Approved:
by the Order of the Rector
of the Vilnius Academy of Arts
No. VĮU-92 on 28 December 2020

Vilniaus dailės akademija

VILNIUS ACADEMY OF ARTS

QUALITY MANAGEMENT MANUAL

2020, VILNIUS

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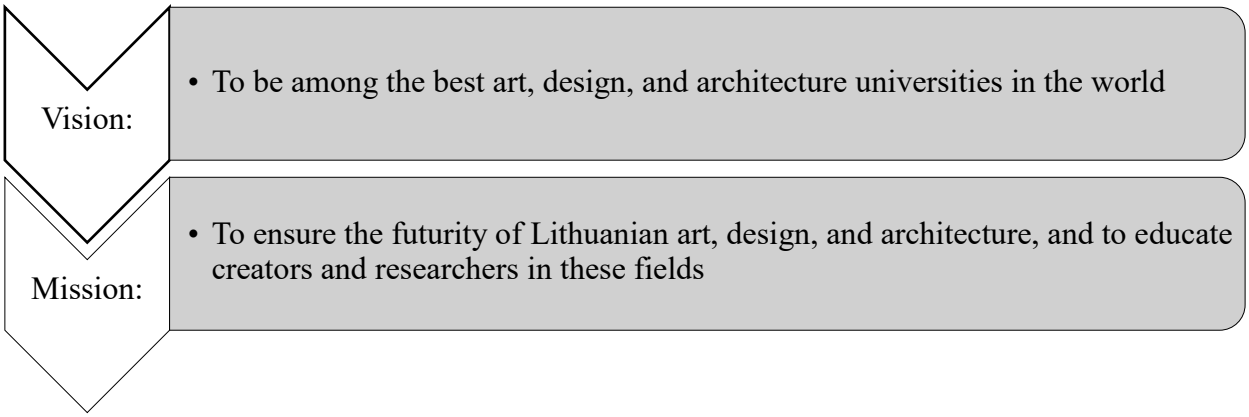
INTRODUCTION

The Vilnius Academy of Arts (henceforth abbreviated as the VAA, the Academy, or the Institution) is a public higher education institution in the Republic of Lithuania, which offers study programmes of all three study cycles in Art, Design, Architecture, and History and Theory of Arts. The activities of the Academy focus on five main priorities: namely, organising and conducting university studies in Art, Design, Architecture, and History and Theory of Arts; promoting artistic creation in the fields of Art, Design, and Architecture; promoting artistic and scientific research; facilitating non-formal education and teaching; supporting and promoting cultural and social activities.

The Academy's commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement is reflected in the VAA Strategy for 2020-2028, approved by the Council Resolution No. T-2019-11/27 on 10 December 2019. The provisions for quality assurance and its continuous improvement are embedded in the Academy's Vision and Mission.

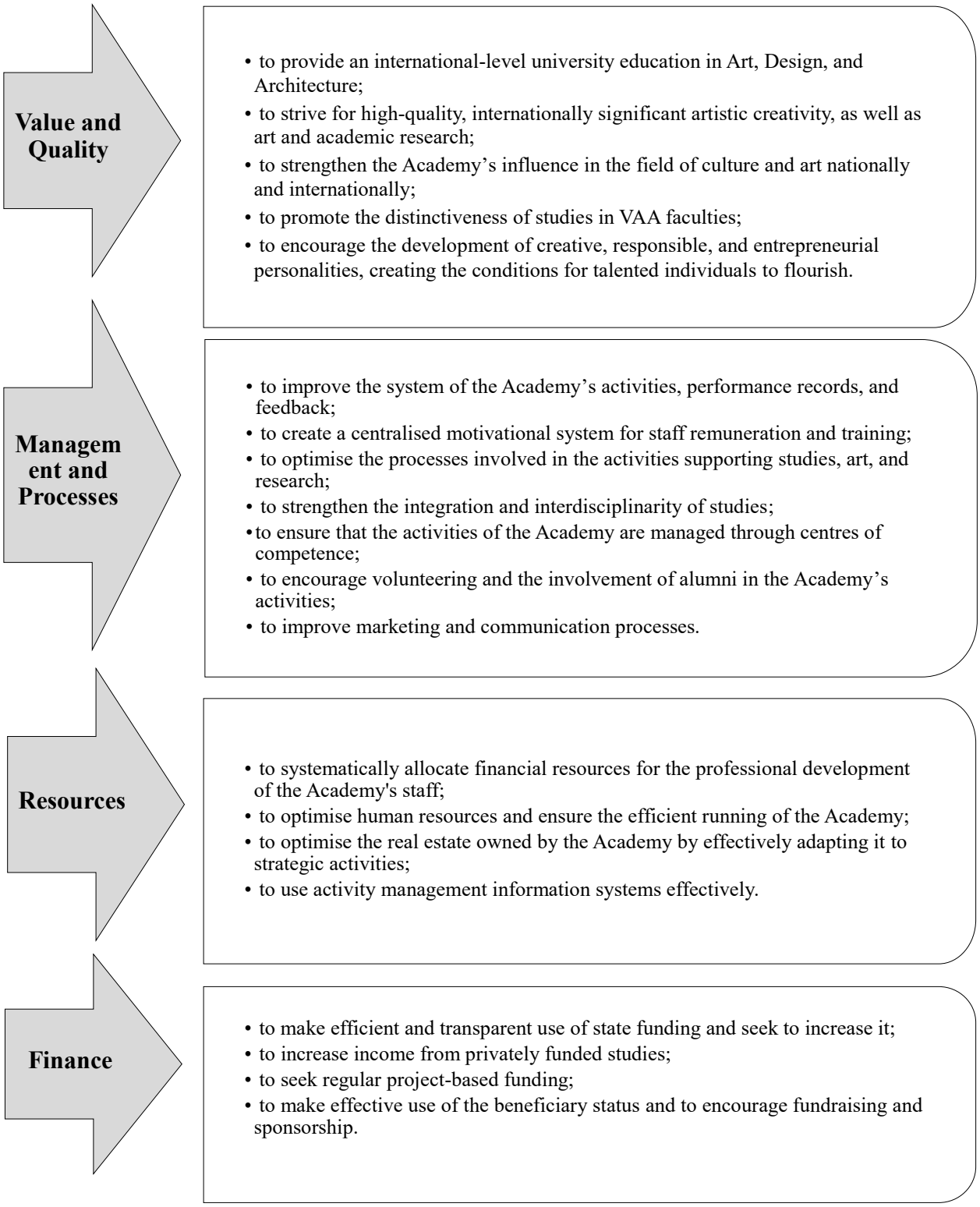


The Academy is the only tertiary-level institution of Art, Design, and Architecture in Lithuania and has campuses in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda and Telšiai. The Academy has 30 art and design laboratories, a museum, galleries and exhibition spaces, Nida Art Colony, a student plein-air centre in Mizarai, exhibition and museum spaces in Panemunė Castle, and a studio in Paris. The Academy boasts of a modern infrastructure that can be used by its community for studies, creative activities, and art and academic research.

On average, there are more than 1,500 students at the Academy each year and around 350 academic staff. The Academy conducts 46 approved study programmes and offers doctoral studies in 3 study fields. Over 90 students participate in study exchange programmes every year. The Academy takes pride in the exceptional artistic and scholarly work of its students and faculty, which has won recognition nationally and internationally. Every year, more than 180 exhibitions are held in the VAA galleries and exhibition halls. 55 faculty and alumni of the Academy have

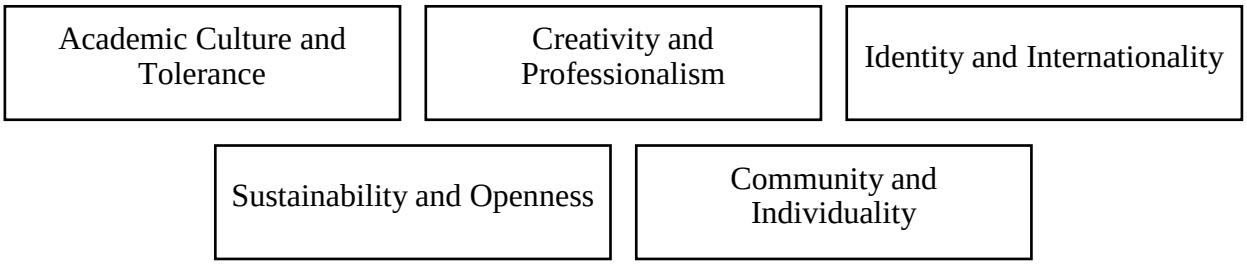
been awarded the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize. The activities of the Academy are based on trust and fostering the individuality of artistic creators.

The Vilnius Academy of Arts works towards achieving its strategic goals, set out in the VAA Strategy for 2020-2028, by means of four pathways:



Quality is also singled out as one of the main directions of the Academy's strategic goals ('Value and Quality'), integral to the daily activities of the Academy's staff and students. The main activities of the VAA as a higher education institution are teaching and learning, therefore, the Academy's quality assurance policy is primarily aimed at ensuring the quality of these activities. The Academy also believes that quality assurance in research and management is equally important. The Academy's quality assurance policy is based on the fundamental premise that the responsibility for the quality of its services and quality assurance lies primarily with the Institution itself. In other words, the mainstay of the Academy's quality assurance system is internal quality assurance based on the recognition and implementation of the principles of academic ethics (academic honesty, respect, active citizenship, personal responsibility).

