VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

ASIAN STUDIES
(FORMERLY: COMPARATIVE ASIAN STUDIES)

Study field: Area Studies
Undergraduate studies level

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Rector of Vilnius University   …………….…………....
Prof. Habil. Dr Jūras Banys

          A.V.

Head of the self-evaluation group   ………............................
Assoc. Prof. Dr Valdas Jaskūnas

March 2013, Vilnius

Title	Asian Studies
Field of Study	Area Studies
National code	612U71001
Higher education type	University studies
Level of studies	First
Mode of studies and duration	Full-time, 4 years
Scope of the programme, ECTS credits	240
Qualification awarded	Bachelor of Asian Studies (since 2010); Bachelor of Ethnology (until 2009)
Registration date and document number	16 June 2000, No. 831

SELF-EVALUATION GROUP (SEG)

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INTRODUCTION

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY (VU)

(1) The University of Vilnius, one of the oldest establishments of higher education in Eastern and Central Europe, founded in 1579 on the basis of traditions of the European Christian culture and education, holds the unity of science and studies as the underlying principle of its whole activity.

(2) VU has 23 academic units: 12 faculties, 7 institutes that have the same rights as faculties (Institutes of Applied Research, Foreign Languages, Mathematics and Informatics, International Relations and Political Science, Theoretical Physics and Astronomy, Biotechnology and Biochemistry), 4 study and research centres (Religious Studies and Research Centre; Centre for Gender Studies; Centre of Oriental Studies and Sports; Heath Centre); 3 university hospitals, an Astronomical Observatory, a Botanical Garden, a Centre of Information Technology Development, and St. John's Church. More details about the structure of Vilnius University could be found at http://www.vu.lt/en/about-us.

(3) The University is governed by the Rector and the Senate. The Senate is the supreme body of the University self-governance, responsible for the general affairs of the University. The Rector is a member of the Senate *ex officio*. Faculty Deans and Directors of academic institutes are elected as members of the Senate during their election as heads of appropriate divisions. Other elected members of the Senate are three representatives from each faculty or academic institute.

(4) There are 3758 staff members employed at VU, among them 1604 have research degree: 307 habilitated doctors and 1297 are doctors (PhD). In 2011 there were 21 562 students at VU, 15 804 of them were studying at the stage of the first cycle or integrated studies.

CENTRE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES (COS)

(1) VU COS was established in 1993 and acts as an academic core unit of VU. Since its establishment till present it remains the major academic institution of Asian and Middle East studies in Lithuania in terms of the scope of studies and research, resources as well as academic staff employed. The Centre runs two study programmes in the field of Area studies: Asian Studies (undergraduate) since 2000 and Modern Asian Studies (graduate) since 2006. Since 2012 minor study programmes, such as Islamic Studies, Tibetan Studies, Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, Indian Studies, African Studies were approved by the VU Senate Commission.

(2) The aim of the Centre is to educate Asianists with special engagement in Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Arabic and Iranian studies, and to act as a national infrastructure of subject studies and research fostering the collaboration between Lithuania and Asia and the Middle East.

(3) The COS has no internal division, while its administrative coverage is extended on governing the Vilnius University Confucius Institute (CI).

(4) The COS is headed by the Director (*ex officio* also acting as a Director of the CI). Administration of the Centre also consists of the Deputy Director of Studies, Executive Administrator of Studies, Administrator of Infrastructure and Resources, IT manager. The highest body of self-government at the Centre is the Meeting of the academic staff, administration and the students' representatives. Study programmes are supervised by the Study Programme Committees approved by the Senate Commission of VU. For the purpose of performance of important tasks,

working groups are formed. According to the Statute of VU, the COS is not eligible to have elected representatives at the Senate of VU but might be represented at other collegial bodies of administration.

(5) At present, the permanent teaching staff of the COS consists of 1 professor, 4 associate professors, 3 lecturers Ph.D. holders, 11 lecturers without Ph.D. and 1 assistant.

COMPOSITION OF THE SELF-EVALUATION GROUP

The scope of the work of the self-evaluation group consisted of data-gathering, analysis and writing of the report. In the first part of self evaluation, data according to the criteria established in the methodology of study programme assessment was gathered and systematised, opinion of external stakeholders and teaching staff surveyed. In the final stage of evaluation, responsibility of the work group members consisted chiefly of systematising the analysis of programme, drafting and communicating strengths, weaknesses and measures of expected improvement of the area. Valdas Jaskūnas was responsible for the evaluation of study programme aims and learning outcomes as well as curriculum design, Marija Tarasova for the evaluation area related to teaching staff, Kristina Garalytė for the evaluation of facilities and learning resources, Dalia Švambarytė and Loreta Poškaitė for the evaluation of study process and students' performance assessment, Audrius Beinorius for the evaluation of programme management. The students' representative at the group was responsible for communicating the results of the work group for the students and analysing their feedback.

Table 0.1. Agenda and timetable of the self-evaluation work group

	Date	Work content
1.	12 Sep 2012	Confirming and specifying members of the self-evaluation group; agreeing on the stages of self-evaluation implementation
2.	21 Sep 2012	Preparing the work schedule; specifying and defining the responsibilities and duties of the self-evaluation group members
3.	22 Sep 2012 – 06 Feb 2013	Conducting surveys of alumni's, teachers', students' opinion; gathering data and discussing data-analysis of the Programme performance
4.	20 Feb 2013	Drafting the self-evaluation report based on the data-analysis
5.	27 Feb – 20 Mar 2013	Drafting and discussing strengths, weaknesses and measures of improvement of the Programme on each of the six fields of evaluation
6.	21 Mar 2013	Communicating the SER for the feedback from the stakeholders
7.	27 Mar 2013	Discussion on the SER with the stakeholders

PREVIOUS EVALUATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The previous external review of the study programme of Comparative Asian Studies, then qualified in the study field of Ethnology, was completed in 17 December 2005. The panel of peers was headed by Prof. Dr. Rimantas Sliužinskas and comprised of the following members: Assoc. Prof. Zita Kelmickaitė, Dr. Elvyda Lazauskaitė, Prof. Dr. Gintautas Mažeikis, Dr. Žilvytis Šaknys. Based on positive evaluation, the accreditation of the programme was extended for the maximum period of six years. The strengths, weaknesses and problems indicated by the expert panel are summarised in Annex 6 and paragraph 6.10.

1. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

1.1. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

(1) The programme is aimed at educating professionals of several Asian cultures skilled in theory-, practice- and value-oriented understanding of and critical engagement with culture and society of the area studied, possessing ability to communicate efficiently in the language of the area, and capable to identify and resolve basic problems relevant to governmental, NGO and business sectors that require interdisciplinary approach and demonstration of international and intercultural attitudes.

