



**VILNIUS
TECH**

Vilniaus Gedimino
technikos universitetas

Nora Skaburskiene

Internal quality assurance at VILNIUS TECH: achievements and challenges

HELLO!

I am Nora Skaburskiene

Director of Academic Affairs Office at Vilnius Gediminas
Technical University, Lithuania

Key expert in the World Bank project on QA in Uzbekistan

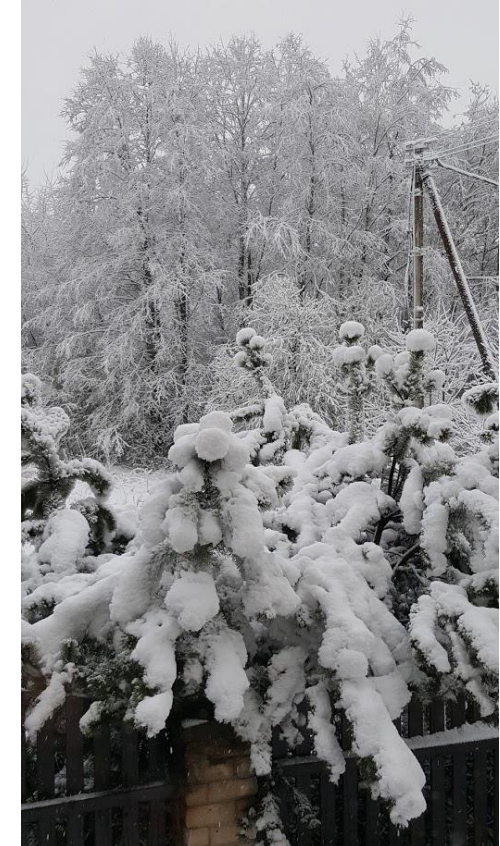
Former:

- ▣ *Director of National Quality Assurance Agency*
- ▣ *Vice-President of ENQA*
- ▣ *President of CEENQA*



LITHUANIA – Where it is?





Long lasting traditions of higher education

Vilnius University was established in 1579



The Charter of the King Stephen Bathory conferring the rights of the University and Academy; issued in Vilnius on 1 April 1579

Vilnius Academy Master's Diploma; issued in 1728



Higher Education in Lithuania

39 Higher Education Institutions

~ 1300 I&II cycle
study programmes

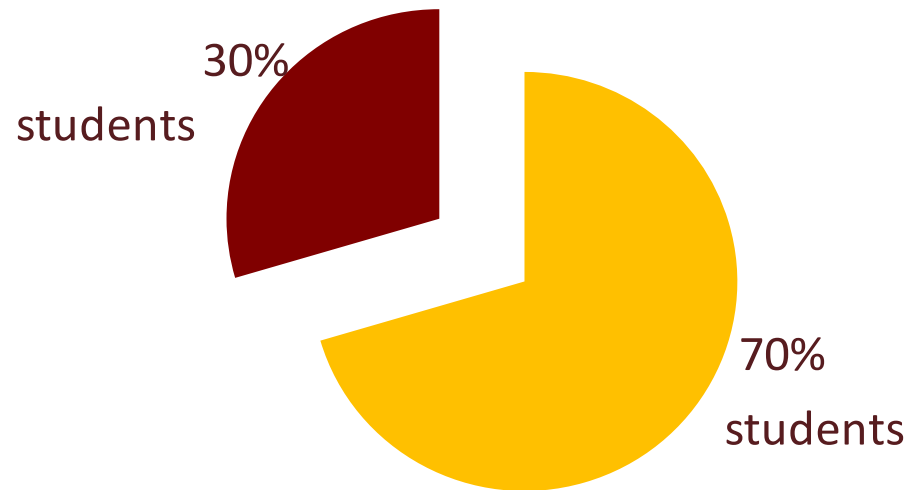
2,8 mln. population

~104 000 students



Binary system of HE

Universities of
Applied Sciences



Universities

There are 39 HEI in Lithuania:

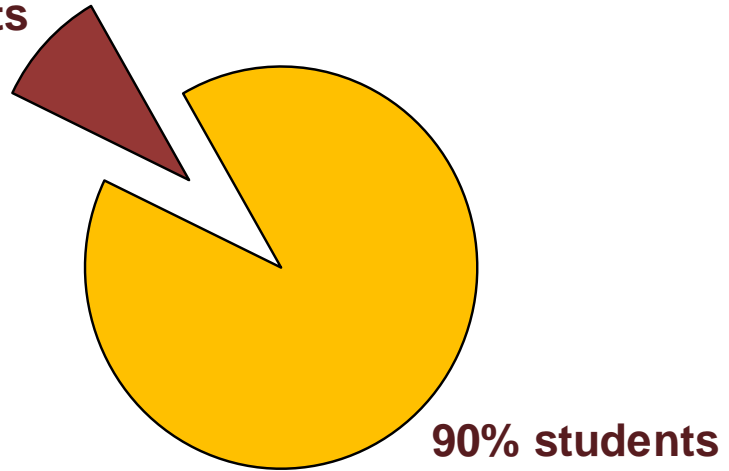
18 Universities (including 2
Seminaries and 1 Branch of
foreign University)
**21 University of Applied
Sciences**