In conducting its activities, the Academy promotes and fosters the following values:



In response to European strategic directions, the Academy is guided by the priorities of the European Higher Education Area as set out in the Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009). The Academy's internal quality assurance system is based on the quality assurance provisions and guidelines for the European Higher Education Area, outlined in the Yerevan Communiqué (2015). The VAA quality assurance system is grounded on a procedural approach and focuses on increasing the efficiency of activities, continuous improvement, and meeting the needs of social stakeholders. The Quality Management Manual is prepared and updated by a working group formed at the Academy and chaired by the Rector. The Quality Management Manual is reviewed by the Vice-Rector for Studies and the Vice-Rector for Art and Research and approved by the Rector. The Quality Management Manual enters into force on the date of its approval.

This Quality Management Manual is a document that describes the VAA quality management system, which meets the requirements of LST EN ISO 9001: 2015, as well as its areas of application, and links it to other documents and procedures of the Academy. This system is in line with the Academy's strategy and the provisions of its main legal documents.

SOURCES

► Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (*ESG*), 2015 (https://www.skvc.lt/uploads/documents/files/Kita_infromacija/Leidiniai/ESG_vertimas.pdf)

► The main documents of the Bologna Process, 2012:

- Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area (the Bucharest Communiqué)
- Mobility for Better Learning. Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area

(https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/Papildomas%20meniu2/Bolonijos_procesas/Bolonijos%20proceso%20dokumentai_2013.pdf)

► European standards:

- LST EN ISO 9001:2015 LT, EN, 'Quality Management Systems. Requirements'
- LST EN ISO 9000:2015 LT, EN, 'Quality Management Systems. Fundamentals and Vocabulary'
- EFQM Excellence Model, 2010, ISBN 9789052365015, ENGLISH

REGULATORY DOCUMENTS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STUDY MANAGEMENT

- ► The Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research;
- ► The Republic of Lithuania Law on Education;
- ► The Regulations for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Fields, and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 17 July 2019 (order No. V-835);
- ► The Methodology of the External Evaluation of Study Fields, approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 (order No. V-149);
- ► The Methodology for the Evaluation of New Study Programmes, approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 (order No. V-149);
- ► The Methodology for Conducting Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions, approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 9 March 2020 (order No. V-32);
- ► The Descriptor of Study Cycles, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 16 November 2016 (order No. V-1012);
- ► The Description of the General Requirements for the Provision of Studies, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 30 December 2016 (order No. V-1168);
- ► The Procedure for the External Review and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, the Order of the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-1529 (19 December 2019);
- ► The Descriptor of the Study Field of History and Theory of Art, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 27 August 2015 (order No. V-926);
- ► The Descriptor of the Study Field of Design, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 27 August 2015 (order No. V-924);
- ► The Descriptor of the Study Field of Art, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania on 27 August 2015 (order No. V-927);
- ► The Republic of Lithuania Law on Architecture.

TERMS, DEFINITIONS, ABBREVIATIONS

Quality policy	-	the overarching intentions and directions related to quality, declared or otherwise expressed by the organisation's senior management, which form the basis for achieving quality objectives.
Quality	-	the degree of conformity of the totality of the existing characteristics to requirements.
Quality objectives	-	objectives related to quality.
Quality management	-	quality-focused management (the establishment of the quality policy, quality objectives and processes in order to achieve quality objectives through quality planning, quality assurance, quality management and quality improvement). Quality management encompasses a management philosophy and practical methods chosen by an organisation that seeks to constantly improve by involving all employees in the improvement activities in order to best meet the needs of internal and external social stakeholders, improve the quality of services, and reduce costs.
Quality management system	-	a coordinated set of related and interconnected activities, determining quality policy and objectives and guiding the organisation towards achieving its goals. It is the totality of the Academy's strategic management documents, subjects, and procedures, aimed at improving the quality of its activities. Quality management system is part of a general management strategy and is abbreviated as QMS.
Quality assurance policy	-	part of the VAA strategic management, based on a four-part cycle of continuous improvement: planning, execution, inspection, improvement. It is developed and implemented by internal stakeholders with the participation of external stakeholders.
Social stakeholders	-	legal and natural persons who have reasonable and legitimate interests in the activities of the Academy.
Internal social stakeholders	-	VAA students, faculty, researchers, administration, and other non-academic staff.

External social stakeholders	-	VAA alumni, employers, students' parents, interested institutions and organisations.
Quality culture	-	an integral part of the VAA's broader culture, based on the values shared by the Academy's community and obliging all of its groups to act in accordance with the principles of ethics, mutual respect, and tolerance, to take initiative and choose measures that best achieve the Academy's Mission.
Organisation	-	a group of people with defined responsibilities, authority, and relationships to achieve the set goals. In the broadest sense, the Vilnius Academy of Arts.
Service	-	an action or sequence of actions that manifest itself in the interactions of individuals, providing a product or benefit to a customer and meeting his or her expectations.
Procedure	-	the established procedure for carrying out an activity or process.
Procedure lead	-	an employee of the Academy, responsible for the coordination and/or outcome of a particular process.
Process	-	the totality of related or interoperable activities that turn inputs into a process result.
Input	-	objects and/or information obtained at the beginning of a process and used to achieve results.
Indicator	-	qualitative or quantitative data describing the characteristic being measured.
Self-evaluation	-	the process during which information, data, and other factual material concerning the quality of one's personal and/or Organisation's activities, field of study and/or study programme are collected, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities.
Study quality	-	the adequacy of the conditions provided for personal self-development and acquiring a qualification at the Academy.
Interested party	-	a person or a group of individuals interested in the success and results achieved by the Organisation. These may be academy staff, students, alumni, external students, sponsors, social partners, employers, and the general public, both individually and as a group.

Management	-	a person or a group of persons authorised to make operational and management decisions. The Rector is the senior governing official at the VAA. In the broadest sense, management can be understood as a group of senior executives, consisting of the Council, the Senate, the Rector and Vice-Rectors, as well as the heads of administration, academic and branch departments, acting in accordance with the VAA Statute, departmental regulations, the operational regulations of governing bodies and/or other binding local legislative acts.
Internal control system	-	the totality of measures, including plans approved by the VAA, the Academy's Statute, work regulations, rules, methodologies, procedures, and other local legal acts, applicable to the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Institution.
Vilnius Academy of Arts	-	a public higher education institution in the Republic of Lithuania, offering study programmes of all three study cycles in Art, Design, Architecture, and History and Theory of Arts. Abbreviated as the VAA or the Academy.
Evaluation	-	the collection of information in the form of measurable data or the determination of compliance.
Assessment area	-	the field of activity chosen by the Academy in performing self-evaluation for ensuring comparability with other higher education institutions.
LABBIS	-	an automated document management system, used by VAA for the management, processing, storage, secure and confidential exchange of documents, and convenient access to digitised paper and electronic documents. The abbreviation used is LABBIS.
Internal audit of the quality management system		a systematic, independent, and documented assurance and verification process, during which objective data is collected and verified according to selected evaluation criteria in order to determine whether the activities and processes in question comply with the legal requirements.

Other terms used in the Quality Management System Manual (hereinafter referred to as the **Quality Management Manual**) correspond to the terms used in the LST EN 9001: 2015 standardisation document and other related documents and legal acts.

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1. The Academy's quality management system is a set of coordinated, interconnected and interoperable activities, which establishes the Organisation's quality policy and goals, and guides the Organisation toward achieving these goals. Overall quality is understood as the integrated whole of quality displayed at the different levels of the Organisation. It is achieved through the assurance of sufficiently high quality in the Organisation, the processes carried out by the Organisation, and its services. It is the totality of the Academy's strategic management documents, subjects, and procedures, aimed at improving the quality of its activities and part of a broader management strategy.

1.2. The quality management system developed, implemented, and operational at the Academy is based on the following principles:

1.2.1. autonomy and accountability – the values of the VAA and the balance of autonomy and social responsibility are taken into account;

1.2.2. contextuality – the distinctiveness of the VAA's mission, strategy, and international and national operating conditions are taken into account;

1.2.3. systematic coherence – factors considered are the interaction and coherence between: study programs, their components, and the field of study; the higher education institution's areas of activity; systematic, institutional, and individual (study programme, study course) levels of the implementation of higher education policy;

1.2.4. self-evaluation results and future directions – the results of the evaluation of the quality of academic activities and future perspectives are taken into account;

1.2.5. partnerships – the participation of the academic community and all stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of the strategic goals and objectives of the VAA is taken into account.

1.3. Quality management is a management philosophy and practical methods chosen by the Organisation that seeks to constantly improve by involving all employees in improvement activities in order to best meet the needs of internal and external social stakeholders, improve the quality of services, and reduce costs.

Quality management is a set of activities performed by the Academy, aimed at achieving the strategic and operational goals of the VAA by providing services and/or products at a level satisfactory to the social partners (internal and external), at a reasonable time and price.