(2) Learning outcomes (LO) of the Programme in relation to three clusters of final qualifications upon completion – knowledge and understanding, domain-specific skills, and generic skills – as well compatibility of the LOs with the qualifications of the Dublin Descriptors (2004)[1] are provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Learning outcomes of the study programme

Qualifications				Learning outcomes	Qualifications of the Dublin Descriptor
1.	Knowledge and understanding	1.1		In-depth understanding culture and society of the area studied by integrating knowledge from several disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches	Knowledge and understanding
		1.2		Key methods and concepts of contributory disciplines and interdisciplinary formations of Oriental and Area culture studies	Knowledge and understanding
		1.3		Relevant scholarship on culture and society of the area studied	Knowledge and understanding
2.	Domain-specific skills	2.1		Skills in a language relevant to the region studied at B2.2 level and an ability to deploy these language skills within a research context	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.2		The ability to critically engage with the area studied from a number of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, including anthropology, art history, history, language of the area, literature, philosophy, and religious studies	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.3		The ability to use and critically interrogate a range of primary and secondary written and/or oral and/or visual sources, in their original language	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.4		Library and internet research skills, proficiency in reading and analysis of texts both in Lithuanian and foreign languages (including a language of the area studied), and abilities in the analysis of visual and aural material as a medium for understanding another culture	Applying knowledge and understanding

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[1] Dublin Descriptors, http://www.jointquality.nl/ge_descriptors.html .

3.	Generic skills	3.1	Read and use materials both incisively and with sensitivity to compare and contrast ideas and concepts found within different disciplinary surroundings	Making judgments
		3.2	Work independently, demonstrated in self-direction, self-management and intellectual initiative both in learning and studying and in time management, and critical reflection upon the scope and limitations of what has been ascertained and understood	Making judgments; Learning skills
		3.3	Work creatively, flexibly and adaptively with others and meet deadlines	Making judgments; Learning skills
		3.4	Present information, ideas and problems to be solved orally in a clear and effective manner, using audio-visual aids, where appropriate, and answering questions from an audience	Communication
		3.5	Communicate ideas with clarity, coherence and persuasiveness, and analyse issues in the light of evidence and argument	Making judgments, communication
		3.6	Synthesise information, adopt critical appraisals and develop reasoned argument based on such appraisals	Learning skills
		3.7	Identify and resolve problems	Making judgments

1.2. PUBLIC RESOURCES CONTAINING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Information about the Programme's aims and learning outcomes is publicly communicated via Open System for Information, Consulting and Orientation (AIKOS) managed by the Ministry of Education and Science[2] and the website of the Centre of Oriental Studies.[3] On various occasions, basic information about the Programme is distributed by printed and/or electronic means, such as the yearly information brochure for admission to the University,[4] printed material for the University Open Days. Students and the community of the University can log-on for this information through the University's Information System (VUSIS). Information about the Programme is also spread yearly during the University Open Day or at the Science and Higher Education Exhibition "Studies".

1.3. REGULARITY OF EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The social partnership pursed at the COS covers a wide range of governmental institutions – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Department of Migration, the State Department of Tourism, etc., as well as educational, business, teaching, mass-media companies. External stakeholders are also represented at the Study Programme Committee, by the Director of the Department of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Ina Marčiulionytė.

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[2] Available from http://www.aikos.smm.lt/aikos/index.htm.
[3] Available from http://www.oc.vu.lt/bakalauro.html.
[4] See, for example, information brochure about admission to Vilnius University undergraduate programmes for the year 2012 at http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Stojantiesiems/VU-2012-pirmoji_pakopa.pdf.

Results of the studies are generally reviewed and reconsidered at the end of each academic year at the Study Programme Committee meeting with participation of all stakeholders. As questionnaire distributed among the external stakeholders in January, 2013 displays that most of the external stakeholders come from the governmental and private business institutions working in the field of organisation of events, doing analytical work and diplomatic activity.

1.4. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL ACTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS ESTABLISHING ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE QUALIFICATIONS OF SPECIALISTS TRAINED

(1) In the absence of national legal background to profile Asian Studies as an area studies programme, Asian Studies programme, from its inception in 2000, was accredited to the field of Ethnology acording to the then active classificatory framework of study areas and fields of higher education. Only with introduction of the renewed classificatory framework in December 2009, the programme was accredited to the field of Area Studies. Notably, neither Ethnology till 2009 has had, nor Area Studies so far has a definite subject benchmark statement, which, in the case of Asian Studies, makes to follow the academic practices worked out in other academic cultures internationally. In April 2013 the work group will commence it work on the Area Studies Programmes' Prescriptor, with a representative from the Centre of Oriental Studies, and by October 2013 the document has to be finalised.

(2) Given that national legislation of studies in Lithuania does not prescribe specific means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of Asian area studies programmes, the programme at the Centre of Oriental studies basically follows the benchmark statements in the area studies area approved by The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education of the United Kingdom (2008)[5].

1.5. RESEARCH FINDINGS IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF AREA STUDIES

(1) The concept framework for the learning outcomes of the Asian Studies programme is tuned with the QAA Subject benchmark statement for Area Studies (UK) and based on research initiated at the subject Centre for languages, linguistics and area studies at the University of Southampton.[6] Alternatively, research on the practice of Area Studies in the US, such as the project on the politics of knowledge in Area studies from the University of California, Berkeley,[7] along with individual research published in the subject journals, such as the *Studies in Higher Education* (Taylor & Francis Online)*, the Quality in Higher Education* (Taylor & Francis Online), the *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* (SAGE journals) was considered.

(2) Asian Studies programme at the Centre of Oriental Studies is a multidisciplinary establishment that falls into the category of the programmes run by the department staffed by teachers of diverse disciplines, such as linguistics, literature, philosophy, anthropology, art history, political sciences. In this respect it differs from the Asian Area Studies programmes at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas), where the programmes in the field are run by the disciplinary departments or come from the partnership between two or more departments.

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[5] Available from official website of The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of UK on http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/areastudies08.pdf .
[6] For research done at the Centre for languages, linguistics and area studies (LLAS) see http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources.
[7] See David L. Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, University of California, Berkeley, 2003. Available from University of California International and Area Studies Digital Collection, http://escholarship.org/uc/ucias.

(3) Research on the professional field of area studies point to the following issues that admittedly are of major concern for provision of competence framework within the Programme: (1) In Area Studies a country or multi-national region is surely best understood by studying its society, its history, its culture and its language;[8] (2) multidisciplinary programmes require assessment, skills and knowledge statements that are specific to the programme of study. The *status quo* of delegating such matters to other disciplines cannot be maintained. Each subject has to have its specific role as part of a multidisciplinary programme of study;[9] (3) an interdisciplinary approach, and interdisciplinary expertise, is at the least advantageous;[10] (4) Area Studies programmes face the challenge to revisit interdisciplinarity, now seen as bringing disciplines together to explore cultural difference as it is articulated across a range of texts – artistic, cultural, political, social, historical – so defining interdisciplinarity in Area Studies as playing an integral part in the acquisition of intercultural competence relevant within multicultural societies;[11]

(4) Quality assurance of the multidisciplinary programme needs to be reoriented away from the underlying assumption of the discipline as the key unit of coherence and reoriented towards the quality of the student learning experience[12] founded on the notion that interdisciplinary "whole" stands as more than the sum of its disciplinary "parts".[13]

(5) The above mentioned framework puts forward challenges that have to be dealt with in further development of interdisciplinary competences targeted by Asian studies. Issues for development are as follows: (1) Interdisciplinary networking is in need of strenghtening as most of researchers build up their academic identity in the disciplinary areas and teach few courses on multidisciplinary courses; (2) Discipline-centered studies and disciplinary knowledge that it produces still has to be balanced in the coherent fabric of multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary competences aimed by the programme.

(6) This situation might improve with the initiative of encouraging teachers' to apply more diversified study methods and supporting offer of new interdisciplinary courses.

