



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDY FIELD
SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

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Vilnius
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Key data on the Programmes of the study field

Title of the study programme	Public Administration
State code	6121LX057
Type of studies	University studies
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Study cycle	First cycle studies
Mode of study and length in years	Full time (3.5 years) / part-time (5 years)
Scope in credits	210
Qualification awarded	Bachelor's degree in public administration
Date of registration	June 16, 2000

Title of the study programme	Public Governance
State code	6211LX078
Type of studies	University studies
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Study cycle	Second cycle studies
Mode of study and length in years	Full-time (1.5 years) / part-time (2 years)
Scope in credits	90
Qualification awarded	Master's degree in public administration
Date of registration	March 2, 2012

Title of the study programme	Regional Development and Governance (joint study programme)
State code	6281LX004
Type of studies	University studies
Language of instruction	English
Study cycle	Second cycle studies
Mode of study and length in years	Full-time (2 years)
Scope in credits	120
Qualification awarded	Master's degree in public administration
Date of registration	June 4, 2014

Abbreviations used in the Self-evaluation report:

BT – bachelor’s thesis
 PTS – part-time studies
 JSP – joint study programme with Pardubice University (Czech Republic)
 CAU – core academic unit
 MT – master’s thesis
 FTS – full-time studies
 PU – Pardubice University (Czech Republic)
 RDG – Regional Development and Governance
 SPC – Study Programme Committee
 ŠU – Šiauliai University (until 2021 January 1)
 VU – Vilnius University
 PA – Public Administration
 VUŠA – Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy

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* Approved at the meeting of VU Šiauliai Academy Public Administration Study Programme Committee and Regional Development and Management Study Programme Committee, protocol no. RP-2-9, 02/27/2020; updated at the meeting of the Public Administration Study Programmes Committee, protocol no. RP-2-45, 09/09/2020.

Schedule of task implementation

Tasks	Date of implementation
Collecting all relevant information for the self-evaluation.	15/06/2021
First draft of the Self-evaluation Report (SER).	30/06/2021
Discussing the first draft of SER focusing on three areas of evaluation: study aims, outcomes and content; links between science (art) and study activities; student admission and support.	10/09/2021
Discussing the first draft of SER focusing on four areas of evaluation: studying, student performance and graduate employment; teaching staff; learning facilities and resources; study quality management and publicity.	01/10/2021
Presenting the SER to the teaching staff, students and social partners of the Study Programme, discussing their feedback.	30/11/2021
Preparation of the final SER.	31/12/2021

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INTRODUCTION

Vilnius University (hereinafter, *University*) was established in 1579 and is the oldest and largest higher education institution in Lithuania. Its status is a public institution. The University's governance structure is defined in the *Statute of Vilnius University*¹, which stipulates that the self-governance of the University's community is implemented by the governing bodies of the University – the Senate, the Council, and the Rector – in their respective capacities.

Based on the data of 1 October 2021, there were 5317 employees at the University (of which 2424 were teaching staff and 804 were research staff, 2089 non-academic staff); the University had 23374 students. Since 1 January 2021 the University has had 15 core academic units (hereinafter, CAUs) (11 faculties, 1 institute, 1 centre, 1 business school, and 1 academy) and 12 core non-academic units. The CAUs maintain contact with each other and cooperate in the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan, studies, and research.

The University offers undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies in the fields of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medical and healthcare sciences, and technological sciences. More than 90 bachelor's and integrated study programmes as well as 110 master's and professional studies' (pedagogical) programmes are operated. Doctoral students can choose among nearly 30 research fields, while resident students can choose from more than 60 residency study programmes. The University offers studies in 12 study field groups and 60 study fields.

Studies in the field of evaluation are carried out at Šiauliai Academy (hereinafter - CAU, ŠA), which started its activities on 1 January, 2021, after the merger of Šiauliai University (hereinafter - ŠU) with Vilnius University. ŠU was a classical university, which acquired the status of a university in 1997, with all three levels of university study programmes, formal and non-formal in-service training and retraining programmes, and research in the humanities, social sciences, physics, technology, biomedical sciences, and the arts.

At Vilnius University, CAU operates in accordance with the Statute of Vilnius University and the regulations of Šiauliai Academy. The main governing bodies of the CAU are the Council and the Director, as well as the College of Studies, which plays an advisory role. Currently the CAU has 2 institutes (Institute of Regional Development, Institute of Education) and 2 centres (Lifelong Learning Centre, Šiauliai Open Access Centre) carrying out research and studies in the respective field. The main research fields of the CAU are ecology, informatics, engineering, mathematics, social sciences, health sciences, humanities, business and public management. The CAU has 224 employees: 120 teachers (22 professors, 39 associate professors, 9 assistants, 50 lecturers), 15 researchers (4 chief researchers, 5 senior researchers, 3 researchers, 3 junior researchers), 89 non-academic employees, 12 of whom are heads of departments and administrative staff. Currently 1061 students and 213 unclassified students study at CAU.

ŠA implements three programmes in the study field under evaluation: 1 first cycle study programme *Public Administration* and 2 second cycle study programmes - *Public Governance* and *Regional Development and Governance* (joint programme with Pardubice University in the Czech Republic); it also offers bridging courses of 30 and 60 credits of Public Administration studies for those who want to study in master's degree studies after non-university studies and studies in other fields. Doctoral studies in the field of Management are also being carried out (until 2021 - a consortium of Vytautas Magnus University with Klaipėda University, Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Mykolas Romeris University and Šiauliai University, since 2021 the rights of ŠU are taken over by Vilnius University, and since September 2021, it has become possible for CAU teachers to supervise doctoral students who have entered the Faculty of Economics and Management of Vilnius University).

The joint master's programme *Regional Development and Governance* is implemented together with the partner University of Pardubice (Czech Republic) (hereinafter - PU). It is one of the 26 higher education institutions in the Czech Republic and the only higher education institution in the Pardubice region to offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies, more than 130 programmes. PU has 7 faculties that seek to develop research and innovation. PU Faculty of Economics and Administration was established in 1991 as the Faculty of Public Administration, which responded to the need for professionally trained specialists in state and local government institutions and business leaders. The students of the faculty are provided with knowledge of economics, financial management, management and marketing, as well as more attention is

¹ Law of the Republic of Lithuania No. I-281, 1990 June 12 (wording of Law No. XII-862 of the Republic of Lithuania of 6 May 2014). See <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.279/asr>

paid to the development of competences of specialists in the field of public administration and public sector economics. Students are introduced to informatics, information systems and technologies, mathematics and statistics, as well as a strong focus on foreign language learning, regional administration and the European Union. In response to the specifics of the studies, the faculty cooperates intensively with public sector institutions (regional, national and international). The faculty consists of 6 institutes: Institute of Economics, Institute of Business Economics and Management, Institute of Administration and Social Sciences, Institute of Systems, Engineering and Informatics, Institute of Mathematics and Qualitative Methods, Institute of Region and Security. The joint study programme *Regional Development and Governance* is implemented at the Faculty of Economics and Administration, which employs 93 teaching, research and administration staff (6 professors, 18 associate professors, 40 assistants, 9 junior assistants, 20 administrative staff) and 1885 students.

Studies in the field were started to be carried out at the then ŠU in 2000, after the registration of the first cycle study programme *Public Administration*. With the growing demand for highly qualified employees in the reorganized public administration of the Republic of Lithuania, since 2005 a specialization *Public Administration* has been established in the already existing master's degree programme *Management*. With the strengthening of the scientific potential, the study base, the growing cooperation with public administration and local self-government institutions, Vytautas Magnus University, KTU conducting political studies and the need for highly qualified managers in public administration, in 2012 the second cycle programme *Public Governance* was launched. These the first and the second cycle programmes are classified as focused on general public governance studies, with constantly reviewed specializations, creating alternatives for students to delve into specific areas of practice and research. In cooperation with the social partners, the shortage of public governance specialists focused on the formulation and implementation of regional development policy has been identified, therefore, with the increase in the international mobility of teachers of public administration programmes, the experience of applying innovative study methods, interacting with regional institutions in order to make greater progress with the help of EU support, another second cycle programme, *Regional Development and Governance*, focusing on specific studies in regional governance practices and research was developed and accredited in 2014.

During the assessment period, the main structural changes in the bachelor's programme *Public Administration* are the reduction of the scope of the programme from 240 credits to 210 without reducing the learning outcomes, introducing service learning and problem-based learning methods, Moodle platform. According to the survey of graduates, since 2020 specializations have been abandoned in the study programme *Public Governance*, they are being replaced by a wider list of electives, the list of which is reviewed and updated every year. In 2020–2021, working with students using the Teams platform during the COVID-19 pandemic (remote direct work (real-time)) taught the staff to find new forms of work and to improve programmes; all subjects are prepared to be performed in a combined or remote way using digital technologies, more group and individual consultations are planned. The study programmes of the field were externally evaluated: in 2005 and 2013 - the study programme *Public Administration*, in 2017 - the second cycle programmes *Public Governance* and *Regional Development and Governance* (JSP in the Czech Republic was accredited in 2019 for 7 years (until 2025)). The study programmes were evaluated positively and accredited for 6 years. The recommendations made in the conclusions of the previous evaluation and the changes they lead to are presented in the analysis of the evaluation areas.

During the evaluation period, CAU's research and project activities were developed in 5 fields. One of them, "Socio-Economic Phenomena in the Process of Welfare State Building", addressed the following research issues: the realization of good governance at local self-government, research on social challenges, sustainable development in the welfare creation process, quantitative modelling of macroeconomic processes, educational management and leadership. It was in this area of research and experimental development that the teachers of the field of study were also active (conducted research, implemented research and applied projects, publicized research results, published specialized journals, and organized international scientific events). In addition, the international Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET) coordinated by VU Šiauliai Academy (whose various activities were initiated, coordinated and organized by the teachers of the field) contributed to the increase of the internationality of research activities and studies.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY FIELD

1. Study aims, outcomes and content

The aim of the study programmes in the field of public administration at both levels is united by the aim of training competent specialists of the public administration system, analysts with democratic values and moral values of public administration, ability to create effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, ability to learn continuously. The higher level of studies presupposes higher aspirations, orienting the bachelor's studies towards the general practice of public administration, the master's studies towards the analysis based on research, expert knowledge, evaluation and improvement of the implementation of public policy through public administration:

- The Bachelor's study programme *Public Administration* is designed to train specialists in the public administration system who, based on the most advanced theories of public governance and administration, democratic values, principles of good and smart governance, using social research methods, innovative digital, information and communication technologies are able to research formation and functioning of public administration systems, processes and interactions between various public administration entities, to prepare and implement investment projects, to implement public administration activities in a constantly changing social, political, legal, environmental and economic environment, to initiate and adopt administrative decisions, control the implementation of laws and administrative decisions, to administer public administration entities and the provision of public services.
- The Master's programme *Public Governance* is designed to train highly qualified specialists with a set of expert knowledge and skills, public administration values and moral norms in the field of public administration, to enable them to act professionally and creatively in solving state and local government issues, to adapt and develop public administration tools in their fields of professional activity, to improve the learning skills necessary for continuing independent studies.
- The Master's programme *Regional Development and Governance* is designed to train highly qualified public administration specialists-experts and analysts who are able to integrate fundamental knowledge of public governance and regional development, research and expertise in the preparation and implementation of regional development programmes.

The programmes *Public Administration* and *Public Governance* focus on general public governance studies that combine the formation of classical public administration, public governance, public policy processes and policy analysis, social research methods, values, principles, creative and critical attitudes, more in-depth studies of other sciences (politics, economics, law, sociology, etc.) and interdisciplinarity, achieved through individualization of the study content, independent choice of topics for individual tasks, practical tasks, preparation of final theses, addressing the development and improvement of specific areas of public governance.

The programme *Regional Development and Governance*, which provides the opportunity to obtain the latest knowledge in public governance and regional economics while studying at two universities (Lithuania and the Czech Republic), to work in international teams on real projects, is focused on specific studies in regional government practices and research.

The content of all subjects in the study programmes of the field of public administration is characterized by international comparability, methodological pluralism, scientific and practical applicability of the performed research; the realization of study subjects is characterized by intensive communication and cooperation with teachers, public administration practices, politicians and with each other; assessment of the learning outcomes is focused on achieving a higher result, not only on the performance of the procedure, as it is also characteristic of modern public administration; the management of study programmes is characterized by strategic inclusive management, transparency, responsibility when the discussed mission of the programmes gives coherence to their management and this is a methodological approach that connects all programmes into a whole.

1.1. Studies in the field are based on the needs of the society, and industry as well as on the strategy on the institution

Rationality of the number of implemented programmes in the field, possibilities of programme development in the field

The first and second cycle studies in public administration field provide preconditions for training specialists for public administration institutions, NGOs, to meet the growing need for analysts, leaders of public sector organizations socialized for teamwork in inter-institutional networks, interacting with politicians, able to work in innovation projects in local government and regional development, as well as to ensure consistent development of research in this field and training of researchers that is realized through research, scientific events, the Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET)², especially that public administration studies according to the description of the study field of public administration are carried out only at the University (there are no other universities in the Northern Lithuania region). The bachelor's programme *Public Administration* is focused on general studies of public administration through electives, practice, individual subject tasks, final work ensuring the realization of acquired knowledge and skills in selected fields of practical activity. *JSP Regional Development and Governance* aims to integrate and deepen the analytical competences of research organization, specific regional sustainable development, management and implementation of social and economic policy processes, which would enable participation in regional development policy, strengthening regional cohesion, thus contributing to regional socio-economic development and increasing competitiveness. The orientation of the master's study programme *Public Governance* towards general public governance studies creates conditions for a wider circle of public governance specialists to develop general public governance competences. The aim of the municipalities - the social partners of the University - to strengthen the staff of their institutions was realized by groups of master students formed from separate municipalities (Mažeikiai, Tauragė, Akmenė, Radviliškis, Šiauliai), at the same time developing public policy in municipalities a field of applied research. The number of employees of public libraries, municipal administration and elderships and heads of health care institutions coming to this master's programme has increased. Master's studies in the programme *Public Governance* enable the development of the parity principle of higher education, i.e. scientific cooperation between teachers, doctoral students and graduates. That is evident in publications in the scientific journal *Social Research*.

During the analysed period, the implementation of the international *JSP Regional Development and Governance* (together with the PU) in the field of public administration especially strengthened the international dimension in public administration studies and research (joint publications, conferences), inspired more active involvement in international contrastive research and joint projects.

The first cycle studies of public administration also proved successful in the public administration transformation carried out by the Republic of Lithuania (in 2018 and 2019 we had groups of people from the police who joined the upper courses and studied for 1.5–2 years, in 2020 the group of students from the State Social Insurance Fund Board (Sodra) and State Tax Inspectorate was formed) between people combining work and studies who have entered the civil service from other fields of activity and seek to meet the requirements of the civil service and the opportunity to grow.

The choice to implement bachelor's and master's studies focused on general public administration competences in the field of public administration at VU ŠA and to have original, regional governance-oriented studies with an international dimension in the second cycle, is primarily based on rationality (seeing wider opportunities for continuity and development the changing needs of the region in public administration, seeing the opportunity to change and improve the region's professional field, make the public service more competent), as well as experience-proven insights to increase the interaction between research and public governance creating a culture of lifelong learning in the region, in the civil service.

Today, when smart public administration is being updated, the attention to the sustainable development of regions, their economic independence and at the same time more active integration of the regions of the Republic of Lithuania with other EU regions is increasing. Therefore, preconditions for the development perspectives of study programmes appear. Researchers and teachers implementing programmes in the field of public administration see opportunities to improve the first cycle programme *Public Administration*:

² Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), coordinated by VU Šiauliai Academy (2015–2020 - coordinated by Šiauliai University). <https://atviri.emokymai.vu.lt/course/view.php?id=126>

1) keeping the content of the programme up to date with the uncertainties of smart governance by strengthening the involvement of citizens and staff in governance, inter-organizational cooperation, social value creation, and other issues; 2) forming groups of modules from the existing structure and offer them to public administration professionals involved in lifelong learning. We also see the following perspectives for the programme: knowing that VU ŠA will not admit students to the first cycle programme *Business Administration* in the near future and only colleges will implement business studies in the region, to consider possibility of a new specialization that focuses on the interaction between private business and public administration thus compensating for the possible shortage of qualified individuals for business establishments; seeing the growing need for skilled workers in the social services sector, NGOs, to consider the possibility of other specializations. Also, after merging with VU, there is an opportunity to consider the issue of creating new specializations or strengthening existing ones (for example, in cooperation with VU Faculty of Law). The programme *Public Governance* could be improved: 1) according to NASPAA an updated standard of 2019 in which the value foundation of the civil service is crucial; 2) in the context of international cooperation with European universities, i.e. becoming an ERASMUS MUNDUS joint programme (project application with partners for feasibility study was submitted in June 2021); 3) developing long-term and sustainable cooperation with the Institute of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska, Omaha (USA) to increase the involvement of USA colleagues in teaching more alternative subjects in English. Perspectives for improving the programme *Regional Development and Governance*: 1) As ŠA became a part of VU, the interest of entrants from other countries is growing; 2) VU ŠA has new opportunities for international cooperation in new (for example, ARQUS) networks, so the programme could be strengthened both in terms of attracting new students and greater involvement of visiting lecturers.

Relevance and uniqueness of the outcomes of the study programmes in the field; compliance with the needs of society and the labour market

The aims of the study programmes of the field and the learning outcomes are formulated in such a way that they correspond to: Lithuanian qualification levels defined by the complexity, independence and variability of the activity; the learning outcomes specific to each cycle described in the description of study cycles; in the description of the study field of public administration (2015), the general and specific learning outcomes defined in its renewal project (2020); the values and competences pursued in the master's programmes in this field defined by NASPAA standard (2014; 2019)³. When formulating and updating the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes of the field:

- 1) trends in civil service development are assessed globally (Insights from colleagues at the University of Nebraska in Omaha; NASPAA standards and insights, etc.) and locally (analysis of strategic results of public policy documents of the Republic of Lithuania in the next 5–10 years, analysis of the results of audits of civil service activities performed by the National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania, competencies of civil servants, etc.); this takes place periodically, each year the Study Programmes Committee (hereinafter referred to as the SPC) discusses the renewal of next year's programmes, seminars of US researchers who come to practice in public administration programmes are organized, the staff participates in the discussions at the annual MRU Public Administration practical conferences. Based on the experience of US colleagues, the content of participatory governance and innovation management has been strengthened in the programmes; in response to the updated NASPAA 2019 standard, the value base of public service (responsibility, transparency, ethics) has been updated; in response to the transformations of public administration in the Republic of Lithuania, the topics of change management and leadership in conditions of uncertainty are being developed;
- 2) the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes of the field in other domestic and foreign higher education institutions are compared ("benchmark"): In Lithuania, studies in the field of public administration are carried out in Vilnius (MRU), Kaunas (KTU and VMU), Klaipėda (KU) and Šiauliai (VU ŠA). Bachelor's programmes at all universities in 2021 focused on general public governance studies, the scope of programmes (MRU and KU - 180 credits, others - 210 credits, KTU dual degree programme - 240 credits), the package of leaning outcomes and the content of their achievement differ (VU ŠA is strong in local self-government administration and development, MRU - civil service

³ NASPAA. (2019). Accreditation standards for Master's degree programs. <https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-11/NASPAA%20Accreditation%20Standards%20-%202019%20FINAL%20with%20rationale.pdf>

procedures, VMU - policy and public administration interaction dimensions, etc.), this creates opportunities for students to move from one university to another, ensures access to studies for civil servants working in the civil service, while, on the other hand, increases competition among potential students. Master's study programmes analogous to VU ŠA *Public Governance* are available at MRU, KTU. Other master's programmes in the field of public administration in Lithuanian are more focused on specific areas of public administration (education and science policy and governance, NGO policy and governance, governance of state institutions) – in the programme implemented at VU ŠA, deepening into specific areas of activity is achieved through study alternatives, individual tasks in the subjects. The JSP *Region Development and Governance* is similar to the KU programme *Regional Governance* in terms of learning outcomes, but the VU ŠA programme differs in that the studies are conducted in English, and the semester is spent at a partner university. Most EU and US university public administration programmes are part of the NASPAA networks, constantly interested in insights into the competences required for public administration, so there are no significant differences in the learning outcomes, the aims and outcomes of the programmes are usually determined by national qualification requirements, for example, in Poland the qualification of a lawyer is required, in the Czech Republic - ICT management (qualification work is defended), etc.;

- 3) assessing the needs of society now and in the near future, the SPC is constantly researching the need for public administration professionals. Competences needed today for digitization processes (European Commission, 2019; 2021),⁴ due to the challenges of operating efficiently and providing quality public services, uncertainty, optimization of structures, increased leadership in crisis situations, management, data security, public procurement, etc. the need for general and special competences (European Commission, 2020; National Audit Office, 2018a, 2018b, 2020)⁵ are analysed, therefore, the first and second cycle programmes in Lithuanian will be implemented in the near future and will remain focused on general public administration studies, as today a holistic view of the field of public administration problems is necessary. The pandemic has reinforced the need to have civil servants with modern governance competences in the civil service, which is increasing the requirements for those already working in the civil service. At present, the percentage of public sector employees of the working age in the Republic of Lithuania is close to the average of European countries (about 24%), but it should not decrease compared to welfare countries (about 37.8% in Norway; 31.1% in Denmark);
- 4) special studies are carried out to assess the needs of the labour market or regular environmental monitoring is carried out by the members of the SPC. In 2018-2020, VU ŠA master's student Aušra Petrauskaitė conducted a study entitled "Planning the Need for Human Resource Competences: The Case of Šiauliai Region Municipal Administrations", which showed that during 2016–2019, there was a slight decrease in the number of competitions, to which there were no applicants, in addition, a trend has been observed that the number of applicants who do not meet the general and special requirements and do not participate in competitions is increasing. There is no "reserve" of competent applicants for vacancies in the region: at present, all students in the first and second cycle study programmes of VU ŠA already have jobs, and their studies will increase their career opportunities. Since 01/06/2021, only people with at least a level VI qualification will be able to work in the civil service of the Republic of Lithuania, and people who started working three decades ago often graduated from schools, which are no longer equated to the VI qualification level, therefore a lot of vacancies will be created. The motivation of school leavers to enter bachelor studies is likely to be affected by the new version of the Law on the Civil Service (hereinafter - LCS) which entered into force in 2020, November 21, which created the legal conditions to increase the attractiveness of the civil service, changed fundamentally the regulations of salaries of civil servants, established the possibility of teleworking and the institute of mentoring, simplified the procedure for evaluating the performance of civil servants, established a centralized selection of applicants for the civil service (Civil Service Department, 2020)⁶. In public administration studies, bachelor and master students

⁴ European Commission. (2019). *A Europe adapted to the digital age*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_lt; European Commission. (2021). *The European Digital Decade. 2030 m. digital goals*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_lt

⁵ European Commission. (2020). *European Competence Framework for Public Procurement Professionals*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/procurement_euf_for_pp_lt.pdf; State control. (2018a). *Public audit report on delays in the legislative process*. <https://www.vkontrole.lt/failas.aspx?id=3789>; State control. (2018b). *Public audit report on the functioning of the public procurement system*. <https://www.vkontrole.lt/failas.aspx?id=3806>; State control. (2020). *Report on the implementation of the recommendations*. https://www.vkontrole.lt/aktualiju_failai/files/2020-09-02-LT_AAI_Rekomendaciju_igyvandinimo_ataskaita.pdf

⁶ Civil Service Department. (2020). *About the civil service*. <https://portalas.vtd.lt/lt/apie-valstybes-tarnyba-857.html>

are periodically offered to conduct research on the need for staff in public administration through individual subject assignments (e.g. in the subject *Sociology* in bachelor studies, of *Public Policy and Policy Analysis* in the second cycle discussing issues of forecasting the need for specialists, etc.). In addition, the need for specialists and their competences is regularly discussed in formal and informal meetings with the social partners (e.g. in meetings-visits to municipalities, in meetings of the Social Partners' Council, in informal meetings, during the municipal events, interview conferences, etc., the necessary scientific or applied research is discussed);

- 5) assessing the needs of potential employers and stakeholders and to anticipate how those needs will grow in the future the following activities shall be undertaken: a) VU ŠA has cooperation agreements with all municipalities of the region of Northern and Western Lithuania, with Šiauliai branches of such state institutions as Sodra (State Social Insurance Fund Board), STI (State Tax Inspectorate), Migration Department, Labour Exchange, SIS (Special Investigation Service). Their representatives form the Council of Social Partners for public administration programmes, which meets each year to discuss the need for general and specific competences in their organizations. In response to stakeholders' expectations, in 2018 first cycle studies focused on the governance of legislation, the governance of ICT systems, in 2019 – on the capacity to prevent corruption, interact with politicians, communities. Assessing the expectations of master's students in 2019–2020, more attention was paid to the use of public policy and public governance research in improving the performance of institutions, the search for innovative solutions by working in teams; b) exploratory research is being carried out in municipalities, for example, in 2019 a survey was conducted by interviewing the municipalities of the region of Northern Lithuania, the Regional Development Council what kind of competences specialists need and in what areas of public administration they would need them. The results of the research were presented at the SPC of Public Administration, the Institute of Regional Development and the Rector's Office of ŠU; c) Barometer readings of the Employment Service (former Labour Exchange) are analysed periodically (1-2 times a year) by the members of the SPC. At present, the barometer does not show a high need for specialists; d) competitions announced by the Civil Service for the positions of civil servants in public governance and self-government institutions, etc., are regularly analysed by the members of the SPC.

This allows the study aims and learning outcomes of the field to be kept relevant. The aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes of the field are presented in Appendix No. 1.

The uniqueness of all programmes in public administration field implemented by VU ŠA can be seen in several aspects: 1) the values of the civil service are developed in all subjects taught; 2) focus on critical, creative, systematic thinking, communication and collaboration, leadership, teamwork, decision making, intercultural skills; 3) use of practical acquired knowledge and competences to analyse and solve real problems of public administration; 4) achievement of higher outcomes in intermediate and final tasks, using the possibility of joint, group, individual consultations, work in pairs and groups. According to their aims, the programmes themselves have the features of uniqueness and originality:

- The originality of the programme *Public Administration* is revealed in several aspects. First, although the programme focuses primarily on general public administration studies, it emphasizes the knowledge and competences required to train individuals who are constantly learning, have a broad worldview, are active in citizenship, and ready to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Secondly, the programme conveys knowledge and develops competences based on high standards of public administration, mastering the values and traditions of Lithuanian, European and global public administration and democracy necessary for students to understand the governance models and processes of public sector organizations (and NGOs) and manage resources, public programmes and projects. Therefore, the programme integrates the latest scientific knowledge in this field and the experience of lecturers and practitioners (attending lectures as visiting teachers) in Lithuania and other countries. Third, the programme focuses on the knowledge of future professional activities, the interaction of theory and practice, so that students can identify, analyse, solve public governance challenges and problems, provide innovative proposals for their solution, recognize the public interest and ethical principles and base decisions. Therefore, the methods of cooperative studies and problem-based teaching are successfully used in studies, and students are involved in applied research that develops attitudes towards creativity and critical thinking.
- The originality of the programme *Public Governance* is revealed in several aspects. First, the programme focuses on the development of critical, analytical and systemic thinking skills, which help

to evaluate and make decisions in the implementation of public policies that determine the continuity of democratic values, and the creative thinking skills required to operate in conditions of uncertainty. Secondly, the programme integrates the analysis of public policy formation and implementation processes and problems in an integral and complex way, thus developing students' holistic concept of public governance and encouraging them to use research analytical methods in their daily activities. Third, the programme permanently emphasizes the importance of the values of citizenship and democracy, cooperation and cooperation for the quality of the public administration system, emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and self-development principles to ensure the professionalism of the public administration system and its efficiency. Fourthly, the programme responds to one of the most important requirements of the modern university study process - internationality, which is realized through international comparability, analysis of good experience in other countries in public governance, enabling students to develop intercultural competence by listening to foreign researchers in foreign languages events, studying the latest scientific literature in foreign languages, participating in international academic events.

- The uniqueness of the programme *Regional Development and Governance* is primarily reflected in the interdisciplinarity as an essential characteristic of the professional field of public administration, characterized by the integration of public administration, management, politics, economics, law and other study subjects. The programme is distinguished by the coherence of the themes covering regionalism (regional economics, regional policy context analysis, creative application of regional policy analysis methodology in order to improve the system, processes, implement innovations). Secondly, the programme has a strong international dimension, as working with an international group of teachers develops in-depth knowledge and skills to apply, adapt and develop regional development and governance tools in national (Lithuanian and Czech) and European Union contexts, which enables students from various countries to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of EU and other countries' regional development programmes and projects, strategic resource management of regions and organizations operating in them, innovation, change management, interact with international citizen groups on regional development issues. Thirdly, the digital and distance learning developed in the programme opens up opportunities for international counselling, greater cooperation in networks, therefore, students are able to conduct international comparative research using the latest scientific sources, the latest regional policy sources, i.e. to professionally research, analyse the economic, social, political and legal problems of several countries in the regions, to evaluate and argue their proposed solutions to the selected countries on the issues of regional development and governance.

In summary, it is necessary to emphasize the following aspects of the coherence of the programmes of public administration of both cycles and the expediency of their implementation: 1) the programmes contribute to the growth of the number of civil servants in the region and to the academic growth and professional development of the staff of public administration institutions (for example, the growth of competences of municipal councillors-politicians, employees of administrative units: over 60 graduates in Mažeikiai district in 10 years, over 30 in Akmenė district, and these districts are now in relatively high positions in terms of attracting investment and earning the name of an attractive municipalities); 2) the internationality of research and studies in the programmes is growing; 3) differentiation and development of learning outcomes, comprehensive vision in training highly qualified employees for the public sector is ensured; 4) greater involvement of students in research and assistance, motivating the most talented students to choose an academic career is ensured, for example, cases when doctoral studies are chosen by students who have completed the bachelor's programme *Public Administration* and master's programme *Public Governance* – dr. Jurgita Joniškienė, doctoral student Rytis Milkintas, Kristina Kulikauskienė, a doctoral student who graduated from the programme *Public Governance*, dr. Gyamfi Solomon, Yee Yee Sein, Mohammed Ibrahim Gariba – doctoral students who graduated from the programme *Regional Development and Governance* (students of PU); 5) the programmes enrich the theoretical discourses of public governance and the implementation of public policy with case studies, a deeper analysis of the problems of public administration in municipalities and territorial subdivisions of state institutions; 6) ensuring the implementation of topics in the field of research in studies, for example, Good Governance at Local Self-Government (2017–2020), Resilience of Regions to Socio-Economic Crises (2021–2023).

Areas of professional activity for which specialists are trained

Upon completion of the study programmes in the field of public administration, first cycle graduates can work in managerial and / or administrative work in public governance and administration institutions (ministries, departments, municipal administrations, tax administration, law enforcement, health care, education, etc.), research and consulting, private and NGOs, non-profit organizations. Professional roles in public administration can include national, European and international levels. Second cycle graduates are ready to work in state and local (municipal) government and public administration institutions, regional development and other sectors of public administration, non-governmental organizations. Graduates of the programme *Public Governance* are prepared to integrate into the activities of social services, health, education, culture, economics, and other activities, graduates of the programme *Regional Development and Governance* are prepared to integrate into the activities of national and international organizations, business enterprises, regional development and consulting agencies, research centres, where regional development and governance competencies are required. As the public sector moves towards strategic management as a whole, graduates of the programme *Public Administration*, having completed the specialization *Strategic Governance in the Public Sector*, or the graduates of the programme *Public Governance*, who chose the alternative subject *Regional and Local Policy*, were perfectly integrated into the organizations. The growing need for organizations to involve citizens in governance proved that the alternative *Participatory Governance* (its subjects) of the programme *Public Governance* was useful. For two years due to the planned accession to VU, no time was allocated for the renewal of alternatives in principle, as the fate of the programmes was not clear. At the beginning of 2021, after approving the further development of the field of public administration studies, the SPC is re-analysing the professional field in which the graduates of the programmes will integrate and which will be developed by public administration strategists. Currently, seeing the growing need for civil servants who are ready for smart, sustainable management (regions need to find resources for development), that topic is not only introduced into the subjects of the study field, but there are also opportunities to develop several alternative subjects that will deepen the competences necessary for smart governance, thus developing the professional field of the civil service and strengthening the competences of inter-municipal cooperation. This choice has already proved its worth, when in previous years in minor studies of public administration the professional field of public relations in the region has been strengthened, interactions of cultural workers with politicians, project alternatives strengthened the work of NGOs and workers in rural communities. In order to implement this idea, it will be necessary to prepare common subjects with teachers of economics and computer science, as is the case with JSP.