1.4. Quality management has the following features:

1.4.1. User-oriented approach. The activities of the Academy depend on the users of its services and products (social stakeholders). Therefore, the VAA seeks to understand their current and future needs, meet their requirements, and exceed their expectations;

1.4.2. Leadership. The managing leaders of the Academy formulate and set the goals of the VAA, identify activity directions, and create an internal environment that involves the entire community of the Academy in achieving the goals of the Organisation;

1.4.3. Employee involvement. Staff at all levels are a crucial part of the Academy. An involvement of the employees in the activities of the Organisation allows for their skills to be used for the benefit of the Academy;

1.4.4. Procedural approach. The desired results are achieved much more efficiently when the activity and the resources associated with it are managed as a process;

1.4.5. A systematic approach to management. The treatment and understanding of interrelated processes as a system and their management help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Academy in achieving its goals;

1.4.6. Continuous improvement. An ongoing evaluation, analysis, and improvement of the overall performance of the Academy is a constant goal of the VAA;

1.4.7. A fact-based approach to decision making. Effective solutions are made on the basis of data and information analysis.

1.5. Four main quality objectives of the Academy's activities can be identified:

1.5.1. to ensure the quality of studies;

1.5.2. to ensure the quality of artistic activities and research;

1.5.3. to ensure the quality of the provision of other academic services;

1.5.4. to promote co-operation between research and businesses.

1.6. The following strategic principles of quality improvement have been established:

1.6.1. a continuous improvement of the Academy's activities is achieved by means of self-evaluation and accountability. Activity data is collected and analysed in an organised manner, with a systematic completion of performance evaluations;

1.6.2. a regular analysis of stakeholders' needs is carried out. These needs are taken into account in the development, implementation, and improvement of study programmes;

1.6.3. compliance with the legal acts regulating the activities of higher education institutions is ensured, following the European higher education quality assurance provisions and guidelines;

1.6.4. provisions are made for material and human resources required for the processes of academic and management activities. Appropriate infrastructure and conditions for professional development are created;

1.6.5. community agreement is sought on the Academy's quality objectives. Quality policy is constantly reviewed and updated to meet the quality objectives and the Academy's strategic objectives.

1.7. This document defines the set of quality assurance measures intended for the VAA activities as defined in the VAA Statute. The Quality Management Manual covers the following areas:

1.7.1. governance and leadership;

1.7.2. quality assurance policy;

1.7.3. monitoring and improvement.

1.8. This Quality Management Manual is in conformity with the VAA Strategy, the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania regulating the activities of higher education institutions, and the Academy's internal control policy, developed in keeping with the Republic of Lithuania Law on Internal Control and Internal Audit.

II. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

2.1. At the Academy, the responsibility for the development, implementation, and enforcement of the quality management system is assumed by senior management, who take on a leadership role in demonstrating their commitment to the highest level of excellence in the Academy's activities. There is a permanent working group established by the order of the Rector, tasked with developing, implementing, and promoting the implementation of QMS measures, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of these measures. The Vice-Rector for Studies, responsible for ensuring study quality, supervises the processes of external and internal monitoring of the study programmes. The documented information about the evaluation criteria is stored in files sorted by documentation plan and is available on LABBIS. The evaluation results are published on the VAA website (https://www.vda.lt/lt/dokumentai/studiju-programu-vertinimas).

2.2. The Academy's quality objectives are inseparable from its strategic goals and fully dependent on the performance of QMS, therefore, QMS is implemented and improved in all activity processes, as it is directly connected to the Academy's procedural approach and management of potential risks. QMS maintenance is guaranteed all the necessary human and instrumental resources. The Rector sets an example and mobilises the Academy's community by involving not only individuals but also collegiate bodies in the improvement of QMS and achieving the expected quality management results. Such collegiate bodies are the Council, the

Senate, the Rectorate, the Senate Academic Ethics Committee, as well as heads and staff of the Academy's administrative departments.

2.3. In order to achieve quality, the Academy's management undertakes to improve the management of the Academy's activities, services provided, and processes undertaken by applying a procedural and systematic approach:

2.3.a) by ensuring an efficient provision of resources necessary for the functioning, improvement, and increased efficiency of the quality management system;

2.3.b) by developing the quality policy and goals in line with the Academy's operational strategy and informing the staff of the VAA, service users, the public, and other interested parties about them;

2.3.c) by ensuring the compliance of activities performed with the requirements of legal acts and the compliance of services provided with the needs of their recipients;

2.3.d) by facilitating the sharing of the latest knowledge and taking an innovative approach in the fields of studies, applied research, and art activities at the Academy;

2.3.e) by creating a suitable working environment for the Academy's staff and encouraging them to improve their performance and develop their professional skills.

2.4. The staff of the Academy undertake to actively participate in the implementation of quality management measures and:

2.4.a) to get acquainted with the documentation relevant to the implementation of the quality management system, and to apply the principles defined therein in their daily activities;

2.4.b) to perform their assigned functions to a high standard and to initiate changes in processes that ought to be improved;

2.4.c) to continuously deepen their knowledge of their professional field in order to improve the quality of services provided by the Academy.

2.5. Quality assurance at the VAA is regulated by the principle of subsidiarity, which means that decisions about the activities of the Academy must be made at the level where finding a solution to problems and procedural issues is the most effective. Therefore, since decision-making is entrusted to the level where it is the most effective, the responsibility for performance quality is likewise shared between all levels (institutional, programme, course/module). Decisions are formalised by means of the resolutions of the Academy's Council and Senate, orders issued by the Rector, and resolutions or decrees at other levels of governance. They are publicly accessible and stored in the LABBIS system.

2.6. The activities of the Academy and the relationships between the members of the community are based on the following key principles: academic and creative freedom and ethics; artistic creation; the compatibility of artistic creation, research, and study; solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect; equal opportunities and fair competition; the promotion of moral, cultural, social, economic, and technological development; the strengthening of international partnerships; quality assurance; transparent allocation of resources; democratic and transparent decision-making based on the principle of subsidiarity; openness, responsibility, and accountability to the public.

2.7. The updated organisational structure of the VAA was approved on 10 January 2020 by the Council Resolution No. T-2020-1/2. This structure establishes subordination, describes the management model and accountability, clearly separates structural units, and outlines the responsibilities in performing the Institution's activities and ensuring operational and management control at the institutional, programme and/or course/module level. The management structure at the VAA is compliant with the requirements for the management structures at public higher education institutions, established in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, and allows to achieve the VAA Mission at the strategic, academic, and operational levels. The organisational structure is further specified through staff role lists, departmental regulations, and employee job descriptions. VAA staff are given the responsibility and authority necessary to achieve the Academy's objectives and goals, to carry out its operational functions, and to comply with regulatory requirements, including the responsibility for their actions and permission to make changes as appropriate. Their responsibilities are set out in job descriptions and local legislative acts. Employees are encouraged to produce regular activity reports and to understand their responsibilities. This also applies to the Rector as the senior manager of the Institution, who is responsible for all activities of the Institution. The organisational structure designed and implemented by the VAA is understood in a broader sense as a system that ensures the planning, execution, control, and supervision of activities and is designed to achieve the Academy's objectives.

2.8. The Academy has established and ensures the effective running of the following collegiate governing bodies: the Council, the Senate, and the Rector as the senior governing official.

2.9. The activities and responsibilities of the Council are described in the Rules of Procedure of the VAA Council, approved at the Council meeting No. T-2014-2 on 7 March 2014. The Council performs the following functions: after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, approves the Vision and Mission of the VAA and the VAA Strategy proposed by the Rector; after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, submits amendments to the Statute for approval at the

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania; upon the recommendation of the Rector, discusses and approves the structure of the VAA and its reorganisation plans; after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, establishes the procedure for the management, use, and disposal of VAA funds and property managed by the right of ownership; after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, establishes the procedure for organising the election of the Rector by way of a public competition; elects, appoints to office, and dismisses the Rector; establishes the principles of the selection and evaluation of the VAA administration and other employees; approves VAA internal rules of procedure; upon the recommendation of the Rector, sets tuition fees and fees not directly related to running study programmes; after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, determines the total number of students the Academy can admit, taking into account the ability to ensure the quality of studies and artistic and scientific activities; considers the annual VAA revenue and expenditure estimate submitted by the Rector and approves its implementation report; after evaluating the conclusions of the Senate, approves the annual VAA activity report submitted by the Rector; after evaluating the proposals of the Senate, approves the plans for the reorganisation or liquidation of the VAA and submits them to the Seimas; oversees sponsorships and support to the Institution; prepares an annual report on its activities and makes it publicly accessible; and performs other functions as defined in legal acts.

2.10. The Senate is an elected governing body responsible for managing academic affairs in the Institution. The Senate operates on the basis of the Senate Rules of Procedure approved by Resolution No. S-2017-3/16 of 26 May 2017 (an updated version approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2020-7/27 of 9 December 2020). The Senate performs the following functions: approves study programmes, programmes of artistic activities, artistic and academic research, experimental (social, cultural) development, and others; submits proposals to the Rector on the financing of these programmes and restructuring of the VAA necessary for their implementation; evaluates the results of research undertaken and the quality and level of artistic activities, artistic and academic research at the VAA; establishes the rules and regulations of studies; approves the internal quality assurance system for artistic activities, artistic and academic research, and studies, and controls its implementation; sets the qualification requirements for teaching and research staff, as well as the rules for their election and attestation; convenes the meetings (conferences) of the VAA academic community to discuss issues important for the operation of the Institution; elects, appoints, and recalls members of the Council; considers and submits proposals to the Council on the suitability of candidates for the position of the Rector; considers and submits proposals to the Council on the Vision and Mission of the Institution, its strategic action plan, amendments to the Statute, the procedures for managing, using, and disposing of the Institution's funds and properties, and the total number of student places available,

taking into account the ability to ensure the quality of studies, research, and artistic activities; considers and publishes its conclusions on the Council annual activity report; grants and revokes the status of a faculty to academic divisions; approves the regulations of main faculties and dependent departments; upon the recommendation of the Rector, approves the composition of academic and teaching staff hiring committees and attestation commissions; forms committees necessary for conducting studies, research, art, and other academic activities, and appoints their chairmen; forms Academic Ethics, Emeritus and other necessary commissions and approves their regulations; considers and approves annual performance reports of the main academic divisions; considers and submits proposals to the Council on the annual VAA activity report submitted by the Rector, and plans for the reorganisation or liquidation of the VAA; upon the recommendation of the Faculty Council and taking into account the results of a person's research or teaching and/or other activities significant to society, awards VAA honorary and other titles; initiates the Institution’s quality audits in the areas of artistic activities, artistic and academic research, and studies; and performs other functions as established in legal acts. The Senate reports to the VAA community on its activities annually.