1.6. PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY AREAS OF THE SPECIALISTS TRAINED UNDER THE PROGRAMME

1.6.1. TEACHING ASIAN LANGUAGES

Teaching Asian languages is one of the professional activities that graduates of the programme are offered in the labour market. Distibution of demand according to the languages taught within the programme was tested by surveying the courses of respective languages in Lithuania announced in the internet and retrieved from such sites as info.lt, mokymai.cv.lt, google (data of 5 Nov 2012). The majority of service providers teach (and consequently may be treated as potential employers for the Programme graduates) Chinese (16), Japanese (15), Arabic (11), Turkish (9), with few cases of Hindi (4) and Sanskrit (2). In terms of popularity or demand of these languages, the number of offers can be collated with the number of students of these languages at the public Oriental

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[8] John Canning, "Interdisciplinary teaching and learning in Area Studies" [on-line], available from http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/paper/2134 (accessed 3 January 2013).
[9] John Canning, "Disciplinarity: a barrier to quality assurance? The UK experience of area studies", *Quality in Higher Education* 11, 1 (2005): 44 (37–46).
[10] Cf. QAA Benchmarking Document for Area Studies
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/areastudies.pdf>.
[11] R.J. Ellis. "Interdisciplinarity", c.2000. Available from http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1430 (accessed 06 / 01 / 2013).
[12] John Canning, "Disciplinarity: a barrier to quality assurance? The UK experience of area studies", *Quality in Higher Education* 11, 1 (2005): 45.
[13] V.B. Mansila, "Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads", *Change Magazine* 37, 1 (2005): 14–21.

Language School which is run at the Centre of Oriental Studies. From 2008 to 2012 students of the languages at stake ammounted to 669 for Japanese, 281 for Chinese, 99 for Arabic, 57 for Turkish, 23 for Hindi. Both data quite representatively prove the scope of interest for Asian and Middle East languages at this segment of labor.

1.6.2. TRANSLATION

(1) Number of Asian languages offered as target languages by Lithuanian newcomer agencies of translation is steadily increasing in recent years as well as a number of acting agencies adding languages of different Asian countries and regions to their services earlier limited to Western languages. During the period from 2008 to 2012, 15 agencies have started to accept orders of translation or interpretation from/to Chinese and Turkish, 12 agencies – from/to Arabic, 11 – from/to Japanese, 5 – from/to Hindi (or Urdu) which is a relatively new entry in this business field.

(2) Publishing of translated Asian fiction, on the other hand, is largely influenced by international currents. Japanese writers have long dominated the field. 6 volumes by Haruki Murakami alone were translated from Japanese by the graduates of the Center of Asian Studies and published in Lithuania over the period of four years starting from 2009. Poetry, fairy-tales, children stories, manga, etc., are among other books recently translated from Japanese. The works by Nobel-prize winners Orhan Pamuk (3 publications) and Gao Xingjian (1 publication) were introduced to the Lithuanian audience through the translations from Turkish and Chinese respectively during the past five years. Translations from Sanskrit are not numerous but they can be called a regular target of Lithuanian publishing houses the last publication having appeared in 2012.

1.6.3. TOURISM

(1) As proved by the Programme alumni survey and experience of arranging professional internship, the field of tourism is one of the most favored segment of labor market of the Programme graduates. A brief survey of Lithuanian inbound and outbound tourism to Asian countries (when tour is organized by tour operators) was undertaken on November 2012 in relation of self-evaluation of the Programme with the purpose to explore the dynamics of this professional field over the period of 2004–2011.

(2) Statistic data[14] of Lithuanian inbound tourism, when tour is organized by a tour operator, shows that in the period of 2004–2011 there was a significant decrease of Asian tourists flows starting from its peak in 2005, but flows started to increase from 2009. Now the average growth is 16 % each year. The major target groups in this professional field are the tourists from Japan, China and Turkey.

(3) Analyzing Lithuanian outbound tourism to Asian countries, when tour is organized by a tour operator, it is obvious, that in the period of 2004–2010 tourists' flows increased approximately 3 times. Major destinations of outbound tourism remain China and Turkey.[15]

1.7. PLACE OF THE PROGRAMME AMONG THE OTHER PROGRAMMES OF THE SAME STUDY FIELD

Asian studies programme is the only first-cycle study programme in Area Studies field run at Vilnius University, and one of two in Lithuanian HEIs, the other being (since 2012) at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. Both programmes cover a range of area-specific cultures and

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[14] Statistic data is taken from the official website of The Lithuanian Department of Statistics (www.stat.gov.lt/).
[15] Analysis of the statistical data collected may be available on demand.

languages, while the scope of these areas differs. The programme of Asian studies comprises specializations of East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, while the one in Kaunas focuses on East Asia only but with the offer of specialization on Korean Studies, which is not represented in Vilnius, while Japan and China studies making a part in both programmes. Besides, in the Cultures and languages of East Asian countries programme there is a relatively bigger part of the curriculum allocated for general ethnic and culture studies as a result of the nature of the Department of Ethnic and Culture Studies, which hosts the programme.

PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

STRENGTHS:

1) Since its inception in 2000, for 12 years the programme was a single Asian studies programme in Lithuania, which both filled-in the niche in the labour market and laid foundation for structured approach to education about Asia in Lithuania.

2) The Programme considers an advantage of access to training in a language of the area studied with the reach of B2.2. level as a medium of understanding another culture.

3) The coherence of programme's aims and learning outcomes is derived from the ballance of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches and knowledge and skills on the area-specific culture and society and heavily rely on research-driven understanding of the subject area internationally.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1) The continuous review and updating of the Programme aims and learning outcomes, although based on a structured demand of the market, still meets vaguely defined interest of external stakeholders and there is a need for a more formal process of obtaining up-to-date market information. The COS sets out to implement a more robust means of students' career planing as a part of study quality assurance strategy.

2) There should be taken better measures to communicate efficiently Programme aims and learning outcomes so that the curriculum and the workload would not come as a surprise for the freshmen. Specifically, internet site at www.oc.vu.lt will be renewed in 2013 and will accommodate all information for the prospective students in a freshmen-friendly manner. Information is to be updated more frequently in the Open System for Information, Consulting and Orientation (AIKOS), other means of communication should be undertaken.

2. CURRICULUM DESIGN

2.1. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CURRICULUM DESIGN

The university first cycle study programmes should meet the legal requirements prescribed in the Descriptor of General Requirements for the First Cycle and Integraded Degree Study Programmes issued by the Minister of Education and Science (No. V-501, 9 April 2010). Table 2.1 shows how these legal requirements are met on the level of curriculum design.

Table 2.1. Provision of legal requirements for the curriculum design (in ECTS credits)

Legal requirements	Descriptor of general requirements for the university first cycle programmes	Provision within the programme
Study programme	210–240	210
Courses of the study field	165<	165
Courses of the generic university studies	15<	15
Optional courses (including minor study programme)	60>	60
Professional internship	15<	15
Graduation thesis	12<	15

2.2. STUDY PLAN

(1) New national legislation of higher education introduced with the new Law of Science and Studies (No XI-242, 30 April 2009) had an impact on the curriculum design either. Therefore starting with the 2011 admission, first, ECTS credit system was established, second, study plan was restructured using modular design based on standardised volume of 5, 10, 15 ECTS credit-modules, and third, a choice of a minor study programme along with the major studies was enabled. These changes resulted in that students admitted to the programme in 2008 and 2010 study after the study plan arranged as a **course curriculum** and are not eligible to opt for a minor study programme, while those admitted to the programme in 2011 and 2012 are subject to a **modular curriculum**.