State vs Private HE

Non-state sector

10% students



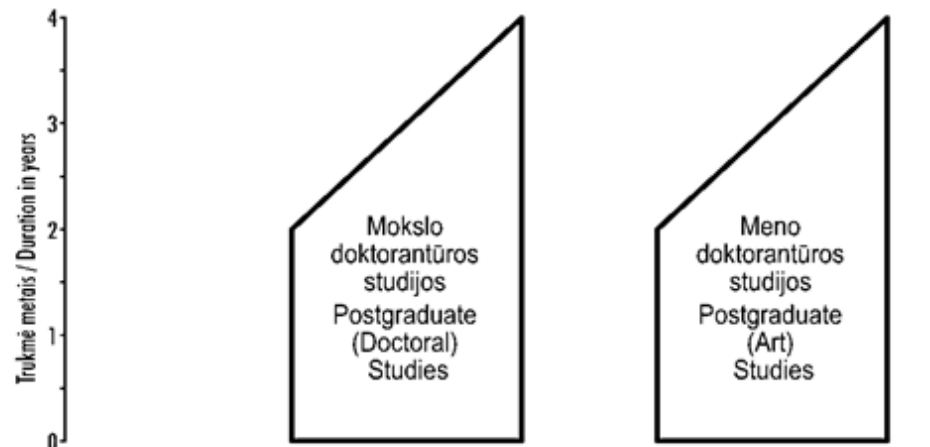
State sector



LTQF 8

EQF 8

TREČIOSIOS
PAKOPOS
STUDIJOS
UNIVERSITY
THIRD CYCLE
STUDIES



Priėmimas/Admission

LTQF 7

EQF 7

ANTROSIOS
PAKOPOS
STUDIJOS
UNIVERSITY
SECOND CYCLE
STUDIES

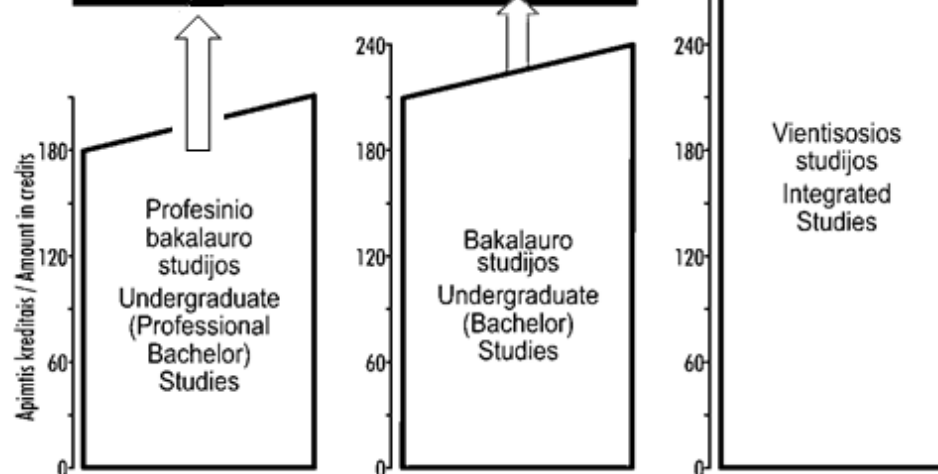


Priėmimas/Admission

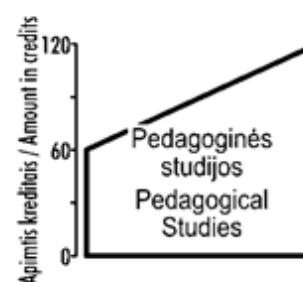
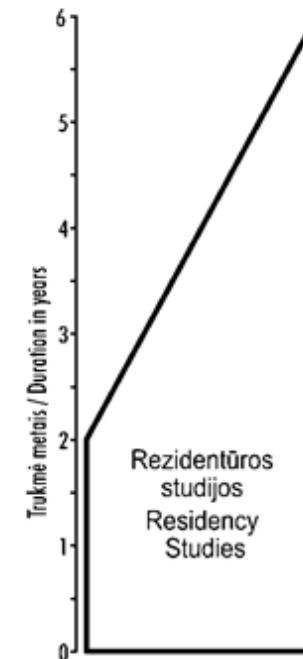
LTQF 6

EQF 6

PIRMOSIOS
PAKOPOS
STUDIJOS
FIRST CYCLE
STUDIES



Priėmimas/Admission





VILNIUS GEDIMINAS TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



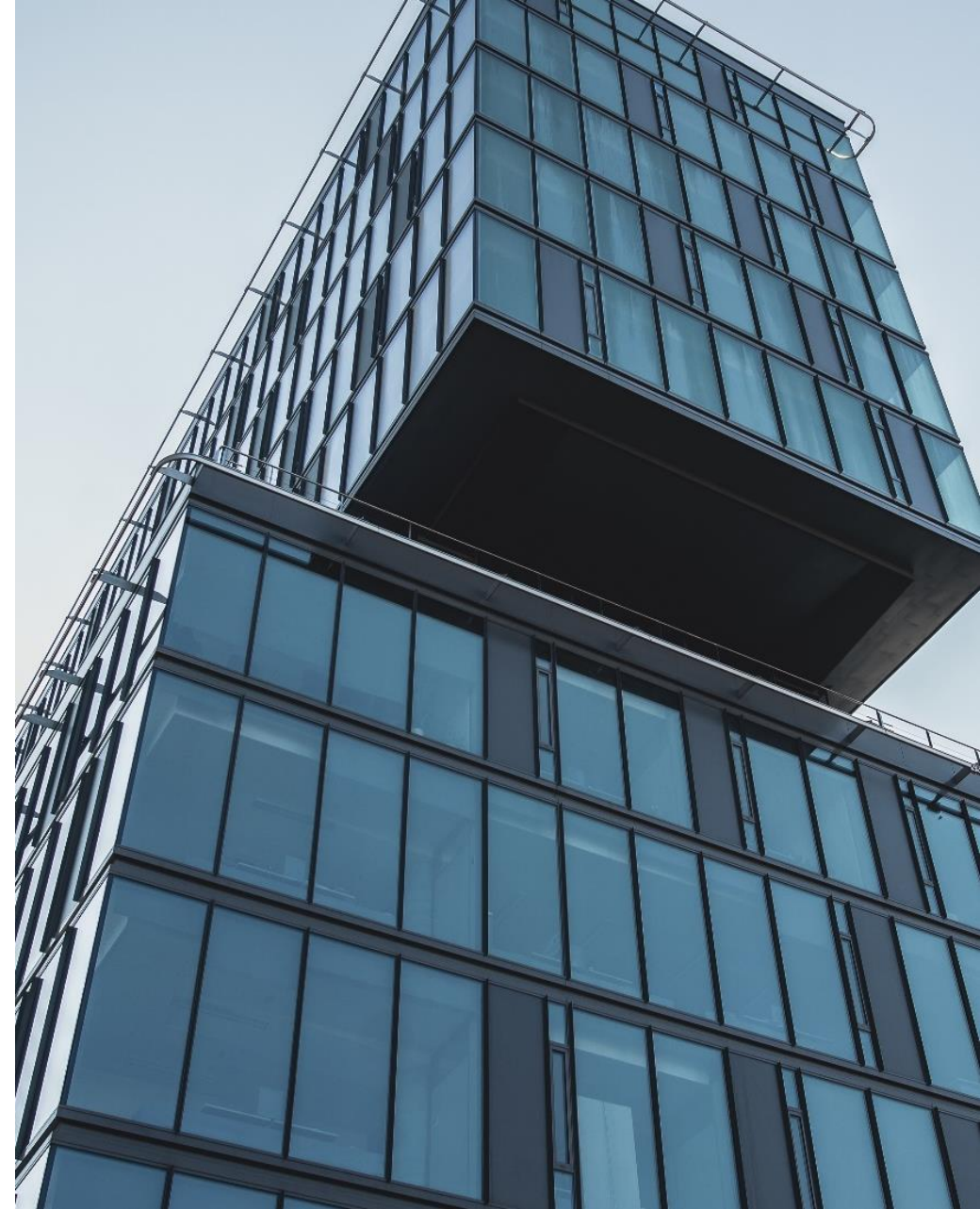
ONE OF THE TOP 2% UNIVERSITIES IN THE WORLD

32 in QS Emerging Europe & Central Asia Rankings 2020



FACTS AND FIGURES

- ESTABLISHED IN **1956**
- **8 500** STUDENTS
14% with international experience
- **13%** OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
from **79** countries
- **966** ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS
11:1 student / academic staff ratio
- **85 000** ALUMNI
- AROUND **500** BUSINESS PARTNERS
- **480** PARTNER UNIVERSITIES
in **64** countries globally



10 FACULTIES OF VILNIUS TECH

- ANTANAS GUSTAITIS' AVIATION INSTITUTE
- ARCHITECTURE
- BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
- CIVIL ENGINEERING
- CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
- ELECTRONICS
- ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
- FUNDAMENTAL SCIENCES (ICT & Computer Sciences)
- MECHANICS
- TRANSPORT ENGINEERING



3 RESEARCH CENTRES

13 RESEARCH INSTITUTES

22 RESEARCH LABORATORIES



110 STUDY PROGRAMMES

(60% in the field Engineering, Information and Technological Sciences)

36% TAUGHT IN ENGLISH:

- Bachelor's (undergraduate) 240 ECTS
- Integrated (undergraduate) 300 ECTS – Master's degree awarded
- Master's (graduate) 90 ECTS
- Master's (graduate) 120 ECTS



PhD STUDIES IN

11 FIELDS OF SCIENCE:

Technological Sciences:

- Civil Engineering
- Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Informatics Engineering
- Materials Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Transport Engineering

Social Sciences:

- Economics
- Management

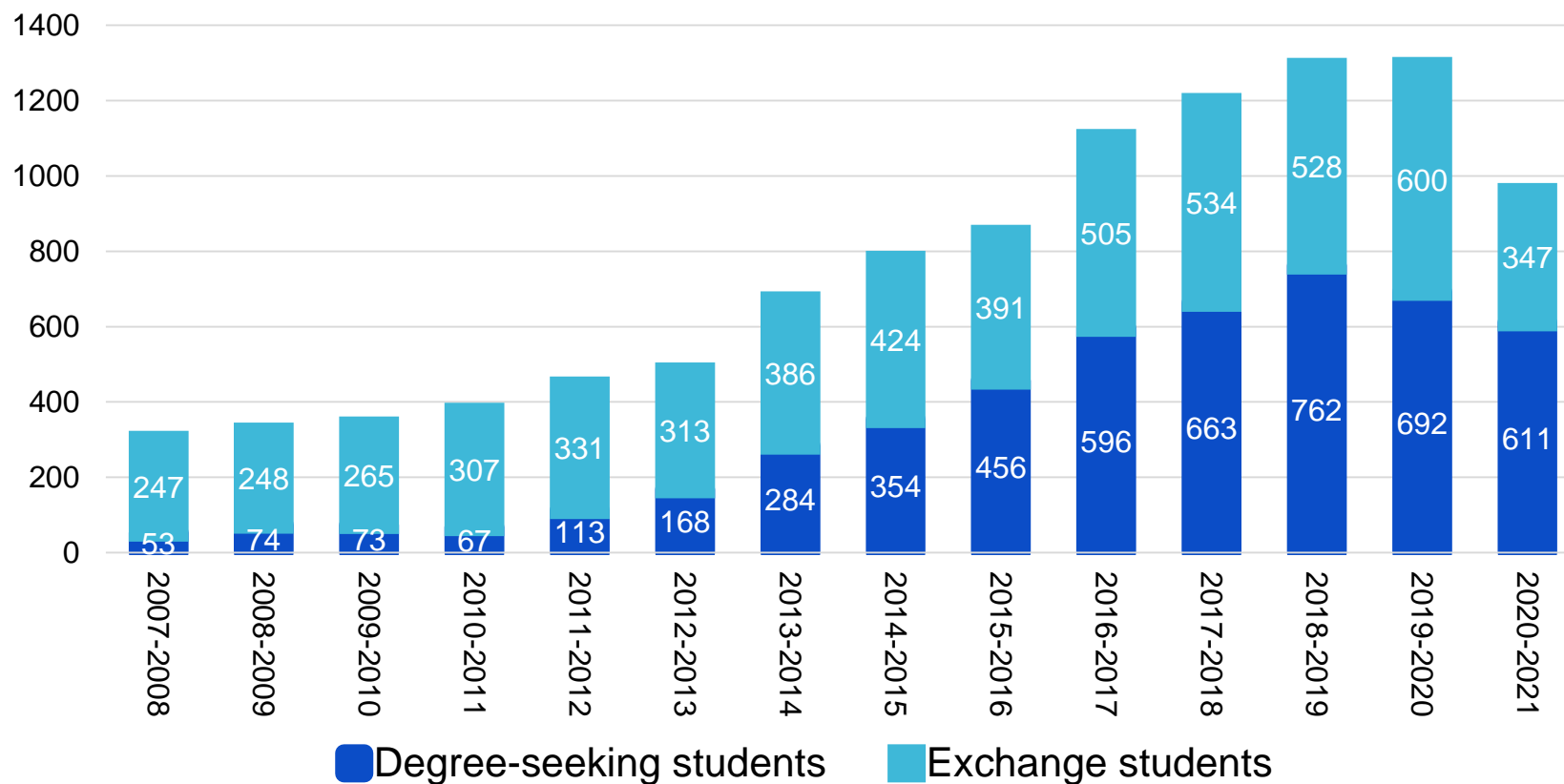
Natural Sciences:

- Informatics
- Humanities
- History and Theory of Arts

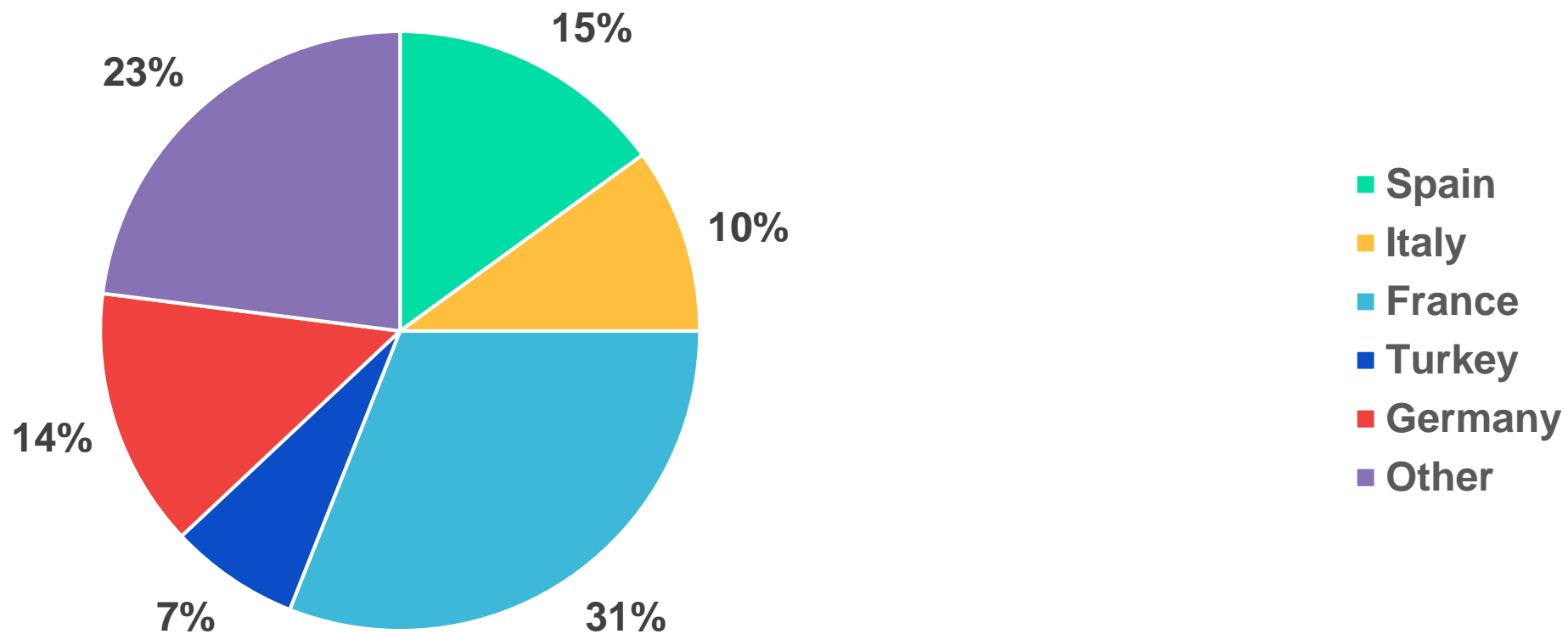


VILNIUS TECH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

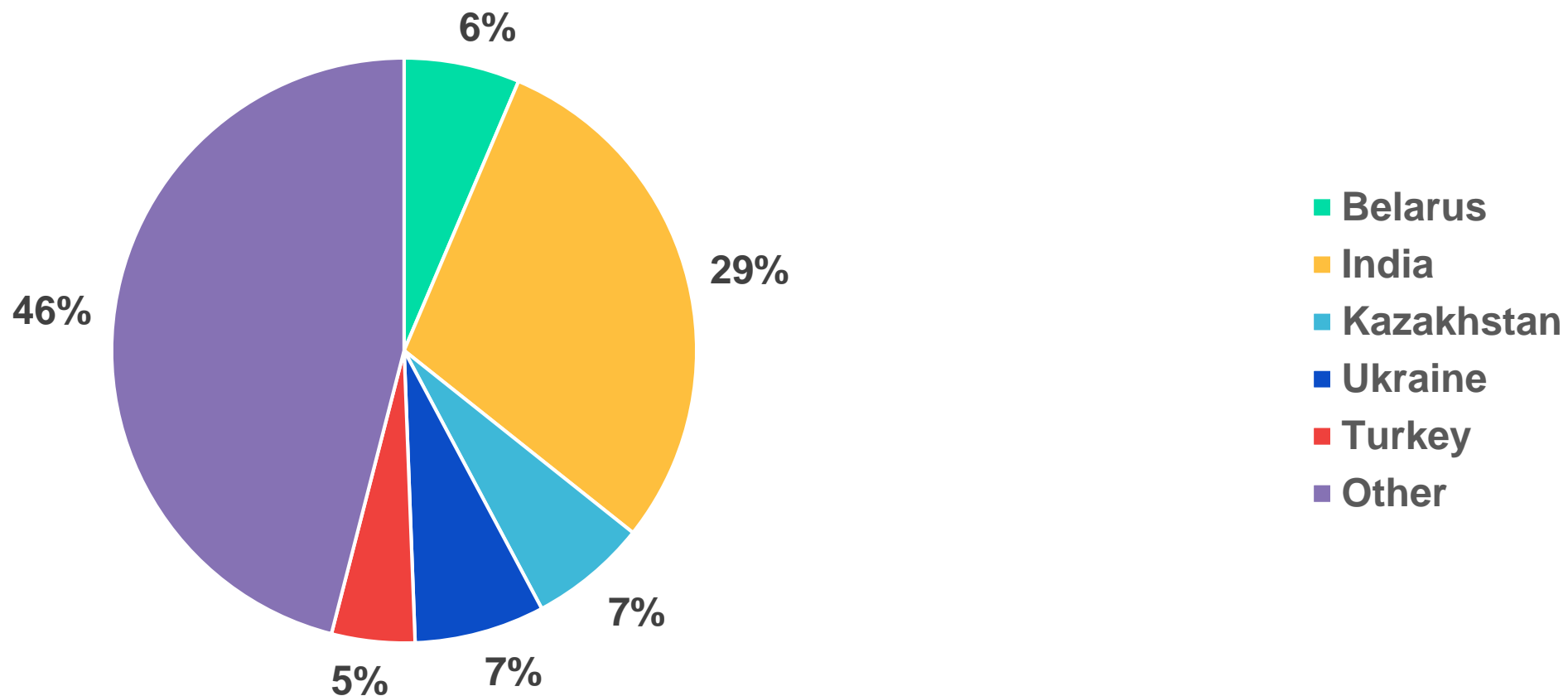
(from over 77 countries in 2020-2021)



EXCHANGE STUDENTS 2020-2021



INTERNATIONAL DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENTS 2020-2021



QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- Quality Manual of VILNIUS TECH Quality Management System
- VILNIUS TECH 2019–2021 performance objectives
- Description of internal audit procedure