2.11. The Rector is the senior governing official of the Institution. The Rector performs the following functions: manages the Institution; organises its activities, ensuring the implementation of the Academy's strategic action plan; forms permanent art, research, studies, strategic planning, and other committees deemed necessary, and submits their chairmen chosen from the members of the Senate for the Senate’s approval; appoints the VAA Vice-Rectors and determines their functions and powers; appoints the heads of the VAA departments in accordance with the procedures established in the VAA Statute; hires and dismisses employees; confirms the acceptances and dismissals of students, including non-degree and visiting students; incentivises and promotes employees and students; imposes disciplinary sanctions and announces them publicly; after evaluating the proposals of the Student Association, submits to the Council for approval the amounts of tuition fees and fees not directly related to running study programmes; considers and makes decisions related to the management, use, and disposal of the VAA funds and assets; issues orders implementing the resolutions of the Senate, as well as orders related to issues outside the exclusive competence of the Council and the Senate; proposes items for the consideration of the Senate and the Council; initiates the meetings of the Senate and the Council that he or she deems necessary; is responsible for the financial performance of the Institution, as well as appropriate management, use and disposal of funds and assets; submits to the Senate for consideration and to the Council for approval the annual VAA activity report and makes it publicly accessible; submits to the Council for consideration and publishes the annual budget and revenue estimate of the VAA; submits to the Council for approval a report on its implementation; submits

to the Senate for consideration and to the Council for approval the VAA strategic action plan and restructuring plan; and performs other functions as established in legal acts. The Rector is assisted in achieving the Academy's goals in the fields of art, research, and studies by the Vice-Rector for Arts and Research and the Vice-Rector for Studies.

2.12. The Academy also has a Rectorate, which is a collegiate advisory body headed by the Rector and consists of the heads of the Faculties, the Vice-Rectors, and the Rector. The Rectorate proposes the agenda of the meetings of the Council and the Senate, submits draft decision projects to be considered by these governing bodies, as well as implements their strategic decisions.

2.13. The Academy has the following attestation commissions and Senate committees:

- Study Quality Committee
- Arts and Research Committee
- Strategic Planning and Economic Affairs Committee
- Ethics Commission
- VAA Academic Staff (Artists) Competitions and Certification Commission
- VAA Academic Staff (Researchers and Representatives of Study Fields) Competitions and Certification Commission

2.14. The Vilnius Academy of Arts runs forty-six study programmes. Study Programme Committees are organisational units responsible for the quality of running study programmes and for updating, supervising, evaluating, and improving the quality of the VAA study programmes. Study Programme Committees are established and their composition is determined by the order of the Rector. In their activities, the Committees follow the legal acts regulating study affairs, as well as the Regulations of the VAA Study Programme Committees, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2014-3 on 21 May 2014. The activities of the Committees are coordinated by the Faculty Councils. The Committees are accountable to the Faculty Councils.

2.15. The VAA management determines and maintains the quality policy and its implementation procedures, establishes practices that encourage and motivate employees to achieve their best performance results, and supervises the implementation of the quality policy. This is clearly highlighted in the VAA Strategy for Ensuring and Promoting the Quality of Studies and Strengthening the Quality Culture of Studies, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-2/11 of 25 April 2018 and integrated into the activities of the Academy and implementation measures (rules, regulations, and descriptions of procedures stored in LABBIS).

II.1. STRATEGY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

2.1.1. With respect to strategic management, the VAA follows the Academy's integrated development strategy for 2012-2020, the VAA Strategy for 2020-2028. and other strategic plans.[1] These documents define the distinctiveness, values, mission, vision, activities, priorities, and strategic goals of the Academy. The indicators for achieving the strategic objectives are coordinated with the approved activity report/self-evaluation forms of the VAA subdivisions, which are filled in by the subdivisions and academic staff every year. In accordance with the Academy's performance quality strategy, the indicators for achieving the strategic objectives have been supplemented and particularised, indicating the persons responsible for their collection and systematisation as well as fulfilment deadlines. Constantly changing circumstances, external and internal factors, and the state of the Academy's performance have created the need to review and adjust the indicators. It can reasonably be stated that the use of adjusted indicators, the obligation to accomplish them at all levels of activity, and the quantitative and qualitative information thus collected enable a reasoned planning of actions for performing strategic tasks and a timely and effective monitoring of implementation.

2.1.2. The constituent parts of the VAA Strategy and strategic activity plan (the analysis of the current situation, operational priorities and objectives, tasks, implementation measures, resources, expected performance indicators) are based on the following provisions:

2.1.2.1. the objectives comprehensively represent all areas of activity;

2.1.2.2. the priorities in the fields of studies, research (art), and impact on the development of the region and the country as a whole are clear and justified;

2.1.2.3. clear and measurable outcomes that can be achieved through the implementation of each task are identified;

2.1.2.4. there is a clear relationship between the long-term strategy and the medium-term and annual plans;

2.1.2.5. quantitative and qualitative indicators fully reflect the accomplishment of all expected outcomes set out in the strategic action plan;

[1] VAA strategy for 2020-2028, approved by the Council Resolution No. T-2019-11/27 (10 December 2019); VAA integrated development strategy for 2012-2020, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-7 (6 December 2012), supplemented by the Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/15a (latest version: Senate Resolution No. S-2017-2/7 of 19 April 2017); VAA strategic action plan for 2020-2022; order of the VAA Rector 'On the Submission of Data for the Annual Activity Report of the Vilnius Academy of Arts' No. VĮU-90 (28 December 2020); VAA Lifelong Learning Strategy Implementation Plan for 2016-2020, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2016-3/13 (20 April 2016).

2.1.2.6. The weaknesses and threats identified in the SWOT analysis are assessed and prioritised as issues to be improved through the matrix of capitalising on strengths and opportunities both in the action plan and in other documents of the Academy.

2.1.3. At the institutional level, the objectives are reflected in the Institution's Mission (available at www.vda.lt/lt/apie-vda/siekiai-vertybes), strategic plans and reports (the annual performance reports of the VAA, the Council, the Senate, and the academic subdivisions, annual financial reports, and annual management reports). Together with the Academy's SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), the objectives identified lead to an overall strategy. In general, the VAA strategic action plan includes the high-level allocation of resources and setting of priorities to ensure the quality of studies, research, and art. More specific objectives derive from the strategic objectives in the process of their implementation through concrete measures.

2.1.4. The implementation of the VAA strategic action plan is constantly monitored by the VAA Senate and the Council through the analysis of results and data in performance reports.[2] Monitoring results are used in planning and/or improving future activities in the hope of achieving higher quality.

II.2. PROCESS MANAGEMENT

2.2.1. VAA ensures efficient process management by the following means:

2.2.1.1. The Academy has a clear structure and principles of management, decision-making, and distribution of responsibilities (see the Academy's Study Regulations,[3] VAA structure, etc.);

2.2.1.2. Changes to the VAA structure are initiated and implemented after the analysis of the need for changes (see, for example, strategic plans);[4]

2.2.1.3. after the implementation of structural changes, their contribution to the implementation of the Strategy and impact on management, decision-making, and distribution of responsibilities is assessed (see, for example, activity reports);[5]

[2] Annual VAA activity reports for 2014-2019 (by year); Council reports for 2014-2018 (by year); the Council report for 2019; the Senate activity reports for 2005-2018 (by year); the Senate activity report for 2019; the annual Faculty activity reports for 2014-2019 (by year).

[3] The VAA Statute, approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 23 June 2011, Resolution No. XI-1536 (updated version: Seimas Resolution No. XI-370 of 13 June 2013).

[4] VAA Strategy for 2020-2028, approved by the Council Resolution No. T-2019-11/27 (10 December 2019); VAA integrated development strategy for 2012-2020, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-7 (6 December 2012), supplemented by the Senate resolution No. S-2015-4/15a (11 November 2015), updated version: Senate Resolution No. S-2017-2/7 of 19 April 2017.

[5] VAA annual activity reports for 2014 – 2019.