(2) Modular curriculum has a unified structure for all area-specific specializations, namely Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Arabic and Turkic studies, yet differs in content of area studied. Following the legal requirements for the curriculum design, it is composed of the following clusters: courses of the generic university studies, compulsory courses of the study field (area studies), selective courses of the study field, courses of the students' choice (including option of a minor studies programme). Composition of the curriculum related to the study field for each area-specific specialization (both compulsory and selective ones) follows the framework of arranging the modules into four clusters: language(s) and literature of the area (75≤ ECTS), culture of the area (20≤ ECTS), religion(s) and philosophy of the area (15≤ ECTS), society of the area (15≤ ECTS). 60 ECTS of the programme is allocated for the students' choice studies, which can be spent on a selected minor programme, optional area-related in-depth courses, courses of the generic university studies, or other options (foreign language studies, free-choice courses). Study plans for each of the area-specific specializations are provided in Annex 1.

2.3. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE MODULES TAUGHT: STUDY METHODS, STUDENTS' WORKLOAD

(1) A vast range of study methods relevant to humanities and soft social sciences is used within the programme, such as lecturing, seminars, consulting, individual and group assignements, research and practical projects, e-learning, fieldwork, paper writing, brainstorming, peer-review, out-going classes, portfolio, etc.

(2) Students' workload varies with regards to subject between 48 contact hours per 5 ECTS module mostly for content courses and 64 contact hours for language courses, which amounts to 36–48 percents of total students' workload. The rationale behind it is that almost all of content courses comprise written paper as an assignements form, which requires sufficient ammount of student's individual work.

(3) Full descriptions of the modules are provided in Annex 2.

2.4. LOGIC OF THE PROGRAMME

(1) The programme applies to the study of culture and society of a given geographical space: Japan, China, India, Arabic countries, Turkey, and Iran (postponed since 2008). The programme is designed as integrating **multidisciplinary attitudes**, i.e. grounded in a range of different academic disciplines, such as language and literature, religion, and art studies, anthropology, history and philosophy, and to a lesser extent **interdisciplinary attitudes** when integrating approaches related to culture studies in general. The programme considers essential provision of access to training in a language of the area studied.

(2) The coherence of the programme is derived from the ballance of understanding and application of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches and knowledge and skills on the area-specific culture and society.

2.5. REQUIREMENTS FOR BACHELOR'S FINAL THESIS

(1) Requirements for the final thesis are prescribed by the Vilnius University Regulation of Preparation, Submission and Custody of the Graduation Works[16] and Methodological Prescription for Study Papers at the Centre of Oriental Studies.[17] The latter prescribes unified requirement for structure, formal style, citation and references, transliteration, designing of the papers submitted and defended at the Centre of Oriental Studies.

(2) Bachelor final thesis are defended at the open meeting of the Commission of Graduation Thesis Defence which consists the members of the Programme Committee, teachers of the programme, representative of external stakeholders and headed by a scholar from other academic or reserch institution. Each thesis is reviewed by one appointed peer.

(3) Topics for the final thesis are proposed by the students themselves, yet approved when endorsed by the supervisor and the head of the Programme Committee.

2.6. PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP

The volume of professional internship is 15 ECTS, which consists of 204 contact hours and 196 individual study hours. Internship placements are ofered with regards of the existant agreements between the Vilnius University and the accepting organization or proposed by the students themselves. Since 2012 the COS joined the Erasmus programme for the international internship and has an agreement with the Welcome Library (UK) for internship placement. Unfortunately, the COS has a single slot for Erasmus practice and suffers from undeveloped system of internship in the non-EU countries. Statistics of professional internship of 2012 show that the majority of students out of 29 chose for internship in the field of translation, information analysis and dissemination (15), tourism (6), consulting (4), library and archive service (2), teaching and training (2).

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[16] „Baigiamųjų darbų rengimo, gynimo ir saugojimo tvarka", http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studiju-procesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45-studijos/studijos/2573-baigiamuju-darbu-tvarka.
[17] „Vilniaus universiteto Orientalistikos centro rašto darbų metodiniai nurodymai" (http://www.oc.vu.lt/public/Metodiniainurodymaiaktualiredakcija20120627.pdf).

STRENGTHS:

1. The Programme accommodates the widest range of area specialisations in Oriental studies among national HEIs, which enables to balance the differing demand and enequal entrance competition for the studies of particular area with steady engagement of teachers and scholars with the area-specific backgrounds;

2. Introducing a choice of a minor study programme is targeted to increase multidisciplinary competences of the Programme graduates while offering minor study programmes for the non-Asianists within the University is supposed to strengthen subject-specific competences in area studies of the potential entrants to the graduate programme at the COS.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Redesigning the study plan into a modular curriculum, which followed implementation of the ECTS credit system and provision of possibility to opt for a minor study programme, faced certain confusion among teachers with regards to arrangement of students workload within the courses turned into modules, on the one hand, and keeping subject-specific competences relevant for the Programme graduates, on the other. To overcome this inconsistency a round-table discussion was conveyed within academic community of the COS, the results of which proved that teaching staff requires better assistance in communicating principles of the ECTS system as well as robust methodological help in attainment of the Programme aims by means of managing slightly decreasing students' workload for the subject-modules. For the purpose, regular consulting and methodological support for teaching staff has been commenced and a plan for structured educational development of the teachers will follow in late 2013.

3. TEACHING STAFF

3.1. LIST OF THE TEACHING STAFF

During the years 2008–2012 the programme was implemented by 54 faculty members (2 professors, 12 associate professors, 10 lecturers Ph.D., 25 lecturers and 5 assistants), majority of whom have had full-time or part-time contracts with Vilnius University. Full list of the teacher enrolled in the Programme is attached as Annex 3.

3.2. COMPLIANCE OF THE STAFF COMPOSITION WITH LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

(1) Composition of the staff involved in teaching at the bachelor degree programme at VU is regulated by the Descriptor of Basic Requirements for the First Cycle and Integrated Degree Study Programmes approved by the Minister of Education and Science[18] and the Descriptor of the Vilnius University Study Programmes.[19] The only legal requirement for the academic staff composition of the first cycle degree programme is that no less than half (i.e. 82.5 ECTS credits) of the total volume of the study field (i.e. 165 ECTS credits) courses/modules has to be taught by scholars. Provision of this requirement varies across the specializations from 65 ECTS in Arabic and Turkish studies to 85 ECTS in Japanese, Chinese and Indian studies.

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[18] „Laipsnį suteikiančių pirmosios pakopos ir vientisųjų studijų programų bendrųjų reikalavimų aprašas", http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=369937&p_query=&p_tr2= .
[19] „VU studijų programų reglamentas", http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studiju_programu_reglamentas_2012.pdf .

(2) Insufficient provision of the requirement in some specialisations has to do both with heavy load of language instruction as well as recent composition of teaching staff. Since there is a great part (65 ECTS and more) of language learning in the curriculum, which is usualy conducted by language trainers without Ph.D., it affects the volume of scholar's teaching load within the Programme. On the other hand, there are five current Ph.D. students from different HEIs enrolled in the Programme, three of whom are supposed to submit their Ph.D. thesis in 2013. The COS expects by the end of 2014 all specialisations being staffed with scholars teaching on the modules of the study field.