Consistency of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes of the field with the mission, operational goals and strategy of the University

Until January 1, 2021, before becoming VU ŠA, the aims and learning outcomes of the public administration study field programmes were coordinated with ŠU strategic documents: Šiauliai University Strategy 2015–2020 (2015), which set out the University's mission to “promote innovation in the region and the country at an international level” and the main objectives “to improve the quality of study programmes and their relevance to the needs of the labour market; to increase the possibilities of study availability, choice and individualization; to systematically increase the internationality of studies; to train competent specialists who can compete in the labour and research market, full-fledged humane personalities, to develop an innovative, civic, competitive community capable of integration into the regional, Lithuanian, European and world market”. ŠU positioned itself as the leader of progress in the Northern Lithuania region and saw its contribution to the implementation of the objective to strengthen the capacity and competence of the civil service of Priority 3 *Effective Public Administration* of the Šiauliai Region Development Plan for 2014–2020. The implementation of the programmes in the field of public administration was also coordinated with draft strategic action plan for 2020–2022 of Šiauliai University⁷, the priorities of research, studies and environmental impact activities emphasized in it. In order to achieve the set aims, it was decided that the learning outcomes of the programmes of both cycles will cover the general key competences developed in higher education in general, all the more so as some (communication, communication and cooperation) in public administration studies are developed as subject competences because critical, systematic thinking, intercultural competences, public involvement in decision-making, teamwork, leadership, etc. has become essential skills in the public sector.

⁷ Draft strategic action plan for 2020–2022 of Šiauliai University (2019).

In 2020-2021, when integrating into VU and reviewing all study programmes, the programmes of the public administration field have been left in the active list of programmes as necessary for the progress of the region, and in line with VU's long-term goals set out in the strategic documents: 1) Vilnius University Strategic Plan 2021–2025 (2021), in which long-term goals are focused on the creation of society and the state (emphasizing the mission in studies – 1.1. A graduate capable of solving societal problems), cooperation, sustainability. This responds to the development of subject and general competences in public administration programs. 2) Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities 2020–2025 strategy⁸ emphasizes values close to the values implemented in the programmes: equality, respect for human dignity and diversity, integrity, responsibility, etc. 3) The Guidelines for the Internationalization of Studies at Vilnius University (2020), which emphasize the relevance of global competences, first of all, intercultural competences; 4) Vilnius University Erasmus Charter 2021–2027. The mission of the studies set out in the strategic action plan of Vilnius University for 2021–2025 - a graduate capable of solving problems - directly responds to the first and second cycle studies of public administration. This is confirmed by the implementation of individual study subjects using the problem-based teaching strategy, service learning, in master's studies - problem-based research, case analysis, and in the criteria of final theses (both cycles) by updating research and practical problems of public governance. Purifying specializations in the bachelor's programme in consultation with the social partners focus is not only on the need for specialists, but also on the problematic governance and lack of efficiency that area of public administration. In the list of alternative study subjects in the master's programme, most of the offered subjects are focused on the solution of practical problems of public governance, efficiency of activities with the help of academic knowledge, application of new approaches.

1.2. The compliance of the field studies with legal requirements; curriculum design, content, and teaching/learning and assessment methods of the programmes enable students to achieve the study aims and outcomes

The compliance of the field studies with legal requirements

The Programmes in the field of public administration have been developed and are currently being implemented in accordance with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework⁹, Description of the general study requirements,¹⁰ Description of study cycles¹¹, Description of the study field of public administration approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania in 2015/07/23, order no. V-829, an updated draft description of the field of study in public administration (2020), prepared and initiated by SQAC (our SPC member prof. T. Tamošiūnas participated in this work with other experts), and Vilnius University regulations of study programmes¹². It should be noted that all studies in this field comply with the requirements of legal acts (see Table 1.1). Detailed study plans of the study programmes of the field, revealing the coherence of the learning outcomes with the study subjects (modules) in the study programmes, are presented in Appendix No. 2.

Table 1.1. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FIRST-CYCLE STUDIES

Requirements	
The planned study programme outcomes correspond to qualification level 6	VI
One year of full-time studies in the programme corresponds to 60 study credits	60
In one year part-time studies the scope is not less than 30 and not more than 45 credits per academic year	40-45
The scope of a study programme that awards a bachelor's degree upon completion is no less than 180 and no more than 240 credits of which:	210
- no fewer than 120 credits shall be composed of field course units (modules)	170
- no fewer than 15 study credits shall be composed of general university studies (GUS)	15

⁸ Vilnius University. (2021). Operating documents. <https://www.vu.lt/apiemus/dokumentai#strategijos-ir-gaires>

⁹ 2010 May 4 Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 535 approving the "Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework" (Žin., 2010-05-15, No. 56-2761). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.372306/asr>

¹⁰ 2016 December 30 Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-1168 approving the "Description of General Study Requirements" (TAR, 2016-12-30, No. 30192). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/a4caf862ced511e6a476d5908abd2210/asr>

¹¹ 2016 November 16 Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-1012 approving the "Description of study cycles" (TAR, 2016-11-17, No. 26908). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/d32e4f70ad0811e68987e8320e9a5185?jfwid=-9dzqntza2>

¹² 2012 June 21 Resolution of the Senate Commission of Vilnius University No. SK-2012-12-4 approving the "Regulations of Vilnius University Study Programmes". https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studiju_programu_reglamentas_2014_01_27.pdf

- no fewer than 15 study credits shall be dedicated for the final thesis (project) or for the final thesis (project) and final exams (in the cases specified in the descriptions)	15
- no fewer than 15 credits shall be dedicated for practice	15
The scope of module is in multiples of 5 credits	5
One study credit corresponds to 25–30 hours of a student's work hours, which include contact and self-study hours	26.6
The scope of contact work (including distance learning) of the part of the first cycle programme corresponding to the first cycle of studies is not less than 20 per cent, and in the case of direct participation of teachers and students (not distance contact time) is not less than 10 per cent, the scope of self-study hours is not less than 30%	32/46
The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes	suitable

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SECOND-CYCLE STUDIES

Requirements	
The planned study programme outcomes correspond to qualification level 7	VII
One year of full-time studies in the programme corresponds to 60 study credits	60
In one year part-time studies the scope is not less than 30 and not more than 45 credits per academic year	45
The scope of a study programme that awards a master's degree upon completion is no less than 90 and no more than 120 study credits of which:	90
- no fewer than 60 study credits shall be composed of field course units (modules) than contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes specified in the field description	
- no fewer than 30 study credits shall be dedicated for the final thesis	30
- no more than 30 study credits shall be composed of university-determined or elective subjects (deeper studies in the field and/or a research project (work of art), additional practice, modules (subjects) in another field	
The scope of module is in multiples of 5 credits	5 PG, 6 RDG (due to the specificity of JSP)
One study credit corresponds to 25–30 hours of a student's work hours, which include contact and self-study hours	26,6
The proportion of contact hours (including online contact) for second-cycle study programmes and the second-cycle part of joint study programmes shall be no less than 10 %; direct contact hours between teaching staff and students (not online contact time) shall be no less than 5 %, and self-study hours shall be no less than 50 %.	PG: 20/78 per cent RDG: 28/70 per cent
The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes	suitable

JSP *Regional Development and Governance* also takes into account the Czech Republic's national documents governing the evaluation and accreditation of study programmes¹³.

Correspondence of the aim of the Programmes of the field, learning outcomes, Programme design, the content of the subjects to the type of study, cycle and academic and (or) professional requirements.

The idea and structure of the first cycle programme *Public Administration* is based on strategies for consistent growth and complementarity of competences. The interdisciplinary content of the study programme comprehensively covers the main areas of modern public administration: *public policy and its analysis* (learning outcomes: LO1.2, LO2.2-2.3; LO4.1-4.3; LO5.3; LO6.1), *governance* (LO1.1-1.3; LO2.1-2.3, LO3.1-3.3; LO4.1, LO4.3; LO5.1-5.5; LO6.1-6.2), *law and the prevention of corruption* (LO1.2; LO2.3; LO3.4; LO4.2; LO5.2-5.5; LO6.1). Interrelationships between subjects, when the later subject is based on previous studies, ensure the consistency of studies and create preconditions for the systematic understanding of public administration and the development of various competences:

- *The subjects General University Studies (GUS)*, which introduce the specifics of university studies and develop a holistic worldview, in lower courses (2–4 semesters) form the basis for deepening the

¹³ Národní kvalifikační rámec terciárního vzdělávání české republiky (National Qualification Framework of Czech Republic. (2010). <http://casajc.ff.cuni.cz/NKF.pdf>; The Higher Education Act. (2017). <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/the-higher-education-act>; <http://aplikace.msmt.cz/vysokeskoly/Legislativa/HigherEduAct.htm>; Statute of the Accreditation Commission. (2004). <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/statute-of-the-accreditation-commission>

field of study in higher semesters. They are rationally complemented by an *alternative 25-credit specialization* (6 semester in FTS or 10 semester PTS), which delves into a specific area of activity in preparation for competency;

- *the combined modular framework* creates the preconditions for combining studies of different scope, complexity and intensity in subjects and modules; the specific outcomes of individual 5 credit subjects and the achievement of complex outcomes in larger modules starting with higher courses respond to the specifics of public administration – to integral, complex outcomes oriented to the task, to the process, to the outcome;
- less complex *study methods* (lecture, seminar, oral presentation of refereed scientific literature, etc.) used at the beginning of the studies create preconditions for preparation for active study methods, such as case analysis, concept mapping, group research; in subsequent studies, this leads to the consistent development of both competences and transferable skills;
- *Consistent development of basic research skills*, starting in the first semesters with work with scientific literature, documents, the analysis of other sources, through the application of sociological research, the methods used in the evaluation of public policy, leads to the application of quantitative and qualitative research methods in case analysis, thus ensuring the preparation for independent preparation of the BT in the last semester.

The study programme consists of 210 ECTS credits, 5586 student working hours. The total duration of the study programme is 3.5 years in full-time studies or 5 years in part-time studies. The duration of the full-time form of the study programme is 7 semesters, part-time - 10 semesters. In both forms of studies, the number of subjects / modules in semesters does not exceed 6, and from the 4th semester does not exceed 4, depending on the scope of subjects / modules, as part of the learning outcomes is implemented through modules of 10-20-25 credits. As recommended in the Public Administration Study Field Description (2015), 15 credits of Practice and BT Preparation (15 credits) are combined in the final semester.

The full-time study programme consists of 1524 hours of direct contact with the teacher, 260 hours of consultations and 3802 hours of independent work of students. Analogous structure of hours is in part-time studies, only direct contact work is organized in the way of sessions or at weekends (as agreed with students). Moodle, Teams platforms offer a wider range of opportunities to listen repeatedly to lectures, briefings (such as practice), consult (individually, in groups, participate in joint consultations with all teachers, such as supervisors of BT) and provide teamwork, administrative experience through forums sharing insights, ideas with those without such experience. These platforms ensure the availability of learning outcomes, more active feedback and with those who have a harder time learning outcomes, with those who do not have work experience in public administration and have more questions. 15 ECTS credits are allocated for the practice (i.e. 400 hours of student independent work, 20 hours of consultations). A similar number of hours of direct contact and student independent work in the scope of the 5 credit subject is determined by: 1) the consensus of the teachers to focus on the time required for the student to achieve the threshold result in the 1-2 years, to the achievement of typical level results in 3-4 years; 2) periodic analysis of students' learning outcomes (subject surveys; meetings with students at the beginning of the 1st year, regular meetings with group monitors, at least once a semester).

The structure of the full-time and part-time study programme consists of the following groups of subjects that correspond to the structure of university first cycle studies, and their consistency and rationality of scope have been verified by more than one year of practice: GUS, study subjects / modules of the field, interdisciplinary subjects or subjects of another field required to achieve the learning outcomes, elective subjects / modules:

- *The volume of GUS in the programme is 15 credits.* General university study subjects¹⁴ are compulsory – students choose them from the list of 5 credit subjects offered to all VU first cycle students, which are accredited separately for each academic year¹⁵. Before becoming VU ŠA, GUS subjects at Šiauliai University were approved by the Senate, next to them all students could choose a foreign language (English / German / French / Russian), and until 2019–2020 they could choose Lithuanian.

GUS are subjects that shape the university's worldview, fostering erudition and creativity, understanding the need to disseminate and share key research ideas and intellectual arguments with the general public.

¹⁴ GUS conception. (2018). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/st_reglamentuojantys_dok/BUS_koncepcija_2018-01-23_redakcija.pdf

¹⁵ Description of GUS implementation. (2017). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Reguliaminas/BUS_tvarka_2018.pdf

Subject descriptions are available in advance on the GUS Subjects portal¹⁶, registration is performed through VU eStudent, there is a possibility to re-register for another subject if there are free places. VU ŠA students choose subjects offered by VU ŠA lecturers or subjects from the entire VU GUS list that provide a form of remote learning. GUS takes place on Thursdays and Fridays from 3 pm all over VU. Their assessments are equivalent to the assessments of the subjects in the field of study and have an impact on student rotation.

- *The subjects / modules of the study field* in the programme amount to 170 credits. They are intended to acquire the basics of the field of study and the special knowledge and skills necessary for obtaining a qualification degree in higher university education in the field of public administration. The subjects and modules of this group focus on the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for professional activities in the three main areas of public administration - public policy and its analysis; governance; rights and corruption prevention;
- *Interdisciplinary or study subjects of another field* (25 credits), in which the acquired knowledge and skills are necessary for developing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of public policy through public governance (microeconomics, macroeconomics), necessary for deepening human resource management (psychology) research methods (sociology) required as tools for continuous improvement in further studies (a foreign language, choosing a foreign language);
- *the specialization of the study field* (25 credits), in which the knowledge and skills required to operate in that field are deepened. During the analysed period, taking into account the challenges of public governance and the approval of the Social Partners' Council, students were offered 2 specializations: *Strategic Governance in the Public Sector, Public Governance Law*, which remain in demand among first cycle students.

The logical structure of the Programme, which allows to consistently achieve the intended learning outcomes, is presented in Figure 1.1.

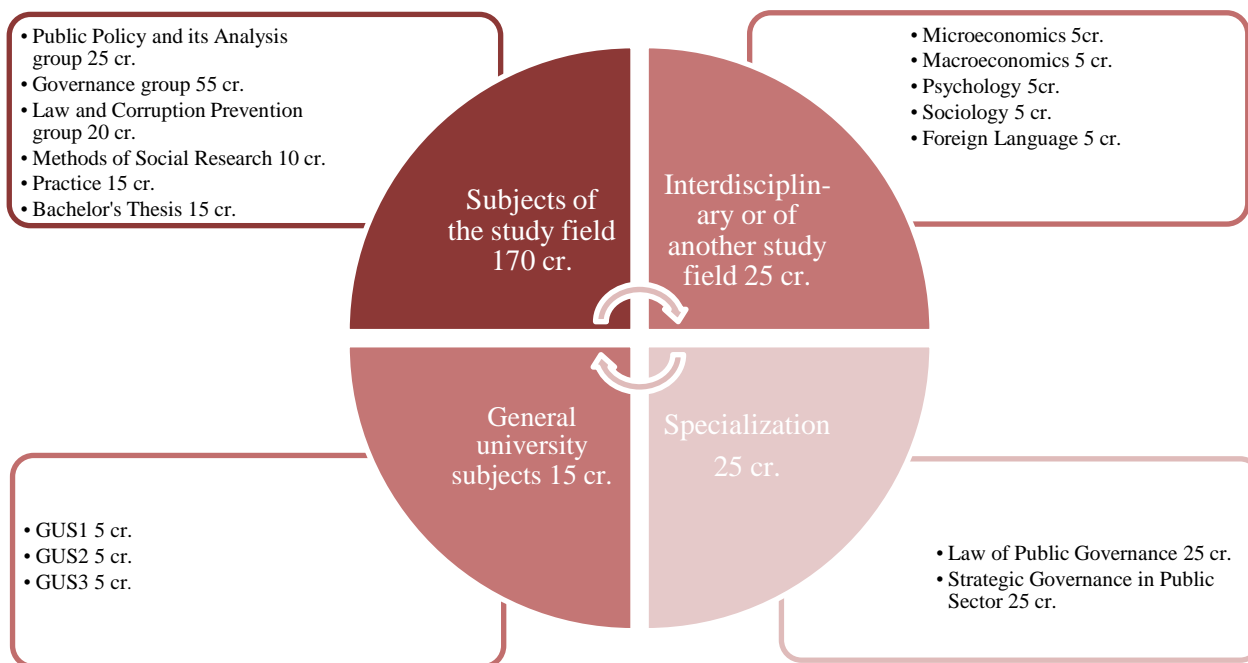


Figure 1.1. Logical structure of the programme *Public Administration*

The accessibility of the outcomes in the first cycle study programme is ensured by: 1) the chosen structure of the programme, moving from simpler discourses to more complex ones, when the student is introduced to the field of public administration science and public policy implementation through public administration from the first semester and later the topics are integrated and deepened, 2) modular programme framework, when the outcomes of complex studies are gradually achieved by studying larger-scale modules, 3) students' involvement in the identification of real problems of public administration and the search for solutions using the methods of service learning, problem-solving-oriented educational strategies (problem-

¹⁶ GUS subjects (modules). (2021). [https://is.vu.lt/pls/pub/vustud.public_ni\\$wwwbul.dalsar_show](https://is.vu.lt/pls/pub/vustud.public_ni$wwwbul.dalsar_show)

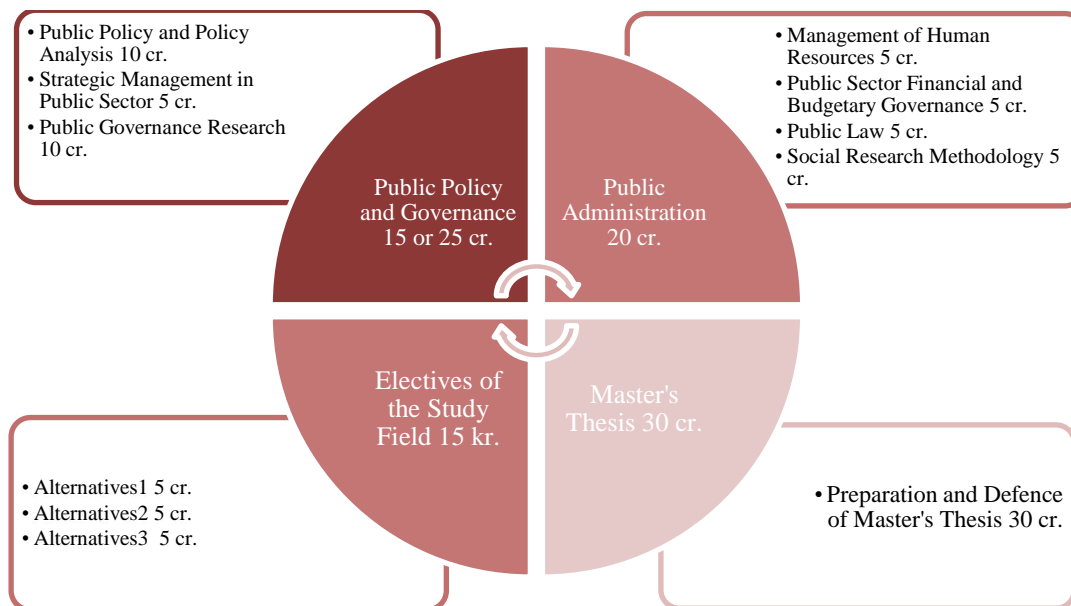
based learning), 4) wide opportunities for consultation with teachers (individual, group, general consultations), 5) an experienced team of teachers, researchers and visiting practitioners, whose competence and qualification meet all the requirements for the teaching staff of university studies, who are active researchers / participants in the practice of public administration improvement, 6) possibility of individualization of studies, 7) use of Moodle and Teams platforms in studies.

The second cycle study programme *Public Governance* reflects a complex and integral approach to public governance. It is observed that the second cycle master's study programme develops and deepens analytical and cognitive competences, which determine the development of students' holistic, critical approach. The content of the programme, taking into account the description of the study field of public administration, the latest scientific achievements in the field of public administration, and the challenges of public governance in recent years, is logically divided into three blocks:

- *The first block* is dedicated to the analysis of the public governance process, the development of public policy and policy analysis, evaluation, programme management skills; the subjects of this block aim at the following learning outcomes: LO1.2-1.3; LO2.1-2.2; LO3.1-3.2; LO5.1-5.2; LO6.1-6.2; LO8.1. The knowledge and competences acquired in these modules will be deepened by studying the 10-credit module of “Public Governance Research” with the participation of the main team of the Programme (7 lecturers and doctoral students);
- *The second block* is for the development of public governance methods, knowledge of tools and the ability to make innovative decisions based on research results. Both general and subject skills are developed (LO1.2; LO2.1; LO4.1; LO5.2; LO6.1; LO7.3-7.4; LO8.2). The competences acquired in the subjects of this block will also be active and will be developed in the module “Public Governance Research”.
- *The third block of elective subjects* of the study field enables students to choose study alternatives closer to the current or planned field of professional activity, activating and developing the existing general competences and by developing specific competences (LO1.1-1.3; LO2.1-2.2; LO3.1-3.2; LO4.1-4.2; LO5.2; LO6.1-6.2; LO7.1-7.4; LO8.1-8.2), skills requiring active involvement in public administration research and practice;
- The analytical competence of a researcher to identify and analyse public governance problems, to provide research-based recommendations is strengthened and developed in *the fourth block* during the preparation of the Master's thesis (LO1.1-1.3; LO2.1-2.2; LO3.2; LO4.1; LO5.2; Lo6.2; Lo7.1; LO7.3; LO8.2-8.3). The module “Public Governance Research”, carried out in the 2nd semester, ensures purposeful independent research of the Master's thesis, because in the seminars organized by the module, master students already use the material of their research and prepare a research-based report.

This division of the programme allows to develop students' abilities to understand, critically evaluate and model multidisciplinary public governance processes. In 2018–2019, 2019–2020 the alternatives were divided into two groups (Participatory Governance; Regional and Local Policy), which created opportunities for specialization. But most students later sought to choose subjects from another subject block, so in 2020-2021 a list of alternatives provided greater freedom of choice.

The logical structure of the programme, which allows to consistently achieve the intended learning outcomes, is presented in Figure 1.2.



* the subject can be studied either in Lithuanian or English (remotely)

Figure1.2. The logical structure of the programme *Public Governance*

The scope of the programme (90 credits) has not changed during the assessment period: it currently consists of 80 credits of the main subjects (modules) of the field of public administration (compulsory in the field of study - 65 credits and optional subjects (alternatives) - 15 credits) during the studies of which competences are acquired to methodologically conduct public administration research and analysis of public policy, to critically evaluate and model the solutions to the problems of organizational governance, cross-sectoral and inter-institutional interactions. Studies of alternatives delve deeper into organizational or regional governance issues. 10 credits are for interdisciplinary subjects that integrate discourses in another field, during which they delve into issues of public law and public sector financial and budgetary governance.

Most students in the *Public Governance* programme combine work with studies, so to achieve the learning outcomes, permanent work is chosen, working on weekends (Friday after work and all Saturdays) and remotely in the evenings (consultations, forums) in the middle of the week for 16 weeks and the last 4 weeks of the semester are for exams, project presentation, subject conference session. In the full-time form, master students study for 1.5 years (3 semesters), in the part-time form - for 2 years, allocating an equal amount of 520 hours for contact work in both forms. The student's independent work in the programme is 1880 hours and makes up 78 percent of the time allotted for the programme. In 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the work was organised in cycles: it was noticed that this form of study is not suitable for everyone, not only to report on the tasks, but also to have the opportunity to improve their tasks, so it was later returned to studying all subjects in the semester together, usually 1-2 contact hours. All study subjects are prepared to work using Moodle and Teams environments together devoting the weekend for contact work of 1 to 2 subjects. All study subjects are prepared for working on Moodle and Teams platforms.

10 years of experience of teachers in this programme, the analysis of graduates' final theses, recommendations of academic and social partners, results of previous external evaluation, level VII of the qualification framework - all this convinces the programme implementers to orient themselves in formulating the results of the programme and study subjects: 1) in the subjects of the study field of public administration to a typical level of achievement, which provides the ability to independently apply the regulatory instruments of public administration after a critical selection; the ability to use and analyse relevant data when making outcome-oriented and evidence-based decisions; the ability to manage the public governance process by seeing the links between public policy programmes, strategies and implementation plans; 2) in the subjects of the alternatives - to the level of excellent achievements, because in the chosen field of public governance the master student must acquire the skills required for expert activities, i.e. insights from the perspective of public administration science, modelling of public administration development opportunities after assessing intensive changes in the system, changing contexts; creative and active involvement in research and

dissemination of its results; improving and enhancing performance through responsible employee engagement, involving communities. The high results achieved in the group of alternatives enable the master student to prepare for doctoral studies (we have students studying or intending to study for a doctorate); 3) achievement of at least a typical level of results in the final work, which demonstrates the graduate's ability to independently choose a topic relevant to public governance, perform research-based work and present its results in the usual form in the social sciences.

The main learning outcomes of the programme are achieved through the compulsory subjects of the study field: *Public Policy and Policy Analysis, Strategic Management in the Public Sector, Human Resource Management, Public Law, Public Sector Finance and Budget Governance, Social Research Methodology, Public Governance Research*. The content of these subjects allows the student to have a deeper understanding of public governance processes, policy developing, to analyse and evaluate modern governance and public policy practice and content applying the main methods and theories of analysis; to model the improvement of the system of governance institutions and the modernization of their internal structures. The content of the subjects combines a national, global, as well as local perspective on public governance. The subject of the master's thesis combines fundamental and applied research, revealing epistemological and methodological pluralism, and developing independent research skills.

Elective subjects of the study field are alternatives designed for the purposeful development of specific competences in public governance. In the first and second semesters of the full-time and part-time study forms of the programme (in the first, second, third semesters in the part-time form until 2020; in 2020 the Administration proposed and the SPC agreed to unify alternative semesters) students choose subjects in which at least two more pronounced topics in public governance are visible: *Participatory Governance, Regional and Local Policy*. Students have a choice: according to the topic, according to the language of instruction (subjects that are also taught in English in the programme *Regional Development and Governance* or for Erasmus students). This makes it possible to optimize the organization of studies and increase students' opportunities to improve their professional English by attending part of the lectures together with JSP students. The policy of choosing the study content, taking into account the needs of the student, his / her expectations to find solutions in the field of activity, is implemented by individualizing the tasks.

The second cycle JSP *Regional Development and Governance*, combining the approaches of the two EU countries (Lithuania and the Czech Republic) to the learning outcomes of the programme, the strengths and methodological approaches of the two universities, focuses on specific regional governance issues and students' different academic preparation because the work is in intercultural teams, part of the students are from African, Asian countries. Here, in order to achieve outcomes, counselling and mentoring issues are important at the beginning. Here, in order to achieve outcomes, at the beginning counselling and mentoring issues are very important.

The programme consists of 90 credits of study field subjects (72 credits compulsory subjects, 18 credits of electives) and 30 credits of master's thesis. It should be noted that according to the different national laws in force in the countries, VU ŠA students defend their master's thesis, and PU students defend their master's thesis and take the state exam (two cycles - *Regional Economics and Politics, Public Policy and Governance*).

Compulsory subjects of the JSP study field are devoted to the knowledge of regionalism as a theoretical construct (block 1) and to deepen the ability to make public governance decisions on the issues of formation and implementation of regional development policy (block 2). Electives and alternatives are designed to develop the capacity to analyse socio-economic issues in democratic regions. The last block of subjects is devoted to the development of research skills by deepening research competences (see Figure 1.3).

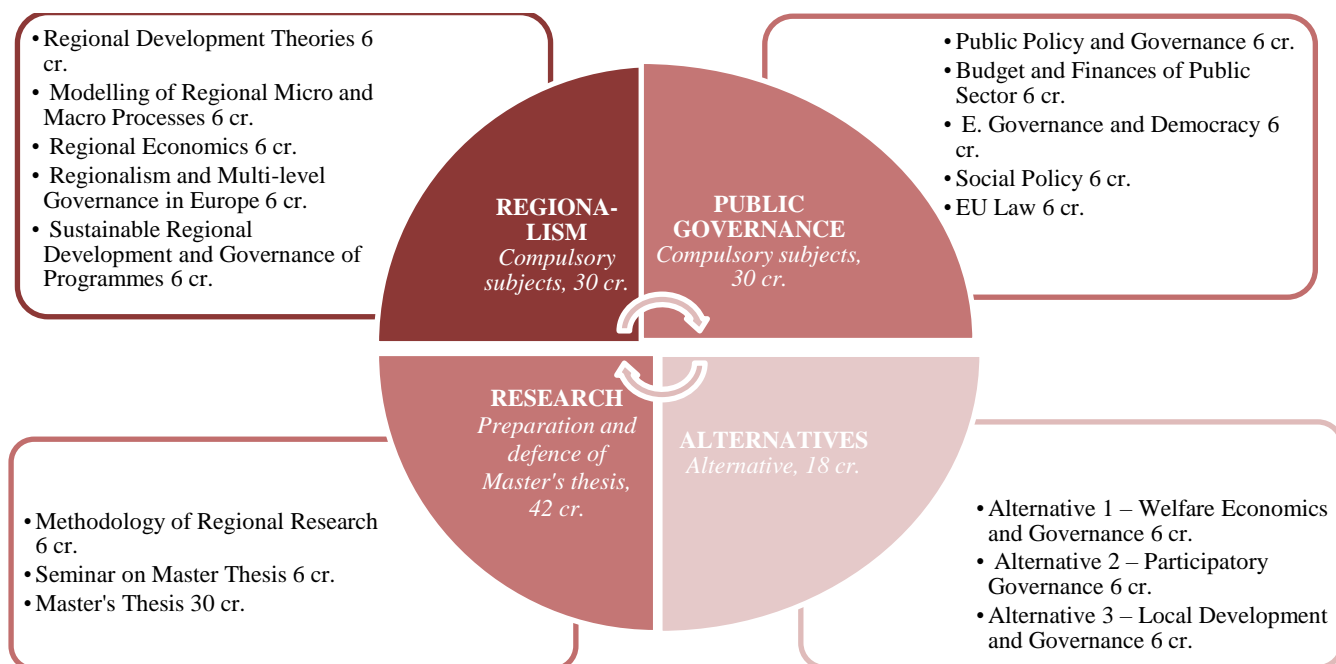


Figure 1.3. The logical structure of the programme *Regional Development and Governance*

The structure of the JSP focuses on the formulation and implementation of public policy as an approach to the analysis and solution of regional development problems, requiring special governance knowledge and expert-analytical skills. The specificity of the programme is reflected in the complexity and integrity of the instrumental capacity for development and governance required to identify and assess regional development processes, identify new regional development opportunities, choose strategies and instruments, propose and justify creative result-oriented solutions in developing and implementing regional development programmes. This axis of the programme allows the development of students ability to understand, critically evaluate and construct multidisciplinary regional development and governance processes. Thus, this programme deepens analytical, cognitive skills that allow students to develop a holistic and critical approach.

Compulsory subjects consist of 102 credits: *Public Policy and Governance, Regional Development Theories, European Union Law, Social Policy, Regional Economics, Budget and Finances of Public Sector, Methodology of Regional Research, Sustainable Regional Development and Governance of Programmes, Regionalism and Multi-level Governance in Europe, Modelling of Regional Micro and Macro Processes, E. Governance and Democracy*. The study subjects *Seminar on Master's Thesis* and *Master's Thesis* are designed to prepare and defend master's theses, which deepen research / expert / analytical competences and knowledge of regional development and governance, form the ability to research, analyse, evaluate and justify decisions in EU regional development and governance issues. The compulsory subjects of the programme not only form the fundamental knowledge of regional development and governance, but also the practical skills required to obtain a master's degree in public administration.

