ACTIVITIES: Measurement, analysis and improvement, that:
To ensure the compliance of the quality management system with the legal requirements and the demands of the interested parties, the SKVC makes efforts to create favourable conditions for the improvement of its activities and the efficient management of the improvement processes. The SKVC management

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assesses the progress of the organisation in attaining its mission and vision and in the implementation of its quality policy, strategy and objectives in all its processes and functions.

The SKVC plans and implements the activities of quality management system monitoring, evaluation, self-assessment and improvement. The results of such activities are evidence of the compliance of services to the requirements and serve to ensure such compliance, effectiveness and continuous improvement. For the purpose of quality evaluation and improvement, the SKVC uses to following means:

- reviews conducted by the SKVC management;
- evaluation of the satisfaction of interested parties;
- internal audit of quality;

etc.

Thus, it could be argued that SKVC management conducts a review of its own activities by a system it has chosen, to the satisfaction of (unspecified) 'interested parties'. On the basis of this and other somewhat vaguely entitled activities it is claimed that there will be continuous improvement in quality of services to support quality in Lithuanian HE.

'Interested parties' should include the SKVC Council but it did not appear, during the ENQA evaluation site visit, that the Council was fully aware of its opportunities or even responsibilities for both checking on 'internal quality' and, even more importantly, contributing to decisions required to promoting greater effectiveness in both processes and uses (by the 'stakeholders') of the outcomes of SKVC's work.

The Quality Manual and numerous associated documents use a very extensive ISO based system (and 'language') within which are some complex inter-relationships. The system has only been in place for a short time and it will only be as good as the commitment of the SKVC staff and the choices they (are able to) make. A crucial factor will be in determining the balance between their focus on the outcomes that lead to improvement in the quality of 'SKVC services' per se and how these are prioritized to offer the best impact for the 'improvement in the quality of Lithuanian HE'.

On a very positive note the Panel was impressed by the SKVC staff it met and their commitment to continuous improvement in both the organisation of the processes they have developed and are operating, and the generation of increasingly useful outcomes from them. This commitment (and enthusiasm) appeared to be shared across the organisation, and was 'recognised' and acknowledged by the key stakeholders.

Clearly an important initiative for the senior 'team', it was noticeable that the middle ranking and even junior staff the Panel met were also 'engaged' in the developments of internal quality and, from this aspect, there is every reason to consider that the approach taken and the system developed by SKVC will meet its aspirations.

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There are however some risks and whilst these appear, to some extent, to have been considered, the Panel would recommend further reflection and appropriate action in the decision-making processes.

The current system is complex and must be onerous to a small organization that is continuing to cope with ever changing contexts. It will be important that the senior management take regular stock of the costs and benefits of each of the measures, and clusters of these, that they have put in place. Then, on the basis of a clear 'cost/benefit' analysis, they should discuss with the staff how and where to refocus quality priorities to ensure that the main efforts are directed towards the 'key areas'. It will be tempting, and perhaps superficially easy, to continue monitoring/measuring 'everything' that fits within a 'theoretical' ISO approach. The challenge that SKVC senior management will need to face, particularly in a context of increasing interest in their services and (most-likely) diminishing resources, will be to identify and target only those necessary and sufficient measures requirements to meet legal demands AND re-allocate resource to those areas that give greatest impact to the Centre's mission and key (non-governmental) stakeholders (the HEIs, their students and graduates, and intending students and those who support them).

The Panel was impressed by the Centre's commitment to the development its 'internal' QA system; the formal (ISO based) 'system' is extensive yet it was also very clear that there is a less formalised 'system' of cross-organisational 'communication' which is very effective in (quickly) identifying matters of importance (in terms of process and outcomes).

Two factors will be important in the continuing success of SKVC:
• ensuring that the 'inherent' and perhaps slightly implicit/informal 'quality culture' (that the staff have embraced across the organisation) is not 'damaged' by the imposition of any overly bureaucratic requirements of a formal 'internal quality management system' and its quality management mechanisms.
• ensuring that, with the prospect of an increasing recruitment/reliance on more 'short-term' staff, their integration into the current 'culture' is a priority.