3.3. INFORMATION ON THE TEACHING STAFF'S INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECTS AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(1) Since 2007 scholars of the COS (Valdas Jaskūnas, Loreta Poškaitė, Dalia Švambarytė, Gediminas Degėsys (since 2011), Jurgita Polonskaitė, Agnė Steponavičiūtė (both since 2012)) conduct a VU budget research project "Traditional Systems of Knowledge in Asia" (coordinated by Audrius Beinorius). In 2010–2012 a trilateral project supported by the Taiwan-Baltic Fund "The Changing Image of Man in Tang, Song, and Ming China" (in cooperation with University of Latvia and Academia Sinica (Taiwan), coordinated from Lithuanian side by Loreta Poškaitė; with participation of Vytis Silius), was conducted. In 2011 the publication project "Studying the Orient in Lithuania" (coordinated by Audrius Beinorius and Valdas Jaskūnas) was performed with the grant of Research Council of Lithuania, the result of which was a collection of articles of international scholars on the history of Oriental studies, the first publication of this type ever published.

(2) Networking activities of the staff members comprise participation of the Indologists in the Central and Eastern European Network of Indian Studies (CEENIS)[20] since 2006; involvement into networking activities of the Baltic Alliance of Asian Studies (BAAS) with the COS being one its initiators, Baltic Research Centre for East Asian Studies (AsiaRes) (L. Poškaitė, V.Silius); individual membership in professional societies and associations such as European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS) (L. Poškaitė, V.Silius), European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS), Association for Japanese Literary Studies (AJLS) (both D. Švambarytė), European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), Societe Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) (both V. Čiubrinskas), International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS), European Association of Contemporary South Asian Studies, American Academy of Religion (AAR), La Societe Europeenne pour l'Astronomie dans la Culture (SEAC) (all four A. Beinorius), Lithuanian Association of the Sudies of Religions (A. Beinorius, K. Garalytė, M. Larbi, A. Litvinas, D. Valančiūnas).

3.4. STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO IN THE PROVISION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Given that the average (admission versus graduation) number of students in the study programme in the period of 2008–2012 equals 204 and the number of permanent academic staff is 27, the programme thus boasts the student/teacher ratio of 7.5. Although the study process definitely benefits from provision of more individual attention from the teachers and creating space for more productive class work, it nevertheless seems rational to seek the possibility to increase the numbers of students being accepted to the study programme, still without negative impact on the quality of studies.

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[20] The official page of the CEENIS available from www.ceenis.uw.edu.pl.

3.5. DATA ON THE TEACHING STAFF EXCHANGE

(1) Over the past five years several visiting teachers contributed to the implementation of the study programme: Dr Deborah Sommer from Gettysburg College (U.S.A) as a Fulbright scholar by teaching on Chinese Buddhism (academic year 2010/2011), Prof Heinz Werner Wessler from Uppsala University teaching on Hindi Dalit literature (September 2012), Prof Henry Diab from Lund University teaching on Arabi literature (March 2012), Prof Danuta Stasik from the University of Warsaw teaching on Hindi literature (September 2008) (all three coming under Eramus programme). Dr Prem Singh from Delhi University visited as Erasmus Mundus grantee from September to November 2009 for taching Hindi language and literature. From September 2009 to June 2010 lecturer from Iran Mohammad Ismaeil Boochali Safiei, comming with the grant from Iranian government taught Farsi. International teachers comming on the basis of bilateral governmental agreements from P.R.China and Turkey usualy got employed at VU and can be found listed among the teaching staff.

(2) There were dozens of visiting scholars who delivered public lectures at the COS over the period.

(3) Of the staff members, Audrius Beinorius taught at the Universities and Colleges of the U.S.A. (September 2008–March 2009), India (January–February 2010), and France (October–November 2012) on his visits to these countries.

3.6. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES AND TEACHING STAFF TURNOVER

(1) The teaching staff of the programme following the employment practice at VU is composed of full- and part-time teachers or hourly employees. The type of full- or part-time contract is normally offered to the teachers that teach subjects of the study field, which but requires more academic and organizational responsibilities on the part of the faculty members. Competition for a position of five years initiated by the Centre of Oriental Studies is formally announced in the *Information Bulletin* of VU and is carried out according the recruitment rules of Vilnius University, applications subsequently processed at the Academic Council of the Faculty of Philology, which is responsible for performing recruitment competition on behalf of the COS, and then approved by the Rector.

(2) Half of permanenent staff members has been working with the COS at least for six years, and one third of the staff – for 10 years or more. Four teachers engaged in teaching at the programme are former graduates of the COS.

(3) Staff composition of five full-time academicians responsible for the courses of the study-field and other part-time members of faculty and some of the hourly employees has a positive impact on the sustainability of the programme as well as its steady renewal with unique subject courses.

(4) The programme specifically benefits from the presence of courses taught by hourly employed staff – normally professionals or researchers of some discipline-specific or professional fields, who enrich the content of the programme by more specific content. Over the past five years one visiting professor also contributed to the implementation of the study programme, namely the Fulbright scholar Deborah Sommer from the Gettysburg College (U.S.A). The teaching staff engagement with the programme and turnover according to the accademic years is given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Teaching staff turnover, 2008–2013

No.		Tenure	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013
	Permanent (full-time and part-time) teaching staff						
1	Beinorius Audrius	Since 2000	X	X	X	X	X
2	Brandišauskas Donatas	2010–2012			X	X	
3	Čaprockij Romuald	Since 2000	X	X	X	X	X
4	Čubrinskas Vytis	Since 2008	X	X	X	X	X
5	Degėsys Gediminas	Since 2010			X	X	X
6	Devėnaitė Violeta	Since 2002	X	X	X	X	X
7	Dolinina Kristina	Since 2010			X	X	X
8	Drąsutytė Barbora	Since 2010			X	X	X
9	Garalytė Kristina	2010–2012			X	X	
10	Jaskūnas Valdas	Since 2003	X	X	X	X	X
11	Kazim Jamal Juma	Since 2012				X	X
12	Korobov Vladimir	Since 2003	X	X	X	X	X
13	Larbi Maritana	Since 2009	X	X	X	X	X
14	Levanaitė Karolina	2010–2012			X	X	
15	Litvinas Algimantas	Since 2003	X	X	X	X	X
16	Pauliukas Mindaugas	Since 2011				X	X
17	Pilkauskaitė-Kariniauskienė Justina	Since 2010			X	X	X
18	Polonskaitė Jurgita	Since 2012					X
19	Poškaitė Loreta	Since 2000	X	X	X	X	X
20	Silius Vytis	Since 2005	X	X		X	X
21	Singh Rasa	2003–2008	X				
22	Statkienė Natela	Since 2001	X	X	X	Maternity leave	
23	Steponavičiūtė Agnė	Since 2012					X
24	Šniukštaitė Vilma	Since 2007	X			X	X
25	Švambarytė Dalia	Since 2000	X	X	X	X	X
26	Valančiūnas Deimantas	Since 2003	X	X		X	
27	Vidūnas Vytis	Since 2000	X	X	X	X	X
	Hourly employees						
28	Andrijauskas Antanas	2000	X	X	X		
29	Ismailov Aleksandr	2009		X		X	X
30	Jakubauskas Romas	2009	X				
31	Kardelis Naglis	2011				X	X
32	Keršys Donatas	2012					X
33	Koma Kyoko	2009		X		X	
34	Luchtanas Aleksiejus	2012					X
35	Mickevičienė Diana	2001			X		
36	Miškinienė Galina	2008	X		X		
37	Motiekaitis Ramūnas	2003		X	X	X	
38	Sato Koichi	2006	X				
39	Shams Aldeen Shams Aldeen	2010			X	X	
40	Šabasevičiūtė Giedrė	2011			X		
41	Tsoyi Maria	2009		X	X	Maternity leave	