2.2.1.4. Internal and/or external social stakeholders are involved in governance at various levels (see, for example, the composition and activities of the Academy's Council and the Senate);[6]

2.2.1.5. processes are linked to strategic objectives and contribute to their attainment (see the structure of the strategic plan);[4]

2.2.1.6. process management analysis is performed regularly. The results of the analysis are used for process improvement (see, for example, the Description of Internal Control Policy);

2.2.1.7. risk analysis is performed, and its results are reflected in planning documents. Risk management measures are envisaged. The conditions for the occurrence of risk factors, changes in internal and external environment, risk identification mechanisms, impact on risk occurrence, activity-level objectives, risk and change management are described in the VAA integrated development strategy for 2012-2020 and the VAA Strategy for 2020-2028. These considerations are also described and assessed in presenting VAA annual activity plans.

II.3. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION AND ITS MANAGEMENT

2.3.1. VAA collects, stores and analyses data on its activities and results in a systematic manner.[2] The information and communication management system developed and implemented at the Academy is based on the following assumptions:

2.3.1.1. the goal is the greatest possible openness;

2.3.1.2. publicly accessible information must be disseminated;

2.3.1.3. openness is encouraged;

2.3.1.4. fewest possible exceptions; easy access to information.

2.3.2. The information systems operated by the Academy help to prepare reports covering the information required for managing and controlling VAA. The Academy uses the following applied information systems: the process and document management system LABBIS; the computerised accounting system STEKAS; the information system for consolidating financial statements VSAKIS; and the payment system VBAMS. They use not only internally generated

[6] The Rules of Procedure of the VAA Council, approved at the Council meeting No. T-2014-2 on 7 March 2014; the Rules of Procedure of the VAA Senate, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-1 on 22 January 2014; study regulations, approved by the VAA Senate resolution No. S-2017-5/29 (22 November 2017); the regulations of VAA art and research activities, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2016-3/10 (20 April 2016).

data, but also information on external events, types of activities, and their conditions, necessary for operational and management decision-making and external reporting.

2.3.3. Effective information transfer is ensured at all levels both vertically and horizontally. Information dissemination includes both the VAA community and the public. Senior management inform all employees clearly and equally about the need to treat their controlling responsibilities with appropriate seriousness. The purpose of this is to make sure that employees understand their role in the internal control system and how their individual activities relate to the work of others. Within the Institution, all employees are provided with the means to transfer information upwards according to the access levels granted to them. Information is also effectively passed on to external parties. For this purpose, an efficient document management system has been created. The main preconditions for its operation are set out in the VAA Internal Rules of Procedure, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-7 on 12 December 2012.

2.3.4. The Academy periodically conducts and publishes top-level reviews, in which the factual performance of the year is compared with plans, forecasts, and previous performance. Key initiatives are identified, e.g., improved study process, cost containment or reduction programmes. A report on VAA activities, which includes the activity reports of the Council, the Senate, the Faculties and the departments, financial statements and their collections, and other reports, is prepared and published.

2.3.5. The heads of VAA subdivisions constantly review their functions and activities and prepare reports covering performance at various levels and of different duration, from the lowest to the highest level of management.

2.3.6. In accordance with the VAA Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the Council and the Senate, the VAA ensures the dissemination of information between the management, committees, and commissions of the Institution. Social partners, student representatives, and other persons (as appropriate) are involved in the activities of committees and commissions.

2.3.7. The main data collected include:

2.3.7.1. key performance indicators;

2.3.7.2. student data, including:

2.3.7.2.1. statistics on student progress, completion and drop-out rates;

2.3.7.2.2. student feedback on study programmes;

2.3.7.2.3. learning resources available to students;

2.3.7.2.4. student support and incentives;

2.3.7.2.5. student participation in international mobility programmes (academic and internships);

2.3.7.3. graduate employment and careers;

2.3.7.4. annual VAA activity reports, which reflect the results of implementing the strategic activity plan;

2.3.7.5. other information about the Academy's activities.

2.3.8. This data is analysed, evaluated, and used for the effective management and improvement of the study programmes and other activities carried out by the Institution. The procedures for designing, approving, and publicising study programmes and analysing their results are established in the VAA Strategy for Ensuring and Promoting the Quality of Studies and Strengthening the Quality Culture of Studies, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-2/11 of 25 April 2018, the VAA Regulations for the Attestation of Study Courses/Modules, approved by the Senate resolution No. S-2015-4/16 of 11 November 2015, the VAA Description of the Procedure of Study Programme Design and Updates, approved at the Rectorate meeting No. R-9 on 6 June 2018, and other relevant documents.

II.4. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

2.4.1. The VAA Deputy Rector for Human Resources is responsible for managing human resources at the VAA. The Deputy Rector is assisted by a human resources specialist.

2.4.2. The HR policy at the VAA involves attracting, encouraging the development of, and retaining competent employees. The documents regulating HR management at the VAA include the Description of the Procedure of Organising Open Competitions for Hiring Academic Staff and Their Attestation, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2017-2/9 of 10 April 2017; the Description of the Minimum Qualification Requirements for Research Staff at State Research and Higher Education Institutions, approved by the Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania on 28 June 2018, resolution No. V-340; the Description of the Procedure of Calculating Teaching Workload at the VAA, approved by the Order of the VAA Rector No. VĮU-30 of 6 April 2020; and other normative and local legal acts establishing practical HR management policy implementation measures.

2.4.3. The VAA has sufficient academic and non-academic staff to achieve its operational goals. This is ensured by constantly monitoring HR needs in the Academy's subdivisions. Heads of the subdivisions monitor HR needs and inform the line manager and HR management staff when a particular need is identified. Once recruitment needs have been

coordinated with the Dean, candidate search and hiring are initiated. Academic staff and researchers (excluding visiting scholars and researchers) are appointed to teaching positions by means of a public competition.

2.4.4. The VAA strives to ensure that its employees have appropriate qualifications, sufficient experience, and skills necessary to perform their functions and duties and understand their responsibilities in implementing internal control practices. This is achieved by ensuring compliance with the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Academic Staff (Artists) and the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Academic Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences, approved by the Senate on 21 March 2012; the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Research Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-7/27 of 19 December 2018; the Minimum Qualification Requirements for Research Staff at State Research and Higher Education Institutions; the Description of the Academic Activity of the VAA Teaching Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences; and, in part, the Description of the Procedure of Calculating Teaching Workload at the VAA, approved by the Order of the VAA Rector No. VĮU-30 of 6 April 2020, and the Description of Awarding Academic Teaching Titles at the VAA, approved by the VAA Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/14 of 11 November 2015. There are also formal job descriptions and other tools for identifying specific tasks that constitute job duties and responsibilities. Levels of competence are outlined for specific positions and/or jobs and are defined as the required knowledge and skills that describe these competence levels.

2.4.5. The Academy's HR practices are closely connected with the expected levels of honesty, ethical behaviour, and competence. Such practices involve recruitment, guidance, training, evaluation, consultation, promotion, compensation, and ensuring compliance. The Academy has developed and implemented lifelong learning promotion policy, which encourages employees to explore possible career progression paths and incentivises them to pursue them, as well as reflects the expected performance levels and behaviour. Performance reviews are regularly carried out to analyse the knowledge and skills needed to do a particular job.

2.4.6. Professional development and learning are continuous processes at the VAA. The Academy creates the conditions for the academic staff to improve their knowledge and skills necessary for teaching, artistic, and research activities in Lithuania and abroad. Non-academic staff also have opportunities to improve their professional competencies in Lithuania and abroad. The aim is to create a system of criteria for retaining and incentivising employees that would ensure the effectiveness of the HR policy.

II.5. MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

2.5.1. The Academy manages, uses, and disposes of its property in accordance with the principles of public benefit, efficiency, rationality, social accountability, and the autonomy of economic activity. The Academy ensures that the resources required for students' learning and an effective running of study, artistic, and research activities in the Academy's study programmes are appropriate, sufficient, and easily accessible. These resources include classrooms, libraries, databases, computer-equipped classrooms, art and design labs, and others. They are readily available to students and fulfil their study needs. Regular student surveys are conducted to clarify their needs with regard to resources, their suitability and adequacy. Infrastructure management and provision (purchase) are described in more detail in the Description of the Procedure of Using VAA Funds, Managing, Using, and Disposing of Property, approved by the VAA Council Resolution No. T-2017-4/11 of 5 December 2017.

2.5.2. The management of the Academy's finance is regulated by Republic of Lithuania Law on Public Sector Accountability, the Public Sector Accounting and Financial Reporting Standards, and other legislation. The financial resources of the Academy, as well as financial planning, accounting, and management procedures are described in the VAA Accounting Policy. The Accounting Office is responsible for accounting for the Academy's financial and material resources, while the Deputy Rector for Facilities Management is responsible for asset management. Their activities are regulated by Faculty regulations and job descriptions and comply with the Description of the Procedure of Using VAA Funds, Managing, Using, and Disposing of Property, approved by the VAA Council Resolution No. T-2017-4/11 of 5 December 2017. The rules for the internal control of financial resources can be found in the Academy's internal control policy.

2.5.3. Resource needs in specific areas of the Academy's activities, programmes, and projects are identified, calculated, and allocated in the process of drawing up strategic, annual, and other plans. This is in line with the strategic planning methodology for public sector entities, established by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Order No. 827 (6 June 2002). The planning of material resources for conducing study, art, and research activities occurs in connection with the VAA strategic goals.