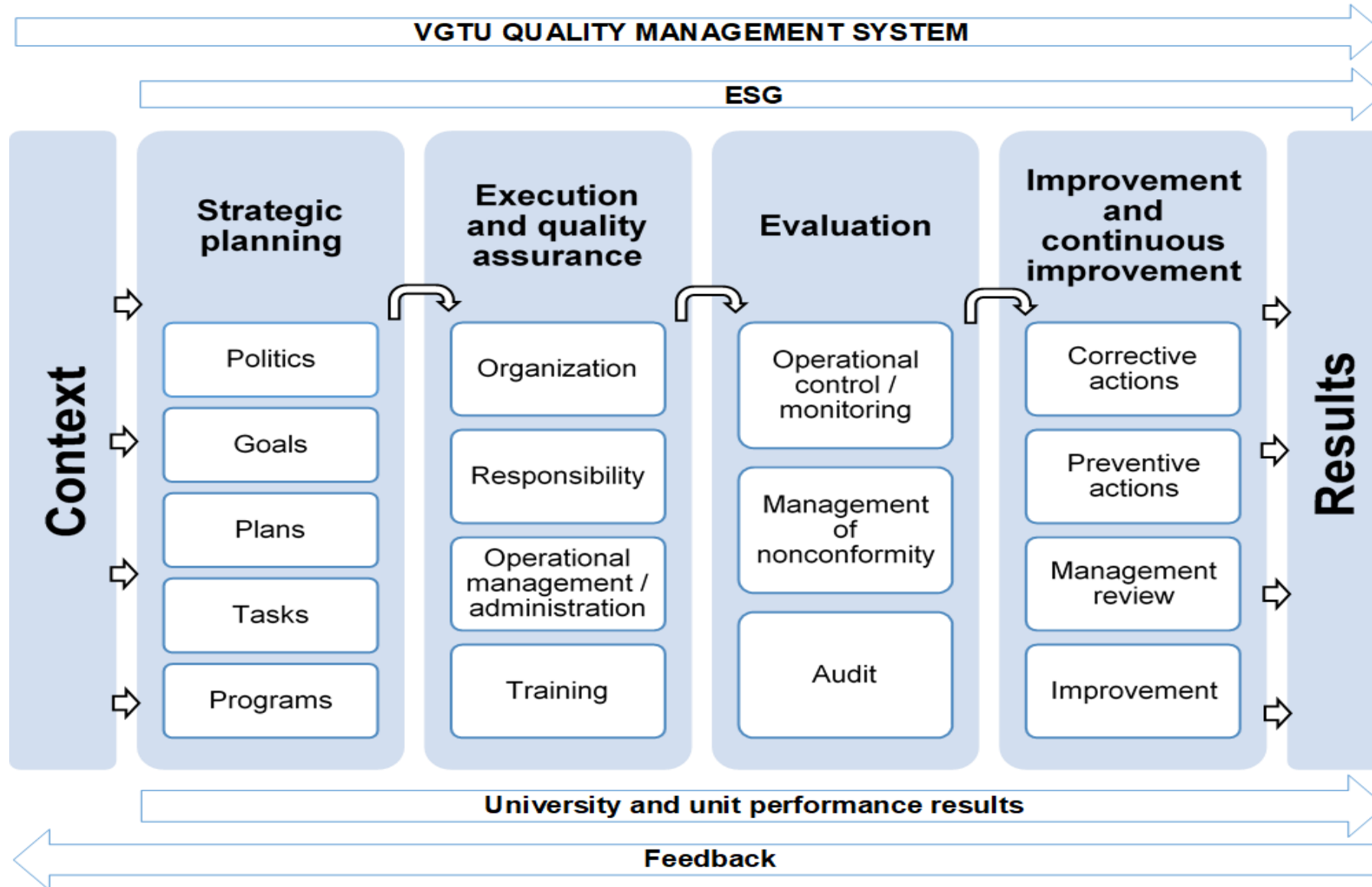


Quality assurance policy

- ❑ develop high-quality content of studies and study methods;
- ❑ expand opportunities for life-long learning;
- ❑ ensure access to distance-learning of engineering sciences;
- ❑ strive for unity of research and studies;
- ❑ continuously improve the system of quality assurance of studies;
- ❑ focus scientific potential in priority areas of research, create favorable environment for scientific creativity and interdisciplinary cooperation among researchers;
- ❑ develop internationalization of research activities, ensure they are in line with the priorities of the European Research Area.
- ❑ create modern infrastructure for research and studies by optimizing and renewing the existing resources, and modernizing the management of the University campuses;
- ❑ train the personnel to achieve the University's objectives, improve the systems of academic and professional career development;
- ❑ nourish academic culture, ensure equal opportunities;
- ❑ ensure that the quality assurance policy and the quality assurance objectives are known and understandable to the University's community.



Quality Management system (I)



Quality Management system (II)

Processes

Strategic management processes;

Main processes (management of studies, research activities);

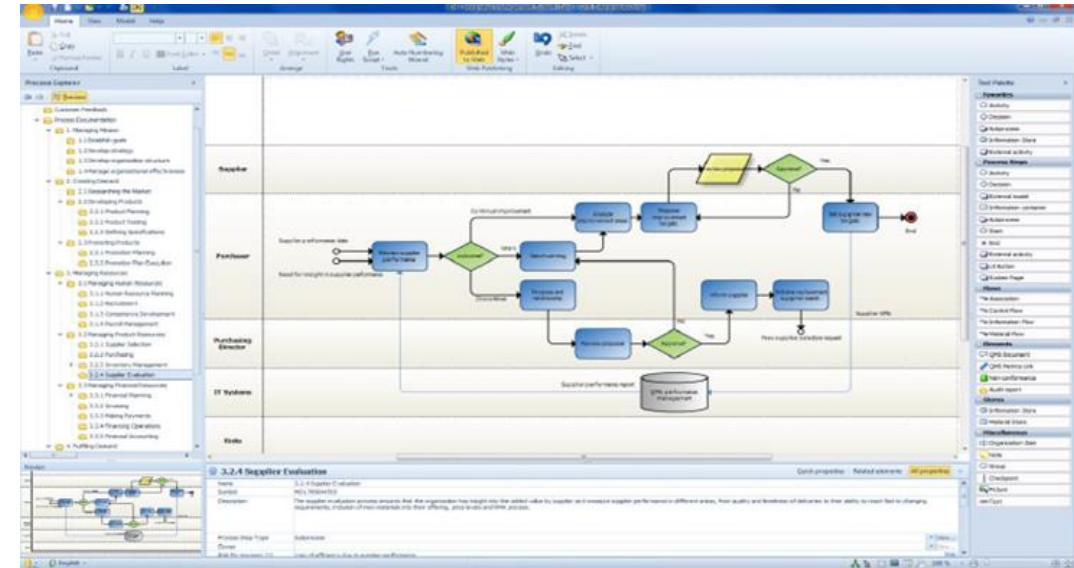
Supporting processes (personnel management, procurement management, IT management, etc.).

Indicators (Criteria)

Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 indicators;

Quality indicators;

Faculties Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 indicators (26 indicators).



Benefits of QM system

- ❑ Promotes a process approach and the improvement of activities by focusing on processes, their improvement, optimization.
- ❑ For employees, QMS clearly depicts the organization's processes, their implementation, intermediate and final results, employee roles, relationships between activities.
- ❑ Each activity (process) has a responsible person who oversees the process and improves it.
- ❑ Encourages and improves employee collaboration in finding the best solutions, making suggestions for improvement, and improving performance.



Quality Management system (III)

- ❑ Quality Management system is a tool for Leaders of the University to monitor implementation of strategic and other plans
- ❑ It does not go into the level where the quality is born



INTERNAL STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE AT **VILNIUS TECH**

Major objectives of IQA

- ❑ Promotion of QA culture within the university
- ❑ Building image of the university to the stakeholders with confidence, transparency and accountability
- ❑ Ensuring good practices in all aspects of management and studies
- ❑ Preparing the programs and university to meet the external QA and accreditation requirements



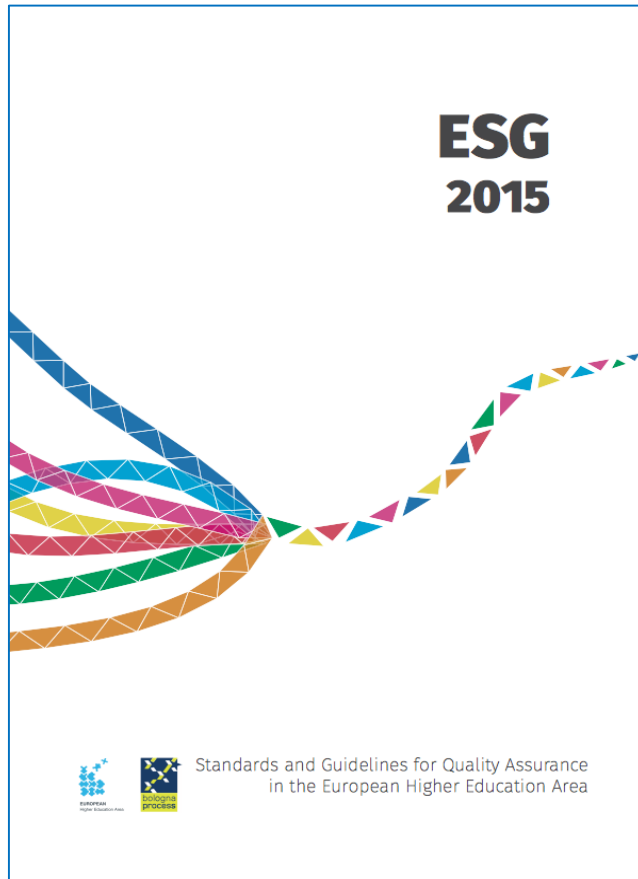
Why ESG is important?



Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

- ❑ Increased focus on student-centered learning and learning outcomes (more effective study process)
- ❑ Apply to all higher education offered regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery (mobility)
- ❑ Provide the framework and common basis for Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance in ESG



- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2 Design and approval of programmes
- 1.3 Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment
- 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
- 1.5 Teaching staff
- 1.6 Learning resources and student support
- 1.7 Information management
- 1.8 Public information
- 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance



1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a **policy for quality assurance** that is made **public** and forms part of their **strategic management**. **Internal stakeholders** should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving **external stakeholders**.