		First emp-loyment date	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013
42	Velička Eirimas	2003	X	X		X	
43	Villanueva Svensson Miguel Karl	2008	X				
44	Wang Haonan	2003	X	X			
45	Zabarskaitė Jolita	2012					X
46	Zykas Aurelijus	2010		X			
	Visiting teaching staff						
47	Atmaca Emine	2012–2013					X
48	Boochali Safiei Mohammad Ismaeil	2009–2010		X			
49	Durgut Huseyin	2009–2010		X			
50	Kilinc Abdulhakim	2010–2011			X		
51	Li Fenglan	2011–2012				X	
52	Liying Wang	Since 2012					X
53	Sommer Deborah	2010–2011			X		
54	Usta Halil Ibrahim	2011–2012				X	
55	Yangbin Xing	Since 2012					X

3.7. PARTICIPATION OF THE TEACHING STAFF IN SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES, EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES, LONG-TERM VISITS

Since 2008 the teaching staff participated in 91 conference or seminar, 80 of them international. The COS hosted two international conferences: "Body in South Asian Cinemas" (30 June–02 July, 2011), "Body and Person in China" (7–8 June, 2011). Two teachers, Vytis Vidūnas (in 2010–2011) and Vytis Čiubrinskas (in 2010, 2011, 2012) , participated in the Erasmus Mundus programme Lot EU–India and conducted research and taught in Indian universities and colleges. Audrius Beinorius conducted a long-term research in Brown University (U.S.A.), as a Fulbright fellow (September 2008 – March 2009), in Ramakrishna Institute of Culture (India) (2010), and in Sorbonne (Paris-IV) University (2012).

3.8. METHODS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STAFF
3.8.1. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With the advent of new paradigm of teaching and learning as a result of the Bologna Process, there were discussions taking place about the changing role of the teacher in the student-oriented studying process. On the University level there is a project „Creation and Implementation of Internal Study Quality Management at Vilnius University" carried out which also covers means of structured support to teachers such as the system of improving pedagogical qualification or daily performance. On the level of COS, there are steps done towards the system of improving pedagogical qualification of the academic staff. The need for formal support for improving educational skills came from recent discussions on academic process and the fact that some of the members of the faculty are inclined to update their teaching methods or instruments for effective and up-to-date learning but cannot proceed with this individualy. As an instrument of identifying problems at the stake of learning/teaching process, there was an initiative of a series of round table discussions convened to address the issue of the changing learning/teaching paradigm and share best practices. The first meeting of students, teachers and administration took place at the end of 2012 with discussion focused on students' workload planing and performance.

3.8.2. SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT

(1) During the period under evaluation scholars of the programme published two books (*Intertekstualumas klasikinėje japonų literatūroje* [Reading the Intertextuality of Japanese Classical Literature] by Dalia Švambarytė, 2011; *Indija ir Vakarai: kultūrų sąveikos pjūviai* [Indian and the West: Layers of Cultural Interaction] by Audrius Beinorius, 2012), one annotated translation from Sanskrit (*Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva, trans. Valdas Jaskūnas, 2012), one handbook (*Budizmo kultūros raida*, 1 dalis: Budizmas Indijoje [Development of Buddhist Culture, Part 1: Buddhism in India] by Audrius Beinorius, 2011), edited two collections of articles (*Studying the Orient in Lithuania*, ed. Audrius Beinorius with Marek Mejor, 2011; *Through the looking-glass of the Buddha-mind: Strategies of cognition in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Vladimir Korobov, 2012); published 5 translations of fiction from Turkish and Japanese languages. The recent three-year (2009–2011) national evaluation of research and project activity of the universities and research institutes proved that there was almost a steady increase of publications, despite of books and translations, by the staff of the COS from nine in 2009, 17 in 2010, 11 in 2011, and 28 in 2012. Noteworthy, the abovementioned evaluation showed that around 27 per cent of total amount of production are the articles published in the international journals in the languages other than Lithuanian.

(2) Since 2000 the COS edits an academic journal, turned into the international biannual English publication since 2006, *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* (ISSN 1648-2662). The following five scholars work for the editorial board hereof: Audrius Beinorius (editor-in-chief), Valdas Jaskūnas (secretary), and members Loreta Poškaitė, Dalia Švambarytė, and Vladimir Korobov.

3.8.3. PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

(1) Major practical development over recent years was conducted in the field of study quality management. Valdas Jaskūnas since 2010 has been involved in a number of international review panels of study programmes in Lithuania and Latvia, conducted peer-reviews of the study programmes in humanities and arts under the EU Structural Fund projects of "Internationalisation of Study Programmes" and "Study Programme Quality Management". Since 2012 he has become a member of the Study Committee, Vilnius University, and has been selected an expert of the project "Creation and Implementation of Internal Study Quality Management at Vilnius University" granted from the EU Social Fund.

(2) Audrius Beinorius is an invited peer of research projects in Estonia. Valdas Jaskūnas has been a peer of the Database of Lithuania-related research publications "Lituanistika" since 2009.

3.9. AGE PROFILE OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF

The age profile of the staff shows that the age groups are quite equally distributed, with two-thirds of the staff less than 45 years old. There is natural correlation between higher academic position and older age (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Age profile of the academic staff

Position	Age, years							
	26–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–64
Professor					1			1
Associate professor			1	3	3		3	
Lecturer Ph.D.		3	3		3		2	
Lecturer	7	8	5	2		1	2	1
Assistant	1	2		1	1			

	Total	8	13	9	6	8	1	7	2

3.10. WORKLOAD OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF

(2) The workload of the full-time teacher per year is 1584 hours, taking into consideration that the weekly workload could not exceed 36 hours. The yearly norm of workload is composed of teaching, methodological, research, and organisational work. According to the Key Indicators of Teachers' Academic Performance at the COS, approved on 21 November 2012, these compositional part are combined in different proportions for each academic position as indicated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Composition of workload according to academic positions

Position	Teaching		Methodological		Research		Organisational	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Professor	348	22	348	22	632	40	256	16
Associate professor	475	30	475	30	475	30	160	10
Lector with Ph.D.	475	30	475	30	475	30	160	10
Lector without Ph.D.	632	40	632	40	160	10	160	10
Assistant	712	45	712	45	–	–	160	10

(2) Since the academic year 2011/2012, the teachers' academic progress has been commenced be systematically monitored and analysed on the base of key performance metrics with the aim to introduce the robust teachers' professional incentive system to be finalised in late 2013.