In the first, second, and third semesters, students can choose one subject in each of three alternatives: *Welfare Economics and Governance, Participatory Governance, Local Development and Governance*. Electives (alternatives) consist of 18 credits and are focused on the acquisition of knowledge and skills in regional economic and social development and governance, which would enable professionals to work effectively, creatively, respond to and manage emerging challenges. The content of the electives is focused on the perception, analysis and modelling of local and international socio-economic development of the regions; an analysis of transparent, open, IT- and innovation-based, cross-sectoral governance. In response to changing regional development policies in Europe, including the countries implementing the programme, the content of alternatives is constantly updated to meet the objectives of the programme and to meet the need for expertise dictated by the changing environment. Throughout the analysed period, the most popular alternative subjects were: in the 1st semester *Public Sector Economics (PU)*, in the 2nd semester *Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations (VU ŠA)*, in the 3rd semester *Local Economics (PU)*.

JSP has no practice (practical training), but specialists working in regional policy formulation and implementation institutions are involved in the teaching process (public lectures, discussions, seminars, presentation of final subject projects to interns in institutions). During their studies in Lithuania, JSP students visit not only local but also national level governance institutions, meet their representatives, participate in scientific conferences, RENET events, etc. In addition, JSP students are offered various opportunities to develop social contacts through a mentoring programme, various events organized for international and ERASMUS students, meetings social partners, competitions with schoolchildren in the region, and other social activities (getting acquainted with Šiauliai city, watching basketball competitions, etc.). In spring semester of 2019, representatives of the partner PU visited ŠU, met the teachers of the programme, students, administration, and were interested in the issues of student adaptation and the study quality. In November of 2021, the Head of the SPC visited the PU under the ERASMUS programme, met JSP students (1st and 2nd year), graduates of the programme, and discussed issues of study organization and quality. In the same month, the representatives of PU visited Lithuania, they met the Vice-Rector for Studies at VU, the Deputy Director for Studies at VU ŠA and the Head of the SPC to discuss the quality of the study programme and marketing of the study programme.

It is necessary to mention that in order to achieve quality studies in the programmes of public administration field and to respond to the need for active involvement of students in the study process (especially during the pandemic), teachers try new study methods and actively implement successful (positive student survey feedback) subjects (e.g. service learning, problem-based learning, dilemma play, participatory budgeting, the Six Hats Thinking Method, etc.).

Principles of credit formation

Achieving the aims and learning outcomes provided in the study programmes of the field is implemented through study subjects (modules). The study subject is the smallest part of the content of the study programme with a defined aim and learning outcomes. The study module is a part of the study programme content, consisting of 5 study credit multiple (in the first cycle programme *Public Administration* and the second cycle programme *Public Governance*), 6 study credit multiple (JSP *Regional Development and Governance*, thus agreed upon registration of programmes in the registers of both countries) and defined aim and learning outcomes. The study credit measures the student's (unclassified students') working time required to implement the learning outcomes of the study subject (module). One study credit corresponds to 26.6 (legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania provide for an interval of 25–27) student working hours, which consist of contact and independent student working hours provided by the teacher and approved by the SPC (see Table 1.2).

The pursuit of the learning outcomes of the programme *Public Administration* is related to the structure of the programme, introducing in the first semesters the main topics of public administration, later activating the development, acquisition and development of subject competences before demonstration in specialization subjects, practice and final work. In the first 1–4 semesters, 2–5 general competences are activated, 2–3 subject competences, when subjects in the field of public administration, which prevail in the second half of the studies cover all subject competences, most of which are activated in larger modules (20–25 credits) and in Practice.

The learning outcomes of the programme *Public Governance* are complex, achieved through the study of several subjects (modules), in the study of each subject usually in order to: 1) to activate and develop 2–7 general competences, because those who come to study are already able to learn and have a wide range of general competences; the competences that will be activated often depend on the specifics of the subject (e.g. in *Participatory Governance* alternatives more attention to general competences compared to *Regional and Local Governance* alternatives), 2) to acquire and develop 2–5 subject competences in the subject; usually subjects in another field of study have a narrower pursuit of subject competences.

The learning outcomes of the joint study programme *Regional Development and Governance* are also complex and they are pursued through the study of several subjects (modules). 4–6 general competences are activated in each subject, 5–9 subject-specific competences: general competences are activated throughout all semesters, as it is very important for students to acquire and deepen the skills required for regional development and governance specialists, and 5 – 9 subject competences are developed in the subjects. Depending on the subject of the chosen alternative, which competences will be deepened (for example, in semester 1, the alternative *Welfare Economics and Governance* least attention is paid to

general competences such as LO2.2, LO3.1 (the ability to independently plan the learning process and behave ethically in assessing the potential moral, social, economic and other consequences of one's actions), and subject competences – LO5.3, LO6.1 (knowledge of regional innovation systems and clusters and making innovative decisions and recognition of ethical principles and ability to follow them in research); the *Participatory Governance* alternative activates the greatest number of general and subject skills compared to other alternatives; in the *Local Development and Governance* alternative the least developed is general competence LO1.2 (leadership, change management, inclusive management, decision-making competences) and subject competences LO5.2 and LO6.1 (knowledge of organizational and individual activity management models and decoding and application of ethical principles).

The outcomes of the analysed study programmes are in line with the general and special learning outcomes of the study field of public administration formulated in the Description of the Study Field of Public Administration (2015) and the project of updating the description of the Field of Public Administration (2020) and general and special requirements for I-II cycle studies. Each of them is achieved through the learning outcomes of several subjects. The learning outcomes of the subjects are narrower, their formulation takes into account the latest scientific achievements in the respective field. The teachers, when formulating the LO of the subject, assesses the student's workload necessary to achieve it and the study (combination of traditional with modern) and assessment methods, for example, in the first cycle studies smaller intermediate tasks at the beginning, the requirements for coherence between the content and the strategies chosen, comprehensive demonstration of competences already acquired are subsequently increased, the value of the examination is gradually reduced, the value of the work performed independently and presented to the audience is increased; in the second cycle studies, one gradually progresses to complex tasks, initially reporting on the concept, the project, later on the report of the entire research, and defending the work in the classroom. Application of cumulative valuation, detailing the work in the study subject (module), meeting students for feedback after the first month of studies, written or oral surveys after assessment of learning outcomes of subjects (modules), surveys of graduates – all this creates preconditions for discussing in the Committee whether the learning outcomes in the study subjects are appropriate and achievable.

Table1.2. STUDENT WORKLOAD FOR ACHIEVING STUDY AIMS AND OUTCOMES in academic year of 2020–2021 and 2021-2022

Programme	Semesters	Compulsory subjects				Electives			
		Credits	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Total	Credits	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Total
Public Administration (cycle I, FTS) 2020-2021 academic year	1	30	304	494	798				
	2	25	236	431	667	5	48	85	133
	3	25	240	427	667	5	48	85	133
	4	25	240	427	667	5	48	85	133
	5	30	288	513	801				
	6	5	48	85	133	25	240	427	667
	7	30	40	760	800				
	Total	170	1396	3137	4533	40	384	682	1066
Public Administration (cycle I, FTS) 2021-2022 academic year	1	30	304	494	798				
	2	25	240	425	665	5	48	82	130
	3	25	240	425	665	5	48	82	130
	4	25	240	427	667	5	48	82	130
	5	30	288	513	801				
	6	5	48	85	133	25	240	427	667
	7	30	40	760	800				
Total	170	1400	3129	4529	40	384	673	1057	
Public Administration (cycle I, PTS) 2020-2021 academic year	1	21	216	343	559				
	2	15	144	255	337	5	48	85	133
	3	15	140	261	401	5	48	85	133
	4	15	144	255	399	5	48	85	133
	5	20	192	342	534				
	6	24	232	408	640				

	7					25	240	427	667
	8	20	192	342	534				
	9	17	106	348	454				
	10	23	26	588	614				
	Total	170	1392	3142	4472	40	384	682	1066
Public Administration (cycle I, PTS) 2021-2022 academic year	1	20	208	324	532				
	2	15	144	255	399	5	48	82	130
	3	15	144	255	399	5	48	82	130
	4	15	144	255	399	5	48	82	130
	5	20	192	341	533				
	6	25	240	427	667				
	7					25	240	427	667
	8	20	192	342	534				
	9	20	68	465	533				
	10	20	68	465	533				
	Total	170	1400	3129	4529	40	384	673	1057
Public Governance (cycle II, FTS) (2020–2021, 2021–2020 academic year)	1	25	200	467	667	5	40	93	133
	2	20	160	374	534	10	80	186	266
	3	30	40	760	800				
	Total	75	400	1601	2001	15	120	279	399
Public Governance (cycle II, PTS) 2020–2021 academic year	1	15	120	281	401	5	40	93	133
	2	15	120	279	399	5	40	93	133
	3	15	120	281	401	5	40	93	133
	4	30	40	760	800				
	Total	75	400	1601	2001	15	120	279	399
Public Governance (cycle II, PTS) 2021–2022 academic year	1	15	120	281	401	5	40	93	133
	2	15	120	279	399	10	80	186	266
	3	15	120	281	401				
	4	30	40	760	800				
	Total	75	400	1601	2001	15	120	279	399
Regional Development and Governance (cycle II) (2020–2021, 2021–2020 academic year)	1	24	256	384	640	6	64	96	160
	2	24	220	420	640	6	64	96	160
	3	24	250	390	640	6	64	96	160
	4	30	16	784	800				
	Total	102				18			
			742	1978	2560		192	288	480

Consistency of the content of the study programmes of the field

The study plan of the first cycle programme *Public Administration* is designed in a consistent manner, from simple to complex (in terms of content and methods, tasks, learning outcomes), integration of previously acquired knowledge and skills, creativity, pluralism of opinions, activation of students, etc. principles.

In the first semester (according to the consecutive study programme) 6 subjects introduce students to public administration as the main object of study, research, show its functioning in the field of business and public governance theories, connection with politics, other social sciences (economics, psychology), using many examples from public governance practices. The subject of the foreign language for specific purposes updates the terminology of the field through the analysis of the texts of international documents, portals and scientific journals. The second semester continues the understanding of public administration in the interaction of other sciences and practices (law, technology) and begins to delve into the systems of state governance and administration, macroeconomic processes. A 10-credit module *Law* demonstrating the interconnectedness of authorities through the legal system is important for developing systemic thinking. At the end of the first year, the student already has an understanding of public administration in the context of social sciences, public governance systems, is able to analyse them in connection with legislation adopted at various levels. In the second year, the study content focuses on public policy and its implementation at the EU, national and municipal levels, and the vision of public governance theories and paradigms in the analysed cases of public administration. The 20-credit module *Governance of Public Sector Organizations* enables the student to see, analyse the diversity of organizations and their administration models, discuss

their governance issues, with a strong focus on strategic management. During the independent tasks, the analysis of primary and secondary sources and other methods in the subject *Sociology* are improved. The third course expands students' knowledge of social research methods, deepens studies in the field of study on issues relevant to the entire public sector (reform governance, corruption), actualizes (10 credits) the discourse of local government as the administration closest to society. The 25-credit specialization (Public Administration Law or Strategic Governance in the Public Sector) already provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate new knowledge, general and special skills, and to prepare for practices and final theses. The last semester is devoted to a practice and a bachelor's thesis, the empirical research of which is often carried out in a specific organization, where professional practice is carried out (for more details, see Table 1, 2 in Appendix 2).

In the second cycle programme *Public Governance*, the study content is constructed in such a way that the students (absolute majority - public administration practitioners) first acquire advanced knowledge in the field of public policy and policy analysis (10 credit module *Public Policy and Policy Analysis* competences to conduct public governance research methodologically (case studies are conducted in all subjects of the 1st – 2nd semester; the subject *Social Research Methodology* is taught in the 1st semester, 10-credit module *Public Administration Research* is conducted on the basis of open seminars and all study programme researchers are involved), to apply and adapt in-depth knowledge and competences to develop public governance tools (15 credits for alternatives in 1-2 semesters). 10 credit interdisciplinary subjects (1st semester *Public Law*, 2nd semester *Public Sector Financial and Budgetary Governance*) enable students to better understand the practical context of public governance, to model and critically evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes. Students start preparing their MT in the 1st semester, with the opportunity to discuss their research issues with the faculty of the programme: in the 1st semester in the subject *Social Research Methodology*, in the 2nd semester in the module *Public Governance Research* and present initial theoretical insights, results of primary research in subjects and modules analysing similar public governance problems, and conferences of young researchers (see Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 2 for more details).

The content of the second cycle JSP *Regional Development and Governance* is constructed in such a way that in the first semester students acquire the knowledge and competences of general regional development theories, regional economics, public policy and EU law required for graduates of this programme. In the second semester in compulsory subjects, specific knowledge of regional governance is developed in the areas of European regionalism, multi-level regional governance, sustainable regional governance, regional programme management, enabling graduates to understand the practical context of regional governance, model and critically evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of regional development programmes. Students also acquire subject competences in the fields of democracy development through ICT governance (e-government) and regional research methodology. In the third semester in compulsory subjects, the knowledge of the socio-economic development and governance of the regions is deepened and the methodological capacities of the regional research are strengthened. The knowledge acquired in the alternatives in the field of welfare economics, participatory governance and local economy, as well as the developed skills to master specific regional governance tools in these areas, contribute to the development of subject competences necessary for regional governance professionals. Students start preparing their MT in the 1st semester, with the opportunity to discuss their research issues with the programme faculty during general consultations, in the subject *Methodology of Regional Research* and other subjects, at conferences of young researchers (see Table 5 in Appendix 2 for more details).

The mobility scheme of the study programme has changed slightly since its beginning in 2014, but it has not changed since 2018:

- Semester 1 - two compulsory subjects are taught to their students by VU ŠA teachers, two compulsory subjects are taught by PU teachers, one elective subject is taught by VU ŠA and PU. Until 2020 the teachers taught in a combined way - directly to their students and via Skype to the students of another institution. In academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, VU ŠA lectures take place only remotely (Teams), in academic year 2020–2021 PU lectures were held only remotely, and in 2021–2022 PU lectures take place in a combined way - directly for PU students and remotely for VU ŠA students.
- Semester 2 - all subjects are taught by VU ŠA teachers. Until 2020 PU students came to VU ŠA, joined VU ŠA students (if any) and studied directly together. In academic year 2020-2021 VU ŠA lectures were held only remotely (Teams), as VU ŠA students are also late in obtaining visas due to

pandemic restrictions. It is planned that in the spring semester of 2021–2022, VU ŠA lectures will be held live.

- Semester 3 - all subjects are taught by PU teachers. Before the pandemic, VU ŠA students (if any) went to the PU, joined the PU students and studied directly together. In 2020-2021 lectures were held only for PU students remotely (Teams), and in 2021–2022 lectures are held for PU students directly.
- Semester 4 - preparation and defence of the master's thesis takes place in the institution to which the student has entered. A representative of another institution (usually the researcher in the country responsible for the programme) participates in the defence commission remotely (Skype, Teams).

Consistency of the aims, learning outcomes of the study programmes of the field with the learning outcomes of the study subjects and / or modules, study methods and assessment methods

When preparing the descriptions of subjects (modules), the teachers follow the intended competences and learning outcomes formulated in the description of the study programme, which ensure the achievement of the general aim of the programme (see Appendix 2). The descriptions of all subjects (modules) must indicate which learning outcomes the subject (module) allows to achieve. Teachers choose the study methods and assessment methods that allow measuring the compliance of achievements with the outcomes of the study programme at their discretion, in coordination with the study programme committee and based on the Bloom Cognitive Taxonomy scheme, taking into account the cycle and year of study. No less important is the agreement of the programme implementers on the use of study methods moving from traditional to more sophisticated methodological strategies, what didactic innovations that activate students are proposed to use, for example, in bachelor's studies, there is at least one study subject (module) in each semester that applies a problem-based learning or problem-based teaching strategy, and case study as a method is used in most study subjects. The appendix contains figures that show the connection between the learning outcomes of the public administration study field programmes and the study and assessment methods (see Figures 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix No. 3).

In the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* (see Appendix No. 2, Tables 1 and 2, Appendix No. 3, Figure 1), general competences are developed in all subjects (modules) and individual that are useful in public administration as subject competences, such as the learning outcome of communication skills SLO2.3 (demonstrates the ability to provide, present information, ideas, problems and solutions to professional and non-professional audiences directly and digitally) are pursued in all subjects (modules) of the first cycle. Subject competences are comprehensively realized in larger-scale modules (Local Government, Management of Public Sector Organizations, Specialization, etc.), demonstrated in Practice, preparation of the Thesis.

Analysing the first cycle programme according to the consistency between learning outcomes and methods (studies, assessment) (see Appendix No. 3, Figure 1), it can be seen that in the first year, in addition to traditional study methods (lecture, seminar, analysis of scientific and other literature, discussion, group work), more modern ones are applied: problem-based learning methods, most actively case analysis; e-learning using tasks provided in Moodle and Teams platforms, forums, self-assessment tests, etc.); modelling of real situations; individual / small group consultations; project. The method of a visiting lecturer (practitioner, researcher, etc.) is also used. In the upper semesters, study methods, although often the same, lead to complex tasks: problem-based learning is combined with service learning in organizations; case studies and their presentations are prepared in the group. Performance reflection is also applied. Trends in assessment methods are also visible, the focus is on creative tasks. In the first semesters, an exam is still available, with the influence of 20-50 percent and often (usually in the subjects of fields) checks the ability to demonstrate knowledge and its connection with practice through the given questions; in the higher semesters, the exam is more often held as a presentation of prepared works, case studies, oral illustrated reports, etc.

The work during the pandemic showed the compatibility of some methods with remote working, the effectiveness of other methods only in classroom work, therefore, the SPC planned to delve into the differentiation and refinement of the successfully applied service learning and problem-based learning methods in the programme, and which methods would be suitable to support the activity of students working remotely.

In the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* (see Tables 3 and 4 of Appendix No. 2, Figure 2 of Appendix No. 3), the general competences of 4 groups are activated in all semesters, seeing them as necessary for achieving professional and subject competences. The following competences are indicated in all subjects: *LO1.2 (Understands the importance of lifelong learning for the success of personal and professional life, is able to independently plan and pursue aims, develop existing and new competences, actively participating in the process of collaborative learning, sharing knowledge and competences)*, *LO2.1. (Ability to critically evaluate and generate new ideas, develops analytical, systematic, critical and creative thinking skills)*. Students understandably accept and support the goal of activating general competences, because when participating in competitions for the civil service, general competences are tested very carefully, on the other hand, today they are necessary in practice. In second cycle studies starting in the first semester, all the planned subject competences are developed. An analysis of the study methods used to achieve learning outcomes shows that that combinations in subjects, which are often modular in scope, are diverse, but in addition to the usual (more often interactive lectures, seminars, exercises, work groups) there are analysis of scientific literature, documents and other sources; case study; mapping of concepts; discussions, group projects, group work, information retrieval and systematization in databases. In the first semester, students are given more tasks that are assessed, and the active participation in Moodle forums, discussions and seminars is assessed. Later, such methods are observed as the subject portfolio, research report, the influence of the exam decreases, most often it is the presentation of the research report to the audience, the report. There is an increase in the value of research-based individual or group work that shows problem solutions, models, and so on. During the pandemic, when teachers lose the opportunity to engage in creative team assignments in the classroom, they are more likely to use separate rooms on the Teams platform, Moodle discussion forums, and more group work and presentations.

In the study programme *Regional Development and Governance*, teaching and learning activities are student-centred and his/her interaction with the teacher (see Appendix No. 2, Table 5, Appendix No. 3, Figure 3). The programme uses teaching / learning strategies that holistically develop cognitive, professional and transferable skills: communicative and service learning, problem-based / project-based learning. Strategies are implemented using methods that develop students' scientific, critical, creative and constructive thinking: CSRA (case study / research / analysis), PM (problem analysis and problem solving through project approach) and CLIL (foreign language and subject integrated learning methods). Concept maps, social research, virtual modelling using software, a portfolio of learning outcomes, and individual and group reflections are also applied in individual subjects. Emphasising the international nature of the programme the focus is on the promotion of students' independent study through methods of information management, performance analysis, individual and group counselling directly in the classroom and remotely, feedback, and discussions in professional networks.

In the study programme, in order to assess students' achievements and progress throughout the semester, cumulative assessment is applied in study subjects (modules). The studies of each subject or module are completed with an exam or an evaluation of the student's independent work (essay, project). The final grade consists of the components of the cumulative assessment defined in the description of the subject (module). The most commonly used assessment methods are: oral presentations - task presentations, written research reports, reflections, discussions, colloquia, etc. During the pandemic, teachers on the Teams platform use the possibility of separate rooms, Moodle discussion forums.

In all semesters of JSP, the general competences of 3 groups are activated, seeing them as necessary for achieving professional and subject competences. All subjects develop general competence *LO2.1 (Has analytical, systematic and critical and creative thinking skills, therefore is able to critically evaluate and clearly, reasonably convey summary information to specialists and other persons, to professionally advise them on regional development and governance issues)*. Students support the goal of activating key competences as they are essential for applying for a variety of positions in institutions and agencies dealing with regional development and governance. In the master's studies starting from the first semester, all planned subject competences are developed, except for *LO6.1 (ability to recognize and follow ethical principles in conducting research, collecting information or communicating with citizens. subject)*, a lot of attention is paid to the realization of this aim in the 2nd semester (especially in the subject *Methodology of Regional Research*). Analysing the study methods used to achieve the learning outcomes, it can be seen that the subjects combine traditional study methods (traditional and interactive lectures, seminars, exercises, group work, analysis of scientific literature, documents and other sources, information retrieval and systematization) with more complex methods, such as case study, individual or group projects, discussions, non-traditional tasks. In the first semester, students are given more tasks that are assessed,

and active participation in Moodle forums, discussions and seminars is also assessed. In the second semester, such assessment methods as a problem-solving task, a non-traditional task, an individual or group project report are used, and the influence of the exam decreases - usually this is the presentation of the project report to the audience, an oral presentation with a discussion. In the third semester, the evaluation of student activities during the semester and the importance of individual completion of tasks and their oral presentation are strengthened. The fourth semester creates value by presenting problem-based individual research reports in writing and oral defence, presenting comparative aspects of regional development and governance, problem solutions, models, and etc. and defending the position in the scientific debate.

In each programme, the coherence of competence development and improvement is sought during the preparation of the programme (the aim of the programme is to acquire or improve competences that can help to achieve competences in study subjects and their scope according to the content logic and programme specifics) and improving it: the matrices of learning outcomes and consistency of subjects, competences and study subjects are reviewed annually, taking into account student surveys, reflections on practices, results of defence of term papers and final theses, changes in external initiatives (e.g. new initiatives of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to improve public governance, new wording of the study field description, 5 credits multiple practice in VU studies). For example, in the programme *Public Administration*, taking into account the requirement of the higher education policy of the Republic of Lithuania to move to a modular system, the scope of individual subjects was reduced to 5 credits after assessing the competences of graduates and practitioners in managing digital technologies; in order to reduce the number of written assignments and integrate special competences in independent work, several study subjects have been combined into the 20-credit study module *Management of Public Sector Organizations*. At the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021 of the second cycle programme *Public Governance*, after finding out that preparing Master's thesis (30 credits) in the last semester and having the subject *Social Research Methodology* in the first semester (2018–2020 study plans) students lacked opportunities to reflect on their research experience in the second semester, the greater need for general consultation appeared. Improving the programme for the admission of 2020, the need for consistency of the MT research and the requirements related to the merger of VU was taken into account, as well as the growing needs of the public sector for analytical skills of employees, were reviewed, the entire study plan was revised, and a 10-credit module *Public Governance Research* was introduced.

Teachers choose the study methods and assessment methods of the subjects, which allow to measure the compliance of the achievements with the learning outcomes of the study programme, at their discretion, in coordination with the SPC, taking into account the cycle and year of studies.

Opportunities for students to individualize their studies in the study programmes of the field

Students are provided with various opportunities to individualize their studies for the development of general and subject competences in the field of study:

- to study according to individual study plans;
- to participate in academic exchanges (part-time studies, practices);
- to study various foreign languages: all bachelor programmes provide an opportunity to study at least one Western European foreign language and choosing to study other foreign languages from the GUS list; students of all cycles are additionally provided with the opportunity to study foreign languages as non-credit subjects (modules) (outside the study programme), developing additional competences not provided for in the study programme;
- to study the subjects of the programme in English: alternatives include subjects in English; 2) if this subject is carried out in another study programme during the semester, for example, in the case of the analysed second cycle programmes *Regional Development and Governance*, 3) if a group of Erasmus students has been formed to study this subject;
- to choose minor studies; in the first cycle programme *Public Administration* (210 credits) there is no possibility to "release" 60 credits for minor studies, therefore students could study them additionally; during the analysed period, there were only cases when students of humanities programmes (240 credits) chose minor studies in public administration;

- in the first cycle studies, 15 study credits are allocated for general university study subjects (modules), which are chosen from the list of subjects;
- choosing the desired study subjects (modules) from the elective subjects (alternatives) provided in all the programmes of the analysed study field of public administration;
- to choose one of the *Practice alternatives* (15 ECTS) in the first cycle study programme, intended to acquire practical skills of different professional activities: professional practice or research practice.

Each programme has a certain amount of credits for electives:

- Elective studies in the first cycle programme *Public Administration* amount to 60 credits (28.5% of the programme). The choice is realized through *GUS* (15 credits); *Foreign Language* for specific purposes (5 credits); *Specialization in the field of study* (25 credits), which enables students to purposefully deepen their professional knowledge in the chosen field of activity of a public administration specialist, to critically evaluate, reflect on and solve specific problems of the public administration system. Students of the *Public Administration* can individualize their studies by choosing the *Practice* (15 credits) according to their intended activity perspectives, because the learning outcomes provided are achieved by choosing one of the following methods: task-oriented practice, workplace-oriented practice (popular among people already working in public administration), public governance research-oriented practice (popular among people planning a master degree studies and later doctoral studies or analytical work).
- Elective studies in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* consist of 15 credits (elective subjects of the study field, choosing three subjects from the list of alternative subjects in the first and second semesters in FT studies and in the first and second semesters in PT studies (until 2020 - 1–3 semesters)), which is 17 percent of the programme. The following study subjects were selected during the analysed period: *Local Self-government Systems* (2017–2018), *Regional Socio-Economic Policy* (during the entire analysed period); *E-Government and E-Governance* (during the entire analysed period), *Change Management and Leadership* (during the entire analysed period), *Regional Development Theories and Governance* (during the entire analysed period), *Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations* (during the entire analysed period), *Transparency, Openness and Anticorruption* (2020-2021), *Urban and Regional Planning* (2020-2021).
- In the second cycle JSP *Regional Development and Governance* electives accounts for 18 credits or 15 percent of the programme implemented through alternatives of 3 study field subjects (four 6-credit alternative study subjects are offered in the semester). Students who studied during the analysed period had chosen the following study subjects: *Migration and Regional Development* (2016–2017); *Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations* (2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021), *Change Management and Leadership* (2017-2018), *Economics of Public Sector* (PU) (during the entire analysed period), *Local Economics* (PU) (during the entire analysed period).

The procedure of recognition of competences acquired by students in non-formal and informal education and crediting of study subjects (modules) is valid at the University¹⁷, which makes it possible to meet individual learning needs and to expand students' opportunities for independent learning through the implementation of lifelong learning principles. This opportunity was actively used by the students coming to study in the higher course of the first cycle studies during the whole analysed period:

- after crediting the learning outcomes, after completing college studies in the same field of study or in other fields (e.g. law, economics, business, social work), after completing university studies in another field, after university studies that were not completed; the crediting of the outcomes takes place by combining the competences acquired in the studies with the competences acquired in the study subjects (modules) of the programme *Public Administration*;

¹⁷ Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. SPN-63 approved the "Description of the Procedure for the Recognition of Competences Acquired by Non-Formal and Informal Education of Vilnius University Students and the Crediting of Study Subjects (Modules)" (2019 November 19) See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/Neformaliuoju_b%C5%ABdu_%C4%AFgyt%C5%B3_kompetencij%C5%B3_%C4%AFskaitymo_tvarkos_apra%C5%A1as.pdf

- following the procedure for recognition of competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning: in 2020, such a procedure was performed with civil servants successfully working at Sodra (State Social Insurance Fund Board) who had to obtain a university degree in order to remain in the civil service, because they had previously completed studies that are currently not equivalent to the VI qualification level in Lithuania. The recognition procedure focused on the competences currently pursued in public administration studies of the first cycle.

Preparation of final theses

The principles of preparation of the final theses of the study field, formation of the commission and defence are established by the Regulations on the Preparation, Defence and Accumulation of Written Papers of Vilnius University Students approved by the Senate of Vilnius University¹⁸ and the procedure for the administration of written works in the study information system of Vilnius University approved by the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University¹⁹. During the analysed period (2018–2021), bachelor's and master's theses were prepared according to regularly reviewed, updated, publicly published documents of Šiauliai University (now VU ŠA):

- Šiauliai University study regulations, general principles of Šiauliai University final thesis preparation and defence procedure description, General principles of final thesis submission and defence procedure description (2020), which discuss types of final theses, their preparation process, defence, appeal procedures.
- Regulations on the preparation and defence of the first cycle (Bachelor) thesis in the fields of economics, business and public administration (2019), Regulations for the preparation and defence of the second cycle (Master) thesis in the fields of economics, business and public administration (2019), in which the course of the final work was regulated, detailed criteria for the evaluation of the final work, evaluation criteria for the defence of the work (has an impact of up to 30%), review and appeal procedures are provided. The analysis of these documents shows that the evaluation criteria of BT and MT are different, which shows MT as an independent step in research. The evaluation of the final theses of public administration students has the same set of evaluation criteria for the content of the work (presentation of research problem, application of theoretical analysis methods, presentation of research methodology, quality of empirical research, logical consistency of research, research design), but the quality criteria for a master's thesis are higher, for example, it is necessary not only to present and substantiate the research problem, but also to update it, base it on the latest theories, alongside aims and objectives to formulate problematic issues which are related to the logic of the research presented in the work. BT usually demonstrates the student's ability to select, analyse scientific sources, MT has to substantiate the chosen theoretical concepts, to reveal the author's position when there is more than one theoretical approach; bachelor students must be able to present data collection and analysis methods, instruments, master students must already justify their chosen research strategy, the expediency of the chosen methods, demonstrate the quality of methods harmonization and application, understand the ethics of research and adhere to it. Both bachelor and master students must be able to conduct empirical research, demonstrate the quality of methods applied, master students usually use several methods of data collection and analysis, the connection between the interpretation of the results of the empirical research and the theoretical part of the document analysis in the context of the problem is especially significant, they have to show ability to engage in scientific discussion, to present research results to the public. The logical consistency, the integrity of the separate parts of the research, the reality and specificity of the conclusions are very important in MT.
- Methodological recommendations for the preparation of bachelor's and master's theses (2013, 2020), which describe the process of preparation of the final work, formalization of the work (scope, structure of the work, etc.), the procedure of defence of the work. During the analysed period, the methodological recommendations significantly update the aspects of research originality, research ethics and academic

¹⁸ "Regulations for the Preparation, Defence and Accumulation of Written Papers of Vilnius University Students" approved by Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S-2017-12-11 (2017 December 19). See

https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Studies/Study_regulations/Research_papers_regulations_VU.pdf

¹⁹ "Procedure for the Administration of Written Works in the Study Information System of Vilnius University" approved by the order of the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University No. R-512. (2017 November 22) See.

https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Studies/Study_regulations/Research_papers_administrations_VU.pdf

integrity, among other aspects, the value of the part of the thesis discussion in the BT structure is growing.

- Additional documents that were published in 2020 during the preparation of the final theses after the onset of the pandemic (Regional Development Institute. Memo on the initial reading of the final theses (2020); Description of the general principles of the procedure for the submission and defence of final theses remotely (2020).