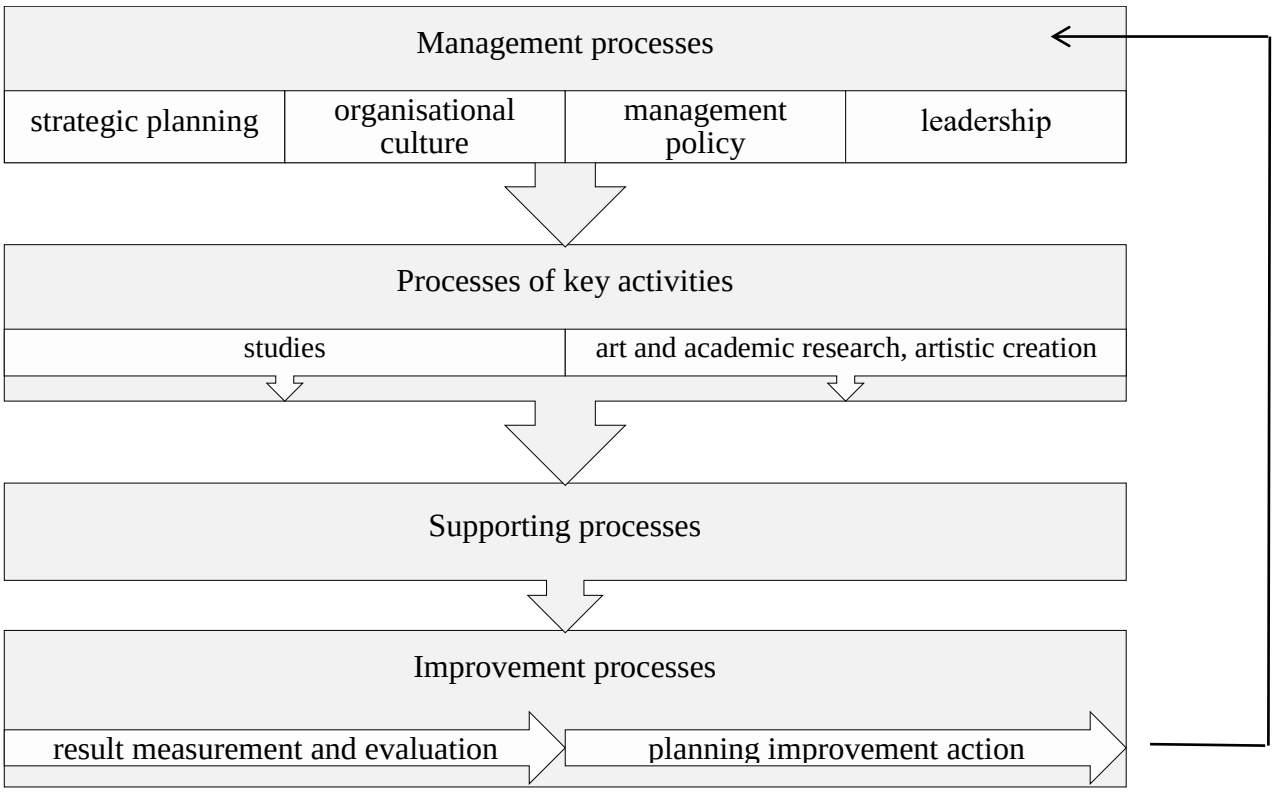
2.5.4. The activities of the Academy as a public legal entity are mainly financed from the state budget. However, for conducting its activities, the Institution is also entitled to receive funding from other sources. The Academy participates in various initiatives for attracting financial resources necessary for conducting its activities, such as exhibitions, art fairs, and other events

popularising the Academy's activities. Tuition fees and/or student financial aid (awarding of scholarships or other awards) are regulated by the VAA Regulations on Awarding Scholarships, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-1 (14 February 2018); the Description of the Procedure for the Allocation, Termination, and Reimbursement of State Funding for Financing the Studies at the VAA, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-4 (7 July 2011); the Description of the Procedure for the Payment of Tuition Fees at the VAA, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2 (23 March 2011); and the Rules for the Admission of Foreign Citizens to the VAA in 2021, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2020-7 (9 December 2020).

2.5.5. The results of the financial and material resource provision are presented in periodically prepared financial and budgetary reports. The funds are used purposefully, efficiently, and exclusively for the activities set out in the plans. Adequate funding for teaching and learning activities, infrastructure, adequate and easily accessible study resources (information, IT infrastructure, laboratory equipment, studio work and practicals, etc.) and support for students are ensured.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

3.1. Quality assurance is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing process on which the reputation of the Academy's study programmes, academic and artistic research, artistic activities, and other services depends. The Academy's quality management system is dynamic. Because the performance of any organisation is affected by a range of internal and external factors, their impact must be constantly evaluated and analysed, and the system improved to meet user needs and expectations. Ensuring the functioning and continuous improvement of the quality management system is related to process management. The processes at the Academy can be divided into four groups:



3.1.1. Management processes include the functions of the VAA senior management and are related to strategic planning, organisational culture, policy development, and leadership;

3.1.2. Key activities processes are the activities of the Academy aimed at the implementation of its main goals;

3.1.3. Supporting processes ensure the efficient operation of the processes of key activities and include administrative functions;

3.1.4. Improvement processes are the activities focused on making improvement decisions based on the analysis of the current situation. Improvement includes the systematic measurement of results achieved (e.g., monitoring satisfaction, verification of compliance, measuring effectiveness, self-evaluation) and the planning of improvement actions (setting goals, developing quality programmes, implementing improvement initiatives).

3.2. The VAA quality assurance policy covers all of its activity areas, reflects the interrelationships and interactions between research and art, as well as teaching and learning, and ensures that the Rectorate, Senate, Council, Faculties, Study Programme Committees (SPC), Departments and other subdivisions of the Academy, students, academic and non-academic staff are guided by the following principles and objectives:

3.2.1. to integrate the subjects of quality, occupational safety and health, and social responsibility into study, art, and research processes as well as art and research activities, and to foster a culture of quality;

3.2.2. to actively participate in the processes of improving studies, academic and artistic research, artistic activities, and other services, and implementing strategic goals;

3.2.3. to create a motivating environment for the VAA staff;

3.2.4. to identify and, as far as possible, meet the needs of the VAA community, social stakeholders and other interested parties;

3.2.5. to carry out VAA administrative activities efficiently and expeditiously;

3.2.6. to ensure a timely introduction and implementation of innovations in order to improve the quality of studies, art and academic research, artistic activities, and other services;

3.2.7. to ensure a rational use of financial and other resources;

3.2.8. to act in a socially responsible manner in accordance with national legislation, international agreements and agreed rules of conduct; to pursue the well-being of the academic community; to observe the principle of transparency;

3.2.9. to create and foster a safe and healthy environment for conducting artistic and academic research and artistic activities, organising studies and teaching, and providing other academic services in all VAA faculties and departments as well as VAA-affiliated studios, labs, and other research and study spaces.

The quality assurance policy is implemented through a variety of processes and by involving the representatives of all interested parties within the Institution as well as external social stakeholders.

3.3. The quality improvement cycle happens at two levels: thinking and action. At the level of action, factual data is processed, while at the level of thinking, data is summarized, and decisions are made. The essence of the continuous improvement of quality management is reflected in the Shewhart-Deming cycle, which consists of four stages: plan–do–check–act.

3.4. **Functionality of the internal quality assurance system:**

3.4.1. The development and improvement of study programmes. The procedure for designing, approving, and improving study programmes is established in the VAA Statute, the Study Regulations (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2017-5/29 of 22 November 2017), as well as the Orders of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The VAA has approved and publicly accessible (www.vda.lt) documents for designing and improving study programmes, such as the Strategy for Ensuring and Promoting the Quality of Studies and

Strengthening the Quality Culture of Studies (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-2/11 of 25 April 2018), the Regulations for the Attestation of Study Courses/Modules (approved by the Senate resolution No. S-2015-4/16 of 11 November 2015), the Description of the Procedure of Study Programme Design and Updates (approved at the Rectorate meeting No. R-9 on 6 June 2018), the Regulations of Study Programme Committees (approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2014-3 on 21 May 2014), the Description of the Academic Feedback System (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S–2015-2/4 of 25 February 2015), and other documents in line with the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The purpose of these documents is to create study programmes that will meet not only the requirements of legal acts, but also market needs and stakeholders' requirements. Study quality is monitored, including by means of scholars' annual activity reports. These reports allow to record the quantitative data needed to monitor and evaluate indicators related to teaching, methodological work, artistic activities (including students' creative achievements), research and experimental development, participation in the working groups of VAA, Lithuanian, and international projects, participation in document preparation groups, professional development, and other professional activities. The quality of study programmes is assessed according to the programme objectives and expected outcomes, programme structure, staff, material resources, and market needs. Study programmes are submitted for evaluation to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and accredited in accordance with the procedure established by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania. External evaluation is conducted in accordance with the procedures and order outlined in the Order of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education No. V-149 ('On the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields, the Methodology of the Evaluation of Proposed Study Programmes, the Plan of the External Evaluation of the Study Fields, the Description of the Selection of Experts, and the Approval of the Description of Organising Expert Work') of 31 December 2019 and other approved documents. Evaluation results are published on the VAA website (https://www.vda.lt/lt/dokumentai/studiju-programu-vertinimas).