(3) Analysis of the data from the academic year 2011/2012 proved that the total workload of the staff almost met the yearly norm, still its actual composition shows relatively uneven performance of different types of work as well as differences of prescribed workload among the teachers. In particular, the workload of teaching, despite slight overwork of this field, is almost subjected to the norm and proves to be efficiently managed, yet performance of organisational and methodological work is quite unevenly distributed. Analysis highlighted that teachers are least engaged in organisational work, which teachers themselves claimed to be subject to the inconsistences of applied methodology that estimates preparation for teaching inadequately (1 hour of teaching is equalled to 1 to 1.2 hours of preparation for the exercise). In case of research performance, despite of year-by-year increase of number of publications in general, involvement of staff into research activities is very uneven with four to five scholars doing the major part of production.

TEACHING STAFF: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

STRENGTHS:

1. The Programme enjoys engagement of a wide range of teachers and scholars specialised in area- and discipline-specific fields to run the multidisciplinary programme on a regular basis.

2. The Programme has a core of permanent staff in each specialisation, which is regularly augmented with new teachers, preferably young scholars, some of them holding Ph.D. from foreign universities.

3. The teachers' academic progress at the COS has been commenced to be systematically monitored and analysed on the base of key performance metrics with the aim to implement the robust teachers' professional incentive system.

4. Scholarly activities of the staff have a strong international dimension, which is the topmost priority in staff management, and is planned to be further extended into teaching in English.

5. The Programme regularly enrolls international staff as native-speakers for teaching languages (Chinese, Turkish, Arabic) for the senior students, which facilitates better adaptability of the students when they got engaged directly with the culture studied.

6. The Programmme enjoys a low student–teacher ratio, which facilitates keeping the track of students' progress and has good impact on their motivation.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Despite of year-by-year increase of staff, engagement of staff into activities other than teaching is very uneven and is a matter of improvement. Teachers' professional incentive system at the COS to be finalised by the end of 2013 is aimed to structure provision of opportunities for staff to pursue their professional development such as scholarship and research and update pedagogical knowledge and skills.

2. Area-specific compartmentalisation of the Programme and limited resources of its provision, especially of Lithuanian-speaking area language teaching staff, result in that, on the one hand, there is a range of teachers specialised in area- or discipline-specific field but employed as part-time staff, and, on the other hand, some specialisations have better representation of staff (e.g. Indian studies) than the other (e.g. Arabic, Turkish studies). To cope with this inconsistency there is better understanding of specific demands of composite programmes like the one under consideration needed from the University side that would lead to possibility to recruit more qualified, perhaps international, staff to fill the gaps in staff composition. One of the strategic issues in the new Strategic Plan of VU (2014–2020) is to establish new-type chairs (professorships) for the specific study fields, which could be applied to area-specific studies either.

4. FACILITIES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

4.1. FACILITIES USED FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME AND THEIR CAPACITY

(1) The COS is located in two places. The main premises of the COS are situated in the main campus of Vilnius University (Universiteto str. 5) where administration is also based. Confucius Institute (henceforth – CI) at Goštauto str. 12 comprises the second location of COS's premises. Premises at the CI are mainly used for the delivery of Chinese studies and various cultural activities related to Chinese culture.

(2) Students of the Programme make use of the VU library and the Oriental Reading Room herein, both located in the Main Campus of VU.

(3) The total area of the COS together with the CI is 471 m². The total number of students' sitting places is 299. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide the material characteristics (rooms with number of sitting places, area occupied and equipment) of the learning premises used for the delivery of the programme.

Table 4.1. Material characteristics of the learning premises at the Main Campus

Room	Number of sitting places	Area, m²	Equipment
A. Binder Room	30	75.72	Audiovisual equipment
Chinese Room	9	22.04	Audiovisual equipment
Hindi Room	13	30.25	Audiovisual equipment
J. Kovalevskis Room	78	57.85	Audiovisual equipment
Japanese Room	35	35.15	Audiovisual equipment
Basement Room	20	29.47	TV, DVD and Video player
Total	185	250.48	

Table 4.2. Material characteristics of the learning premises at the CI

Room	Number of sitting places	Area, m²	Equipment
Chinese 2 Room	20	36	Audiovisual equipment
The hall	70	144.52	Audiovisual equipment
Chinese 1 Room	12	20.44	Audiovisual equipment
Audiovisual Room	12	19.59	12 computers with headphones
Total	114	220.55	

(4) The facilities are constantly renewed with a financial support which comes from the Embassies of Asian countries and other foundating bodies. With the support of the Government of Japan in 2002 three rooms were equiped, the now Japanese Room, A.Binder Room and J.Kovalevskis Room (recently turned from the Reading Room into an auditorium). In 2004 Embassy of the P.R.China funded the equipment of Chinese Room. In 2006 Indian Embassy contributed to the establishment of Hindi Room. In 2010 m. after having renovated the premises in Goštauto street, the CI was launched with the financial support from the Hanban (Ministry of Education, P.R.China). In 2011 the Library of the COS stored in the Reading Room got moved to the renovated premises of the University Library and laied as a foundation of the Oriental Reading Room there. Consequently, the premises were completely renewed and J.Kovalevskis Room with 78 sitting places was established.

4.2. EQUIPMENT USED FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

All rooms (except the Basement Room) have audiovisual equipment necessary for the display of audiovisual material. Two rooms (A.Binder and Audiovisual) having personal headphones on each working place and are specifically utilised for language learning. Both the COS and the CI each have a single many-seated room that can accommodate 70 to 78 persons.

4.3. AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS

(1) The major bulk of teaching and learning resources are stored at the Oriental Reading Room at the VU Research Library, which was established on the basis of the prior departmental library. The stock of the Oriental Reading Room in general comprises around 13,423 titles, 15,686 items, 9,929 book titles and 11,414 book items, 87 journal names and 847 journal items, 57 titles of audiovisual sources and 58 items.

(2) The students and teaching staff make use of the Humanities Information Centre, Philology Reading Room, Philosophy Reading Room at the Research Library as well as the Religion Studies Library, Gender Studies Library, History Faculty Library and others departmental resources.

(3) Since 2008, for the period of renovation of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, the COS temporarily hosts the part of its Oriental Collection, which comprises approximately 1,000 titles or 1,050 items.

(4) According to the data retrieved on 8 January 2013, the University Research Library had an access to 54 subscribed databases (Sage, JSTOR, EBSCO, Taylor & Francis etc.) and 7 databases have been tested.

(5) Although recent years show regular augmentation of research material stock, the absence of Oriental studies before 1990s resulted in a great gap of information resources still relevant for the scholarship in the field.

4.4. INFORMATION ON THE UPDATING AND UPGRADING OF THE LEARNING RESOURCES

(1) The stock of the Oriental Reading Room is renewed by the book purchase conducted by the COS and the University. Books are purchased from a list compiled after the teachers' requests on upgrade of book-stock for a particular subject. VU Library also has a service „Offer the book" through which teachers and students can place electronically the book on demand on a purchase list. A lot of material is constantly being donated by the Embassies of Asian countries as well as various foreign private donors and foundating agencies. The COS conducts an *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* exchange programme of academic journal with nearly 30 academic institutions worlwide, which constantly supplies around 30 periodicals and other publications. Ten periodicals on Asian and Middle Eastern topics are regularly subscribed by the University Library.