In public administration study field programmes for the final thesis preparation period (in the first cycle studies it is the last semester, in the second cycle studies all study semesters) BT / MT preparation stages and terms are prepared and approved by the SPC. In this document, students see the whole process of preparing the final work, starting with the selection of the supervisor, anticipation of the topic, general teacher consultations, and ending with the initial reading, submission of the final work to the Commission, deadlines for inclusion in the eLABa system. Although the process of preparing the final work is activated during other study subjects, showing that it will be useful in the final work, this term plan helps to manage the time during the preparation of the final work, to take advantage of wider consultation opportunities. In the bachelor's study programme research methods, examples of final theses and methodological research alternatives are analysed in the subjects *Social Research Methods* (until 2021 - *Social Research Methodology*), *Bachelor's Thesis Project* (credits were joined to the Bachelor's Thesis in January 2021 after integration into VU), *Methodological Seminar of Public Governance Research* (2021–2022 is the last year when part-time students enrolled in 2017–2018 will study this 3-cr subject). There are also study subjects in the master's studies, in which the material of the final theses is actively analysed, alternatives for the preparation of the thesis are discussed, for example, in the *Public Governance Programme* – the subject *Social Research Methodology* and in the module *Public Governance Research*; in the programme *Regional Development and Governance* – *Methodology of Regional Research*, *Seminar on Master's Thesis*.

These documents and all other information related to the final and written works are published on the website of the Institute of Regional Development of VU ŠA²⁰. The evaluation criteria for the final theses are also presented in the descriptions of the modules *Bachelor's Thesis*, *Master's Thesis*, and *Master's Thesis Manual* specially prepared for the joint study programme. The aim of the final thesis is to develop a public administration analyst able to think critically and systematically, therefore students are encouraged to see the problems in choosing organizations that would benefit from the research conducted by students.

Research conducted in bachelor's theses in *Public Administration* more often focuses on a specific problem of public governance, but their results can also become the basis for deeper research to improve the performance of public sector organizations. It has been observed that the bachelor's work process is motivated by the possibility to choose an organization or field of activity close to one's work activity. When a student chooses a supervisor according to the research field of the latter, he / she usually expresses expectations about what he / she would like to be useful about. During the analysed period, the field of research became the organizations of all municipalities in Northern Lithuania, as well as the institutions of less frequently analysed municipalities in Southern Lithuania. Telšiai, Klaipėda, Panevėžys and Šiauliai counties were chosen as the field of public policy implementation research. Some bachelor students work in the police, therefore the issues of prevention of juvenile delinquency, youth employment and prevention of domestic violence were quite actively analysed. The topics of the final theses testify to the current issues of the civil service of the Republic of Lithuania in recent years: the provision of social services, the coordination of public and private interests, performance evaluation, staff evaluation, change management, professional ethics. A number of bachelor's theses delved into the prevention of corruption, e-government, and other themes. Bachelor's theses test the use of knowledge and research skills acquired during the study year in the preparation of the final thesis.

The list of final theses (see Appendix 5) shows that most of the topics of the theses are coordinated with the workplaces in which the student works. Each year, on request, the social partners - the municipal administrations - send out lists of problem areas or areas of public administration that need to be examined in more detail. Some topics are analysed in study subjects, modules, others become the main or one of several analysed issues in the bachelor's thesis, because municipalities more often name a practical problem. Over 50 percent of bachelor's theses respond to the interest of employers, so such theses are significant to them.

²⁰ VUŠA. (2021). Institute of Regional Development. Relevant information for Institute students. https://www.sa.vu.lt/apie/regionu-pletros-instituto-studentams/aktuali-informacija-instituto-studentams#verslo-ir-viesosios-vadybo_s-studentams

Over 100 master's theses were defended in the programme *Public Governance* during the analysed period. According to the themes, it can be seen that the distribution of themes is in line with the programme and its structure. Over 25% of MT are related to public administration process analysis, public policy and policy analysis, evaluation, programme governance. Over 74 percent of works are designed to demonstrate knowledge of public governance methods and tools, the ability to make innovative decisions based on research results. The social partners are more interested in MTs for practical solutions, and they participate in MT defences (during the analysed period the mayor of Mažeikiai district, the mayor of Akmenė district, the head of the Šiauliai branch of Sodra, etc. participated), in the presentations of the results of master's theses in the workplace, they see the value of theoretically based research and are interested in them. During the analysed period, the municipalities of Šiauliai region were selected to investigate the case: Mažeikiai district (over 10 MT), Šiauliai city (over 10 MT), Akmenė district (over 10 MT), Radviliškis district (4), Kelmė district (3). Of course, there are always comparative MT analysing public governance at the national and regional levels. All the works correspond to the studies of the field public administration according to both - the analysed object and topic. In 2018-2021, it was important to analyse the activities of municipal administrations and institutions managed by them, the activities of health care institutions, rural communities, NGOs, and the number of works on library governance is increasing. In terms of topics, students were concerned with strategic management, human resource management, e. governance, interinstitutional cooperation on service quality and accessibility. More and more graduate students want to delve into the topics of anti-corruption policy implementation, public involvement in governance, leadership and smart leadership, which testifies to the connection of topics with the tendencies of public governance improvement.

The list of theses defended in 2018-2021 in the JSP *Regional Development and Governance* is given in Appendix No. 5. It is dominated by the international context of comparative research, which emphasizes regional policy, regional socio-economic development, and issues of sustainable regional development.

Students' academic achievements are recognized at the university level. During the reporting period, students of *Public Administration* and *Public Governance* study programmes for the preparation of high-quality final theses and thematic relevance to the region were awarded a nominal scholarship of Vanda and Vytautas Šliūpai for significant works. Final works related to the essential issues raised by Jonas Šliūpas regarding culture, history, development of society, and the confession of faith, little-known historical and biographical facts, which reflect the connection with Lithuania and Šiauliai region:

- Theses of *Public Administration* study programme: Rytis Milkintas "Implementation of Cultural Policy at the Local Level: The Case of Šiauliai City Municipality" (2018, supervisor - lecturer Vilma Tubutienė), Gabrielė Norvaišaitė "Trust in Local Government Institutions: The Case of Šiauliai District Municipality" (2019, supervisor - lecturer Vilma Tubutienė), Monika Plingytė "The Role of the Eldership in the Development of Citizens' Participation in Local Self-Government" (2020, supervisor - lecturer Sigitas Balčiūnas);
- Theses of the *Public Governance* study programme: Rytis Milkintas "Smart Urban Culture Governance" (2020, supervisor - Prof. Dr. Teodoras Tamošiūnas), Kristina Kulikauskienė "Development of a Socially Inclusive Library: Development Aspect of Services for the Disabled" (2020, supervisor - Prof. Dr. Laima Liukinevičienė).

1.3. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations of previous evaluation	Actions
<i>Public Administration (evaluated in 2013)</i>		
1.	"More study subjects must be taught developing general competences to maximize students' opportunities to develop these important skills".	General skills are activated in all study subjects. They are developed in four groups of general competences.
2.	"Teaching basic subjects in English, in addition to English	In all SPs: 1) opportunities to improve one's English through GUS (first cycle), additional studies; 2) internationality of subject

	language courses, would facilitate the integration of ERASMUS students into the Lithuanian student body and would benefit both groups.”	content, it is obligatory to use the latest scientific sources in a foreign language in all tasks; 3) Lectures in English by visiting researchers from abroad at VU ŠA.
3.	“Most of the theses have relatively few references in English. Although many topics are local, regional, national in nature, the theoretical foundation should be based on English sources”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Criterion of BT: The research problem is based on the latest world research sources. 2) Requirement in the BT evaluation criteria: at least 30% the latest scientific literature and international documents.
<i>Public Governance (evaluated in 2016)</i>		
1.	“Consider including additional subjects, such as Law and other aspects of public administration, such as Public Procurement and Project Management.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actualization of legal discourse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 10-credit module Public Law is among the compulsory subjects in the programme. The teacher has a doctor’s degree and is a practitioner of public law. • Electives include a 5-credit subject <i>Transparency, Openness and Anti-Corruption</i>, which integrates public law discourse. • The PEST approach necessarily seeks to highlight the legal aspect of the problem in research. 2. Strengthening aspects of public procurement and project management in public administration studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topic is integrated into compulsory subjects (modules): <i>Public Sector Financial and Budget Governance</i> (5 cr.); Public Law (10 cr.); • The topic of public procurement transparency in the elective subject <i>Transparency, Openness and Anti-Corruption</i> (5 cr.); • It was suggested that in their master's theses students investigate the areas of public administration choosing the case of their organization. During the analysed period, works related to project governance were prepared and defended, for example, “Strategic management of EU investment projects in local government: the case of Šiauliai district” (2018); “Development of physical culture and sports for children and youth: strategic directions for improvement in Šiauliai” (2018); “Participation of youth NGOs in local government: the case of Šiauliai city” (2018); “Development of international cooperation relations between municipalities: the case of Radviliškis district municipality” (2019); “Functionality of the local community in the context of the new public governance: the case of Tirkšliai eldership” (2019) and others. Master’s theses for research on the improvement of public procurement activities: “Prevention of corruption in the public sector: the case of Radviliškis district municipality” (2019); “Governance of public and private interests in the primary health care centre” (2019); “Improving the activities of public procurement commissions in municipal institutions” (2021), etc. • It was proposed to get involved in the non-governmental organization "Academic Centre for Public Administration" (ACPA) and, under the guidance of the PG programme teachers, to train an EU project governance expert how to administer projects.
2.	"ŠU must take into account the students' desire to further	Until 2018-2019 all study subjects had a combined form of studies(distance and direct), study subjects (modules) are

	develop remote learning in the future. However, remote learning can make it difficult to achieve learning outcomes, especially to develop critical thinking, change attitudes and develop social skills. It is therefore important to develop an appropriate methodology to avoid such shortcomings. "	accredited at the ŠU Distance Learning Centre. In the middle of the week the work takes place only remotely (consultations, Moodle forums, lectures), on Saturdays during direct contact in the auditorium (seminars, classroom work). Since the spring of 2020 all study subjects (modules) have been conducted remotely using Teams and Moodle platforms. In the autumn 2021, the study subjects were prepared to be carried out in a contact or remote manner (the issue of the need to upgrade the equipment was discussed at the SPC meeting). After interviewing the students, it was agreed to conduct introductory meetings, mid-term examinations in direct contact (or in a combined way in classrooms), and to conduct theoretical lectures and consultations remotely using the Teams platform and recording lectures with the possibility to save lectures in Moodle. Classroom work and seminars are conducted remotely on the Teams platform, tasks in the Moodle environment are actively reflected. After the end of the pandemic, it is planned to continue the good practices and have some of the activities (consultations or theoretical lectures) on the Teams platform.
3.	"ŠU should work more flexibly - to allow part-time students to study for more than two years."	According to national and VU documents, students who are unable to complete their studies in time due to objective reasons may suspend them (academic leave in case of illness).
<i>Regional Development and Governance (evaluated in 2016)</i>		
1.	"The social partners have a greater role to play: in expanding the content and profile of the master's programme, <...>".	Due to the small number or the total number of students admitted to VU ŠA, the social partners limited themselves to participating in the activities of the SPC, approving the proposed changes to the programme required to ensure mobility. By the Decree of the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University Regarding the formation of working groups for the renewal and improvement of study programmes supervised by the Institute of Regional Development of Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University (2021 April 19), in May-June of 2021, social partners participated in the updating of the study programme (provided proposals for updates to the descriptions of the programme and subjects), participated in the preparation of the programme improvement plan, in which submitted proposals for the content part as well.
Strengths of the evaluation area of the field of public administration studies		
1.	The study programmes, in their aims and learning outcomes, respond to the tendencies seen in the world public administration science about the improvement of the civil service, EU and Lithuanian public policy in the civil service improvement, VU strategic position, VU ŠA's aspirations to actively participate in regional development and studies.	
2.	Periodicity and variety of measures applied in reviewing and updating the aims of the study field programmes, the learning outcomes and the didactic resources available to achieve them, discussing combinations with the SPC and with all lecturers working with the SP.	
3.	Involvement of social stakeholders, academic and social partners in the review and coordination of the aims, learning outcomes of the programmes, discussion of final theses and proposing issues for analysis in future student research.	
4.	Testing and introducing new, interactive study methods into study subjects (for example, service learning, problem-based learning, dilemma game, participatory budgeting, the six hats thinking method, etc.).	
Aspects for improvement in evaluation area of the field of public administration studies		
1.	Integration of the civil service value foundation (NASPAA, 2019) into all study subjects (modules), including interdisciplinary ones. NASPAA is not limited to the following values, they can be	

	developed as needed: pursuit of public interest through accountability and transparency; to serve professionally in the areas of competence, efficiency and objectivity; to act ethically in order to maintain public confidence; to develop global, regional and local understanding; to promote participation and inclusion in the demonstration of respect, fairness and integrity in dealings with members of the public, stakeholders and other civil servants. It is necessary to include this integration in the programme development plans.
2.	The challenges of the pandemic have shown the need to better combine classroom work with remote learning, critically selecting study methods and ways of activating students to achieve learning outcomes. Research is needed (group discussion or survey of teachers and students).
3.	In the implementation of the master's and bachelor's programmes in the field, the development of practical knowledge through observation and participation in real activities related to public administration is essential. There is a considerable connection between practice and individual initiatives in the study of individual subjects, but an integrative systemic approach at the level of programme implementation is still lacking. It is necessary to develop a plan for the implementation of a systemic approach.

2. Links between science (art) and study activities

2.1. Assessment of the adequacy of the level of research activities in the field related to the field of studies

Results of the evaluation of research and experimental development and of the most recent comparative expert evaluation of research and experimental development activities

The results of the evaluation of the level of activity in the field of governance carried out by Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. LEVEL OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY VILNIUS UNIVERSITY ŠIAULIAI ACADEMY

The results of an annual evaluation of research, development, and artistic activity			Results of comparative expert evaluation of university research and experimental development activities	
Study field of governance	Study field			Study field
	2019	2018	2017	The year of evaluation: 2017
LRC evaluated only by areas	VDDAi – 5.4 ΣAIV – 29.06	VDDAi – 5.72 ΣAIV – 43.36 ²¹		Result - 2. The level of research conducted is satisfactory at the national level. Researcher positions - 1.8. Teacher positions - 11.9.

Foreign experts, who performed a comparative evaluation of the research activities of Lithuanian institutions in 2013–2017, stated that the results of the field of management and administration of Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University (then Šiauliai University) are satisfactory at the national level. Experts stated that during the last five years, the representatives of VU Šiauliai Academy in the field of management and administration have published a number of scientific articles in books and scientific journals, but there is little top-level publication and little international contribution. Due to the low internationality of research, it has not been possible to attract more external funding for research. However, researchers have all the necessary infrastructure and resources to carry out their research. The number of doctoral dissertations defended in 2013–2017 was very small: only one doctoral dissertation in the field of governance was defended in 2016. Apparently, foreign experts were not informed that Šiauliai University was granted the right to conduct doctoral studies in the field of governance only in June, 2011. Therefore, the first doctoral dissertation in the field of governance here was defended in 2016. Until then, researchers of Šiauliai University defended their doctoral dissertations in the field of governance at other Lithuanian universities. In 2018–2019, four dissertations were defended in the field of governance at Šiauliai University, three of them were defended by teachers working in the field of public administration, and the fourth one is also close to being applied in the field of public administration. The scientific supervisors of all four dissertations were professors working

²¹ VDDAi – full-time equivalent; ΣAIV – weighted sum of points for formal assessment research papers.

in the field of public administration at VU ŠA. At the end of 2021, another doctoral dissertation in the field of governance will be defended at VU ŠA, close to application in the field of public administration studies (scientific supervisor of the dissertation - professor working in the field of public administration studies).

Since 2021, after joining VU, opportunities have increased to engage in joint research activities with other VU core academic units, to join VU research groups and their international research networks, to use the scientific achievements of VU colleagues in student education. In 2021, particularly close relations began with the Faculty of Economics and Management of Vilnius University and the Institute of International Relations and Political Science.

Direct connections of ongoing research and applied research activities with ongoing studies in the field of public administration and their integration into the studies

Studies in the field of public administration are carried out in harmony with research activities, therefore the teachers of the field actively contribute to the development of various research activities at CAU, for example, the scientific journal “Socialiniai tyrimai” (Social Research) (since 2021 this journal has been published by VU Publishing House, before that - Šiauliai University), to the publication of which the teachers of the field have been contributing. In order to ensure the dissemination of research and promote cooperation, national and international scientific conferences and science promotion events are organized (6 international scientific-practical conferences “Good governance at local self-government” in 2012-2017, 2006-2021 - 14 Jonas Pranas Aleksa International Scientific Conferences "Development of the State Vision in the 21st Century: National and International Context", initiated and organised by the teachers of the field, 2001-2021 - 20 international scientific conferences "Rethinking Regional Competitiveness").

The research competence of the teachers in the field of public administration is confirmed by the prepared scientific publications. They are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. RESEARCH IMPLEMENTED BY THE TEACHING STAFF OF THE STUDY FIELD in 2018 - 2020

Field: governance	2018	2019	2020
Monographs, studies, fundamental and original theoretical research	6	3	1
Articles in peer-reviewed journals	14	14	14
<i>From them:</i>			
<i>Clarivate Analytics Web of Science DB</i>	3	4	3
Articles in other publications (cultural, professional, popular science, etc.)	1		
Study books and textbooks			1
Teaching-methodological aids and other study literature	1	1	3
Other books (<i>dictionaries, manuals, translations, atlases, catalogues, etc.</i>)			
Conference proceedings	3	2	1
<i>Of these, Lithuanian conferences</i>			
<i>Of these, international conferences</i>	3	2	1
Patents			
Other publications	3	1	2
Total:	28	21	22

In 2018-2020, 12 teachers of the field of public administration published 48 units of research and methodological production individually or mostly together with co-authors. The specialized subjects taught in all programmes of public administration field correspond to the areas of teachers' research interests, therefore the teachers of the field constantly integrate the results of their research into the content of the taught subjects, actively sharing them with the first and second cycle students in order to develop students' skills and to ensure that students' skills development is based on the latest knowledge and the most appropriate methods. Here are some examples of integration:

- In 2018, the research study “Knowledge Spillovers in Regional Innovation Systems. A Case Study of CEE Regions (indexed by Scopus), together with researchers from the JSP partner Czech Pardubice University and other universities in Central and Eastern Europe was published in Springer International

Publishing, in which the section *“Assessing the Absorptive Capacity of Regional Innovation Systems: A Case Study of Lithuanian Regions”* (31 page) was prepared by three researchers in the field of public administration studies at VU Šiauliai Academy. This study is applied in the second cycle programme *Public Governance* for the subjects *“Strategic Management in Public Sector”*, *“Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations”*, *“Social Research Methodology”*, in the joint second cycle programme *Regional Development and Governance* in the subjects *“Regional Research Methodology”* and *“Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations”*.

- In 2018, Palgrave Macmillan Publishing House published a research study entitled *“Political Leaders and Changing Local Democracy”*, the co-author of the 39-page chapter *“The Mayors’ Political Career: Between Local and National Ambition”* is a researcher in the field of public administration at Šiauliai Academy. This study is applied in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* for the subject *“Local Government”*, in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* in the subject *“Local Government Systems”*, in the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance* in the subject *“Regionalism and Multilevel Governance in Europe”*.

- In 2019, a collective monograph *“Cooperation of Municipalities in Lithuania: Forms, Opportunities, Visions”* was published at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, whose co-author is a researcher in the field of public administration studies at Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University. This monograph is used in the subject *“Local Government”* in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration*, to the subject *“Local Government Systems”* in the Master’s study programme in Public Administration, and in the subject *“Regionalism and Multilevel Governance in Europe”* in the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance*.

- In 2021, a scientific study *“Local self-government in Europe”* was published in Slovenia, in which the 48-page section *“Local self-government in Lithuania”* was prepared by three researchers in the field of public administration studies at VU Šiauliai Academy. This study is applied in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* for the subjects *“Local Government”*, *“Public Administration and Governance”*, in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* for the subjects *“Local Government Systems”* and *“Public Governance Research”*, in the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance* for the subjects *“Regionalism and Multilevel Governance in Europe”* and *“Regional Research Methodology”*.

- In 2018, the scientific study *“Social innovation in the regional context: scientific study”* was published at Šiauliai University, which together with the researchers of the Yanka Kupala University in Grodno, on the basis of a two-year joint project funded by the Lithuanian Research Council, was prepared by two researchers in the field of public administration studies at Šiauliai Academy. This study is applied in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* for the subject *“Strategic Management in Public Administration”*, in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* in the subject *“Strategic Management in Public Sector”* and *“Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations”*, in the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance* for the study subject *“Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations”*.

- In 2020, the textbook *“Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme”* was published at Klaipėda University, the co-author of which is a researcher in the field of public administration studies at VU Šiauliai Academy. This textbook is applied in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* for the subject *“Social Research Methods”*, in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* for the subjects *“Social Research Methodology”* and *“Public Governance Research”*, in the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance* in the subject *“Regional Research Methodology”*.

- In 2020, The National Education Agency issued a methodological aid *“Anti-corruption education in a general education school”*, the co-authors of which are two researchers of the field of public administration studies at VU Šiauliai Academy. This methodological aid is applied in the first cycles study programme *Public Administration* for the subject *“Ethics and Anti-Corruption Policy”*, in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* for the subjects *“Transparency, Openness and Anti-Corruption”* and *“Public Governance Research”*, in the second cycle programme *Regional Development and Governance* in the study subject *“Transparency, Openness and Anti-Corruption”*.

Most of other publications and scientific articles published in 2018-2020 by teachers in the field of public administration are also used in the study of separate subjects of three public administration study programmes. Also, the latest compulsory literature is used in the subjects of the study field, which is additional information related to the latest scientific knowledge and presentation of technological innovations, the latest scientific works of other University employees. The teacher coordinating the subject is responsible for the improvement of the subject description every year and for the compliance of the subject content with the market news. It constantly follows the latest literature and updates the list of main and recommended literature to include the latest scientific publications.

From the above information, it is obvious that the connection between the content of the field of study in public administration and the latest achievements in science and technology is ensured by the teachers of this field. Therefore, the continuous improvement of the teachers themselves is very important, which is ensured by their active participation in scientific conferences, practices, seminars, etc. (see section 5 for more details).

Cooperation with external partners in the field of research related to the field of studies

The co-operation of the teachers of the public administration study field of VU Šiauliai Academy with external partners in carrying out research activities in the field related to public administration studies is mainly manifested in the joint research projects carried out together (see Table 2.3).

As Table 2.3 shows, the scientific cooperation of the teachers of VU ŠA in the field of public administration with Lithuanian and foreign institutions in project activities fully corresponds to the topics of the subjects taught in the field of public administration and, in many cases, is consistent with relevant research and publications.

Table 2.3. RESEARCH PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS OF THE STUDY FIELD IN 2018–2021

Title of the project	Period	Funding source / partner (s)
International projects		
Development and implementation of a model for assessing the innovation potential of global value chains as a basis for increasing regional competitiveness	2021–2024	The Bulgarian National Science Fund / International Business School - Botevgrad (Bulgaria)
A Toolkit for the Prevention of frauds in European Funds with special attention to ERDF and CF (EUMODFRAUD)	2020–2022	HERCULE programme / University of Burgos (Spain)
E-leadership in local government organizations	2019	Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor (The Baltic-German University Liaison Office)
Youth Networking for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region	2020–2021	Council of the Baltic Sea States / Klaipėda University
Academic Staff Renewal and Continuing Professional Development at the University of Latvia	2019–2020	The Government of Latvia / Latvia University
SB Nature Guide Network - Supporting sustainable nature tourism in transboundary coastal areas in the SB Region via establishing a common education scheme for Local Guides	2018–2021	INTERREG, South Baltic / Klaipėda University
FOCUS. Facilitating blue growth with open courses by utilizing R&D products and virtual mobility	2017–2020	INTERREG, South Baltic / Klaipėda University
RETROUT. Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination	2017–2021	INTERREG, Baltic Sea Region / Sweden, Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län
Impact of ERASMUS + Action KA1 (learning mobility for individuals) and longitudinal study on the sustainability of results (Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, Germany)	2018–2020	Lithuanian Education Exchange Support Foundation
Improving the accessibility and efficiency of social support services for guardians and foster and adoptive parents to strengthen their ability to protect and nurture children at risk	2018–2019	LAT-LIT programme / SOS Children's Villages Association in Lithuania

Digitization of studies at the Higher School of Economics	2020–2022	Belarus Republican Foundation for Fundamental Research / Belarusian State University of Economics
Social innovation in the context of regional development: socio-economic development of rural areas (low level of urbanization) and improvement of the quality of life	2017–2018	Lithuanian Research Council / Grodno Janka Kupala State University, Belarus
National projects		
NGO synergies: transparent public governance	2019–2022	2014-2020 Priority 10 of the European Union Funds Investment Operational Programme / Northern Lithuania College
KURK: a creative, unique, caring generation	2018–2019	2014-2020 Priority 9 of the EU Funds Investment Operational Programme / Klaipeda State College
Formation of Šiauliai City Youth Intolerance to Corruption	2018–2019	2014-2020 Priority 10 of the European Union Funds Investment Operational Programme / Northern Lithuania College
Cooperation of Municipalities in the Provision of Public Services: Possibilities of Network Management and the Public Interest Dilemma in Lithuania	2018–2019	Lithuanian Research Council / Vytautas Magnus University
The ruling elite of Kaunas city (1918-1940)	2020–2021	Lithuanian Research Council / Vytautas Magnus University
Phase 3 of the national project "Leaders' Time"	2017–2021	Priority 9 of the European Cohesion Fund Investment Operational Program 2014–2020 / Ministry of Education, Science and Sport Education Supply Centre
Development and testing of general education content and organization models in general education	2020–2022	Priority 9 of the European Cohesion Fund Investment Operational Program 2014–2020 / Ministry of Education, Science and Sport Education Development Centre
National project "I choose to teach - for school change!"	2017–2021	Sponsor: Vilnius Prekyba Support Fund "Now" / Public Institution "School Improvement Centre"
Evaluation of the project "BABBAT - 2019-I-ISO1-KA204- 051131"	2019–2021	ERASMUS / Office for Monitoring and Development of Human Resources
Training and research in the project "MENTOR 2018-1-LT01-KA204-047032"	2018–2019	ERASMUS / Public Institution "Social Innovation Centre"

Of course, extensive scientific cooperation is manifested in participation in scientific internships, Lithuanian and foreign scientific conferences and seminars. Many researchers from Lithuanian and foreign universities participate in the conferences organized by VU Šiauliai Academy, they publish articles in the scientific publication "Social Research" of VU Šiauliai Academy, which is led by researchers in the field of public administration. Teachers of the public administration study field at Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University have deep traditions in cooperation with the municipalities of Northern Lithuania and Šiauliai region and other public sector institutions: presentations of research and academic works, seminars, discussions of scientific and academic nature take place, representatives of the region are widely involved in research, VU ŠA researchers are invited to conduct applied research in institutions.

In 2015, Šiauliai University established and until now VU Šiauliai Academy coordinates the international Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), the chair of its Committee in 2015-2020 was the chairwoman of the Public Administration Study Programmes Committees assoc. prof. dr. Vita Juknevičienė (since ŠU became VU ŠA on January 1, 2021 - she has been responsible for the organization of RENET activities). The aim of this network is to consolidate the research forces of the institution and partner institutions, which would help to develop the scientific competences of researchers and contribute to ensuring interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation between researchers at local, national and international level. Joint network activities perform two main functions: 1) joint thematic network discussions (seminars, doctoral seminars, lectures, conferences, virtual forums, etc.) in a traditional or remote way. Network events are recorded and published on the network website; 2) Mobility of researchers and exchange of competences.

The Network currently brings together representatives from 61 institutions representing 28 countries around the world. The network contributes to a large extent to the international scientific cooperation of the teachers of VU Šiauliai Academy in the field of public administration, because it often organizes (at least 3-4 times a year) scientific events initiated by teachers of public administration, in which topics of public policy and administrative science are discussed with foreign researchers (from the USA, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of South Africa, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland, Latvia, etc (for example, issues of public administration research methodology, introduction of participatory budget self-government, issues of European Union and its political stability, reduction of corruption, issues of regional development indices and implementation of innovation policy, etc.)). Students of the programmes *Public Administration*, *Public Governance*, *Regional Development and Governance* are regularly involved in the events organized by RENET - when participating in public lectures, seminars, discussions, workshops, they must not only listen, but also ask questions to speakers and / or reflect in subject seminars, as these are tasks formulated by subject teachers. In 2021 one public administration researcher became a visiting lecturer at the University of Johannesburg (South Africa) for three years, where she will work with other researchers at the School of Public Administration, Governance and Public Policy on the issues of regional and local development.

Plans of research activity in the field related to the evaluated field of study

In 2021, the research group of VU Šiauliai Academy in the field of public administration consists of 14 teachers (6.0 teaching positions). In 2017, the "*Public Administration Study Field Development Plan for 2018–2020*" was prepared and approved by the Šiauliai University Administration, and most of the measures and planned outcomes were implemented.

For a long time (since 2012), the common research topic of this group has been "*Realization of Good Governance at Local Self-Government*". The group has published extensively on this topic, worked on various research projects and participated in scientific events. Every year (2012–2017), at the beginning of October, in commemoration of the Local Self-Government Day in Lithuania, the group organized a high-level international scientific conference on the topic, and a number of foreign guests used to come. In recent years, however, the topic has become less visible, more interdisciplinary research has emerged, where public sector governance has been linked to the topics of gender equality, anti-corruption education, educational leadership, innovation leadership, e-leadership, and so on. In June 2021, a meeting of this scientific group decided to move to a new scientific topic: "*The resilience of regions to socio-economic crises*". In addition, soon at the strategic session of the research groups of the Institute of Regional Development of Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University, the representatives of the research group of the field of public administration studies suggested the representatives of other groups to join this topic. The support of economics, informatics and other scientific groups has been received. In the future, this topic may become uniting for many the research groups of the Institute of Regional Development, i.e. may become interdisciplinary.

The activity plan of the research group of the field of public administration for 2021–2023 is planning to organize an international scientific conference "*Development of the Role of the State in the 21st Century: National and International Context*" in September every year (in 2021 the 14th conference took place); to carry out applied and fundamental research in public sector institutions according to the topics of regional socio-economic development and education; to analyse the application of the principles of smart governance at national, regional and local levels; to examine the possibilities for improving an efficient and enabling public administration system in line with the prevailing democratic values and trends in the EU; to conduct research on ethics, corruption prevention, leadership, smart public administration, and innovation in the public sector; to prepare high-level scientific publications, to organize an international scientific conference, to participate with reports in conferences and other scientific events.

Assessment of linking the study content with the latest achievements in science, art and technology

The descriptions of VU ŠA public administration study subjects show a very wide scale of public sector management issues. Academic staff implementing studies in the field of public administration integrates their research into the study subjects they teach. The results of the research are shared to ensure that students' knowledge and skills development is based on the latest knowledge and using the most appropriate methods.

Although the study of state governance dominates in the study of public administration, it is necessary to specialize in various fields of governance. As a result, these studies provide much for the effectiveness and efficiency of public law, politics, leadership, personnel management, financial management, public procurement, ethics, strategic and project management, public relations, and other competences that meet the needs of today's society.

Civil servants need a systematic, strategically long-term approach. The studies also focus on the European Green Course, thus responding to the conditions dictated by the theoretical approaches to sustainable development in the development of fundamental and applied research. For example, this issue is especially emphasized in the subject of the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* "Strategic Management in Public Administration", in the subjects of the second cycles study programme *Public Governance* "Strategic Management in Public Sector", "Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations", "Regional Socio-Economic Policy", "Urban and Regional Planning", in the subjects of the second cycle programme *Regional Development and Governance* "Sustainable Regional Development and Governance of Regional Programmes", "Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations".

However, recent research shows that policy-making is not limited to long-term goals (sustainable development, climate change). Usually the situation has to be changed here and now. The public sector is under constant pressure to respond very quickly to the new challenges that arise on a daily basis. The pandemic has shown that excessive administrative burdens can be abandoned in many places in the public sector. A new breakthrough in public administration has been provided by information technology, which enables not only the prompt processing of documentation, but also the wider involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and the greater consideration of their opinions. For example, in 2019 in the field of research a new topic of e-leadership in the public sector emerged. Teachers also pass on this topic to students. For example, in 2020 in the subject "Governance of Public Sector Organizations" of the programme *Public Administration* students completed tasks - pilot e. leadership research in their organizations using a research tool developed by teachers, performed qualitative data analysis, presented research data in the form of reports and oral presentations. This theme is also reflected in the two master's theses in the programme *Public Governance* defended in 2021.