In summary: the internal quality management system and quality management mechanisms established by SKVC are extensive and detailed. Whilst relatively new in their development they are 'supported' by the commendable commitment of the SKVC staff. The staff also appear to operate an extremely effective, but perhaps less formal, 'networking' across the organisation. The latter appears both timely and 'pro-active' but, being slightly 'informal', may be susceptible to the loss of any 'corporate memory' if key staff were to leave. Recent history of the Centre suggests this would not necessarily be the case, but an over commitment to a potentially prescriptive and over-elaborate internal management burden could change things.

The Centre will have to guard against any new (and potentially more bureaucratic) system becoming too preoccupied with 'recording data', becoming rather more 'reactive', and focussing more on the needs of 'supplying a quality service', rather than one that must be focused on 'supplying a service that effectively and efficiently supports quality in HE'. The two are not necessarily

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incompatible but it will be essential for SKVC to reflect on those aspects of its work that are most important to its contribution to its primary mission and prioritise its internal QA on these.

The Centre might wish to re-visit its Quality Policy to consider not just 'how can we ensure continuous improvement of the quality of the Centre's services?' but instead ask 'which of the services that we do provide (and could provide) has the greatest (potential) impact on our mission (i.e. to contribute to the improvement of quality in Lithuanian higher education and the free movement of persons across borders)? and then 'how can we prioritise and improve those services?'

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Appendix Two – Site Visit Schedule

Provisional Timetable for review of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)
Vilnius, Lithuania
Tuesday 13th March, 2012

PM	Panel arrive	Vilnius international airport
18.30 – 20.00	Panel Briefing	Hotel "Neringa"

Wednesday 14th March

Time	Meeting with:	Purpose / Discussion topics
8.30 – 9.00	Quick tour of SKVC facilities	Welcome, acquaintance with physical infrastructure, brief meeting with staff in offices
9.00 – 9.45	**Leadership of SKVC:** • Dr. Artūras Grebliauskas, Director of SKVC • Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Deputy Director	Overview of organization, Presentation of internal quality management system, Compliance to ESG
10.00 – 11.30	**Contributors to SER**: • Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Deputy Director • Mr. Almantas Šerpatauskas, Head, Division for Study Programme Evaluation • Ms. Nora Skaburskienė, Head, Division for Institutional Review • Ms. Rima Žilinskaitė, Head, Division for Qualification Evaluation • Ms. Daiva Buivydienė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Gintarė Motiekaitienė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Grytė Ruzgė, Chief Specialist • Ms. Jolanta Kriščiūnaitė, Evaluation Coordinator	Process of self-analysis, producing and findings of self-evaluation report
11.30 – 11.45	*Coffee break*	

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11.45 -12.30	Staff and management of divisions, performing external quality assurance agency functions: **Division for Study Programme Evaluation:** • Mr. Almantas Šerpatauskas, Head of Division for Study Programme Evaluation • Ms. Aušra Rostlund, Deputy Head of Division for Study Programme Evaluation • Ms. Gintarė Motiekaitienė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Grytė Ruzgė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Eimantė Gečytė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Jolanta Kriščiūnaitė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Renata Grinaitė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Rasa Penkauskienė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Kristina Žalnieriūnaitė, Evaluation Coordinator **Division for Institutional Review**: • Ms. Nora Skaburskienė, Head of Division for Institutional Review • Dr. Daiva Tereščenko, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Daiva Buivydienė, Evaluation Coordinator • Ms. Tautvilė Tunaitienė, Evaluation Coordinator	Activities of SKVC and Compliance to ESG; Functioning of internal quality management system
12.30 – 13.00	**Division for Qualifications Evaluation**: • Ms. Rima Žilinskaitė, Head of Division for Qualification Evaluation • Ms. Kristina Sutkutė, Credential Evaluator • Ms. Rūta Silevičiūtė, Credential Evaluator • Ms. Dalia Abaravičiūtė, Credential Evaluator	SKVC performing functions of ENIC/NARIC centre, Functioning of internal quality management system
13.00 -14.00	*Lunch*	
14.00 – 15.00	Supporting services, staff and management of: **Division for Law:** • Ms. Ieva Kairiūkštytė, Head of Division for Law • Ms. Vaida Balčiūnaitė, Chief Specialist **Finance Division:** • Mr. Tomas Vainoras, Head of Finance Division • Mr. Nerijus Gokus, Chief Specialist for Project Finance	Activities of SKVC and respective staff; functioning of internal quality management system