CURRENT STATUS

- Vilnius tech has QA policy (approved by Rector in 2015, renewed in 2018);
- Quality management system encompasses all activities of University;
- QMS is integral part of strategic management;
- Set of KPIs is approved, data gathered on regular basis.

ENHANCEMENT

- Improvement of **student's involvement into IQA processes**: SU prepares guidelines how students are involved in Study Committees and how feed-back is given to the rest of the students;
- Work with lecturers and students to **increase their participation in IQA** (trainings, discussions).



1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the **design** and **approval** of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended **learning outcomes**. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and **refer to** the correct level of the **NQF** for HE and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

CURRENT STATUS

- Vilnius tech internal system for development and approval of new programmes is in place;
- All programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- Programme portfolio is relevant to VGTU mission and vision

ENHANCEMENT

- Improvement of **student's involvement** in development of new study programmes;
- Further work with lecturers in **formulation of intended learning outcomes**.



1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an **active role** in creating the **learning process**, and that the **assessment** of students reflects this approach.

CURRENT STATUS

- Flexible ways for studies (according to possibilities – free, alternative subjects and in the framework of legal acts);
- All lecturers do have consultations hours;
- Mutual respect within learner-teacher relationship is promoted – introductory meetings with faculty lecturers, surveys results are analyzed and discussed;
- Appeals system is in place.

ENHANCEMENT

- **Variety of study methods** should be enlarged – pilot of innovative study methods - problem based, reflection/portfolio methods, etc. in 4 programmes;
- Better **sharing opportunities** of didactical, professional experience gained in foreign universities.



1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student „life cycle“, e.g. **student admission, progression, recognition and certification**.

CURRENT STATUS

- General national admission system, high level of state regulation;
- VGTU has a right to evaluate foreign diplomas for academic purpose;
- All students are awarded with diploma and diploma supplement in two language (LT+ENG).

ENHANCEMENT

- **Introduction** of 1st year students into university environment (module „Introduction to studies“ for all fresh students instead of orientation lectures);
- Revision of regulations for **recognition of study periods**.



1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the **competence** of their teachers. They should apply **fair and transparent** processes for the **recruitment** and **development** of the staff.

CURRENT STATUS

- Pedagogical competences upgrade courses for lecturers are being organized;
- Possibilities for upgrade of qualifications abroad (Erasmus+, mutual agreements between universities, research projects);
- Fair remuneration system (fixed part and point system depending on the work results – research, work with promotion of the university, etc.)

ENHANCEMENT

- Special **trainings** for lecturers working with I year students;
- **Non-formal discussions** of lecturers on the topic of quality of studies;
- Attestation form should include **hours of trainings** for enhancement of pedagogical competencies.



1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have **appropriate funding** for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible **learning resources** and **student support** are provided.

CURRENT STATUS

- Various projects for development of infrastructure;
- Funding available: Scholarships, reduction of fees, mobility, research grants, participation in events, dormitories, etc.
- Psychological and career counseling consultations are available;
- Tutors for the 1st year students are available;
- Free facilities for students.

ENHANCEMENT

- When **equipping** new premises special attention should be paid to attractive learning environment, good access for students with disabilities;
- The **antiplagiation** system is being tested for Social sciences (further expansion of application).



1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they **collect, analyse and use** relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

CURRENT STATUS

- Internal IT systems are in place;
- IT system for data according to KPIs;
- Electronic surveys system.

ENHANCEMENT

- After approval of a new external legal act on accreditation of Study fields, [review of KPIs](#), acquisition of data on the overall performance of the study field;
- Analysis and monitoring of [drop-out rates](#), guidelines for improvement;
- Guidelines for faculties on how the [results of surveys should be analyzed](#) and used.
- Data about [career of the graduates](#)



1.8 Public information

Institutions should **publish information** about their activities, including programmes, which is **clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible**.

CURRENT STATUS

- Information regarding all activities of university, including its study programmes is publicly available.

ENHANCEMENT

- Review and update of [English version](#) of the webpage;
- More information about [recognition of competences](#) acquired in non-formal way.



1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should **monitor** and **periodically review** their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to **continuous improvement** of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

CURRENT STATUS

- Activities of Study Programmes Committees – regular review of study programmes;
- All results of external evaluation are being published on the website.

ENHANCEMENT

- Foresee [planning and clear accountability](#) of Committees;
- Trainings for the members of Committees.



1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo **external quality assurance** in line with the ESG on a **cyclical basis**.

CURRENT STATUS

- All studies according to study fields are being assessed by the national QAA;
- University undergoes institutional review on a regular basis.

ENHANCEMENT

- Start of new cycle of accreditation of study fields (preparation of data and self-evaluation reports according to schedule).