Recent research argues that innovation alone is not enough, it requires competent professionals. The quality of public administration depends directly on the professionalism of those who work there. Of particular importance are leadership, managerial skills and strategic thinking, the ability to respond quickly to a rapidly changing situation. Theorists of science emphasize that the new direction of public administration is converging good governance with smart governance, which is characterized by prompt and ingenious solution of challenges. The topic of smart governance is also reflected in students' final theses.

The presumed challenges for the public sector posed by the pandemic and the EU migration crisis have dictated the need for research on regional resilience. Following the latest scientific and socio-economic practical tendencies in Lithuania and the EU, the teachers of VU ŠA decided to change the topic of their research group from good to smart governance, emphasizing the issue of regional resilience. In addition, Šiauliai Academy has deep traditions of uniqueness of its research. Many researchers at the Institute of Regional Development specialize in regionalism. Therefore, teachers in the field of public administration, responding to the latest scientific trends and long-standing traditions of regional research, focus on the various issues of their research group's new topic "Resilience of Socio-Economic Crises" and the application of their own and global research achievements in public administration.

Assessment of creating conditions for students to engage in research activities corresponding to the study cycle

All students of VU ŠA's three public administration study programmes are involved in research activities by performing various tasks assigned by teachers and preparing written papers, in which students are encouraged to get acquainted with and use the latest and most appropriate research works on the chosen topic written both by the teachers themselves and their colleagues, Lithuanian and global research works. The methodological quality of the research work, the ability to find new literature on the student's chosen topic and apply it effectively, to perform comparative analysis, to base the conclusions of the work on documentary facts is always the focus of all independent work tasks provided by teachers. The ability of

students to perform research work competently is emphasized in the assessments of students' bachelor's and master's theses.

Involving students in research in first cycle studies is a coherent process, starting with the research methods required in social research (concept maps, dictionaries, critical literature selection, annotation, referencing, systematization, generalization) active use in independent work tasks, moving to more complex, integrating primary and secondary data analysis, case studies, etc. At the beginning of the master's studies, a great deal of attention is paid to the identification of the research problem and the theoretical substantiation of the problem. Students identify the problems of public policy development and implementation, the interaction between politics and public administration, organizational governance and substantiate the possible solutions to the problem with their analysis of theoretical sources and empirical research.

The Institute of Regional Development of VU ŠA has a long tradition of organizing scientific conferences for young researchers every spring, in which the majority of students in public administration study programmes participate physically or remotely. In 2021 May 13, one of the three plenary presentations was made by a graduate of the programme *Public Governance*, and in two sections of the study field of public administration, 8 papers in Lithuanian and 4 papers in English were presented by students of three public administration study programmes of VU ŠA. As the conference was held remotely, all students in the three public administration programmes had the opportunity to listen to the conference presentations and discuss in the sections.

In September of each year, the Lithuanian Union of Researchers together with the Institute of Regional Development of VU ŠA organizes an international scientific conference "Development of the State Role in the 21st Century: National and International Context", in 2021, September 24-25 the 14th conference on this topic was held. Students of the three public administration study programmes are invited to participate in it every year, some of them make presentations in the sections of this conference.

Many teachers of VU ŠA who work in three public administration study programmes try to involve students in the research activities in which they participate themselves. In this way, students participate and make presentations physically or remotely at scientific conferences, seminars or other scientific events of Lithuanian and foreign universities.

It is also necessary to note that during the studies, students are given the opportunity to engage in scientific and applied research together with the teachers (researchers) of the field. Students have the right to participate in discussions of conceptual approaches to research, construction of research methodology, development of research instrument, collection of research data, analysis of special SPSS or NVivo programmes, discussion and interpretation of final research results, preparation of research report, preparation and publishing scientific publications based on research results. Usually students decide to take part in research when they have the opportunity to prepare final theses on the topic of research, i. e. a part of the research data can be used by the student for the analysis of his / her bachelor's or master's thesis (as one of the parts of the empirical research of their final thesis). Examples of such practices in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* are the study of anti-corruption attitudes in the region and in 2018 bachelor's thesis "Evaluation of youth anti-corruption potential: the case of Šiauliai county", research on gender equality monitoring in municipalities and in 2021 bachelor's thesis "Gender Equality Situation in Šiauliai County Municipalities"; in the second cycles study programme *Public Governance* - a study of gender equality at the political level of local self-government and in 2019 master's thesis "Women's Political Participation in Local Self-Government in Lithuania", research on the anti-corruption environment in municipalities and in 2022 master's thesis "Human Resource Management in the Municipality by Creating an Anti-corruption Environment" is going to be defended. Master degree students are also involved in research carried out by researchers from other institutions and in the preparation of related interdisciplinary topics, such as the national survey of 11–12 year pupils on their knowledge of Human Papillomavirus (Lithuanian University of Health Sciences) and master's thesis "Governance of the Cervical Cancer Prevention Programme in the Context of Lithuanian Health Care Policy" (VU ŠA). Participation in research is very useful for students in order to gain experience in research activities by performing independent work assignments in study subjects, and especially in preparing bachelor's and master's theses.

Some students, together with the supervisors of their theses, manage to publish the main results of the theses in scientific journals before the defence of the theses (VU ŠA has a scientific journal "Young Researchers' Works" for student publications). Certificates of the papers presented at the conferences and copies of the published articles are recorded in the appendices of the final theses, which provides additional

advantages for the defence of the final theses. Many students write an article together with the supervisor after the defence of the final thesis, i.e. articles are published in collaboration of a graduate with a former thesis supervisor²². Students make presentations at international scientific conferences in Lithuania and abroad.

2.2. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area, strengths and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations from the previous evaluation	Actions
1.	<p>In the evaluation of the first cycle programme <i>Public Administration</i> of VU ŠA carried out in 2013, the experts provided the following recommendations related to the second field of evaluation:</p> <p>1) The international dimension of employee research and conferences needs to be strengthened.</p> <p>2) Teaching the main subjects in English would facilitate the analysis of foreign sources and would be useful for the development of the internationalization of studies.</p> <p>3) Many theses provide relatively few references in English. Although many topics are local, regional, or national in nature, the theoretical foundation should be based on English sources.</p> <p>4) The approach to research and participation in conferences should be more international. Then students could use more information material in English than just Lithuanian sources.</p>	<p>The increase in the internationalization of science and studies and the development of English language skills in the period of 2018-2020 were significantly influenced by:</p> <p>1) RENET public lectures in English and visiting lecturers from abroad;</p> <p>2) the efforts of teachers of public administration to ensure that students use significantly more study sources in English;</p> <p>3) encouraging students to use global research databases in the study process;</p> <p>4) publicizing the results of students' final theses at international scientific conferences in English;</p> <p>5) involvement of students in the activities of international research projects and their presentation in the form of a scientific conference or seminar;</p> <p>6) enabling students in the second cycle programme <i>Public Governance</i> to choose some elective subjects in English together with the students of the joint programme <i>Regional Development and Governance</i>.</p>
Strengths of the evaluation area		
1.	The coherence of research, project activities and study content that motivates and involves students.	
2.	Extensive and growing network of international cooperation in the fields of research and project activities, involving both teachers and students.	
3.	Potential opportunities to develop cooperation with the Faculty of Economics and Management and the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University.	
Aspects for improvement in evaluation area		
1.	<p>To strengthen the quality of research and scientific production in the field of public administration studies at VU ŠA, linking research with studies and involving students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making greater use of the opportunities offered by the merger with VU: opportunities for greater support for research (the structure of workload teachers are focused on research; more foundations, international events, scientific journals, etc.), engage in interdisciplinary 	

²² Publications of the study programme *Public Administration*: <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/fedora/objects/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2019~1587832994798/datastreams/DS.002.0.01.ARTIC/content>; <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2016~1535458586000/J.04~2016~1535458586000.pdf>;

Publications of the study programme *Public Governance*: <http://ojs.wsb.edu.pl/index.php/fso/article/view/379/274>; <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748907190-91>; <https://doi.org/10.37886/ip.2020.005>; <https://doi.org/10.15388/Im.2020.88.35>; <http://hdl.handle.net/10195/67945>; https://lufb.ltu.lv/conference/Research-for-Rural-Development/2016/LatviaResRuralDev_22nd_vol2-128-134.pdf;

Publications of the study programme *Regional Development and Governance*: <https://gs.elaba.lt/object/elaba:45986469/>; https://doi.org/10.23762/FSO_VOL8_NO1_4.

	<p>research (with political, economic, management, sociological, equal opportunities, etc.) teams;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to involve teachers and students more widely in international comparative research on public policy implementation and improvement of public administration.
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3. Student admission and support

3.1. Coherence between the student selection and admission procedure and the results of field learning outcomes

Requirements for admission to the study programmes of the field

Admission to VU first cycle (or integrated studies) studies is carried out during the General Admission in accordance with the admission procedure approved by the institution LAMA BPO (Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for Organizing General Admission) authorized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. Admission to the first cycle studies of the assessed field takes place in accordance with the rules of admission to the first cycle study programmes of Vilnius University (the rules are approved by the VU Senate; they are published on the VU website²³). Entrants to each study programme in the field are admitted by competition according to the competitive score. The rules define the structure of the competitive score and the methodology for its calculation.

Applicants with a secondary education are admitted to the Bachelor's programme *Public Administration*. The competitive score is made according to the established formula:

- 3 – have passed 3 compulsory state maturity exams (Mathematics, Lithuanian and freely chosen exam);
- ≥ 7 – 5 best annual subjects (A and B level subjects optional: Lithuanian language and literature; mother tongue (Belarusian or Polish, or Russian or German); foreign language; mathematics; history or geography, or integrated history and geography course; biology or physics, or chemistry, or integrated science course; subject of art or technology; subject of general physical education or chosen sport) must have an average mark of at least 7;
- $\geq 5,4$ – the competitive score must be at least 5.4 points.

Admission to the second cycle studies is carried out in accordance with the rules of admission to the second cycle study programmes of Vilnius University, which are approved by the Senate of Vilnius University. These rules are published on the VU website²⁴.

In 2014-2017, the SPC was observing if graduates of other study fields and programmes enter master degree programmes in public administration, what knowledge and competencies they have, how they succeed in achieving the outcomes of the study programme and subjects, the extent to which the students' scientific and practical interests correspond to the aims of the field of study in response to the feedback heard in meetings with the social partners and graduates, and in 2018, the SPC decided that it is necessary to increase a list of applicants who can be enrolled in master degree programmes. Until then, candidates for admission were restricted to study programmes in public administration, business administration, and economics.

The study programme *Public Governance* is open to: applicants who have completed the first cycle studies in economics, political science, sociology, social work, public security, communication, law, business and public governance, education and have obtained a bachelor's degree; applicants who have obtained a bachelor's degree in another field of studies and have completed 30 credits of bridging studies (20 credits until September 2021); applicants who have obtained a professional bachelor's degree in the above fields

²³ "Rules for Admission to the First Degree Study Programs of VU" approved by the Senate of Vilnius University. See.

<https://www.vu.lt/studijos/stojantiesiems/bakalauro-studijos> / <https://www.vu.lt/en/studies/bachelor-studies/how-to-apply-bachelor#step-4-admission-requirements>

²⁴ „The Rules for Admission to Vilnius University Postgraduate Studies" approved by the Senate of Vilnius University". See

<https://www.vu.lt/studijos/stojantiesiems/magistranturos-studijos> / <https://www.vu.lt/en/studies/master-studies/how-to-apply-master#step-4-admission-requirements>

and have completed 60 credits of bridging studies (until September 2021 - 25 credits). The joint study programme *Regional Development and Governance* is open to: applicants who have completed the first cycle studies in economics, political science, law, business and public management and have obtained a bachelor's degree; applicants who have obtained a bachelor's degree in another group of subjects and have completed 30 credits of bridging studies (until September 2021 - 20 credits). The competitive score is calculated according to the established formula, summing up the average marks of the diploma supplement and the average marks of the bachelor's thesis / final examinations. Upon entering the programme *Public Administration*, the competitive score additionally includes results of winning international and national Olympiads and competitions (I place or gold medal, II place or silver medal, III place or bronze medal), (only the achievements shown during the Olympiads and competitions in the last forms, (II-IV forms in gymnasiums) are evaluated, additional points for Olympiads and competitions in different subjects are added together, but in such a way that the total sum of the components does not exceed 2.5). In the case of the programme *Public Governance*, additional scores are added for research results. 0.6 points are added to those with publications (in the fields of business and public governance, education, law, economics, political science, sociology, social work, communication, public security) in the scientific journal or for the winners of research conferences of students in the fields of business and public management, law, education, economics, political science, sociology, social work, communication, public security (winners of 1-3 places); 1 point is added to those who have a scientific publication (business and public management, law, education, economics, political science, sociology, social work, communication, public security) in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Additional score (maximum) is added only once. In the case of the joint study programme *Regional Development and Governance*, the entrant must demonstrate a level of English proficiency of B2 or higher (according to CEFR). In addition, motivational interviews are conducted with the candidates for the joint programme, which are conducted by the International Relations Coordinator of the VU ŠA Study Department (teacher of the study programme *Public Administration*).

During the analysed period, the formula for compiling a competitive score and the conditions for admission to master's study programmes did not change.

Information on the conditions of admission is made public by the University and the CAU, LAMA BPO and other websites providing information about studies, various publications ("Kur stoti", etc.), presented at study fairs, visits to general education schools and other events, such as the annual "Student's Day" (2021 - "Student for one day"), at the conference of young researchers "Young Researcher for the Smart Society", FB accounts "VU ŠA Public Administration Studies", "Joint Master's Programme "Regional Development and Governance" ²⁵. In order to introduce the admission requirements and the study procedure to the already working potential students, in the spring of each year the teaching team visits the municipalities of Šiauliai and neighbouring counties, where they consult representatives of municipal administrations, other public administration and public service institutions (2018, 2019). Until 2020 information on admission to the joint master's programme *Regional Development and Governance* was published on the website co-administered with the partner Pardubice University²⁶.

The agreement for the joint master's programme states that admission will take place every two years and the partners change. However, noting the attractiveness of the programme in the Czech Republic, the partners at the SPC meeting offered and it was agreed to enrol in the programme at both universities. 2018-2020 ŠU did not admit students because a profitable group (10 students) was not formed. Only after merging with VU 2021, VU ŠA admitted 5 international students. In the academic year of 2018–2020 and 2019–2020, no group was formed in any of the partner universities due to cost-effectiveness. In 2018, PU admitted 6 students, and in 2020 and 2021 - 9 students each year, who also studied the subjects taught by VU ŠA teachers.

Data related to the admission of students to the field of study are presented in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

²⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/viesasisvaldymas>; <https://www.facebook.com/JointRegion>.

²⁶ <http://jointregion.su.lt/>.

Table 3.1. NUMBER OF STUDENTS APPLYING FOR FIRST PRIORITY AND OTHER PRIORITIES *

Year	I cycle				II cycle					
	Public Administration Admission to I course		Public Administration Admission to upper courses		Public Governance		Regional Development and Governance			
	VU ŠA		PU							
	1 pr.	other pr.	1 pr.	other pr.	1 pr.	other pr.	1 pr.	other pr.	1 pr.	other pr.
2021	3**	4**	-	-	20	9	8	0	12	0
2020	20	62	23	-	22	10	0**	0	12	0
2019	-	-	6	-	26	16	-***	-	24	0
2018	-	-	11	-	16	2	0	0	28	0

*full-time and part-time mode taken together
** admission was closed after the first round of admission due to too few applications.
*** there was no admission.

During the analysed period, the number of applications to study in the upper course of the programme *Public Administration* increased (see Table 3.1). This is explained by the stricter requirements for employees to obtain a university degree. Until 2016, the programme *Public Administration* was quite popular among entrants to the first course, however, in 2017, 2018, 2019 there were not enough (15) requests to form a group. The reasons may have been both the decline in the prestige of the civil servant in society and the declining demographic trends of students with secondary education. With the launch of a more active marketing campaign in 2020, the number of the applicants and the contracts signed changed significantly.

Table 3.2. NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO SIGNED STUDY CONTRACTS IN STATE-FUNDED AND STATE-NON-FUNDED PLACES *

Year	I cycle				II cycle					
	Public Administration Admission to I course		Public Administration Admission to upper courses		Public Governance		Regional Development and Governance			
	VU ŠA		PU							
	SF	SNF	SF	SNF	SF	SNF	SF	SNF	SF	SNF
2021	-	-	-	-	9	7	0	5	0	9
2020	9	4	-	23	6	21	0	0	0	9
2019	-	-	-	6	5	17	-	-	-	-
2018	-	-	-	11	7	39	0	0	6	0

*full-time and part-time taken together

The number of applicants to the second cycle programme *Public Governance* in the first priority is almost twice as high as in the second priority. Every year, 1–2 groups of students (in one or both forms) are admitted, it should be noted that the majority of those admitted are SNF students, which shows the purposeful selection of applicants and the compliance of the study programme with their needs. As can be seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the number of submitted applications for SF places is significantly higher than the number of SF places allocated, so a part of the applicants who did not enter the SF places choose the SNF place or transfer to other similar study programmes.

In order to improve the number of admissions together with the general marketing tools of VU ŠA, ways are being sought to inform the target groups about the study opportunities. Particular attention is paid to direct communication with the regional public administration and public service institutions, with which the members of the SPC meet every spring and present changes in the study programmes in the field of public administration, discuss the needs and opportunities to respond to them. Once a year, the meetings of the Council of Social Partners in the field of public administration discuss the challenges facing public

governance and the possibilities of study programmes in the field of public administration to help institutions overcome them (for example, partial studies without a university bachelor degree in public administration). Targeted marketing tools are also implemented in the traditional annual events: a separate section of teachers' and students' reports is formed at the conference of young researchers "Young Researcher for the Smart Society", an annual event to mark anti-corruption day takes place in December by inviting students from Šiauliai city or surrounding areas to discuss and present their works on anti-corruption topics.

During the analysed period, VU ŠA had no applications to the joint master's programme *Regional Development and Governance* (the situation changed after ŠU became VU ŠA in 2021 and the inclusion of this programme in the list of VU programmes offered to international students), however, in each year of the analysed period, due to intensified marketing of Pardubice University in the target countries (especially in the African continent, India and other countries of Southeast Asia) there were applications and admissions to this university, so in 2018 and 2020 one group was formed and both partner universities implemented the programme. It should be noted that there were quite a lot of requests for studies at both VU ŠA and the partner University of Pardubice, but due to migration requirements and restrictions, not all of them were able to process documents and obtain a visa.

The score of the admitted students of the second cycle programme *Public Governance* remained the highest during the analysed period - the average in SF places was 8.9; while in the SNF places it is slightly lower - 8 points. The expression of the score of the entrants fluctuates insignificantly during the analysed period, the highest score is between 10–9, the lowest - 8–7 points (see Table 3.3).

During the analysed period, the average number of students admitted to study programme *Public Administration* (only the number of students admitted to the first year is taken into account) was 7.4 in SF and 6.2 in SNF places (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. DATA ON THE COMPETITION SCORES OF THE ADMISSION TO THE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD * (excluding the number of admissions, who have been exempted from taking the examinations)

Programme in the study field	Admission Year	State funded (sf) / State non funded (snf) places	Competitive score of the admission		
			Highest score	Lowest score	Score average
Public Administration (I cycle)	2021	sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
sf		19,17**	16,75**	18,02**	
snf		18,25**	12,55**	15,84**	
Regional Development and Governance (VU ŠA) (II cycle)		sf	***	***	***
		snf	***	***	***
Public Administration (I cycle)	2020	snf	8,5	6,3	7,4
		snf	6,8	5,5	6,2
sf		9,1	8,4	8,9	
snf		9,5	7,6	8,2	
Regional Development and Governance (VU ŠA) (II cycle)		sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
Public Administration (I cycle)	2019	sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
sf		9,4	8,2	8,7	
snf		9,5	6,6	7,9	

Regional Development and Governance (VU ŠA) (II cycle)		sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
Public Administration (I cycle)		sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
Public Governance (II cycle)	2018	sf	10,1	8,4	9,1
		snf	9,4	6,7	7,7
Regional Development and Governance (VU ŠA) (II cycle)		sf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-
		snf	-	-	-

*full-time and part-time taken together.
** after the integration into VU, the procedure for calculating the competitive score changed.
*** the data were not available to the members of the SPC preparing the self-assessment.

Recognition of foreign qualifications, partial learning outcomes, previous and other learning

VU carries out the academic recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and acquired in accordance with the educational programmes of foreign states and international organizations in accordance with the law granted by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania²⁷.

When making academic recognition decisions, the University follows the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Description of the Procedure for the Recognition of Education and Qualifications Related to Higher Education and Acquired in the Curricula of Foreign States and International Organizations²⁸, Methodology for the Evaluation of Education and Qualifications Related to Higher Education and Acquired in the Curricula of Foreign States and International Organizations²⁹ and other documents.

A foreign qualification is recognized as equivalent to a secondary education or higher education qualification of the appropriate level provided in the Republic of Lithuania, if it is not possible to indicate significant differences between the general requirements of the country where the foreign qualification was obtained and the general requirements of the Republic of Lithuania.

Each foreign qualification is assessed and the decision on its academic recognition is made individually, based on the available information and the practice of assessment and recognition of analogous or substantially similar foreign qualifications, thus ensuring the consistency of the practice of recognition of qualifications.

Entrants to the field of study may submit applications to credit the learning outcomes achieved in a formal or informal (self-education) manner in accordance with the procedures in force at Vilnius University³⁰. Formal learning outcomes can be credited according to a pre-agreed contract (e.g. crediting of partial learning outcomes) or uncoordinated learning content. According to the uncoordinated study content, the learning

²⁷ 2015 April 23 the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the LR No. V-376 grants the right to VU to carry out the academic recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and acquired in accordance with the educational programmes of foreign states and international organizations. <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/34a7abd0ea0411e4ada6f94d34be6d75?jfwid=-9dzqnuead>

²⁸ 2012 February 29 by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 212 "Description of the Procedure for the Recognition of Education and Qualifications Related to Higher Education and Acquired in the Curricula of Foreign States and International Organizations" was approved. <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.419285>

²⁹ 2012 May 28 the order of the Director of the Study Quality Assessment Centre No. V-48 approved the "Methodology for the Assessment of Education and Qualifications Related to Higher Education and Acquired Under the Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organizations" (wording of Order No. V-21 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education of 14 March 2017). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/e3a13db209c211e78dadb175b73de379/asr>

³⁰ Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. SK-2013-8-11 "Description of the procedure for admission of a person who has studied at another domestic or foreign higher education institution and wishes to continue his / her studies at Vilnius University" (20/06/2013) (Wording of Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S-2017-11-10 of 21 November 2017). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/st_reglamentuojantys_dok/Asmens_studijavusio_kitoje_AM_priemimo_tvarka.pdf; Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. 9 "Procedure for crediting study results at Vilnius University" (June 3, 2004) (Wording of Resolution No. SK-2007-11 of the Senate of Vilnius University of 30 May 2007). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/st_reglamentuojantys_dok/Studiju_rezultatu_iskaitymo_VU_tvarka.pdf; Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. SPN-63 "Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Competences Acquired by Non-formal and Informal Learning of Vilnius University Students and Crediting of Study Subjects (Modules)" (19-11-2019). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/Neformaliuoju_b%C5%ABdu_%C4%AFgyt%C5%B3_kompetencij%C5%B3_%C4%AFskaitymo_tvarkos_apra%C5%A1as.pdf

outcomes are credited after assessing whether the learning outcomes meet the formal requirements and the general and subject competences developed by the desired study programme.

A person who has studied at another domestic or foreign higher education institution and wishes to continue his / her studies at Vilnius University may be admitted to continue his / her studies in programmes of the field. In this case, the learning outcomes are credited after assessing their compliance with the formal (group of study fields, field of study, type of study programme, form of study, etc.) and subject (study aims of subjects (modules), skills, content, scope, etc.) requirements of the desired study programme. No more than 75 percent of the desired volume of the first, second cycle or integrated study programme may be credited.

Recognition of students' competences acquired in non-formal and / or informal way and crediting of study subjects (modules) based on this recognition allows recognition and crediting of student competences acquired through work, voluntary work or internships, short-term or long-term internships, courses, seminars, projects, etc., independent learning. No more than 50 percent of the study programme volume may be credited. Final examinations, final theses and other written works that are provided in the study programme as a separate study subject (module) cannot be credited. The decision on the crediting of learning outcomes is made by the SPC. A designated assessor or a panel of assessors may also participate in the competency assessment procedure.

At the beginning of the autumn semester of 2020, crediting of study subjects (modules) carried out on the basis of non-formal and / or informal learning competences was made for 15 students who successfully continued their partial bachelor's studies in public administration. In the spring semester of 2021, 2 study subjects (Management, State Governance and Administration Systems) were credited for competences acquired through non-formal and / or informal learning and on the basis of this recognition 2 students (with long-term (6 and 12 years) management experience in the public sector, but with a professional bachelor's degree in another field), successfully continued bridging studies in *Public Governance*, in order to formally acquire the competences required to enter the programme *Public Governance* at VU ŠA in June 2021.

3.2. A system of support for students that enables them to achieve maximum learning progress

All students in the field have access to the offered support: academic information and counselling, career services, information technology services, library and information services, financial support, accommodation services, cultural and leisure services, access to student activities, psychological services, spiritual and religious services, support and services for students with special needs. Most of these services are provided anonymously to make students feel safe seeking help. The problems faced by students are addressed on the principle of subsidiarity, i.e. through the mediation of the SPC chairman between student-teachers, student-teacher-administration, etc.).

Academic mobility of students

The processes of studies abroad and international cooperation at the University are administered by the Department of International Relations, and at the Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University by the International Relations Coordinator of the Department of Studies, who is responsible for international cooperation and studies abroad.

Students of all cycles have the opportunity to attend semester or year periods of studies as well as compulsory professional practice during the period provided for in the study plan, additional professional practice (internship) during the summer, graduate practice (internship) immediately after studies under Erasmus +, ISEP, Nordplus programmes and bilateral cooperation agreements. In total, students in the field can spend up to half of their study period in mobility programmes. Students can use Erasmus and Erasmus + programmes for a total of 12 months. CAU has 45 Erasmus and other agreements with foreign universities (see Table 3.4). The visits of students in the field for Erasmus internships is organized and administered by the Student Services and Careers Department. It should be noted that in 2021, even wider opportunities for students to gain international experience opened through VU's participation in the activities of the University Alliance ARQUS (partial studies, short-term exchanges, participation in international conferences, etc.). The ARQUS network consists of 7 European universities that have signed and are implementing the open mobility model. Students in the field have access to 38 universities belonging to the network of the oldest European classical universities COIMBRA, the University of Nebraska in Omaha, or the University of Kent. Students wishing to study abroad before the start of their planned studies abroad must have completed at least one first-cycle course or one second-cycle semester. All information about mobility opportunities is

made public by the University³¹ and VU ŠA³² on web sites, in newsletters sent to the University community, meetings with students organized for information purposes.

Students of the first cycle programme *Public Administration* last went to study at a foreign partner institution in 2017–2018, none of the students went on internships during the analysed period (see Table 3.5). This situation is due to the fact that no new groups were admitted to the programme during the analysed period (entrants of 2020 can only take part in the ERASMUS programme from 2021-2022).

Table 3.4. ERASMUS AND OTHER AGREEMENTS WHERE STUDENTS CAN STUDY

No.	Country	University/ Higher School	Number of agreements
1.	Bulgaria	International Business School	1
2.	Czech Republic	Mendel University in Brno, University of Pardubice, Tomas Bata University in Zlin	3
3.	Denmark	Zealand Institute of Business and Technology (Zealand Institute of Technology and Business, Campus Roskilde)	1
4.	Estonia	TalTech University	1
5.	Greece	University of the Aegean	1
6.	Spain	University of Carlos III de Madrid, University of Huelva	2
7.	Latvia	Rezekne Academy of Technology, Riga Technical University, Baltic International Academy, Turiba University, Latvia Agriculture University	5
8.	Poland	Marie Curie-Sklodowska University, National-Louis University, Wroclaw University	3
9.	Portugal	Acores University, Branganca Polytechnical Institute, Viana do Castelo Polytechnical Institute	2
10.	France	Paul Sabatier - Toulouse III University, Normandy Business School	2
11.	Romania	Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca	1
12.	Slovakia	Alexander Dubcek University of Trencin, Comenius University in Bratislava, University of Economics in Bratislava	3
13.	Slovenia	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Organisation Studies Novo Mesto	2
14.	Turkey	Anadolu University, Istanbul Aydin University	2
15.	Hungary	John von Neumann University	1
16.	Germany	Pedagogische Hochschule FREIBURG, Chemnitz University of Technology	2
17.	Albania	European University of Tirana	1
18.	Belarus	Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno	1
19.	Georgia	Sokhumi State University, International Black Sea University	2
20.	USA	University of Nebraska at Omaha, Kent State University	2
21.	Russia	Dostoevsky Omsk State University	1
22.	Sri Lanka	University of Rajarata of Sri Lanka	1
23.	Korea	National Chung Hsing University, Chonnam State University	2
24.	Ukraine	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	1
25.	Chile	Universidad Finis Terrae	1
26.	Japan	Junsei Education School	1

Table 3.5. STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF STUDY WHO STUDIED ABROAD (AT LEAST 15 STUDY CREDITS)

Academic year	Number of students who went abroad		Institutions (countries) where students go to study	Number of students who arrived		Institutions (countries), of which students arrive
	I cycle	II cycle		I cycle	II cycle	
2019–2020	0	0		0	0	
2018–2019	0	0		0	6	University of Pardubice (Czech Republic)
2017–2018	2	1	Branganca Polytechnical Institute (Portugal), University of Pardubice (Czech Republic)	0	0	

³¹ <https://www.vu.lt/tarptautiniai-ryšiai/mainu-galimybes>; <https://www.vu.lt/tarptautiniai-ryšiai/kitos-studiju-uzsienyje-galimybes>

³² <https://www.sa.vu.lt/en/about/degree-programmes>

During the analysed period, the students of the second cycle programme *Public Governance* did not go to study according to the ERASMUS programme. This is usually due to the fact that students are working practitioners, they have families, so leaving for a semester is not favourable for them.

To increase students' competences in EU policies and their international mobility on 16-22 October 2017, in the framework of the project "I am a responsible EU citizen" prepared by a member of the Council of Teachers of Public Administration and Social Partners, 8 students of *Public Administration* (two 1st year, three 2nd year, three 3rd year) and two 1st year master students in *Public Governance*, accompanied by 5 lecturers, went on a visit to the EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament). As this trip was beneficial both in terms of internationalization and competence development, it was decided to carry out short-term traineeships of a similar nature every couple of years, but this was not possible due to the pandemic situation.

During the analysed period, 1 JSP student was away for studies. Also, in the spring semester of 2018–2019, 6 JSP PU students came (physically) to VUŠA, and in the autumn and spring semesters of 2020–2021, 9 JSP PU students studied JSP subjects taught at VUŠA remotely. It is planned that 5 VUŠA students and 9 PU students (physically arriving) will study at VUŠA in the spring semester of 2021–2022, and they will all study at PU at the autumn semester of 2022–2023. In addition, other ERASMUS students can join English language courses taught to JSP students. For example, in the spring semester of 2018–2019, the ERASMUS student joined the JSP subject "E. Governance and Democracy".

Providing information about studies, consulting students

Information about studies is constantly provided at several levels: general information about the study process is provided centrally at the Student Services and Career Centre, unit-specific information is provided at the VU ŠA Study Department and the Public Administration Study Programme Committee, individually in meetings with academic advisors or subject teachers. VU ŠA Student Representation Office also provides information to students.

Students admitted to the field of public administration are first introduced to their study programmes during *Integration Week*, during which a special schedule of lectures and meetings is created for new students. *Integration Week* is the first week of studies. This week's schedule includes meetings with members of the study programme committee to acquaint students with the aims, learning outcomes, methods and individualisation opportunities of the respective study programmes, a separate lecture on the study process is organized, as well as lectures to present various forms of support and leisure.

51% of all consultations on the study process provided centrally in the Student Services and Careers Department are conducted by e-mail, 26 percent - by phone, 14 percent - in the direct inquiry system on the website, 5%. - in social networks, 4 percent - during a real meeting, 1 percent – in discussion forums.