3.4.2. Organisation of studies. The study organisation procedures are described in the Academy's Study Regulations; the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in Art and Awarding Doctor of Arts Qualifications; the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in Design and Awarding Doctor of Arts Qualifications; the Description of the Evaluation of the Doctoral Studies in Art at the Vilnius Academy of Arts (approved at the Senate meeting No. S-3 on 9 May 2012); the Procedure for Organising Studies and Work at the Vilnius Academy of Arts during the Period of COVID-19-related Restrictions (approved by the Order of the Rector No. VĮU-78 on 6 November 2020, supplemented and replaced by subsequent orders); the Description of the General

Requirements for the Graduates of Bridging Study Programmes and Universities of Applied Sciences (approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2 of 23 March 2011); the Description of the Procedure of Selective Studies (approved at the Senate meeting No. S-8 of 23 November 2011); the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in History and Theory of Arts (Humanities) at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre; the Description of the Procedure for Registering Elective Study Courses on the Information System (approved by the Order of the Rector No. VĮU–29 of 6 April 2020); the Description of the Procedure for the Preparation, Completion, Defence, and Evaluation of Bachelor's Theses (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2017-5/30 of 22 November 2017); the Description of the Final Thesis of Second-Cycle Studies (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/10 of 11 November 2015); the Description of Remote Final Thesis Defence in the Academic Year 2019-2020 (approved by the Order of the Rector No. SĮ-136 of 19 May 2020); the Description of the Academic Feedback System (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S–2015-2/4 of 25 February 2015), and other related documents. The purpose of organising and conducting studies is to ensure the effective running of the Academy's study-related activities. The process of organising and conducting studies includes the following: study planning, student admission and adaptation to university, organising studies and provisioning resources, conducting studies (organising and delivering lectures and classes, studio work and practicals, self-guided creative activities, knowledge assessment), organising final thesis defences, issuing diplomas, analysing and improving the process of organising and conducting studies (feedback collection, performing internal audits, self-evaluation, the implementation of improvement actions).

3.4.3. Assessment of study results. The purpose of the assessment of study results is to monitor whether students' achievements correspond to the expected study outcomes and to provide timely feedback that would help to ensure the efficiency of students' working practices and the achievement of expected results.

In addition to the aforementioned documents, the assessment of study results at the Academy is also regulated by the Description of the Procedure for Recognising Study Credit at the Vilnius Academy of Arts (approved by Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/16 of 11 November 2015); the Description of the Procedure for Applying the European Credit Recognition and Transfer System at the Vilnius Academy of Arts (approved at the Senate meeting No. S-3 of 11 May 2011); the Description of the Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Study Results and Competences (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2014-4/19 of 29 October 2014); the Description of the Procedure for the Temporary Student Rotation and Ranking (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2/13 of 19 April 2017); and other related documents.

The Academy collects, systematises, and analyses quantitative and qualitative data on learners' study results and achievements. In order to ensure the active participation of students throughout the study semester, their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, and an objective assessment of study results, cumulative assessment is frequently used. Cumulative assessment allows to evaluate learning outcomes by means of interim assessments, with the final grade calculated on the basis of the grades of intermediate assessments and examinations. If a student fails to submit or be examined on the assignments set during a particular semester and does not achieve the minimum pass grade for interim assignments, he or she is not allowed to sit the final exam. The Academy has a ten-point grading system. In order to ensure the transparency of the process of evaluating study results as well as the validity and objectivity of evaluation, the Academy has the Code of Academic Ethics (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/13 of 11 November 2015), the Regulations of the Academic Ethics Committee (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-1 on 14 February 2018), and the Procedure for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and their Management (approved by the Order of the Rector No. VĮU-90 of 9 November 2018).

3.4.4. Quality assurance of academic staff performance. The qualification and competence requirements for academic staff and researchers are set out in the following VAA documents: the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Academic Staff (Artists); the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Academic Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences (approved by the Senate on 21 March 2012); the Minimum Qualification Requirements for VAA Research Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-7/27 of 19 December 2018); the Research Council of Lithuania Resolution on the Minimum Qualification Requirements for Research Staff at State Research and Higher Education Institutions; the Description of the Academic Activity of the VAA Teaching Staff in Humanities and Social Sciences; the Description of the Procedure of Calculating Teaching Workload at the VAA (approved by the Order of the Rector No. VĮU-30 of 6 April 2020); and other related documents. The procedures for hiring the Academy's academic staff, evaluating their qualification and competence, and conducting attestation is regulated by the Description of the Procedure of Organising Open Competitions for Hiring Academic Staff and Their Attestation, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2017-2/9 of 10 April 2017.

The procedure for appointing the heads of departments is established and their activities are defined in the Department Regulations (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2020-7/31 of 9 December 2020) and the Head of the Department job description (approved by the Order of the Rector No. VĮU-85 of 10 December 2020). The Academy evaluates staff activities and performance regularly and consistently. The attestation process assesses whether a particular

scholar or researcher meets the established qualification requirements and to what extent. The evaluation of academic staff also includes an analysis of the information obtained from stakeholder surveys and interviews. The granting of teaching titles is regulated by the Description of Awarding Academic Teaching Titles, approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2015-4/14 of 11 November 2015.

3.4.5. Information and public relations management. Interested parties can get acquainted with the Academy's policy, plans, activity reports, and the documents regulating the activities and procedures of the VAA on the Academy's publicly accessible website www.vda.lt. The Academy takes a favourable and supportive approach to transparency and openness. VAA actively disseminates information on social networks, cooperates with the media, publishes and distributes publications that shape the public image of the Academy, publicises the Academy's events to its community and the broader society, organises and participates in art and design exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad, and represents the Academy in various organisations and networks nationally and internationally. The Academy places great emphasis on advertising and promoting studies and attracting students to its study programmes. The VAA Communications Department is responsible for the publication of the information about the Academy and its activities.

3.4.6. Study resources and student support. The Academy ensures that the resources required for high-quality studies are appropriate, sufficient, and easily accessible. These resources include classrooms, libraries, databases, computer-equipped classrooms, art and design labs, and others. These resources are readily available to students, and their range and availability are informed by students' needs and feedback. Student surveys are conducted at least once a year to clarify their needs with regard to resources, their suitability and adequacy.

Several types of scholarships are awarded to the Academy's students: academic merit, one-time, endowed, needs-based (administered by the State Studies Foundation, hereinafter SSF), and doctoral. Students may also receive bursaries and grants. The procedure for awarding scholarships and bursaries is established in the Regulations for Awarding Scholarships (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2018-1/6 of 14 February 2018). The procedures of financing studies and/or the reimbursement of fees are regulated by the Description of the Procedure for the Allocation, Termination, and Reimbursement of State Funding for Financing the Studies at the VAA, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2011-4 (7 July 2011); the Description of the Procedure for the Payment of Tuition Fees, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2011-2 (23 March 2011); and the Rules for the Admission of Foreign Citizens to the VAA in 2021, approved at the Senate meeting No. S-2020-7 (9 December 2020).

Students with disabilities are eligible for two types of financial support: financial assistance from the Department for the Affairs of People with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and a targeted disability allowance (administered by the SSF). Students can also receive state-supported loans: a loan to cover tuition fees, a maintenance loan for living costs, and a loan to finance part-time studies pursuant to international (interdepartmental) agreements. The granting of loans is administered by the SSF.

3.4.7. To promote academic mobility, the VAA has signed over 180 Erasmus + interinstitutional cooperation agreements with schools of art, design, and architecture abroad to undertake activities funded by the Erasmus + programme, and over 20 other interinstitutional academic cooperation agreements. The Academy is also part of Nordic-Baltic networks of art, design, and architecture higher education institutions, such as CIRRUS (Design study field), KUNO (Art study field), and NBAA (Architecture study field). Within the framework of these networks, the academic mobility of students and academic staff is facilitated through the Nordplus programme. Every year, the VAA organises open competitions for study exchange, traineeships, and staff mobility supported by Erasmus + and Nordplus programmes, in which the VAA community is invited to participate. These competitions follow the approved procedures for the participation of VAA students and staff in the Erasmus + programme, and the Nordplus programme guide. The information about international mobility opportunities (in Lithuanian and English) and the admission of foreign citizens to full-time studies (in English) provided by the VAA online is regularly updated.

The VAA participates in the following international mobility programs:

Erasmus + programme in Programme Countries (EU) and Partner Countries (non-EU): student exchanges for partial studies and traineeships; exchanges of academic and non-academic staff for teaching and traineeships;

International student internships in Lithuanian schools and Lithuanian communities abroad;

Nordplus programme within the framework of Nordic-Baltic institutional networks KUNO, CIRRUS, and NBAA: organising creative workshops; long- and short-term student exchanges; teaching opportunities for visiting academic staff; annual conferences organised by the networks;

State scholarships for foreign citizens for second-cycle studies in Lithuania;

State support for inviting visiting scholars to Lithuanian higher education institutions.

3.4.8. Career planning and alumni relations management. The purpose of the informal process of career planning, monitoring, and alumni relations management is to help

students improve their career management skills, plan, and prepare for a professional career, taking into consideration the needs of the labour market. This process includes planning career guidance and career monitoring, implementing career guidance and career monitoring for prospective and current students, and liaising with alumni and employers to receive feedback on the Academy's strengths and areas for improvement in its career guidance. Alumni employment data is collected through surveys as well as other ways of collecting statistical information, and in cooperation with the Academy's social partners (updating the alumni database, organising alumni events, conducting feedback surveys aimed at alumni and social partners). VAA graduates in Art and Design often create jobs for themselves through self-employment, working as freelance artists, designers, architects, and independent artists or make use of scholarships and residency programs for artists. Every second student in first-cycle studies plans for employment and/or starts working either during their studies or immediately after graduation. Most postgraduate students combine work and studies. Most alumni work in private sector companies or are self-employed. Two thirds of the Academy's graduates work in positions related to their field of study.