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	Other specialists, directly reporting to Director • Ms. Vilma Mieželienė; Chief Specialist for administration & HR • Ms. Julija Mažuolienė, Chief Specialist for projects • Ms. Gražina Radzvilavičiūtė; Chief Specialist for public relations	
15.00 – 15.30	Panel meeting	
15.30 – 17.00	**Ministry of Education and Science** Dr. Nerija Putinaitė, Vice-Minister (supervising Higher Education and Research)	Overview of Lithuanian Higher Education system and reform; role of SKVC

Thursday 15th March, 2012

9.00 – 10.00	**Experts participating in reviews (from HEI and stakeholders)** • <u>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saulius Vengris</u>, Vice-Rector for Strategic Development, Vilnius Academy of Arts, took part in evaluation of management programs, institutional reviews of universities • <u>Audronė Vareikytė</u>, Advisor for Social Affairs, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, lecturer of Vilnius University and Mykolas Romeris University– took part in development of social work study field descriptors, evaluation of social work study programmes • <u>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daiva Lepaitė</u>, Senior Specialist for Programs Development, Department of Study Affairs, Vilnius University – took part in evaluation of education study programmes, also in SKVC project devoted to studies regulation • <u>Assoc. Prof. Valdas Jaskūnas,</u> Vilnius University, Centre of Oriental Studies – took part in evaluation of philosophy and arts study programmes • <u>Mr. Jonas Bartlingas</u>, Head of Health Care Resources Management Division, Ministry of Health – took part in evaluation of public health, odontology programmes	Expert participation in programme and institutional reviews, other activities of SKVC
10.00 – 10.30	Panel meeting	
10.30 – 11.00	**Representatives of SKVC advisory bodies** • <u>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kęstutis Dubnikas</u>, Vilnius University, Head of Higher Education Evaluation Commission, took part in evaluation of history,	Decision making process in study programme evaluation

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	philosophy, religious studies programmes • <u>Prof. Dr. Rita Žukauskienė</u>, Mykolas Romeris University, member of Higher Education Evaluation Commission, took part in evaluation of psychology programmes • <u>Mr. Linas Leonas,</u> Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Head of Doctoral Board, member of Higher Education Evaluation Commission • <u>Mr. Saulius Olencevičius,</u> Director, Prime Consulting, member of Higher Education Evaluation Commission, took part in evaluation of management programs, institutional review of ISM University of Management and Economics, Vilnius Business Higher Education Institution, will be participating in institutional review of Vilnius University International Business School • <u>Dr. Henrikas Mykolaitis,</u> The Engineering Industries Association of Lithuania LINPRA, member of Higher Education Evaluation Commission, took part in evaluation of management, industrial engineering programs, will be in the group of institutional review of Maritime college (tentative)	
11.00 - 11.40	**Representatives of Colleges of HEI** • <u>Dr. Gintautas Bražiūnas</u>, Director of Vilnius College of Higher Education (Vilnius, public institution) • <u>Dr. Nijolė Zinkevičienė</u>, Deputy Director, Kaunas College of Higher Education (Kaunas, public institution) • <u>Mr. Ignas Stankovičius</u>, Deputy Director for Institutional Development, V. A. Graičiūnas School of Management (Kaunas, private institution) • <u>Assoc. Prof. Danutė Remeikienė</u>, Director, Alytus College of Higher Education (Alytus, public institution)	Views of SKVC work and role in Lithuanian HE system
11.40 – 12.20	**Representatives of Universities** • <u>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alfonsas Daniūnas</u>, Rector of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Vilnius, public institution), former member of SKVC Council (*tentative*) • <u>Prof. Dr. Pranas Žiliukas</u>, Vice-Rector for Studies, Kaunas University of Technology (Kaunas, public institution)	Views of SKVC work and role in Lithuanian HE system