All information about the study process (study calendar, lecture and exam schedules, options, evaluation procedure, debt rescheduling), studies abroad, tuition fees, scholarships, study financing is also provided to students at VU departments: Department of Studies, Regional Development Institute, during meetings with the heads and members of the study program committees, academic advisors. Information is constantly published <https://www.sa.vu.lt/studentams/svarbi-informacija>. Information about the study process is also provided to the student through VUSIS: he / she sees his / her personal data, extracts from the orders, study plan, session schedule, session results, etc., participates in the study process: registers for GUS and elective studies.

Academic support

All students in the field have access to the offered support: academic information and counselling, career services, information technology services, library and information services, financial support, accommodation services, cultural and leisure services, access to student activities, psychological services, spiritual and religious services, support and services for students with special needs. Most of these services are provided anonymously to make students feel safe seeking help.

One of the most important forms of support is academic support. At Vilnius University, academic support for students is provided both in each academic unit separately and centrally - in the Department of Student Services and Careers. Students are provided with advice on all matters relating to their studies (such as the

admissions process, the choice of study programme, financial support, suspension, termination of an individual study plan, changes in study programmes, practice or informal activities). Not only Lithuanian students are consulted, but also those who have come from foreign countries for full-time studies or under the Erasmus + programme or bilateral exchange agreements. For the convenience of students, academic consultants also consult students in every academic unit of Vilnius University. Students of the field of public administration at VU ŠA are additionally consulted by 3 academic and remote learning consultants.

Students are advised about the learning outcomes and content of the programme by the members of the Public Administration Study Programmes Committee and the teachers participating in the programme, who have set time when students can apply for consultations, as well as between (after) lectures and by e-mail. During the preparation of the final theses, the students are advised by the supervisor. During the analysed period, students preparing the final theses had the opportunity to consult not only with the thesis supervisor, but also with other programme teachers. The lecturer, an expert in social research methodology, regularly consults students of all programmes who have registered by e-mail for consultation, 2 hours are appointed for this per week (and more as needed). According to the decision of the Public Administration SPC, since 2018 general consultations for students preparing final theses have been organized, in which students, supervisors, reviewers and members of final thesis defence commissions participate. In 2020-2021, these consultations became an integral part of the SPC's activities: in bachelor studies 1 general consultation a month before the initial reading of BD, in master studies - 2 general consultations 2 and 1 month before the initial reading of MT ((taking into account the feedback from the graduates and the content of the module "Public Governance Research" (10 credits), in the meeting of October 2021 the SPC decided that in the case of MT one general consultation would be held 1 month before the first reading). VU Library ŠA Information Centre specialist for databases and trainings consult on information retrieval and use of library resources.

Students are consulted about career opportunities not only through lectures, meetings with alumni (alumni association <https://www.sa.vu.lt/apie/alumni>), potential employers, they are also invited to the defence of theses, conference of young researchers. After becoming a part of Vilnius University (in 2021), the mentoring programme successfully implemented at VU³³ will be used, to fully develop students' general competences, knowledge, improve their academic and personal achievements and motivation to study, to help take over the experience gained by a mentor and to receive valuable advice in planning a professional future. Volunteers faculty and alumni participate in this activity and share personal experiences, thus contributing to the personal and professional growth of students and the strengthening of the university community.

JSP students are advised by representatives of both partner universities. At VU ŠA, these functions are performed by the coordinator of international studies, the chairwoman of the study committee of the field of public administration. Information on the admission and study conditions is published on the study programme e-website <http://jointregion.su.lt/>. administered by the partner universities.

Support for socially vulnerable groups

Vilnius University strives to create equal opportunities to study and work for all members of the community. VU students have the opportunity to suspend their studies for personal reasons or to take academic leave in case of various difficulties.

Students from socially vulnerable groups may receive reduced tuition fees, dormitory rent or a special scholarship (e.g. VU birthday scholarships for gifted graduates from vulnerable backgrounds; scholarships for Belarusian students affected by the political regime, etc.).

The University is open and strives to ensure appropriate study conditions for students with disabilities:

- investing in the adaptation of the university environment;
- access to various compensatory techniques is provided, which help to adapt the study process to individual needs;
- students with disabilities are given the opportunity to use more flexible forms of assessment, to individualize the study process according to the needs arising from the disability. At the student's

³³ <https://www.vu.lt/studijos/studentams/mentoryste>

request, the Disability Coordinator prepares recommendations for the adaptation of studies to the needs arising from the disability;

- students and teachers are provided with consultations on the issues of access to studies;
- seminars and other events on disability are organized for the university community as needed.

In its activities, VU ŠA follows the strategy "Open University for the Disabled" approved by the Senate in 2017. In Lithuanian higher education institutions, this is the first case where a long-term commitment is made to work systematically in the field of ensuring equal opportunities for the disabled.

In order to ensure the availability of studies, the Child Care Room (free childcare service) operating at the VU Library Information Centre (VU ŠA) is a form of support for young parents raising children (students and teachers) who need to leave their children for a short time (up to 3 hours) while they participate in lectures or consultations, meetings.

Social support

The main expression of students' social support is financial benefits (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6. SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Full-time and part-time studies taken together

Financial support	Public Administration						Public Governance					
	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021
Awarded by the University	A*	S**	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S
Incentive scholarship	16	6	7	3	7	9	0	4	4	3	2	8
One-time incentive scholarship	0	0	3	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
One-time incentive scholarship (for first year students)	0	0	0	0	13	-	6	0	20	0	26	-
One-time social scholarship	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nominal scholarship	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
SSF support	A*	S**	A	S	A		A	S	A	S	A	
Social scholarship	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	1	2
Targeted disability allowance	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	1
Financial support for the disabled	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
State - subsidized loan	1	1	3	0	1	1	2	1	4	3	6	2
Compensation of tuition fees ***	3	-	0	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	2	-

* A – autumn semester, ** S – spring semester,

*** compensation is granted only in the autumn semester for the previous academic year.

Students can receive financial support from the University: incentive scholarships for the best learning outcomes (in 2018–2021, 139 students in the field of public administration received scholarships, of which 65 one-time incentive scholarships for first year students), social scholarships (1 scholarship in 2018–2021). Separate expressions of social support are state loans for students (administered by the State Studies Fund) and financial benefits for students with disabilities: in 2018-2021 11 students in the field of public administration received social scholarships, in 2018–2021 targeted benefits for the disabled and financial support for the disabled were provided to 9 students in the field of public administration, 22 students in the field of public administration benefited from the state-supported loan, and 9 students got compensations for the price paid for their studies.

Highly gifted students who study well and participate in research activities can apply for nominal scholarships in accordance with the respective fields of study and research. Detailed information about them

is available on the VU ŠA website. In 2018–2021, nominal scholarships for high academic results and active social activities were awarded to 7 students in the field of public administration.

Students can get acquainted with the procedure for granting and paying the mentioned benefits on the VU ŠA website. Students of public administration are also introduced to these support opportunities in the introductory lectures of the first semester and in the Student Representative Office.

VU has a Counselling and Training Centre, where students can receive professional psychological counselling (counselling cycle) on issues of personal life, family, studies and social integration.

VU ŠA chaplain provides spiritual advice and support.

VU has a Student Representation Office, which solves various students' problems, defends their interests, takes care of students' academic and social well-being, organises cultural leisure time, fosters student traditions, and helps first year students to integrate into the University community. After the founding conference of VU SRO in February 2021, another unit officially joined VU SRO - Student Representation Office in Šiauliai Academy. The Student Representation Office usually appoints a senior student to the freshman, who can be contacted for any questions of concern. Students are also invited to join the activities of Student Representation Office.

3.3. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area, strengths and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations of previous evaluation	Actions
Public Administration		
1.	The problem of declining enrolment (especially part-time students) needs to be addressed if students' learning experiences are not to be jeopardized.	Meetings are organized with the staff of the regional public administration and the administration of public service institutions, they are informed about the study opportunities.
2.	Teaching basic subjects in English, in addition to English language support courses, would facilitate the integration of ERASMUS students into the Lithuanian student body and would benefit both groups.	Local students are also invited to attend lectures delivered to Erasmus students.
Public Governance		
1.	"To promote the international mobility of students, to look for practice (internship) opportunities abroad."	Students are actively offered Erasmus internship opportunities.
2.	"The social partners have a greater role to play: in setting up scholarships for students <...>".	In 2018–2021, public administration students received 7 nominal scholarships.
Regional Development and Governance		
1.	"ŠU and PU, together with the social partners, should look for ways to set up scholarships for students to encourage them to find employment in the local or regional public sector. This goal could be achieved by: creating a scholarship system <...>".	During the analysed period, the social partners of the programme during the discussion stated that the establishment of scholarships for foreign students does not add value to the institutions of Šiauliai region (students did not intend to stay in the region or did not fulfil the essential requirement to work in the Lithuanian public sector – they do not speak Lithuanian). It was therefore limited to other forms of cooperation. In the autumn semester of 2017, 3 state-funded places for Lithuanian students were provided at ŠU. Due to the small number of entrants, no additional measures were used in the autumn semester of 2019.

		Scholarships are offered for talented students from the Czech Republic entering VU ŠA for the autumn semester of 2021 (the programme is offered only to foreigners).
2.	“Review study programme governance and balance student groups. The current study programme is more attractive to foreign than local students. This problem is also relevant for students in this study programme in the Czech Republic. Find ways to attract more Czech students to PU in the Czech Republic and more Lithuanians to ŠU in Lithuania to meet the needs of specialists in the region.”	In 2018–2020, the study programme is promoted equally to the target groups of both partner countries (local and foreign potential students). In 2021, VU ŠA study programme has been publicized to the target group from abroad. PU continues to target the local and foreign market.
Strengths of the evaluated area		
1.	Study programmes in the field of public administration are attractive to practitioners seeking to improve their competences.	
2.	Strong links with public administration or regional institutions providing public services (periodic visits to these institutions, social partners' councils, conferences) allow for the dissemination of information about the study programme directly to the target groups.	
3.	Developed student support services enable students with social or financial difficulties to feel safe.	
4.	SPC and institutional support for solving problems of different types of students in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.	
Aspects for improvement of the evaluated area		
1.	To strengthen the publicity of the study programme <i>Public Administration</i> to potential students (pupils) through more active development of the volunteering programme (volunteering introduces final-year pupils to the study programme, performs PA-related tasks, encourages them to choose PA studies at VU ŠA).	
2.	To make the Moodle environments designed for general thesis consultations permanent, with a wider scope for discussion, with relevant latest aspects of social research methodology, publications attesting to the change of public administration paradigms, the latest EU and Lithuanian strategic documents for the improvement of public governance.	
3.	In order to attract foreign students to the joint master programme, it is necessary to strengthen marketing measures aimed at foreign markets, to use VU's network of international cooperation with other higher education institutions of the world, with the network of other countries with embassies in the Republic of Lithuania.	

4. Studying, student performance and graduate employment

4.1. The preparedness of field students for independent professional activity

The descriptions of the study programmes and study subjects (modules) in the field aim to ensure the coherence of learning outcomes and teaching / learning methods (see Appendix 3). The competences and learning outcomes to be developed are focused not only on the provision of certain subject knowledge, but also on the development of general competences determined by the needs of the labour market. The social partners, employers and graduates of the field are actively and consistently involved in their formulation.

When developing a student-centred study model, cumulative assessment is especially encouraged and applied in all study subjects (modules) of the field. During the learning process, the student is given feedback on his / her achievements in order to ensure consistent and in-depth learning, which would enable students to achieve maximum progress in studying the subject (module) and at the same time reveal the student's personality and talent.

In order to follow the student-centred study paradigm, a student-centred motivational study environment is created and developed that systematically and consistently promotes learning and provides the students with incentives and the necessary skills to become an active participant in the study process responsible for

their own learning. Studies in the field develop a culture of argumentation and creativity, critical thinking, social responsibility, the ability to solve problems, constantly innovate, understand, accept and tolerate the diversity of the world and society.

The motivating study environment also determines the teacher's activity, the change of traditional hierarchical relations with students: the teacher not only creates a learning environment that enables the student to change his/her thinking and activities, but also learns how to continuously improve this environment.

The organization of a learning-based learning process requires a review of community attitudes, attitudes toward learning and changes in teaching and learning methods, and the concept of student workload. To ensure this change, the didactic competence of teachers is being developed, appropriate support is being developed for students (academic counselling, vocational counselling / career guidance, etc.) and for teachers (training, counselling, discussions, dissemination of good practice) (more in sections 3.2 and 5); initiatives and measures are encouraged and developed to guarantee the necessary conditions for a learning environment (appropriate classrooms, laboratories, equipment, information resources, etc.).

Forms and methods of studies, teaching / learning methods, assessment of achievements

Studies in the field are conducted on a full-time and part-time basis. The main study methods and teaching / learning methods are contact (lectures, laboratory works, practical work, consultations, and seminars in master's studies) and non-contact (independent literature studies, preparation of written works, performance of specific tasks of teachers). During practical classes and seminars, discussions are organized, students work in groups solving specific questions or performing tasks assigned by the teacher, presenting reports on a chosen topic. During seminars and practical classes, most of the tasks assigned to students during their independent work are discussed, thus ensuring the monitoring of progress. It should be noted that since the spring semester of 2019-2020, remote learning (lectures, seminars, reports, consultations, etc.) in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic has been taking place using ICT (Teams, Zoom, etc.). The Moodle learning environment was used extensively by the programme teachers before the pandemic as well.

The following study methods are most often used in the study programmes of the field: inclusive / interactive lecture, visiting lecturer, literature analysis methods, individual and group project, case study, group work, discussion, concept map, small group consultations, etc. There is interdisciplinary integration in the delivery and assessment of assignments for the first cycle students, with best practice in teachers' collaboration delivering a single module in the graduate programme. The methods used ensure that students acquire subject knowledge and develop general and subject skills.

The main methods of student assessment: written and / or oral exam (during the exam, especially in master studies, individual or group work is usually presented, the test with closed and open questions using Moodle tools is performed less often); written works, which assess the ability to creatively apply theoretical knowledge, analyse and critically evaluate the processes taking place in public administration and link practical issues with the theory of science, competently solve social and economic development problems, evaluate alternative solutions; verbal illustrated report, checking communication competences important for a public administration specialist; in almost all subjects, active participation in group discussions, promoting the development of social-communicative competences, is also included in the assessment criteria. Control tests and case studies are also used. Comparing the study methods and assessment methods applied in the first cycle with the second cycle, the latter pays more attention to inclusive, problem-based teaching and independent research. For example, in the second cycle study programmes *Public Governance* and *Regional Development and Governance*, a case study is carried out in the subject "Social Research Methodology", identifying a problematic situation in a selected organization (group of 3-4 students). The results of the research are presented in a seminar attended by representatives of the researched organizations. The reports on the subject "Public Governance Research" are accounted for in the form of a conference.

The following principles of assessment of study achievements are applied at Vilnius University: professionalism, transparency, fairness, objectivity, reliability, respect and goodwill. In the first cycle programme *Public Administration*, second cycle programmes *Public Governance* and *Regional Development and Governance*, formative, intermediate and final assessment of the subject (module) study achievements is performed. Methods of student self-assessment and informal collegial assessment are

used. Final assessment of study achievements is mandatory. Examinations, depending on the study subject, are conducted in writing, orally, or in writing and orally. A computer-based assessment is equivalent to a written assessment. The same evaluation criteria are applied to all students in a programme, regardless of the mode of study.

Further study opportunities for the graduates

Graduates of the study field programmes are ready to continue their studies at a higher level. 10% of graduates who completed the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* in 2018–2019 study in the second cycle study programmes, during the period under review one graduate of *Public Governance*, and three graduates of *Regional Development and Governance* continue their doctoral studies (one of them defended his doctoral dissertation in September 2021).

Adaptation of the study process to socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

The University has a “Procedure for Individualization of Studies According to Individual Needs Caused by Disability”, which allows to adapt the study process to students and unclassified students with special needs. Students can contact the Disability Coordinator, who will find out their special needs and provide guidance to the person responsible for matters relating to students with disabilities (CAU Study Process Administrator) on the adaptation of study processes. The person in charge of the CAU prepares a study individualization plan according to the provided recommendations and ensures that it is implemented. He informs teachers about the application of teaching / learning methods during a specific subject (module) as needed. When organizing studies and assessing the study achievements of students with special needs (visual, hearing, mobility or other disabilities), it is planned to apply flexible forms of assessment of studies and achievements (e.g. by increasing the font of examination tasks, extending the time for assessment) adapting to the capabilities of these individuals. Some lecturers in the academic unit have received training on working with students with special needs.

During the analysed period, students with special needs due to a disability did not study in the field programmes, but students sometimes need to adapt the study process or the form of assessment when, depending on their health, work, family situation, they are unable to attend some classes. Teachers have the flexibility to take into account the needs of such students by providing them with alternative tasks that develop the same abilities, providing targeted additional literature, providing advice on completing tasks, encouraging peer counselling, and using distance learning methods. If there is a valid reason why the student is unable to fulfil the task on time, faculty members may extend the deadline for interim assessment, and the person in charge of the CAU may, in agreement with the student and faculty member, postpone the date of the exam.

More information on the integration and support of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs can be found in section 3, and on the adaptation of infrastructure in section 6 of the self-assessment report.

4.2. Student performance assessment and graduate employment

Monitoring student progress

At the University, the study progress of students in the field is monitored at several levels - subject (module), study course, study programme.

At the subject (module) level, students' progress is assessed by the subject (module) teacher(s). Applying the cumulative assessment of the subject (module), the teacher provides feedback on the completed tasks, evaluates the progress made by the student, advises what to pay attention to. The teacher, taking into account the students' feedback on the subject (module) assessment methods and evaluating the results achieved by the students at the end of the semester, improves the subject (module) study and assessment methods or assessment criteria. Moodle study environment is used in the study of all subjects (not only during the quarantine period), which enables to constantly monitor the progress of each student by recording interim evaluations of the work done in the classroom and at home, to provide written comments to each student individually. In addition, the groups of students are small, so teachers are aware of their capabilities

and aspirations and, depending on this, quite often individualize tasks. The topics of the assignments for the first cycle students are selected from the field in which they work / intend to work, and the assignments for the second cycle students are selected according to the topic of their master's thesis.

The progress of students at the course level is monitored by the Department of Study Administration. When ranking the best students and rotating students, it is observed whether the averages of the achievements of the students studying in the study programme are not exclusively at the excellent or threshold level. Once recurring trends in student assessment have been identified, the results of student achievement are discussed with the administration of the units conducting such studies and the study programme committee. The Student Services and Career Department monitors student dropout and implements its preventive action plan. This plan provides for monitoring of student achievement as needed. At the end of the exam session, data on students' final semester achievement is analysed. Students who do not pass at least one exam during an exam session and prepare for a retake session will receive specially prepared informational letters with information about retake options and various training, tips on how to prepare for the retake, indicating who to turn to for help if needed (teacher, academic counsellor, career counsellor, psychologist, etc.).

At the level of the study programme of the field, the progress of students is monitored by the Study Programmes Committee. Once during the academic year, the SPC evaluates the progress made by students during their practice by gathering feedback from the institutions where their practice was conducted; evaluates the results of the defence of final theses and the share of students who have defended their final theses on time and, taking them into account, improves the process of preparation and defence of written theses; evaluates the distribution of the final achievement results of the study subjects (modules) provided for in the study plan, determines the level of students' progress in the study subjects (modules); evaluates the number and reasons for those who have studied in the study programme and who have suspended or terminated their studies.

The knowledge and skills of the study subjects of the students of all study programmes in the field are evaluated sufficiently high. The average examination score of the students of the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* during the three-year period is 7.9. The learning achievements of full-time undergraduate students are slightly higher than those of part-time students (average exam scores of 8.4 and 7.7, respectively). The exam scores of the students of the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* are higher than those of the first cycle study programme, the average is 8.8. There is practically no difference in the learning achievements of students studying full-time and part-time (average exam score, 8.9 and 8.7, respectively). The average examination score for students graduating with a Master's degree in *Regional Development and Governance* is 1.72 (corresponding to approximately 8.5 in the ten-point system).

Students are given the opportunity to suspend their studies in unfavourable circumstances and then resume their studies. From 2017–2018 to 2019–2020, 13 (8.1%) students of the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* suspended their studies, 4 (2.5%) took academic leave. During the analysed period, 23 (13.8%) students suspended their studies in the second cycle programme *Public Governance*, 6 (3.6%) took academic leave.

Quite a few students drop out without the opportunity to continue. From 2017–2018 to 2019–2020, there were 25 such students in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration* (15.7%), most of them (12) did not fulfil the terms of the contract (did not pay the tuition fee). In the first cycle programme, 4 students dropped out of their studies at their own request; 4 students did not defend their master's thesis, 3 for failure, and 1 student did not return after the suspension. The majority of undergraduate students leave their studies in the first year or in the last year without completing a thesis. During the analysed period, 31 students (18.6%) of the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* dropped out of studies, mostly (13) at their own request, and those who did not defend their Master's thesis (7). Students drop out in both the first (17) and second (14) year. The main reasons for termination of studies, which are indicated by both first and second cycle students, are: changed family situation, changed situation in the workplace, reduced need or study opportunities, changed financial situation. In 2016–2017 and 2017–2018, 5 students of *Regional Development and Governance* were admitted to ŠU, but at the end of the first semester, 3 students stopped due to financial situation and family responsibilities. Another student suspended her studies after the second semester, arguing that she had to complete a job commitment (since it was her second master's degree, she entered doctoral studies in South Korea a year later and did not return to the programme). Only 1 out of 5 students passed all semesters successfully. In the partner university (PU) about 70% of students

successfully and on time complete their studies. The most common reasons for suspension of studies are failure to submit a Master's thesis in time.

Addressing dropout at the institutional level, the VU Department of Study Services and Career is actively involved in communication and prevention: sending letters after sessions to students who have failed exams with information on how to prepare for retraining, who to turn to in case of problems, how to manage stress, and so on. At the programme level, the head of VU ŠA Public Administration SPC thoroughly analyses the reasons, meets students who want to terminate their studies, consults them, offers possible solutions regarding the individual plan, and discusses the options for returning to studies. When preventing the threat of termination of studies caused by the obstacles that have arisen at the level of the study subject, the teachers, in accordance with the established procedure, extend the terms of interim assessments and provide individual consultations if the student applies. General consultations are organized for bachelor's and master's degree students, and the module "Public Governance Research" was introduced for master's students also provides opportunities and incentives for students to better plan their thesis preparation and complete their studies in time.

In the Study Committee of the programmes *Public Administration* and *Public Governance*, the goal is set for students to reach at least a typical level during their studies. According to the data of the three-year evaluation of bachelor theses in the study programme *Public Administration*, the level of excellent achievements was reached by 26.4% of students, the standard level - by 63.9%, and the threshold level - by 9.7% of students (average score on a 10-point scale - 7.5). There is a tendency of increasing grades of final theses (average in 2018 - 7.3, in 2019 - 7.5, in 2020 - 7.8). The quality of final theses of full-time students is, on the whole, slightly higher than that of part-time students. According to the data of the three-year master's thesis evaluation in the second cycle programme *Public Governance*, the level of excellent was reached by 52.3% of students, the standard level - 46.6%, and the threshold level - 1.1% of students (average score on a 10-point scale - 8.6). Grades of final theses do not change much: the average in 2018 was 8.6, in 2019 it was 8.4, in 2020 - 8.7). The quality of the final theses of full-time and part-time students in the second cycle programme *Public Governance* is similar. The planned goal of study quality in terms of final theses has not yet been achieved in the first cycle study programme *Public Administration*, and in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* it has been achieved in principle. The average assessment of the examinations of the students of the second cycle study programme *Regional Development and Governance* in the analysed period is 2.2 (in the ten-point system this corresponds to approximately 7.6).

The vast majority of students in the programmes of the analysed study field successfully complete their studies. After summarizing the data for three years, 70% of students obtain a Bachelor's degree in *Public Administration* (73% of those who studied in the form of full-time studies, 67% of those who studied in the form of part-time studies). The success rate of master's studies in *Public Governance* is higher - it reaches 85% of full-time students and 77% of part-time students. 20% of students complete the second cycle programme *Regional Development and Governance* two years after admission in the period under review (1 out of 5 students enrolled in ŠU). The situation is not good in this respect, but it should be noted that students who prepare their master's or bachelor's theses in time usually defend them successfully: only one bachelor's thesis was not defended in the analysed period of 2017–2018 to 2019–2020. Students who do not complete their final theses for important reasons have the opportunity to postpone them. From 2017–2018 to 2019–2020, the defence of two bachelor's theses and the defence of 6 master's theses were postponed. Most students whose defence had been postponed, later defend them successfully.

In order to provide assistance to students in the preparation of the final thesis, a number of measures are offered: in addition to individual consultations of the supervisor, it is possible to consult with any teacher, in the final semester of the first cycle study programme one general consultation is organized, and in the second cycle programme - two general consultations (from September 2021 - one general consultation), in which all teachers working in the programme participate. In the programme *Public Administration* a three-credit subject "Public Administration Research Seminar" was introduced in 2018, the aim of which was to develop the competences of social research methodology acquired in previous courses (after moving to 5 credit system in 2020, the seminar was eliminated). All these measures allowed to improve the quality of final theses in both cycles, but they did not significantly affect the ratio of students entering and graduating the programmes. In 2020, the subject "Public Governance Research" was introduced in the second semester of full-time studies and in the third semester in the part-time studies of the programme *Public Governance*, which allows to deepen social research competences, apply them in analysing the public

governance problem chosen for the master's thesis, and allow for collegial discussions on the concept of the master's thesis.

In December 2019, Kristina Kulikauskienė, a second-year student of the programme *Public Governance* at the Institute of Regional Development, became a student of the year at Šiauliai University, and in December 2020, Tomas Martinaitis, a second-year student of the same programme became a student of the year, they were awarded special scholarships established for ŠU Alumni.

Diplomas CUM LAUDE are awarded to no more than 5 percent of the best (highest weighted average) graduates of each Vilnius University first cycle, second cycle and integrated programmes. In 2021, 1 graduate of *Public Administration* and 4 graduates of *Public Governance* received diplomas CUM LAUDE at VU ŠA.

Providing feedback to students

Feedback on students' achievements is provided through both formal and informal assessment. In accordance with the requirements of ethics, the assessments of both mid-term examinations and examinations are not made public, study papers are analysed for the purpose of learning only with the student's consent. The feedback is based on the presentation of the benefits of the work first, followed by the disadvantages and areas for improvement. Moodle forums are often used (and not only during a pandemic) for feedback and comments on the task. In both cycles, collegial informal feedback is used, when students evaluate and discuss each other's work.

Monitoring the employment and career of graduates

Graduates' career monitoring is performed with the help of tools in the Career Management Information System (CMIS) career.lt. Two types of indicators are used for career monitoring:

1. *Objective indicators of state information systems, state or departmental registers* - currently the system has developed an interface with the student register, the population register and Sodra (State Social Insurance Fund). Objective indicators on graduates' careers are obtained from state information systems, state or departmental registers 5 years after graduation and updated twice a year;
2. *Subjective, sociological survey indicators*: they show the subjective opinion of graduates on various career issues. Subjective indicators are collected three times - by interviewing graduates one, three and five years after graduation. The aim of the first survey (12 months after graduation) is to assess the employability of graduates, the second survey (3 years after graduation) assesses the ability of graduates to successfully establish themselves in employment, and the third survey (5 years after graduation) focuses on the satisfaction of graduates and job evaluation. No such institutional level surveys were conducted at Šiauliai University before becoming a unit of Vilnius University.

According to STRATA, a year after graduation, 89% of graduates of the first cycle studies in public administration and over 90% of the graduates of the second cycle studies worked in Lithuania under employment contracts. The number of working graduates of the first cycle study programme has increased over the three-year period, while that of the second cycle programmes has not changed substantially. During the analysed period, one graduate of the programme *Regional Development and Governance* defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of Pardubice in September 2021, two are continuing doctoral studies at the PU, others work in the private sector in Prague. A graduate of ŠU who has completed the joint study programme in Lithuania, works in an international business company in Šiauliai.

According to employers (organizations where students of the programme *Public Administration* take practice) students are prepared well enough, and although there is a lack of skills in a specific workplace, preparation during studies allows for rapid learning. Students' practise is generally rated as excellent or very good. When commenting on the improvement of the programmes the members of the Social Partners' Council also emphasize the importance of practical skills (for the first cycle programme). Surveys of graduates at the programme level show that over 95% of graduates agree and over 70% fully agree that the studies and preparation of the thesis have been beneficial for their professional and personal development: more often it is agreed by master's degree graduates, who more often studied part-time (and worked) than by full-time students.

Ensuring academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination. Examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process

The University ensuring the diversity of opinions of the academic community, openness to ideas, mutual respect, trust, tolerance, harmonization of autonomy with accountability to the state and society, and other documents. bases its activities and relations between community members on the principles set in Vilnius University Statute, Vilnius University Code of Academic Ethics, Vilnius University Diversity and in the Equal Opportunities Strategy³⁴ and other documents.

Various measures are applied at the University to ensure honest study. VU teachers and students must follow the Vilnius University Code of Academic Ethics³⁵, which defines the general ethical norms of academic, teaching, study and research work. The code defines cases of fraud, plagiarism, counterfeiting, bribery, and assistance to others in performing dishonest academic activities. The VU study regulations stipulate that students who violate academic ethics may be reprimanded and expelled from the University. Teachers use a variety of measures to ensure that students adhere to the principles of honest study during exams and accountability for written assignments. During the examination session, the delegated representatives of the Student Representation Office monitor the progress of the examination and help the teachers to ensure the honest passing of the examination. VU has implemented an electronic overlap recognition system (ESAS) for final and written works, which allows checking the coincidence of a specific author's work with the works stored in the database. In the programmes of the analysed field of study, the culture of academic honesty is constantly developed and maintained: teachers monitor and prevent cases of plagiarism of works, from the first year students strengthen their skills of quoting and referencing research papers. Issues of academic ethics are discussed in the broader context of the development of the civil service ethics and anti-corruption environment in the organization, the ethics of social research, and data protection.

Cases of violation of the principles of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination are investigated at the University in accordance with the regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission of Vilnius University³⁶ and the Regulations of the Academic Ethics Commission of the CAU of Vilnius University³⁷, as well as the regulations of the Central Dispute Resolution Commission of Vilnius University³⁸ and the Regulations of the Dispute Resolution Commission of the CAU of Vilnius University³⁹. The University also has a special hotline to which any member of the community can address for violating the principles of academic ethics, tolerance and non-discrimination. These applications are confidential and the applicant is provided with prompt assistance by a special team of psychologists and lawyers.

The VU ŠA Academic Ethics Commission examines applications for actions of members of the academic community working or studying at the Šiauliai Academy that may violate academic ethics. There were no complaints during the analysed period.

During the analysed period, cases of violation of the principles of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination occurred in the study programmes of the field, but they were promptly addressed at the programme or teacher level. One bachelor's thesis was not defended because the student could not provide evidence of the research. With the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation in 2018, the confidentiality of not only the examination but also the mid-term assessment and the informal assessment became more relevant, taking into account the students' observations. In surveys, over 80 percent of graduates fully agreed with the statement that the supervisor was correct, followed the requirements of academic ethics, but misunderstandings in the relationship between the supervisor and the student were not avoided. At the meeting of the Study Program Committee (June 2020), this was noted and it was stated that the reason for the disagreements is the different expectations of some students and teachers for the

³⁴ February 18, 2020, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. SPN-6 Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025. See. https://www.vu.lt/site_files/2020_m._SPN-6.pdf

³⁵ April 17, 2018, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. The Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University was approved on S-2018-4-4. See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Senatas_Taryba/Senatas/2018-04/Akademes_etikos_kodeksas.pdf

³⁶ April 17, 2018, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S2018-4-4 "Regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission of Vilnius University" was approved. See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Senatas_Taryba/Senatas/2018-04/Centrines_akademes_etikos_komisijos_nuostatai.pdf

³⁷ April 17, 2018, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S2018-4-4 approved the "Regulations of Academic Ethics Commission of the CAU of Vilnius University". See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Senatas_Taryba/Senatas/2018-04/KAP_akademes_etikos_komisijos_nuostatai.pdf

³⁸ December 2, 2014, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S-2014-10-2 "Regulations of the Central Dispute Resolution Commission of Vilnius University" (wording of SPN-27 of the Senate of Vilnius University of 16 April 2019). See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/CGNK_nuostatai.pdf

³⁹ December 2, 2014, Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S-2014-10-2 "Regulations of the Dispute Resolution Commission of the CAU of Vilnius University" (wording of SPN-27 of the Senate of Vilnius University of 16 April 2019). See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/KAP_GNK_nuostatai.pdf

work preparation process, therefore, the teachers were recommended to clearly agree on the system and content of the counselling in the first meetings with the students, to inform the students about the possibility to resolve disagreements through the mediation of the SPC chairman.