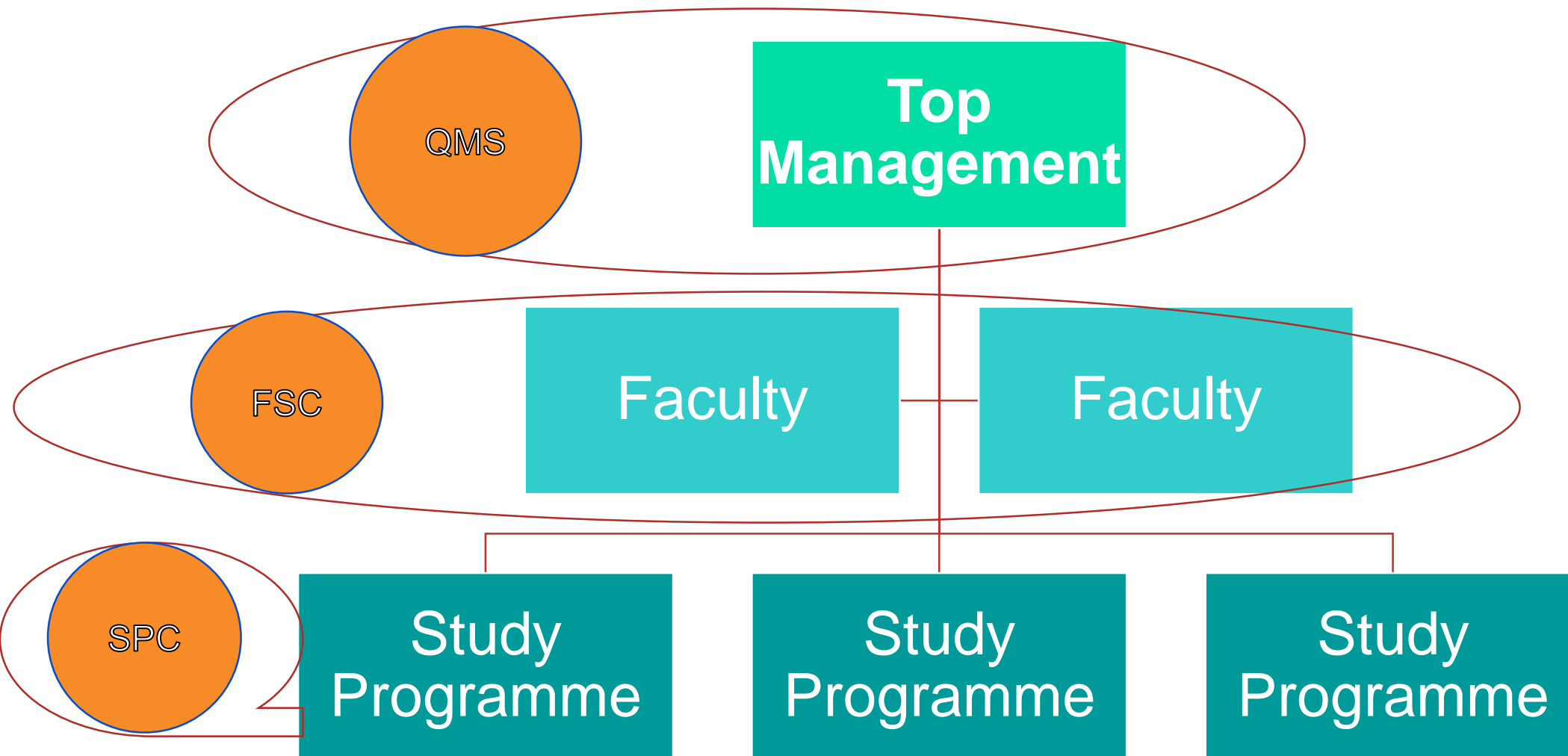


Summary

- ❑ ESG2015 provides a baseline for QA and focuses on student experience during the study process;
- ❑ Improvements related to the international harmonization and benchmarking of the programmes opens wider opportunities for the students to gain invaluable experience;
- ❑ Student involvement in the improvement of the study programmes can provide new insights on solutions to lasting problems, as well new suggestions for further development.



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT



Study programme level

Study Programme Committees

- ☐ Different attitude
- ☐ Unclear accountability
- ☐ No information for academic community
- ☐ Connection with employer world

Teachers

- ☐ Upgrade of qualification
- ☐ Conflict solving
- ☐ Learning from best practices

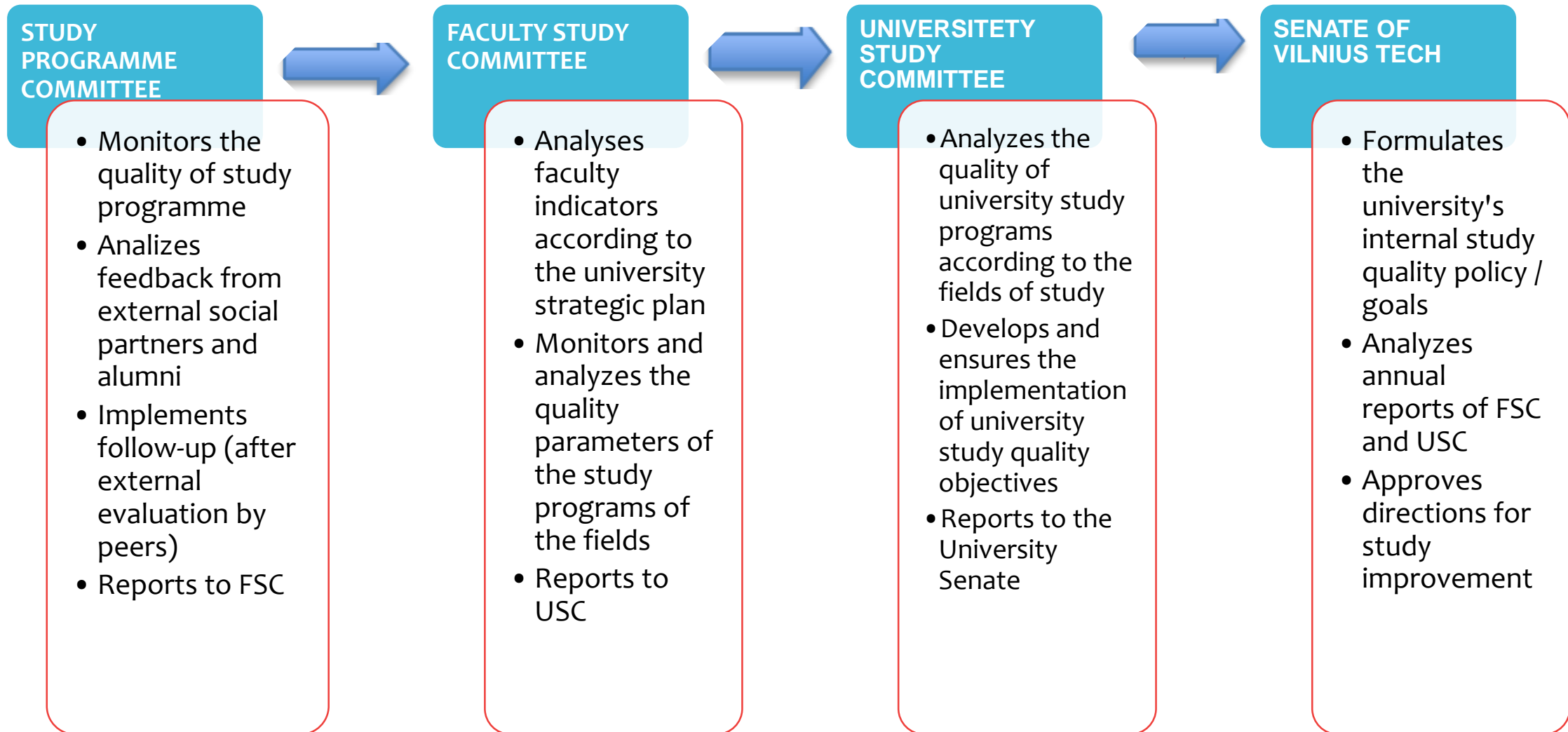
Students

- ☐ Feed-back
- ☐ Active involvement in IQA
- ☐ Academic support
- ☐ Retention of students



Study Programmes Committees

Review of functions and responsibilities



Study Programmes Committees

- ☐ Produce reports for the activities during academic year
- ☐ Submit reports to the FSC;
- ☐ Publication of reports



Teachers

- ☐ Academic support centre
- ☐ Training for academic staff
- ☐ Support in conflict solving
- ☐ Learning from best practices