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	• <u>Prof. Dr. Jonas Ruškus</u>, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University, former Head of Higher Education Evaluation Commission • <u>Prof. Dr. Jonas Čaplikas</u>, Vice-Rector for Studies, Aleksandras Stulginskis University (Kaunas, public institution)	
12.20 – 13.00	**Students and representatives of student associations** • Ms. Agnė Tamošiūnaitė, Mykolas Romeris University, took part in evaluation of psychology programs • Ms. Rasa Paurytė, Mykolas Romeris University, took part in evaluation of psychology programs • Ms. Ieva Dičmonaitė, Former President of National Union of Student Representations of Lithuania (LSAS), took part in institutional review of ISM Management and Economics University • Mr. Paulius Simanavičius, Social and Academic Affairs Committee Coordinator, Lithuanian National Union of Students (LSS) • Mr. Justas Bujokas, PhD student at Vilnius University, participated in arts and religion study programmes assessment • Mr. Mindaugas Grajauskas, Kaunas University of Technology, took part in evaluation of philosophy, dance and pedagogics programmes, will be participating in evaluation of linguistic and Baltic philology programes (*tentative*)	Student participation in external and internal QA
13.00 – 14.00	Panel Meeting/Lunch	
14.00 – 15.30	**Council of The Centre** • <u>Prof. habil. Dr. Jonas Čičinskas</u>, Institute of International Relations and Political Science Vilnius University, Head of Council • <u>Prof. Dr. Rimvydas Jasinavičius</u>, Vice-President, Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, Mykolas Romeris University, Deputy Head of Council - ***will not be available for the meeting, on business travel*** • <u>Mr. Saulius Baliukynas</u>, Head of Training Projects, Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (*tentative*) • <u>Mr. Tomas Baranauskas</u>, Member, The Board of Lithuanian Culture and	Views of SKVC work and role in Lithuanian HE system, Management of SKVC,

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	Arts	
	• Ms. Daiva Daugvilienė, Chancellor, Internation School of Law and Bussiness	
	• Mr. Dainius Dikšaitis, President, Lithuanian Union of Students	
	• Dr. Renaldas Jurkevičius, Prorector for Studies, Lithuanian University of Health Science (*tentative*)	
	• Prof. habil. Dr. Domas Kaunas, Reserch Secretary, Lithuanian Academy of Science, Vilnius University	
	• Mr. Antanas Levickas, Head, Division of College Studies, Departament of Studies, Science and Technology, Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Lithuania (*tentative*)	
	• Ms. Rūta Norkienė, Adviser, Office of the Education, Science and Culture Committee, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (*tentative*);	
	• Prof. Dr. Viktoras Senčila, Director, Lithuanian Maritime Academy	
15.30 – 17.00	Private Panel Meeting	
17.00 – 17.30	**Feedback from Review Team.** Participating: • Dr. Artūras Grebliauskas, Director of SKVC • Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Deputy Director • Mr. Almantas Šerpatauskas, Head, Division for Study Programme Evaluation • Ms. Nora Skaburskienė, Head, Division for Institutional Review • Ms. Rima Žilinskaitė, Head, Division for Qualification Evaluation • Ms. Ieva Kairiūkštytė, Head of Division for Law • Mr. Tomas Vainoras, Head of Finance Division • Ms. Aušra Rostlund, Deputy Head of Division for Study Programme Evaluation • Ms. Vilma Mieželienė; Chief Specialist for administration & HR • Ms. Julija Mažuolienė, Chief Specialist for projects • Ms. Gražina Radzvilavičiūtė; Chief Specialist for public relations	

Friday 16th March, 2012 - Panel departure

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