The procedure for submitting appeals is defined by the regulations of the CAU Dispute Resolution Commission. Those who do not agree with the examination procedure or assessment may apply in writing to the CAU Board of Appeal within 5 working days of the announcement of the assessment. The decision of the Board of Appeal regarding the assessment is final, and the decision on the examination procedure can be appealed to the VU Dispute Resolution Commission. Students are introduced to the appeals procedure for the study process. During the analysed period, no appeals were received from the students of the first cycle and the second cycle study programmes in the analysed field regarding the examination and thesis defence procedures and assessment.

4.3. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area, strengths and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations of previous evaluation	Actions
Public Administration		
1.	The ratio of exams and course papers in assessing students is highly volatile. The assessment procedure would be improved by setting maximum and minimum limits for the variation of those elements <...>.	In the study programme <i>Public Administration</i> , a cumulative assessment system is applied in all study subjects / modules. The assessment obtained during the exam accounts for 20 to 50 percent of the cumulative score in the studies of different subjects / modules. The weight of the exam in the assessment depends on the nature of the task, the aims of the subject / module, the scope of the subject / module and the teaching logic, therefore it is not appropriate to set the same weight for all subjects / modules.
2.	The amount of feedback on students' work is volatile; it would be useful to set certain minimum requirements.	The extent of the feedback depends on the competences whose development is to be tested. The weight of the tasks in the final evaluation is not less than 10%.
Public Governance		
1.	"It is advisable to set requirements for attending lectures."	Requirements for attending lectures are set. Attendance at lectures on practical and laboratory work is compulsory. If a student does not participate in one-third of the practical sessions without a valid reason, he / she loses the opportunity to take the exam. Many teachers provide students who did not attend practical lectures with tasks that they have to do independently consulting with the teacher and / or colleagues.
2.	"Ensure that students who do not work in the public sector gain experience in public administration (internships)". "The social partners have a greater role <...> to play in introducing career opportunities for graduates ... <...>"	Special practice places for some students who do not come from the public sector are not prepared, but they meet with practitioners in lectures, when performing the tasks of study subjects, they must participate in the meetings of municipal council committees, meetings of the Council, they analyse the decisions made, monitor the work of the administration, conduct interviews with representatives of other public sector organizations.
Regional Development and Governance		
3.	"ŠU and PU, together with the social partners, should look for ways to set up scholarships for students to encourage them to find employment in the local or regional public sector. This goal could	RDG: since 2018 there have been no Lithuanian students in the study programme (only foreigners who entered the PU), therefore no scholarships were created. The close contacts established by the teachers of the programme and the SPC with the social partners allowed

<p>be achieved by: <...> announcing the benefits of working in the public service sector (studying in a first cycle programme)". "The social partners have a greater role to play: <...> ... providing work experience for those not working in the public sector; introducing career opportunities to postgraduate graduates".</p>	<p>to organize meetings with them. For example, PU students presented their research papers (projects - ideas for city and regional development) in Šiauliai City Municipality (spring semester 2017, 2019), met and discussed with representatives of the municipal council and administration. In 2019, a member of the municipal council gave a public lecture to the students on the local government system, the dichotomy of politics and administration, and answered questions from the students.</p> <p>Practice places are prepared for RDG students. During the practice, students can participate in the projects of social partners. However, due to the strict structure of the programme, practice opportunities are limited.</p>
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Strengths of the evaluated area

1.	The variety of active study and feedback methods applied in the implementation of the study programmes of the field enables many students to become active participants in the study process, to reach a typical and higher level of achievement.
2.	The studies of the programmes in the analysed field integrate and theoretically give meaning to the students' professional experience, the study papers correspond to the professional field and interests of the working students, the topics of the bachelor's and master's theses are coordinated with the student's professional and academic interests.
3.	The developed system of student counselling in the preparation of final theses enables to take a deeper look at the analysed problem, to carry out higher quality research, to improve the quality of final theses.
4.	A culture of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination has been established and maintained.
5.	High employability of postgraduate students and increasing employability of undergraduate students. High evaluation of the impact of studies on students' professional development.
6.	After becoming a unit of Vilnius University, the monitoring system and practice of study quality and employability of graduates in the analysed study field programmes are successfully supplemented and integrated into the relevant systems of Vilnius University.

Aspects for improvement of the evaluated area

1.	Despite the various measures taken by the study programme committee and the teachers working in the programme, many students in the study programmes of both cycles, still leave their studies in the final courses, do not prepare and do not defend their final thesis. It is expedient to look for methods of individualization of studies after determining the risk of not preparing a final thesis.
2.	Taking into account the interdisciplinary content of the learning outcomes of the study programmes, ensuring a deeper connection between the learning outcomes and the teaching/assessment methods, it is expedient to strengthen the cooperation between teachers of different subjects.

5. Teaching staff

5.1. The academic staff of the field studies is suitable to ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the field study programmes

Permanent teaching staff of the field study programmes

VU teachers are employed in accordance with the regulations for the organization of competitions for the positions of teachers and research (art) staff of Vilnius University and the organization of attestation⁴⁰. Teaching and research staff (except for visiting teaching and research staff) are appointed to primary or higher positions after winning a public competition for a position at the University. With a teacher or researcher holding a position and winning a competition for the same position at the University for the second time in a row an employment contract of indefinite duration is concluded for the performance of these duties. A similar procedure for the employment of teachers was in 2018–2020 at the then ŠU.

In order to determine whether the qualification of research and teaching staff corresponds to their current position, the staff must undergo evaluation every five years. When evaluating teaching staff, the following criteria are considered: the number of published research articles, conference attendance, research supervision, teaching, published teaching materials, participation in the doctoral studies process, student research supervision, expert, organisational, and other research activity. Students' feedback on the work of the evaluated teacher is also taken into account. The course unit (module) satisfaction survey allows to take students' feedback into account more objectively.

List of teachers working permanently in the institution (at least half-time and at least 3 years in a higher education institution), indicating the available pedagogical and / or scientific degree, pedagogical work experience, field of scientific interests (indicating the 3 most significant works prepared during the last 5 years), practical work experience in the field of the taught subject, the taught subjects, the current workload are presented in Appendix 4 to the Self-evaluation Report.

In 2020–2021, 11 teachers worked in the field of public administration studies at VU ŠA, they occupied 6.6 positions of scientific and pedagogical work and 1.25 positions of a researcher. Four teachers worked as professors occupying 2.5 positions, one teacher as an associate professor (0.7 positions), the remaining six teachers worked as lecturers occupying 3.4 positions. Seven teachers have a doctoral degree, they held 4.5 full-time positions, and four teachers without a scientific degree held 2.1 full-time positions in scientific and pedagogical work. One teacher, who has a doctoral degree in 2020–2021 was on parental leave. Two lecturers are doctoral students in the field of governance.

In the academic year 2018–2021, the current ratio of the number of teachers of subjects (modules) in the three study programmes in the field of public administration to the number of students studying was approximately 1:11, i.e. there were 11 students per teacher (see Table 5.1). The number of teachers of other study fields (economics, political science, management) in the teaching of public administration subjects is small, it did not exceed 5 percent.

Table 5.1. RATIO BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN THE FIELD SUBJECTS (MODULES)

Academic year	Number of teachers of the field	Number of students in the programmes of the first cycle	Ratio	Number of students in the programmes of the second cycle	Ratio	Overall ratio of teachers and students in the field
2020–2021	11	67	1:6.09	59	1:5.36	1:11.45
2019–2020	13	52	1:4	78	1:6	1:10
2018–2019	14	72	1:5.14	86	1:6.14	1:11.29

In 2018–2021, the change of teachers in the field of public administration was insignificant. From September of 2019, the lecturer doctor is on two-year parental leave. On September 1, 2020, one lecturer resigned due

⁴⁰ November 20, 2018, VU Senate Resolution No. S-2018-12-4 "On the Approval of the Regulations on the Organization of Certification for Competitions for the Positions of Vilnius University Teachers and Researchers". See https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Vilniaus_universiteto_d%C4%97stytoj%C5%B3_ir_mokslo_meno_darbuotoj%C5%B3_konkurs%C5%B3_pareigoms_ei_t%C4%97_aestavimo_organizavimo_nuostatai.pdf

to a change of job and one professor left teaching due to age. As four dissertations were defended in the field of governance at Šiauliai University in 2018–2019, three of them were defended by teachers working in the field of public administration, therefore, it can be said that the education of young teachers is going well: the ratio of the number of researchers to all teachers in the field of public administration is increasing.

The composition of the academic staff in the study programmes of the study field of public administration complies with the formal requirements established in legal acts (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

Table 5.2. COMPLIANCE OF TEACHERS IN THE STUDY FIELD OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE FIRST CYCLE AND THE REGULATION OF VU STUDY PROGRAMMES

Requirement	In the programmes of the field
At least half of the subjects in the field of study must be taught by researchers	The requirement is met: 9 teachers in the field of public administration work in the study programme <i>Public Administration</i> , 5 of them are researchers.
The final work is defended in the evaluation commission. At least one member of the Commission must be a representative of an institution other than the University	The requirement is met: a representative of social partners, who does not work at VU Šiauliai Academy, always participates in the final evaluation commission of the study programme <i>Public Administration</i> .

Table 5.3. COMPLIANCE OF TEACHERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDIES WITH THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE SECOND CYCLE PROGRAMMES AND THE REGULATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES AT VU

Requirement	In the programmes of the field
No fewer than 80 % of teaching staff must have a research degree	<i>The requirement is met:</i> 11 teachers in the field of public administration work in the second cycle programmes <i>Public Governance</i> and <i>Regional Development and Governance</i> . However, teachers without a degree occupy a small part of the staff here, and more than 80 percent of the study content is taught by researchers.
All teaching staff who teach lectures must have a research degree (according to VU Study Programme Regulation)	<i>The requirement is met.</i>
No more than 20 % of field subject teaching staff can be practitioners with at least 3 years of professional experience corresponding to taught course units (modules) in the last 7 years	<i>The requirement is met.</i> Practitioners are encouraged to do research. An example is that the study subject “Public Governance Law” is taught by a teacher who works as a chief legal adviser at the Government Representatives office who defended her doctoral dissertation in 2019.
No fewer than 20 % of field course units (modules) must be taught by teaching staff with the rank of professor	<i>The requirement is met:</i> out of 11 teachers in the field of public administration 4 professors work in the second cycle programmes.
The final thesis must be defended before an Evaluation Committee. At least one member of the Commission should be from an institution other than the University	<i>The requirement is met:</i> A representative of the social partners, who does not work at VU Šiauliai Academy, always participates in the final thesis evaluation commission, and a professor whose main duties are at another university is invited to be the chairman of the commission.

In 2018–2020, the level of reading English of all 12 teachers working in the programmes of the study field of public administration was not lower than B2. However, 8 out of 12 teachers were able to speak English at a level of at least B2 (see Table 5.4). Most teachers speak Russian at a minimum level of B2, and some teachers speak German or French.

The teaching staff working at JSP *Regional Development and Governance* in 2018–2021 did not change: 3 professors, 1 associate professor, 4 lecturers (one - doctor, two - doctoral students, two - practitioners). All of them teach and speak English at a minimum level of B2 (with the exception of one professor who speaks at a B1 level, but his work with students has been mainly focused on conducting combined studies in Moodle environment, evaluating written assignments, and providing written feedback).

Table 5.4. DATA ON TEACHERS IN THE PROGRAMMES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDY AREA WHO KNOW ENGLISH

Position	Number of teachers in the programmes in the study field	Number of teachers of the field of study whose proficiency in English is at least B2 level	Percentage of all teachers in the field
Professors	4	2	50 percent
Associated professors	1	1	100 percent
Lecturers doctors	3	2	66.67 percent
Lecturers doctoral students	2	2	100 percent
Lecturers	2	1	50 percent
Total			

During the analysed period of 2018–2021, three lecturers-practitioners worked in three programmes in the field of public administration: Chief Adviser to the Government Representative in Šiauliai and Telšiai Counties (Doctor of Governance), Director of Šiauliai City Municipality Education Centre (doctoral student in governance), and study coordinator at VU ŠA. These three lecturers help to connect the scientific basis of studies with the real practice of public administration and governance. In addition, the teachers of the field of public administration studies continue its long tradition of maintaining effective relations with the social partners.

The diversity of the teaching staff in the programmes of the study field of public administration is shown in Table 5.5. It should be noted that out of 11 teachers who worked from 2020 to 2021, only 4 do not have a scientific degree.

Table 5.5. STRUCTURE OF TEACHERS OF THE PROGRAMMES IN THE STUDY FIELD OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BY POSITIONS IN 2018–2021

Academic year / Position	2020–2021		2019–2020		2018–2019	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Professors	4	36.36	5	38.46	5	35.71
Assoc. professors	1	9.09	1	7.69	1	7.14
Lecturers doctors	2	18.18	2	15.38	3	21.43
Lecturers doctoral students	2	18.18	2	15.38	2	14.29
Lecturers	2	18.18	3	23.08	3	21.43
Total	11		13		14	

5.2. Conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff, their regular evaluation

Teachers of public administration study field at VU ŠA are provided with good enough conditions to improve their competences and ensure academic mobility. Teaching visits abroad are funded by the ERASMUS programme. Study visits and internships are usually funded by project funds or special programmes or funds. Teachers' competences are periodically assessed in a five-year term attestation and competition for the next term. Statistics on the mobility of teachers in the field of public administration are presented in Table 5.6.

The most robust mobility statistics occurred in the 2018–2019 academic year: a total of 30 teacher visits took place. Statistics for 2019-2020 fell by almost half due to the complete cessation of physical visits during the spring semester due to the pandemic, and remote learning was not yet popular. Statistics on learning visits improved in 2020-2021, with excellent opportunities for remote learning. However, physical teaching visits did not take place during the pandemic period in 2020–2021.

Table 5.6. SUMMARY OF MOBILITY OF TEACHERS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDIES IN 2018–2021

Pedagogical and (or) scientific degree	2020 – 2021				2020 – 2019				2019 – 2018			
	LT		Foreign countries		LT		Foreign countries		LT		Foreign countries	
	Teaching visits	Learning visits	Teaching visits	Learning visits	Teaching visits	Learning visits	Teaching visits	Learning visits	Teaching visits	Learning visits	Teaching visits	Learning visits
Professors		5		1		1	3	1		5	4	2
Assoc. professors		1		2		2	2	1		3	3	1
Lecturers doctors				3		1				2		2
Lecturers doct. students							1	1			2	3
Lecturers		1				2	1				2	1
Total		7		6		6	7	3		10	11	9

Teaching visits in Lithuania in 2018–2021, were not registered in the CVs of the teachers of the public administration study field of VU ŠA. However, it should be noted that one professor works not only at VU ŠA, but also at Klaipėda University, and another professor at Vytautas Magnus University. One professor is a member of the Joint Doctoral Committee of Vytautas Magnus University, Mykolas Romeris University, Klaipėda University and Vilnius University, participates in the admission, attestation and dissertation review meetings of this committee, and annually reviews about 4 dissertations. The professor worked as the chairman of the evaluation commission of bachelor's and master's theses of Vytautas Magnus University. In addition, twice a year (in January and June), one professor or one associate professor remotely (Skype, later Teams) participated in the JSP's *Regional Development and Governance* Joint Commission for the Defence of Master's Thesis and State Examinations, where together with the PU representatives participated as equal members of the commission and represented VU ŠA (the then ŠU). In June 2018, when ŠU JSP students defended final theses, the joint commission was remotely (Skype) attended by the programme guarantor professor from PU. Many teachers in the field of public administration at VU ŠA participated in activities with other Lithuanian universities and colleges, which could be compared to teaching visits in Lithuania. In addition, in the period of 2018–2021, the teachers of the field of public administration studies at VU ŠA participated in international scientific conferences in Lithuania and abroad on average about 8 times, but in Table 5.6 these statistics are not recorded.

The academic mobility of teachers is very valuable for the teachers themselves, as it encourages the exploration of new scientific and documentary sources and the development of the English language skills, expands the competences of academic work at other universities and provides many opportunities for new research and project connections. At the same time, the academic mobility of teachers is also beneficial for studies in the three programmes of the study field of public administration, as teachers introduce students to new information, experience and new opportunities for cooperation, encourage students to participate more actively in student exchange programmes.

During the period of 2017–2019, visits of foreign teachers to give lectures in the three programmes of the public administration study field of VU ŠA were sufficiently intensive (see Table 5.7.). In the spring semester of 2020, physical visits were interrupted due to the pandemic, and lectures by foreign teachers were given remotely. Throughout that period, RENET public lectures and seminars were held with the participation of students and teachers in public administration programmes.

Significant contribution to the internationalization of studies was made by remote public lectures, seminars, discussions, conferences (and separate sections) of the Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), which were attended by foreign researchers. They presented topics relevant to public policy, regional development, public sector efficiency, innovation management, social research methodology, and in all those events, the teachers of the study programmes in the field of public administration obliged the students

of all three programmes to participate by assigning additional tasks. Therefore, they had to attend at least a couple of RENET events held in a foreign language each semester⁴¹.

Table 5.7. TEACHERS OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES, WHO GAVE LECTURES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDY PROGRAMMES IN 2017–2021

Academic year	Teacher	Institution (country)
2020–2021	Prof. dr. Craig Maher (did not come due to the COVID-19 pandemic)	University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA)
	Prof. dr. Daniel Meyer**	University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
	Assoc. prof. dr. Natanya Meyer**	University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
	Assoc. prof. dr. Daniela Georgieva**	International Business School – Botevgrad (Bulgaria)
	Prof. dr. Teodora Georgieva**	International Business School – Botevgrad (Bulgaria)
	Prof. dr. Uroš Pinterič**	Alexander Dubček University in Trenčín (Slovakia)
	Programme assistant Asta Aviete**	European Commission (Belgium, Lithuania)
2019–2020	Prof. dr. Irma Rybnikova*	Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences (Germany)
	Prof. dr. Uroš Pinterič*	Faculty of Organisation studies in Novo mesto (Slovenia), Alexander Dubček University in Trenčín (Slovakia)
	Asist. prof. Inese Abolina**	University of Latvia (Latvia)
2018–2019	Prof. dr. Carol Ebdon*	University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA)
	Prof. dr. Irma Rybnikova*	Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences (Germany)
	Assist. prof. dr. Daniela Georgieva*	International Business School – Botevgrad (Bulgaria)
	Assist. prof. dr. Irina Canco	European University of Tirana (Albania)
	Assoc. prof. dr. Aleksandra Mileva	Goce Delchev University in Shtip (Northern Macedonia)
	Prof. dr. Uroš Pinterič*	Faculty of Organisation studies in Novo mesto (Slovenia)
	Prof. dr. Robert Blair	University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA)
	Assoc. prof. dr. Ermela Kripa	European University of Tirana (Albania)
2017–2018	Assoc. prof. dr. Uroš Pinterič*	Faculty of Organisation studies in Novo mesto (Slovenia)
	Assoc. prof. dr. Jelena Borocki*	University of Novi Sad (Serbia)
	Prof. dr. Carol Ebdon	University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA)
	Prof. dr. Yung-Chul Lee*	Chonnam National University (Republic of Korea)
	Prof. dr. Ethel Williams*	University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA)
	Prof. dr. Irma Rybnikova	Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences (Germany)
	Prof. dr. Iveta Reinholde**	University of Latvia (Latvia)
	Adjunct dr. Adam Jarosz**	Zielona Gora University (Poland)
	Prof. dr. Kenneth A. Kriz**	Wichita State University (USA)
	Research Manager, assist. prof. dr. Fabio Papa**	Institute of Applied Economic Research (Italy)
	Adviser at the European Parliament Kätlin Joala**	European Parliament (Belgium, Estonia)
Assoc. prof. dr. Vladimir Djaković**	University of Novi Sad (Serbia)	

* During the mobility, lectures were given on the subjects of the field programmes and a public lecture or seminar took place at an event organized by the Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), which was attended by students and teachers of the field programmes.
** lectures, seminars, reports were read only at an event organized by the Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), which were attended by students and teachers of the field programmes.

⁴¹ The Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET) events of 2018-2021 are available at: <https://atviri.emokymai.vu.lt/course/view.php?id=126> (2018–2021 RENET activities).

Along with teaching and learning visits and participation in conferences, all 12 teachers of VU ŠA in the field of public administration during the period of 2018–2021 were active in other research, academic and various international events, learning and professional development.

Professors and associate professor working in the programmes are widely involved in doctoral processes in the field of governance: they supervise doctoral studies and dissertation preparation, review doctoral dissertations submitted for defence, and work as members and chairmen of the dissertation defence councils. They work in the research and organizational committees of international conferences, are active members of the editorial boards of various scientific publications in the field of social sciences in Lithuania and foreign countries, and are expert reviewers of international publications. For many years, the professor and associate professor have been directing the VU ŠA scientific journal “Social Research”.

One professor is an independent expert on the Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe, prepares expert material for the Council of Europe (the case of Lithuania), and has calculated the Lithuanian Local Government Autonomy Index.

Another professor is a member of the Group of Independent Experts of the Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities from Lithuania (member of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Council of Europe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities). Since 2013, she has been examining publications in the field of humanities and social sciences of the international scientific database LITHUANIA (2007–2011; 2017–2021). In addition, she has been an expert of the Lithuanian Culture Council since 2014 and an expert in the expert evaluation group of project applications in the field of “Initiatives for the Development of Heritage Protection, Investment and Tourism Services” of the programme “Initiatives for Kaunas”.

The associate professor together with VU ŠA public administration study field-researcher are certified instructors (60 hours course), capable of conducting mixed teaching training on research integrity, in which the ethical aspect of values is integrated. Certificates were obtained according to the HORIZON2020 project “Virtue Based Ethics and Integrity of Research: Train-the-Trainer Programme for Upholding the Principles and Practices of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity -VIRTU2E”.

Since 2015 the associate professor has been the main initiator and chair of the coordination committee of the Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET), coordinated by VU ŠA (until 2020 - ŠU). In September 2021, she became a visiting associate professor at the University of Johannesburg for 3 years.

The lecturer doctoral student was an evaluator of applications in the field of education and training of Education Exchange Support Foundation (KA204, KA202, KA101, KA120) in 2016–2021.

Most lecturers are members of various international research associations, such as the European Regional Science Association (ERSA), the Baltic Regional Research Association (BRTA), The Lithuanian Educational Research Association (LERA) and the European Educational Research Association (EERA), etc.

Many teachers conduct trainings for the public and public sector institutions, conduct applied and commissioned research, write relevant publications in the press, and participate in media events.

Especially good opportunities to study and improve qualifications arose in January 2021, when the former Šiauliai University was integrated into Vilnius University and became the VU Šiauliai Academy. For half of a year teachers of ŠA, including teachers of the study field of public administration, were provided with various trainings on how to use VU information systems, databases, rich collections of research and other collections, to participate in project activities and to integrate into VU research and study processes.

Training for the development of pedagogical competence for Vilnius University lecturers has been organized centrally since 2017. Most VU teachers participate in pedagogical competence development programmes, which last from 3 to 40 hours. The most popular of these programmes are "Active Learning Methods", "Student Work in Groups", "Supervision of Written Papers", "Communication Skills", "Integration of Information Communication Technologies in the Teaching Process", "Application of Mixed Learning in University Studies", etc. Since September 2021, the associate professor and lecturer (doctoral student) of public administration study programmes have been participating in the VU project for the development of teacher competence development programmes.

5.3. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area, strengths and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations of previous evaluation	Actions
1.	The evaluation of 2016 of the second cycle programmes "Public Governance" and "Regional Development and Governance" included a recommendation: "To require that all teachers had qualifications in teaching, learning and assessment and remote teaching"	<p>All teachers of the programmes are encouraged to actively participate in trainings and seminars for the development of pedagogical and research competences (members of study programme committees, VU Šiauliai Academy administration share information and invitations).</p> <p>Many study subjects are taught in a team, when an experienced professor works together with a young teacher in the study of one subject.</p> <p>At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, Šiauliai University had a number of trainings for organizing the study process remotely using Teams platform. All teachers in the field of public administration have created the essential study material in the virtual Moodle environment and constantly update their subject information in it.</p> <p>Opportunities to participate in trainings related to teaching and learning, assessment, remote learning have increased especially since the integration into VU in January 2021: many trainings organized by VU for the teachers of VU Šiauliai Academy take place.</p>
Strengths of the evaluated area		
1.	There is a sufficient number of highly qualified teachers with academic titles and degrees in all three programmes in the field of public administration and there are real opportunities to improve this indicator.	
2.	Part of the teachers of the programmes are practitioners working in public administration institutions (management positions).	
3.	Active participation of many teachers in the field of public administration in research, academic and various international activities.	
4.	Traditionally, strong and effective relations of teachers of public administration studies with the social partners of Šiauliai region - the leaders of local government and other public sector institutions.	
5.	In September 2021, one VU associate professor (Doctor of Political Science) joined the programme, working in a team with a professor and a lecturer (the professor intends to leave the university in 2022 due to age, therefore preparations for the change of teachers are already underway).	
Aspects for improvement		
1.	To strive for distance internships and distance academic work in higher education institutions of other countries to be recognized as adequate for physical internships in the higher education system of the Republic of Lithuania.	
2.	Taking advantage of Teams, Zoom platforms which have been used in studies for 2 years already to increase the number of lecturers from other countries in the programmes.	
3.	After the analysis of VU international partners (universities, governance institutions), to make a long-term plan for short-term internships in the PA programme staff in order to expand the network of academic and social partners.	
4.	To use existing competence in the application of innovative learning strategies, to teach colleagues and lecturers of other VU departments to use these methods, learn new ones in various seminars, develop e-tools of good practice.	

6. Learning facilities and resources

6.1. Physical, informational and financial resources of the field of studies

Learning facilities

Study programmes in the field of public administration are carried out at VU Šiauliai Academy, in which a favourable study environment is created, material conditions enabling study are ensured, appropriate methodological provision of the programmes is guaranteed (see Table 6.1). The adequacy and sufficiency of material resources is based on the guideline in the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 1 July 2011 No. V-1170 *On the Methodology for Assessing the Real Resources of a Higher Education Institution* and a new version of this methodology approved on 18 July 2014 by Order no. V-665.

Table 6.1. ROOMS USED FOR CLASSES

Room No. (or name)	Address	Area, m ²	Number of work places	Equipment in the room
218	Višinskio st. 25	55.54	29	Projector, white board, laptop
219	Višinskio st. 25	63.26	13	Projector, int. screen, 12 laptops and one desktop computer
221	Višinskio st. 25	61.33	25	Projector, white board, laptop
311	Višinskio st. 25			Projector, white board, laptop
312	Višinskio st. 25		10	Projector, int. screen, 10 laptops
313	Višinskio st. 25			Projector, white board, laptop
316	Višinskio st. 25	56.03	19	Projector, int. screen, 18 laptops and one desktop computer
317	Višinskio st. 25	72.09	29	Projector, white board, laptop
321	Višinskio st. 25	47.08	17	Projector, int. screen, 16 laptops and one desktop computer
401	Višinskio st. 25	53.29	20	Projector, white board, laptop
409	Višinskio st. 25			Projector, white board, laptop
410	Višinskio st. 25			Projector, white board, laptop
411	Višinskio st. 25	35.58	10	Projector, white board, laptop
415	Višinskio st. 25	56.65	25	Projector, white board, laptop
419	Višinskio st. 25	56.27	25	Projector, white board, laptop
504	Višinskio st. 25	54.46	15	Projector, white board, laptop
512	Višinskio st. 25	56.30	20	Projector, white board, 12 laptops and one desktop computer

Pardubice University – the partner of *JSP Regional Development and Governance* - uses 2137 m² of premises for studies. There are 1832 workplaces in 25 rooms. All rooms have a computer, white board, projector. Students also have access to the PU Library, which has 269 workplaces.

In 2021, when Šiauliai University merged with Vilnius University, Šiauliai University Library became Šiauliai Academy Information Centre of Vilnius University Library (now VUL ŠAIC). According to the data of January 1, 2021, members of the academic community had access to 202 workplaces in the VU ŠA Information Centre, of which 67 were computerized workplaces. The Information Centre has 8 individual and group work rooms with special tables for visitors with disabilities, 2 seminar rooms equipped with computers and video projectors (they can accommodate up to 15 people). The Information Centre has General reading room, reading rooms of periodicals and arts with open funds, Media Library, dr. Jonas Šliūpas reading room and reading room of rare publications, Internet reading room, computerized teaching / learning classroom for developing students' information skills. ŠAIC is equipped with modern computer equipment with Internet access, which ensures fast search of scientific information.

Wireless internet access available throughout the academy, document scanning, copying, printing, binding or laminating services are available.

Renovation work of the premises used in the study process

During the analysed period, no renovation of the premises used in the study process were carried out at ŠU. However, the investment project “Modernization of educational sciences and social welfare study infrastructure VU ŠA buildings in P. Višinskio str. 25” was being prepared. Although the aim of the project is to improve the quality of ŠA studies of educational sciences and social welfare, it will also contribute to the improvement of the study infrastructure in the field of public administration, as the premises of the same building are used. The results of the project will directly affect 110 teachers, 15 students with disabilities, 63 social partner institutions.

During the implementation of the project the study infrastructure will be improved: the premises will be adapted for the disabled, the electrical installation, water supply and sewerage will be changed, the heating system will be renewed, an elevator will be installed, adapted to the needs of the disabled, etc. Infrastructure maintenance costs will be reduced proportionately, i.e. heating costs in the building will be reduced by about 15% (replacement of worn and highly energy inefficient windows, renovation of the heating system, insulation of pipes and installation of heating intensity control valves) and electricity consumption in the building will decrease by about 5% (with the introduction of energy-saving measures, the replacement of electrical installations, the elimination of highly inefficient incandescent lamps and the installation of a modern energy-saving elevator). This project is being implemented in two stages:

- Stage I. 2019–2023 (60 months), 1.36 mln. Euros - simple renovation of building spaces, creation of a multifunctional space for child cognition and personalized education;
- Stage II. 2023-2025 (24 months), 2.2 mln. Euros - simple repair of the building premises, creation of an aerobiology study and research area, installation of a smart production laboratory.

In 2021, procurement was started for the installation of two new computer classes (21 computers per class will be purchased). Funds were allocated from the project “Optimization of the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Improvement of the Quality of Studies by Connecting Šiauliai University to Vilnius University” No. 09.3.1-ESFA-V-738-03-0001.

During the analysed period, the partner University of Pardubice made the following upgrades in the rooms where JSP studies are carried out: purchased computers, projectors, projection screens. Every year, PU allocated 120 thousand Euros. Also every year PU invests 120 thousand Euros in renovation of the premises. Such amounts are planned until 2025, and the university expects to receive funds from European Union funds.

The specifics of the field of study of public administration determine that the practice does not require a special base outside the university (this usually requires the usual measures used in the practice of public sector organizations). Thus, a student of the first cycle programme *Public Administration* during the practice uses the infrastructure and equipment of the host public sector organization.

Information and methodological resources

On January 1, 2021, all classrooms of to the study programmes in the field of public administration had at least one computer for the teacher, multimedia equipment and a smart board. There are 73 computers in the computer classrooms. All computers are licensed for Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office Windows media. Competitive license for the statistical software package SPSS is available, 1 “portable” MaxQDA program license has been purchased. Moodle and Teams systems are widely used in the study process. In 2022, it is planned that the study process will be available with licenses for SPSS, MaxQDA and Nvivo programs.

353 687 phys. pcs. (145,261 titles) of traditional documents (according to the data of January 1, 2021) are stored in the Library's holdings. The stock of printed publications has been significantly supplemented by electronic resources. Before the end of 2020, the Information Centre of ŠA subscribed to 16 scientific databases, the bibliographic records management tool RefWorks, and the plagiarism verification programme URKUND. In 2017–2020, the academic community had, on average, access to 286,150 electronic publications. Readers had access to about 180,000. el. books and over 22,000 electronic journals. On January 1, 2021, the library of the JSP partner Pardubice University had 224,485 items of books, subscribed to 9 databases.