3.4.9. Research management. Research management is regulated by the Regulations for Artistic and Research Activities at the Vilnius Academy of Arts (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S-2016-3/10 of 20 April 2016). The Regulations cover planning, organising, and conducting research activities, and the dissemination and integration of research results in study practices. In addition to the abovementioned document, research activities at the Academy are regulated by the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in History and Theory of Arts (Humanities) at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre; the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in Art and Awarding Doctor of Arts Qualifications; and the Regulations for the Doctoral Studies in Design and Awarding Doctor of Arts Qualifications. The evaluation of research activities is regulated by the Regulations for the Annual Evaluation of Research, Experimental Development, and Art Activities at Universities and Research Institutes (Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-747 of 4 October 2017), and the Regulations for the Comparative Expert Evaluation of Research and Experimental Development (Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania V-706 of 26 September 2017). The evaluation of doctoral studies is regulated by the Description of the Procedure for Evaluating the Quality and Efficiency of Doctoral Studies in Arts (Order of the Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania No. V-277 of 6 November 2017); the Description of the Procedure for Evaluating Academic Doctoral Studies (Order of the Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania No. V-192 of 31 March 2020); and the Regulations for the Comparative Expert Evaluation of Research and Experimental

Development (Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania V-706 of 26 September 2017).

The quality of the Academy's art and research activities is controlled and ensured by the annual evaluation of performance results, which are also submitted to external evaluators – the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL). Arts and research activities are promoted through the Arts and Research Projects Fund and the Student Arts and Research Support Fund. Thanks to these measures, art and research management processes at the VAA have resulted in high-quality art and research results, integrated into studies and business practice, exhibitions, national and international awards, academic and other publications, and the organisation of research events.

3.4.10. Impact on regional and national development. The VAA activities are coordinated with the Lithuanian cultural policy strategy. They seek to contribute to increasing the availability of professional culture in the regions of Lithuania and facilitate the development of the country and its regions. The impact on the development of the country and its regions is anticipated in the Academy's Strategy. The Academy's study, artistic, and research activities comply with national strategy documents. The Academy outlines expected impact goals and outcomes for the development of the country and its regions and collects data on these activities. VAA cooperates with social and business partners at national and regional level. The inclusion of topics relevant to the regions and the development of the whole country is accounted for in the descriptions of practicals and final theses; the diversity and dynamics of social and civic engagement of students and staff are valorised. The Academy monitors the implementation of measures affecting the development of the country and its regions, analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of these measures.

3.4.11. Creating conditions for lifelong learning. VAA monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning, provides for a variety of forms and conditions of lifelong learning, ensuring their implementation, and performs the evaluation of ensuring lifelong learning conditions.

3.5. **External quality assurance**

3.5.1. Regulations. VAA participates in external quality assurance procedures periodically. The objectives, criteria, and procedures of external study programme evaluation are regulated by the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research; the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-835 ('On the Description of the Procedures for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, the Approval of Assessment Areas and Indicators') of 17 July 2019; the Order of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education No. V-149 ('On the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields, the Methodology of the Evaluation of Proposed Study Programmes,

the Plan of the External Evaluation of Study Fields, the Description of the Selection of Experts, and the Approval of the Description of Organising Expert Work') of 31 December 2019; and other related legal acts. The purpose of external evaluation is to create the conditions for the improvement of the Institution, to promote quality culture, to assess funding needs on the basis of performance, to inform the founders, the academic community, and the public about the quality of Institution's performance, and to provide recommendations on the Institution's activity development on the basis of the evaluation results. The frequency, scope, and criteria of external evaluation are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and its authorised institution – the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The results of international external evaluation are used to improve the performance of the Institution.

3.5.2. Organisation. The external evaluation of the Academy's activities covers all areas of activity specified in the Statute and is based on the following criteria: compliance with the Mission as stated in the Statute; research and studies of international standard; the compliance of study results with the established requirements; compliance with academic ethics and procedures; the efficient use of state funds; and the compliance of activities with the requirements established in legal acts. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania initiates an external evaluation of the Academy at least every 6 years. The external evaluation of the Institution includes the evaluation of existing material and human resources and the evaluation of activity compliance. Resource evaluation is based on VAA financial statements, official statistics, and the results of the survey of higher education institutions. The assessment of resources is performed within the terms and in accordance with the procedures established in the methodology of resource evaluation.

Activity conformity assessment is performed by expert groups formed by an authorised institution in accordance with the principles of expert group formation published in advance, which determine the composition of the expert group and their qualification requirements. The VAA may reasonably propose to substitute person(s) included in the expert group in accordance with the procedures established in the performance evaluation methodology. Experts from other countries are included in external evaluations. The accreditation of higher education institutions is performed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Academy is regularly accredited on the basis of the conclusions of external evaluation.

IV. MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

4.1. The Academy's quality management system is constantly reviewed and improved. Quality improvement takes place consistently and gradually, covering all positions and areas of

the Academy's activities. The improvement process involves staff at all levels, whose knowledge, intelligence, creativity, and other skills and qualities are capitalised upon. Continuous performance improvement begins with ensuring an understanding of the quality policy and its objectives by all academic and non-academic staff.

4.2. The Academy’s management is constantly looking for opportunities to improve the effectiveness of processes and the quality management system. The Academy applies the following methods of the evaluation of activity processes, study quality, and level of research: the monitoring and analysis of stakeholder satisfaction; internal audit of the quality management system; defining the expected quality of processes and services; managerial evaluation analysis; the analysis of corrective and preventive actions.

4.3. VAA conducts a managerial evaluation analysis of the quality management system at the level of the Academy and its subdivisions. This is usually done once a year in the period leading to the preparation of activity reports. Such assessments may also be carried out more frequently depending on need.

The following indicators and/or information are collected/presented and analysed in each managerial evaluation analysis:

4.3.1. actual indicators or results achieved with respect to the planned;

4.3.2. stakeholder feedback results;

4.3.3. the results of the audits and external evaluations of the quality management system for the current and previous year;

4.3.4. information on the status of corrective and preventive actions and the implementation of recommendations proposed in the previous managerial evaluation analysis regarding the improvement of the quality management system or processes;

4.3.5. information on the need to update the Academy’s quality policy;

4.3.6. information on the need to update the analysis of quality objectives.

4.4. The Academy’s representative for quality (head of the Study Quality Department) or faculty representatives for quality organise a faculty meeting to discuss quality-related issues, such as increasing the effectiveness of the quality control system and its processes, improving the services provided by the Academy or faculties, and resource needs.

4.5. The Academy has a permanent working group for updating and enhancing the quality management system, headed by the VAA Rector and supported by the Study Quality Department. Its purpose is to improve the quality management system, to review the suitability of

the content of the Quality Management Manual and improve it, and to discuss the results of the managerial evaluation analysis. Minutes are taken during the meetings of the working group, and the content and decisions of the managerial evaluation analysis are recorded.

4.6. Internal quality audits are organised by drawing up an annual plan of the internal audit committee and are performed in accordance with the procedures set out in the Description of the Internal Audit Procedures. The frequency of internal audits is based on the importance of the audited process. All discrepancies are recorded in internal audit reports and in the recommendation implementation and improvement action plan. Corrective actions must be approved by the order of the Rector and implemented immediately, with an assessment of their effectiveness. The persons responsible for the audited processes must ensure that the discrepancies found during the internal audit and the reasons for their occurrence are eliminated. All audit records (internal audit plans, questionnaire-report, submitted report to support the managerial evaluation analysis) are managed in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Regulations of the Internal Audit Department and the Internal Audit Methodology (Internal Audit Manual).

4.7. When assessing the quality of studies, together with objective criteria (the qualifications of academic staff, artistic and research activities, funding, etc.), the subjective opinion of students about various factors of study quality and their significance should be considered. The conducting of student surveys is regulated by the Description of the Academic Feedback System (approved by the Senate Resolution No. S–2015-2/4 of 25 February 2015). In order to collect feedback from the participants of the study process, the Academy regularly conducts surveys of students, academic staff, alumni, and social partners. The generalised results of these surveys are analysed at the level of study programme committees, departments, faculties, the Rectorate, and the Senate.

4.8. The internal evaluation, monitoring, and self-evaluation of individual study programmes are performed by study programme committees.

4.9. The quality assurance of the Academy’s activities is based on the principle of continuous improvement. The results of the analysis and various evaluations, as well as the managerial evaluation analysis, form the basis for the decision whether to consider the possibilities for improvement. If such a need is identified, further steps are taken to improve the quality management system.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1. The person responsible for the preparation, review, and updating of the Quality Management Manual is the Head of the Study Quality Department, appointed by the Rector.

5.2. Proposals for the amendment and improvement of the Quality Management Manual are submitted and discussed in the Working Group for Updating the Quality Management System, formed by the Rector.

5.3. The Quality Management Manual and/or its amendments are approved by the order of the Rector.

5.4. The Quality Management Manual is reviewed and, if necessary, updated once a year.

5.5. The VAA Communications Department is responsible for making the Quality Management Manual publicly accessible on the VAA website.