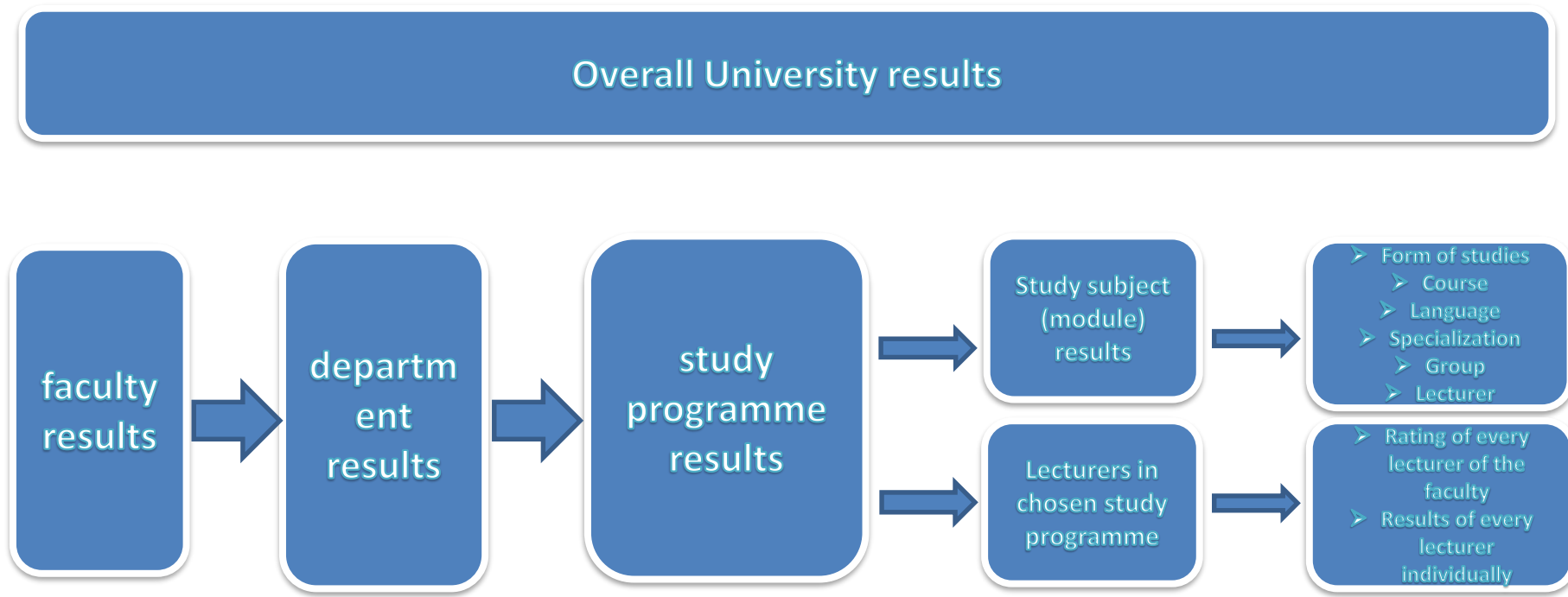
Students

- ❑ Regular surveys and provision of feed-back
- ❑ Active involvement in the work of SPCs
- ❑ Regular meetings with students in the faculties
- ❑ Academic support – mentors, tutors, additional courses on Mathematic, Physics, Chemistry
- ❑ Prevention of drop-out: pre-screening, work with identified group

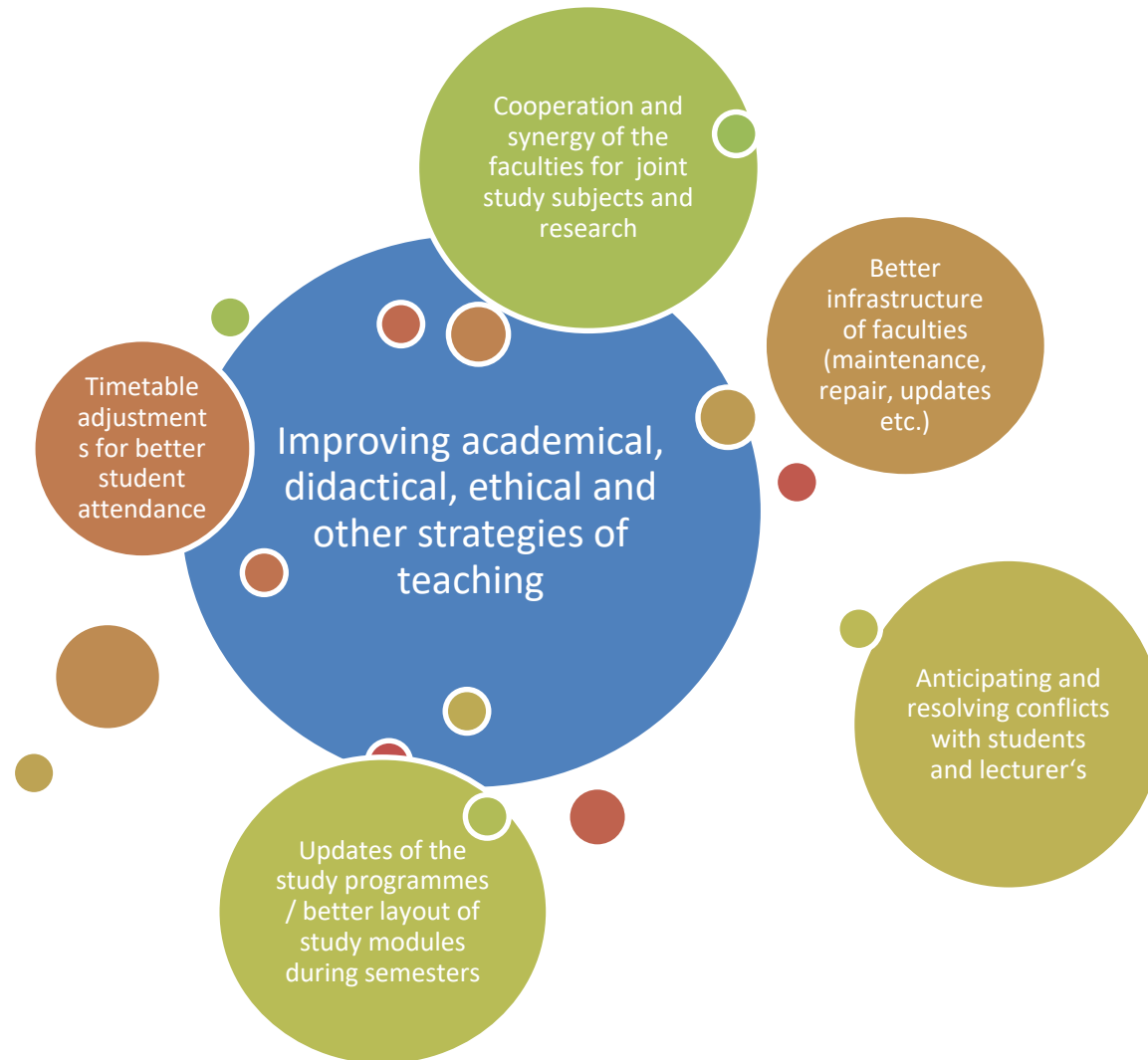


Survey data analysis

Student survey about the quality of teaching: possible data cuts:



What are the tendencies of the conclusions and actions taken from survey results?



BUT...

Be aware of the subjectivity of some of the data regarding quality!

- Quality data based on surveys and questionnaires often represent perception instead of hard facts
- Example: even though student questionnaires and surveys to assess teaching quality give us valuable information, they are based on perceived quality and may therefore be biased depending on other factors (exam results? Empathy?)



Compliance to external quality indicators

= **Stimulant** or the **risk** for the development of educational quality excellence?

- Stimulant: external quality requirements require and encourage a professional approach to internal quality assurance

BUT:

- Sometimes teams are focusing on “being compliant” to the formal requirements of external criteria. This may lead to *meeting the minimum required quality standards*, but not to excellence.
- A heavy focus on certain indicators (e.g.: number of peer-reviewed scientific articles published by the staff) may have a negative impact on other (core) activities, such as teaching or providing individual feedback to students.



CONCLUSIONS

- Quality is often subjective; educational quality is more than what can be measured.
- It is important to find a balance between accountability and improvement.
- Top aim - Learning Organization with a Quality Culture based on trust.
- Implementation is improved by ensuring that Quality is a matter of everyone.
- We need flexible quality systems to adapt to a quickly changing reality.



THANKS!

Any questions?

You can find me at
nora.skaburskiene@gmail.com

www.vilniustech.lt