After the merger with Vilnius University in 2021, the supply of publications and electronic resources to the academic community of VU ŠA increased significantly, as the Vilnius University Library is the largest academic library in Lithuania, which subscribes to a large number of databases, magazine collections, and other electronic resources.

Members of the Academy community have great access to the e-book platform Academic Complete (ProQuest Ebook Central), a collection of more than 180,000 e-books on a variety of topics. This base is especially useful for study programmes in the field.

Since April 2021, the VU ŠA community has had access to 58 subscribed scientific databases. The following databases and journals are suitable for VA programmes of public administration field: Academic Complete Collection on Proquest Ebook Central, eBooks on Cambridge Core (Cambridge University Press), EBSCO Database Package, JSTOR, Oxford Journals Collection, Passport, SAGE journals online, Science Direct: Freedom Collection, SpringerLINK, Taylor & Francis, Wiley Online Library, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU) Publishing House, Kaunas University of Technology Publishing House, Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) Publishing House and Klaipėda University Publishing House Electronic Books.

Students and faculty have access to all the funds and reading rooms of the Academy Information Centre, and pre-ordered publications are lent home. For the convenience of students, the VU Virtual Library is an integrated search system that allows them to search Vilnius University Library resources, institutional repository, Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library eLABa, subscribed databases, open access repositories and archives, other databases and electronic resources, LIBIS summary catalogue, including resources held in public libraries. If the library does not have the required publication, then after searching the virtual library and finding the publication in another academic library, it can be ordered from other Lithuanian or foreign libraries via an interlibrary loan. The virtual library also has a collection of standards of the Lithuanian Department of Standardization available to readers, which is supplemented with hundreds of new standards every year.

The computers of Šiauliai Academy are connected to the common VU network, which allows to use all the resources available at VU from any computer in the CAU or from a home computer connecting via VPN to the unified connection system.

During the analysed period, ŠU received funds for the updating of methodological tools (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. FUNDS FOR THE RENEWAL OF METHODOLOGICAL AIDS, EUROS

Methodological aids	2020	2019	2018	2017
Books	3541	3877	3624	3364
Periodicals		1948 (funds for the periodicals of 2020)	4012 (funds for the periodicals of 2019)	6127 (funds for the periodicals of 2018)
Database subscription	8956	1627	421	21368

Teachers and specialists of VU ŠA Information Centre constantly consult and cooperate on updating and supplementing the Academy's information resource funds. The Academy provides information retrieval services, consultations on citations, bibliography, the Mendeley bibliographic record management programme, organizes and conducts information literacy training. A significant number of readers use personal computers, tablets or other smart devices, so the Information Centre spaces, education and training are changed or updated according to current needs, so that students and academic community have convenient and easy access to all methodological materials needed for study and teaching.

The literature collected by ŠAIC meets the needs of the Programme. In addition, it is constantly updated with new sources of needed for the content of the Programme.

Adaptation of study resources for people with special needs

The premises of VU ŠA Information Centre are adapted for visitors with reduced mobility. Work areas with special equipment for visually impaired or motor impaired visitors are equipped in the general reading room and in the reading room of Periodicals, the individual work rooms are equipped with height-adjustable tables for visitors with reduced mobility.

For the **convenience** of the Academy community, the Information Centre has a babysitting room where it is possible to leave pre-school children (3 to 6 years old).

6.2. Planning and updating of resources required for studies

Until January 1, 2021, a representative of the library participated in the meetings of the Study Programme Evaluation Committees. The library, in its turn, always orders the publications requested by the teachers, after checking whether such is not available and / or adds new resources or titles to the available resources, and sends information to the institutes about the newly published publications in Lithuania. When ordering books in a foreign language, teachers are asked to send a list of publications they would like to have for their subject.

Publications required for the programme at Pardubice University can be ordered at the initiative of teachers, librarians and students. The final decision on ordering new publications is made by the library staff.

6.3. Recommendations of previous evaluation of the evaluated area, strengths and aspects for improvement

No.	Recommendations of previous evaluation	Actions
Public Administration		
1.	"The premises for studies and staff are of high quality; faculty library - bright and spacious; it provides an environment conducive to individual and group learning. The library has a number of readings in English. "	During the analysed period, SPC and programme teachers constantly cooperated with the representatives of the library, provided them with lists of methodological resources needed for their acquisition. Some methodological resources were acquired during the research projects carried out by the teachers of the program from the project funds (for example, in 2019, scientific books were purchased from the DAAD project "E-leadership in local government", which are available at the VU ŠA Information Centre for all members of the VU ŠA community).
Public Governance		
2.	"Classrooms are rich in teaching resources, students have access to databases from home, the library is accessible to the public, and the university community and locals."	During the period under review (before the pandemic), programme teachers actively initiated RENET activities and various other public events in the library so that programme students, the university community, social partners, and local people could continue to meet. During the pandemic, events were held on Teams, to which community members and all interested parties were also invited.
Strengths of the evaluated area		
1.	More computer equipment and programmes used in the study process were purchased.	
2.	The choice of information sources is increasing (availability of e-books).	
3.	The number of subscribed databases is increasing.	
4.	Ability to connect to subscribed databases from a home computer.	
5.	Opportunity for members of the academy community to use the Child Care Room in the Information Centre, where it is possible to leave preschool children.	
6.	The material resource base meets the requirements for the implementation of public administration programmes.	
Aspects for improvement		
1.	To get acquainted in more detail with the resources available at VU (instruments of social research methodology, databases), digital tools and intellectual products created here and to evaluate their possibilities to update the study content, to use them in research.	
2.	After finding out about other VU units planning to purchase simulation activity packages, etc., discuss with them the software able to help students try out the various e-government tools available in public administration programmes, e. systems, to find out the possibilities of acquiring or creating such systems in VUŠA.	

7. Study quality management and publicity

7.1. Study improvement based on an internal quality assurance system

Study quality assurance system

The study quality assurance system of Vilnius University was developed within the project “Development and Implementation of the Internal Study Quality Management System of Vilnius University” and is implemented in accordance with the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulations⁴². Ensuring the quality of studies is based on fostering a quality culture arising from the values enshrined in the mission of VU, monitoring and analysis of study data and internal dialogue on continuous quality improvement.

VU applies various internal quality assurance processes and procedures: performs the approval, monitoring and evaluation of study programmes; monitors and analyses the course of studies; implements and improves student achievement assessment, remote learning, computer-based examination and plagiarism screening systems, a system for deepening and developing the pedagogical competence of teachers, promoting the application of innovative teaching and results evaluation methods in the study process, which contributes to the implementation of student-centered learning; implements the introduction of newly admitted academic staff and student dropout prevention programmes; ensures a suitable study environment, study resources and academic, cultural, social and other necessary support for students; provides career services; collects and analyses feedback from the participants of the study process - students, teachers, employers, social partners and the dissemination of information on best practices in quality improvement, dissemination of good study quality practices, student involvement.

The VU Study Programme Regulation stipulates that study programme committees are responsible for ensuring the quality and continuous improvement of study programmes and follow the regulations of the Study Programme Committee in their activities⁴³. The committee consists of the teachers implementing the programme, the social partner(s), and the student representative(s). The SPC is subordinate to the CAU Council and report to it at least once a year on the implementation of the programmes. The reports analyse the number of students admitted and the distribution of competitive scores; internationality of studies; students' satisfaction with the study programme and study subjects (modules) (survey results); the need for material resources of the study programme; costs of study programme implementation; subject and pedagogical competencies of the academic staff implementing the study programme; student workload; other data of the study process - monitoring of progress (academic debts, debts, academic leave, suspension of studies, graduation, graduation, continuation of studies at a higher level, employability, etc.) and other relevant qualitative and quantitative data related to the quality of studies. The information collected during the last 3 years on the implementation and evaluation of studies has been used to improve the studies in the field. Here are some examples:

- *Meeting students' professional development needs.* In order to strengthen the quality of studies, in March 2018–2020 (before the COVID pandemic) meetings were held with the Social Partners' Council, alumni - employees and managers of public administration institutions, the needs of the professional field and the possibilities to respond to them in the second cycle study programme *Public Governance* and in the first cycle study programmes *Public Administration* were discussed. The peculiarities of the students' practice are discussed at the SPC meetings, and the problems of the areas in which the students work are analysed during the practical sessions. In 2018, during the reflections on practice performed by the students of *Public Administration*, it became clear that the students did not have sufficient knowledge of document management, therefore, the content of the study subject “E. Government” was supplemented by expanding this topic.
- *Student workload optimization.* Almost all part-time students in the first cycle programme *Public Administration* and second cycle programme *Public Governance* are employed. Surveys and interviews with students revealed that it is difficult for them to combine studies, work and family responsibilities, therefore, by optimizing the time spent on tasks and maintaining the learning outcomes in 2018–2020 integrated common tasks for accounting for different subjects were introduced (e.g. “Ethics and Anti-Corruption Policy” and “Social Research Methodology” modules in

⁴² European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Higher Education. <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esq/>

⁴³ March 6, 2014, VU Senate Resolution No. SK-2014-4-1 “Regulations of the Vilnius University Study Programme Committee” (wording of Vilnius University Senate Resolution No. S-2017-11-6 of 21 November 2017). https://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/st_reglamentuojantys_dok/SPK_nuostatai_galutinis_2018.pdf

undergraduate studies; "Transparency, Openness and Anti-Corruption" and "Partnership of the Public and the Private Sectors for Regional Innovations" in second cycle programmes), continuous tasks of several teachers teaching one module were formulated (e.g. "Strategic Management", "Management of Public Sector Organizations" modules in undergraduate studies; „Public Governance Research" module in *Public Governance*), the tasks of the final courses were coordinated with the topics of the final theses.

- *Decisions on ensuring academic ethics.* In a survey of undergraduate students in 2019, signals were received that ethical violations occur in the study process (opinion of one student): there are times when teachers pay more attention to some students and make concessions. This situation was discussed at the SPC meeting, the information encouraged the teachers to reflect on their behaviour, to reflect on the Halo effect in the studies.
- *Study quality commitments.* In order to ensure the quality of studies, in the programme *Public Governance*, it was decided to take actions to ensure that all students achieve a higher level of achievement (grades of study subjects and final thesis would be at least 7). This aspiration was recorded in the descriptions of the study subjects (before the renewal of the programmes according to the VU forms in the spring semester of 2021), discussed with the students during the introductory lectures of the subjects. The experience has shown that this mutual commitment has increased students' motivation for further studies, and has led to the expansion of teacher support measures for students. In addition to the consultation hours provided in the description of the study subject, individual consultations of teachers were carried out (at least 1 hour per week), the schedule of which was published on the Internet (before joining VU, spring semester 2021). It has been agreed that teachers provide consultations not only to students studying the relevant module or preparing a thesis on a specific topic, but also to other students who apply.
- *Aiming for the quality of final theses.* In order to improve the quality of final theses, the recommendations for students preparing final theses were updated in 2020. During the last semester, two general group consultations-discussions were organized for master students and 1 general consultation for bachelor students. In October 2021, the SPC decided that, taking into account the content of the 10-credit module "Public Governance Research", both bachelor and master students preparing their final theses would be given 1 general consultation during the last semester. A group of teachers of the programme participates in the consultation.

One of the main tasks of the Study Programme Committees is to improve the programme in order to achieve its aims, the integrity of the competences, the content, methods and assessment of achievements, the relevance and competitiveness of the programmes. The committee analyses the feedback of the faculty departments, students, graduates, lecturers, and social partners about the programme and its implementation, discussing with them the possibilities of improving the programme and the issues relevant to students. Committee members discuss these issues with both teachers and heads of faculty in search of solutions. In addition, the committee analyses the resources available for the programme and discusses them with the CAU management. The latter, taking into account both the strategic goals of the University and the issues to be addressed by the SPC, formulates the goals of the CAU activities through dialogue, which would contribute to the achievement of the general goals of the University and help ensure quality studies. The formed activity goals are discussed at the College of Studies, which consists of the Deputy Head of Studies of the CAU, committee chairs and a student representative. The chairmen of the study programme committees organize the work in the committee accordingly and at the same time plan the directions of the study programme improvement that meet the goals of the CAU activities.

The committee not only ensures that the objectives and content of the programme are kept up to date, but also participates in the preparation and approval of related documents (e.g. descriptions of study subjects prepared by teachers). Another function is to assess the competences acquired by students under other programmes and to decide on the crediting of study achievements. Decisions of the Committee shall be taken by a majority of votes.

Amendments to the study programmes of the field are considered by the SPC, and if the amendments are substantial, they are considered and approved by the CAU Council. When changing the name of the study programme, the field of study to which the study programme is assigned, the qualification degree, professional qualification or the scope of the study programme, the change is considered and approved not only by the study programme committee and the CAU Council, but also by the Senate. If the CAU carries

out more than one programme in the same field of study, the amendments are also presented at the College of Studies, which advises the CAU Deputy for Studies and the Council. This is one of the measures to ensure the rationality of the number of study programmes and the uniqueness and compatibility of their goals, learning outcomes and content. The process of updating the programme is supervised by the VU Study Quality and Development Department, and administrative support is provided by the CAU Study Department.

During the analysed period, there were two study programme committees in the field of public administration - the Committee of Public Administration Study Programmes (responsible for the first cycle programme *Public Administration* and the second cycle programme *Public Governance*) and the JSP Committee of the programme *Regional Development and Governance*, consisting of representatives of VU ŠA and PU. The work of both committees of VU ŠA is managed by the chairman of the committee. During the period under review, the chair of the first committee was changed in September of 2020, i.e. prof. dr. Laima Liukinevičienė was replaced by assoc. prof. dr. Vita Juknevičienė. The JSP SPC was chaired by two chairmen of the committee - VU ŠA assoc. prof. dr. Vita Juknevičienė and PU prof. dr. Jan Stejskal (PU is also referred to as the guarantor of the study programme). Due to the specifics of the JSP, the meetings of the SPC are organized separately, and in the case of the JSP SPC, in English, when representatives of the partner university are invited to participate in addressing important programme issues related to the management or quality of the programme.

During the analysed period, the study programme committees discussed issues related to the quality and improvement of the study programme (prepared follow-up action plans), developed a programme quality culture (initiated seminars, organized and participated in quality day events). Attention was paid to the renewal of the study programme structure, preparation of new specializations, renewal of subject descriptions, improvement of students' practice, improvement of study quality monitoring tools and discussion of the outcomes by providing ways for improvement. The analysis of the minutes of the study programme committees (January, 2018–July, 2021) revealed that the programme improvement actions were carried out in the following essential directions:

- Improvement of study programmes;
- Renewal of the subjects of study programmes;
- Development of the study quality monitoring system and discussion of the obtained results. Analysis of the results of the monitoring of the quality of the preparation and defence of students' final theses;
- Monitoring and improving the quality of student practice (see Appendix No. 6).

Stakeholders are involved in the process of assessment and improvement of studies in the field, who are divided into three groups according to their responsibilities and levels of involvement in the process: the first group includes persons, groups of persons and organizations directly involved in the study process (teachers, students, administration, etc.); the second group - public administration institutions and bodies involved in the process of programme development, implementation and evaluation; the third group - non-governmental organizations, society. According to internal and external documents, the stakeholders of the first and second groups are involved in all the main processes of SP implementation: SP development, marketing, implementation, evaluation.

During the analysed period, the social partners actively participated in the final thesis defence commissions (for example, 13 social partners, occupying leading positions in 11 public sector institutions of Šiauliai region, were included in the final work commissions in 2019–2021, (see Appendix No 7), provided relevant topics for the final theses, participated in the presentations of the final theses in their organizations (see Appendix 8), were involved in the processes of preparing this self-assessment (see the composition of the self-assessment preparation group), were members of the Study Programme Committee. The social partners are involved in shaping the topics, they receive feedback on the results of the bachelor's and master's thesis research: 12 bachelor's and master's theses were prepared during the reporting period, the results of which were presented to the institutions. For example, in 2019 - Gabrielė Norvaišaitė "Trust in Local Self-Government Institutions: The Case of Šiauliai District Municipality" (supervisor - lect. V. Tubutienė); Odėta Bučienė "Employee Involvement in Quality Management Processes: The Case of the Lean System" (Assoc. Prof. Dr. V. Juknevičienė) (see Appendix No 8).

Representatives of foreign universities as academic partners contributed to the development of students' competences during the reporting period (see the international dimension, visiting lecturers in the studies,

meetings of visiting lecturers with programme teachers and sharing of experience in terms of improving the quality of the programme, remote lectures by foreign teachers, RENET activities ⁴⁴) (see Table 5.7.).

The committees of other study programmes (Economics, Management, Mathematics SPC) are closely cooperating in the development of study programmes. For example, on 28/09/2018, a joint meeting of the Departments of Economics and Business and Public Governance (four committees) was held to improve the study programme by changing the arrangement of subjects in the programme grid (28/09/2018, Protocol No. 2).

In order to constantly review the compliance of the Programmes with the market needs and to improve the quality, the Social Partners' Council has been operating since 08/05/2014 - it has 15 members representing public administration institutions. The Council meets at least once an academic year. It provides suggestions for the improvement of the Programmes, advises the teachers of the Programmes on the relationship between practice and theory, and offers relevant topics for the final theses. During the reporting period, 3 meetings of the Council took place (minutes 2017, 2018, 2019). No meetings were held during the pandemic, in the spring semester of 2021, the members of the Council were involved in updating the short descriptions of study programmes and subject descriptions (submitted written proposals).

At the meetings of the Social Partners' Council, issues related to the Programmes were discussed: the compliance of the content of the Programmes with the needs of the public administration system, the relevant competences of specialists were discussed, and the results of the students' survey were discussed.

At the meeting of the Social Partners' Council (2019), the issues of service learning and practice, research conducted together with students were presented and discussed (for example, a commissioned study of the anti-corruption environment in Joniškis, surveys conducted by teachers and students on the trust of the population in self-government institutions), areas for further research and cooperation in social partner institutions were discussed. The members of the Social Partners' Council were presented with the opportunity to meet with a visiting professor of public administration from the University of Nebraska in Omaha (USA), the International Researchers' Excellence Network (RENET) and the plan of events and opportunities to participate in them remotely, (for example, in the Municipal Forum). The members of the Social Partners' Council submitted proposals on the topics of students' final theses that would be relevant to the public sector institutions of the region. The Council also submitted a proposal on the dissemination of defended works in the regional institutions - a representative of the State Tax Inspectorate promised to schedule a meeting with a student who defended his final thesis on corruption (Minutes No. RP-2-9 of 22 March 2019).

The social partners are involved in organizing events dedicated to the International Anti-Corruption Day, the Self-Governance Day (conferences, discussions), which are attended by specialists from the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania and representatives of North-West municipalities.

Collection of information about studies and its use

Until 2018, student surveys on the quality of programmes and teaching took place at the institutional level of Šiauliai University, when students, teachers, employers were interviewed and the reports were presented and made public (online access: <http://su.lt/studijos/studiju-kokybe>).

During the analysed period, the results of the surveys conducted by all three study programmes of the field were discussed at the meetings of the department/SPC. Students were provided with information about the results of the surveys and expected changes by the SP / SPC Chair (or committee members responsible for the survey) during the discussions. Information on the quality of studies (for students, graduates, employers) was presented during the meetings (during the pandemic, meetings with students took place remotely). Information about studies and development of students' competences was discussed during visits and meetings with representatives of institutions of Šiauliai region and neighbouring regions (Mažeikiai district, Telšiai district, Raseiniai district) (in 2018, 2019 SP teachers went to municipalities, STI, Sodra branches, public libraries, etc.). Feedback from students, teachers and employers were presented in the video information about the SP that was uploaded to the internet.⁴⁵ SP Facebook account was created, which contains information about SP and ongoing events and the results of the study process (e.g. results

⁴⁴ RENET activities <https://atviri.emokymai.vu.lt/course/view.php?id=126>

⁴⁵ <https://fb.watch/6pfexDJ2MP/>.

of active teaching methods, guest lectures) (Facebook: VU ŠA Public Administration Studies) (09/05/2019, protocol No. RP- 2-18; 09/09/2019, Protocol No. RP-2-26).

Greater accessibility of the social partners of the study programmes is ensured by the sections (Videos) published on the Facebook page of VU Šiauliai Academy: “Interview with a graduate”, “OPTIONS”, “Bachelor studies 2020”, “It is worth choosing” and the sections “Alumni speak”, “How do you live.”⁴⁶

Other forms of disseminating information about the improvement of the Programmes are scientific and practical conferences, round tables, quality days. In 2009–2019, annual Quality Days were held, the aim of which was to develop a quality culture at the University, considering the possibilities of improving the quality of studies, sharing experiences of various social stakeholders. Dissemination of events is publicized and hosted on the Internet. In March 2021, VU ŠA also organized events aimed at improving the quality of studies, including the Study Fair.

Information about the events organized by the PA study field is published in the regional and national press (for example, about the events organized by the Department of Public Administration dedicated to the Self-Governance Day, the International Anti-Corruption Day). Students are also periodically reached by specific information of VU ŠA - electronic information bulletins about the events taking place at the University, exchange programme opportunities, competitions, etc.

Teachers and students of the PA field participate in the activities of the University / Academy marketing group by providing information on the improvement of the study programmes to the following target groups: pupils (future students), students, graduates, employers. The main marketing activities of the University: informing potential students, vocational counselling of specialists about their studies, visits, dissemination of information on the Internet, networks, handouts, career and study fairs, (for example, in 2018–2019 RDG (M) SP was presented at international study fairs), thematic lectures in schools, open days, vocational camps, scientific events, etc. On March 31, 2021, the VU Study Fair was held, in which the study programme *Public Administration* was presented to the public with the participation of teachers, students, graduates and social partners of the field of public administration.⁴⁷

The above-mentioned means of communication with the Programme stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, future students, pupils) ensure effective dissemination of quality improvement results.

The administration of the Unit and the lecturers use the University Study Information System (VUSIS), which connects various applications and is the information base for the management of the study programmes of the field. One of the main applications of study administration is the administration of study programme, to which a person with access rights (vice-dean of studies, study administrator, etc.) can review and edit study programme plans. The administration programme allows to see and administer students' personal data, assessments of study subjects, registration for studies of optional subjects, topics of final theses, to issue certificates, to credit subjects taken at another higher education institution, to acquaint students with the results of their applications, assessments, etc. All orders of the Dean or Rector related to students (e.g. on the topics of term or final theses, on business trips to part-time studies at foreign universities, etc.) are prepared in VUSIS. Diploma supplements are also prepared and printed through this system. VUSIS stores data on admission (competitions, number of admissions by priority), student and study statistics in various parameters. Teachers have electronic workplaces where they can enter the results of exams, descriptions of the subjects taught, sees lists of students in the subject being taught, and receives feedback results. VUSIS facilitates information management and studies.

The results of the study evaluation are published on the vu.lt website, on the CAU websites, as well as on the internal page of the University and in the information system. Plans for the improvement of study fields and progress reports are planned to be published on the intranet, students will be acquainted through SPC activities.

The opinion of students studying the field about the quality of studies

In 2018, representatives of ŠU Student Representation Office participated in subject exams of the programmes in order to find out the intentions of cheating during the exam. They presented their insights to the subject teacher and presented the summarized data to the ŠU community.

⁴⁶ For example, <https://fb.watch/6pfWCMqbw/>; <https://fb.watch/6pfZEA5pOo/>.

⁴⁷ <https://fb.watch/6pg9URzrAB/>.

In 2019–2021, no centralized student surveys were conducted at Šiauliai University. The last centralized survey of University students was conducted in the spring of 2018 and involved 18 students of the programme *Public Administration* and 12 students of the programme *Public Governance*.

Upon completion of studies in 2018–2021, all graduates were interviewed using a specially prepared survey form. The content of the survey consisted of three main topics: the evaluation of the thesis preparation process, the evaluation of the thesis defence process and suggestions for the improvement of the study process. After analysing the material of these surveys, ways to improve the programme were planned.

In 2021, the majority of students were positive about their studies and were generally satisfied with the quality of their studies. Undergraduate students indicated that: *"The quality of studies is very good."*; *"Subjects were taught clearly, a clear accounting and evaluation system"*, *Teachers are real professionals in their fields"*; *"A hard-working, cohesive, high-class team of scientists. Good luck!"* In the second cycle programme: *"I enjoyed the studies, especially the lectures, which are very interesting and engaging in the discussions"*; *"Everything met expectations: professional, high quality of teaching and prepared courses, attention to personality and expansion of opportunities. 100% useful for practice. The choice that justified the expectations in the context of the programmes offered by LT universities"*.

Student surveys revealed that addressing the issue of the relationship between theory and practice in both first cycle and second cycle programmes was not fully solved in the students' view. Several first cycle students in the surveys wanted a stronger link between studies and practice, more frequent visits to public administration institutions. A small number of second cycle students missed the connection between topics of lectures and practice, analysis of specific processes, and said that there was still a lack of discussion based on practical examples rather than narration of the subject. The teachers of the study programmes were acquainted with the students' feedback during the general discussion of the SPC meetings, and the remarks addressed to the specific teacher were forwarded in writing by the SPC chairman and discussed with the teacher individually. During the discussions at the SPC meetings, the teachers were encouraged to strengthen the connection between theory and practice during the lectures by analysing the documents of the activities of public administration institutions, more often using the case analysis method. In 2020, students in the programme *Public Governance* submitted a proposal for structural improvement: *"The research methodology should be at the end of the course and not at the beginning of the studies"*. It was not expedient to implement this proposal directly, as the topic of research methodology was strengthened by introducing a new module "Public Governance Research" in the penultimate semester.

During the analysed period, students' opinions were analysed by assessing the study subjects and teachers' competences at the end of the semester (at the initiative of the subject teacher), which allows the subject / module teachers to improve the subject taking into account students' opinions. A deeper analysis of the results of the students' opinions, conducted by the SPC, revealed the existing problem - a large number of intermediate written assignments and an uneven distribution of reports in the semester. This encouraged the teachers working in the study programmes to review the subject descriptions by adjusting the forms and dates of assessment.

Since ŠU became VU unit in 2021, VU study quality measures have been applied. Surveys of first and second cycle students are conducted centrally twice a year at the end of each semester at VU (surveys are conducted using the VU electronic survey system linked to VUSIS):

- 1) About specific subjects studied in the semester.
The recommended co-university subject questionnaire is used in these surveys. After connecting to the VU information system in the "Surveys" section:
 - students can express their views about their studies anonymously, including the specific subjects they are studying;
 - teachers are provided directly with feedback from students on the subjects they teach;
 - students' feedback on all subjects of the study programme is submitted directly to the chairman of the Study Programme Committee;
 - students' feedback on the subjects of all study programmes in the unit is provided directly to the unit administration.
- 2) About overall satisfaction with semester studies.
Detailed survey results by departments and study programmes are published on the internal VU website in the section "Feedback". Data from centrally conducted student surveys are used:

- by programme implementors to improve the study programme or subject (module);
- by the Study Programme Committee and the administration of the unit during the continuous quality assurance and improvement of the study programme;
- preparing self-analyses of the study programme for external evaluation;
- during the analysis of the study programmes to be implemented;
- by attestation commission during the attestation of teachers;
- for the improvement of other activities of the Unit and the University.

7.2. Strengths, weaknesses and improvement actions in the evaluation area

No.	Recommendations of the previous evaluation	Actions
Public Administration		
1.	"The quality assurance system would be more effective if the procedure for selecting students for the programme supervision group was clearer, simpler and more democratic"	Since 2021 VU ŠA SPC members-students have been offered by the VU Student Representation. Representatives of VU ŠA Student Representative Office discuss possible candidates with SPC.
Public Governance		
1.	"The social partners have a greater role to play: <...> in introducing career opportunities for postgraduate graduates; popularizing the second cycle study programme (in social media); providing work experience / traineeships for students not working in the public sector."	In order to constantly review the compliance of the Programme with the market needs and to improve the quality, the Social Partners' Council has been operating since 08/05/2014. It has 15 members representing public administration institutions. The Council makes proposals for the improvement of the Programme, advises the lecturers of the Programme on the relationship between practice and theory, and offers relevant topics for the final theses.
Regional Development and Governance		
1.	"ŠU and PU, together with the social partners, should look for ways to set up scholarships for students to encourage them to find employment in the local or regional public sector. This goal could be achieved by: creating a scholarship system; promoting work in the public sector and explaining what it is like; announcing the advantages of working in the public service sector (studying in a first cycle programme) "	In 2018–2021, the social partners were members of the SPC, but only due to the participation of foreign students in their studies, they carried out traditional activities: they met with students at organized events, introduced them to the specifics of the municipality and municipal activities, listened to projects and discussed. During the discussion, the social partners stated that the establishment of scholarships for foreign students does not create added value for the institutions of Šiauliai region (students did not intend to stay in the region or they did not fulfil the essential requirement to work in the Lithuanian public sector - to speak the state Lithuanian language).
2.	"The social partners have a greater role to play in: expanding the content and profile of the second cycle programme, promoting the programme (including through the use of social media); providing work experience for those not working in the public sector; introducing career opportunities to graduates "	During the analysed period, PU students presented their research works (projects - ideas for city and regional development) in Šiauliai City Municipality (spring semester of 2017, 2019), met and discussed with representatives of the municipal council and administration. In the spring semester of 2019, a member of the municipal council gave a public lecture to graduate students on the local government system, the dichotomy of politics and administration, and answered questions from graduate students. In the spring semester of 2019, the alumni-practitioner of Public Administration and Public Governance programmes delivered a public lecture on political participation in local government and answered questions from graduate students.

	By the Decree of the Vice-Rector for Studies of Vilnius University of 19 April 2021 on the establishment of working groups for the renewal and improvement of study programmes supervised by the Institute of Regional Development of Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University, in May-June 2021, the social partners participated in updating the study programmes (short descriptions of the programmes and subjects, providing proposals for updates) and submitting the programme improvement plan to the VU administration.
Strengths of the evaluated area	
1.	Extensive and effective quality assurance process, including the development of a quality culture (e.g. Quality Days, Alumni Days, Workshops of visiting teachers for Programme teachers on quality issues, etc.) and a widespread survey of students' views when these views are heard and taken into account taking action.
2.	In order to strengthen the relationship between practice and theory, lecturers-practitioners (social partners) representing public administration institutions and NGOs (municipalities, STI of the Republic of Lithuania, Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania, educational institutions, business incubators, etc.) were invited. They were also invited to the Thesis Defence Commissions.
3.	Active and inclusive sections on social media have been created to publicize the programmes of the field and to keep in touch with graduates, students, social partners and prospective students.
Aspects for improvement of the area	
1.	In order to support the proper application of study quality assurance measures, to integrate the feedback tools available at VUŠA into the VU quality management system, to initiate the creation of VU environments informing students about the inclusion of their proposals in the study improvement process as a feedback tool.
2.	In view of the issues of public administration included in the improvement strategies for the next period (2023–2027), to expand the Council of Social Partners with specialists representing e-government, implementation of migration policy, anti-corruption management, community involvement, etc. issues.
3.	Since 2021, the publicity of the joint study programme has been directed only to the foreign market, so local potential students can receive information only with the help of social media. It is necessary to provide information about the programme in both English and Lithuanian, encouraging Lithuanian students to choose in this programme.

APPENDICES

1. Appendix No. 1. *The Aims and Learning Outcomes of the Study Field Programmes*, 6 pages.
2. Appendix No. 2. *Study Plans of the Programmes in the Study Field*, 12 pages.
3. Appendix No. 3. *Coherence of the Learning Outcomes, Study Methods Used to Achieve them and Assessment Methods of the Study Programme*, 3 pages.
4. Appendix No. 4. *List of Lecturers of Public Administration Study Field Subjects Working Permanently in the Institution (at least part-time and at least for 3 years)*, 7 pages.
5. Appendix No. 5. *Lists of Final Theses of the Programmes in the Field*, 9 pages.
6. Appendix No. 6. *Analysis of the Meeting Minutes of the Study Programmes Committee in the Field of Public Administration*, 3 pages.
7. Appendix No. 7. *Participations of Social Partners in the Thesis Defence Commissions in 2019–2021*, 1 page.
8. Appendix No. 8. *List of Final Theses of the Programmes Public Administration and Public Governance Presented and Discussed in Organizations*, 1 page.