(2) In 2011 the Oriental Reading Room received 782 new publications (603 items), among them 153 items of periodicals (39 titles), 626 items of book (561 titles) and 3 video sources. In 2012 it was supplied with 463 new publications (361 items), i.e. 310 items of book (295 titles), 126 items of journal (42 titles) and 27 items of audiovisual sources (24 titles).

FACILITIES AND LEARNING RESOURCES: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

STRENGTHS:

1. Programme facilities are subject to constant renewal and learning resources are augmented, both by raise of institutional funds as well as private donations.
2. The COS has annual budget allocation for purchase of new books and maintains the journal exchange programme to keep regular augmentation of the library stock of learning and research resources.
3. VU has access to the widest range of international electronic resources nationally, which facilitates good access and regular update of learning resources.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Although skills in English is a major prerequisite for successful study performance and the library English stock is mostly expanding, there is still a lack of handbooks or other learning resources on the subject in Lithuanian, especially for the freshmen. Recently teachers got specifically encouraged to produce learning kits in Lithuanian by making wider access to the Virtual Learning Environment of VU. At the COS methodological activities of the teachers are pursued by allocating a part of total workload for spending on producing learning tools, such as handbooks, textbooks, compendiums, etc.

2. There is still unequal distribution of learning resources according to the areas represented within the Programme. In comparison with other areas, Middle East and Central Asia have weaker representation in the library stock. With the resumption of Arabic studies in 2010, there were special means undertaken for constant augmentation of its library stock by prioritising purchase of learning resources on the area as well as diversifying the funding sources.

3. Academic staff is badly lacking individual working places at the University, which has been once again proved by the teachers' survey. Coping with the problem requires great investments into the University infrastructure, especially its historical Main campus. There are plans to equip lofts above the present premises of the COS that might be used for establishing cabinets for the teachers, yet the plans are postponed for the future. On a minor scale, with shifting of administration office to newly restored premises, there will be new shared working places for the teaching staff established at the present location of administration.

5. STUDY PROCESS AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

5.1. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

(1) Admission to the first cycle programmes at the HEIs of Lithuania is organised by the Joint Admission Network Association of Lithuanian Higher Education (LAMABPO), which unites 21 state and private university. In order to enter the Programme, no entrance examinations are taken by the applicants. Procedure of admission in 2012 required that the applicants were rated according to the competition score comprised of the grades of state maturity examinations in history (weighting factor 0.4), Lithuanian language (0.2) and the first foreign language (0.2) as well as yearly grade in geography (0.2) received by the graduates of gymnasium schools. In previous years, there were minor differences in the composition of the competition score mostly related to the changes in the values of weighting factors.

(2) The applicants are eligible to register to a number of study programmes (taking part in the competition for state-funded and self-funded study places separately), which was limited from 20 to 16 in 2008 and further reduced to 12 from 2010 onward. Admission to the Programme itself is performed on the level of specialisations. When it comes to attracting the to-be-students to the state-funded study places, the Programme is subject to competition within the group of study programmes in the related study field in humanities.

(3) Vilnius University was the first HEI to introduce in 2009 a treshhold entrance grade of 10.4 which makes one half of the highest possible admission competition grade without additional scores.

5.2. ADMISSION TO THE STUDY PROGRAMME

5.2.1. COMPETITION

From 2000 to 2010 admission to the Programme was organised every second year but since 2011 it turned into annual admission maintaining rotation of the target specialisation. Admission to the Programme is carried out on the level of specializations. The Tables 5.1 and 5.2 provide data for the period under self-evaluation on the number of persons applying for the Programme and priority ranking of specializations according to the applicants' preferences (based on the annual Admission to VU Reports).

Table 5.1. Competition to state-funded study places

Specialization	2008				2010				2011				2012			
	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A
Arabic studies	–	–	–	–	29	107	192	12	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indian studies	14	68	164	9	35	156	273	12	17	116	247	12	23	108	216	12
Japanese studies	78	176	308	10	151	355	565	12	–	–	–	–	104	311	521	23
Chinese studies	29	90	153	9	46	152	249	12	87	228	340	18	62	195	308	13
Turkish studies	14	50	111	8	–	–	–	–	18	60	115	11	–	–	–	–

'1' – registrations under the first priority; '1–4' – registrations under the first to fourth priority; 'T' – total number of registrations to the specialization; 'A' – number of admitted students.

Table 5.2. Competition to self-funded study places

Specialization	2008				2010				2011				2012			
	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A	1	1–4	T	A
Arabic studies	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indian studies	4	17	42	1	–	–	–	–	2	19	38	2	3	12	38	4
Japanese studies	14	57	109	2	24	81	142	2	–	–	–	–	12	72	142	3
Chinese studies	3	24	56	0	9	45	87	1	8	33	74	4	6	39	97	3
Turkish studies	3	11	34	1	–	–	–	–	1	10	28	2	–	–	–	–

'1' – registrations under the first priority; '1–4' – registrations under the first to fourth priority; 'T' – total number of registrations to the specialization; 'A' – number of admitted students.

5.2.2. ADMISSION

(1) Admission competition to state-funded and self-funded study places is carried out separately. The highest possible entrance grade (without additional scores) in 2008 was 2080. From 2009, the methodology of the calculation of admission competition grade was changed and the highest possible grade (without additional scores) became 20.8. The Tables 5.3 and 5.4 provide data by specializations on the highest, average and lowest grades of the entrants admitted to the Programme (based on the annual Admission to VU Reports).

Table 5.3. Grades of the entrants addmited to state-financed places

Specialisation	2008			2010			2011			2012		
	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.
Arabic studies	–	–	–	20.2	no data	17.80	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indian studies	2018	1949.33	1904	23.6	no data	18.38	20.36	18.495	16.68	19.92	18.303	17.16
Japanese studies	2097	2032.33	1995	20.2	19.7	19.02	–	–	–	21.4	19.681	18.78
Chinese studies	2066	1994.56	1966	21.38	no data	18.88	21.96	19.347	17.88	22.4	20.178	19.38
Turkish studies	2023	1957	1895	–	–	–	20.38	18.593	16.62	–	–	–

Table 5.4. Grades of the entrants addmited to self-financed places

Specialisation	2008			2010			2011			2012		
	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.
Arabic studies	–	–	–	17	17	17	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indian studies	1878	1878	1878	–	–	–	15.3	15.01	14.72	17.78	16.515	14.76
Japanese studies	1988.4	1889.2	1790	21.38	no data	18.9	–	–	–	19.7	19.253	19.02
Chinese studies	1946	1946	1946	20.3	no data	19	18.70	18.513	18.26	19.26	19.187	19.14
Turkish studies	1870	1870	1870	–	–	–	14.84	14.68	14.52	–	–	–

'High.' – the highest admission competition grade; 'Av.' – the average admission competition grade, 'Low.' – the lowest admission competition grade.

(2) Comparative analysis of the grades of the entrants admitted to the programme in 2008 is and those in 2010 onward is deemed to be inconsistent due to the change of the methodology of admission competition grade calculation. Dynamics of the grades of the entrants admitted to the programme from 2010 onward is best traced in Chinese, Indian and Japanese studies where admission took part twice or thrice. Turkish studies and Arabic studies with a single admission are not representative.

(3) Average grade of the entrants to all specializations over the period is kept relatively stable with insubstantial difference among the specializations and ranges from 20.178 for Chinese studies in 2012 and 18.303 for Indian studies the same year. The grade which guaranted admission, or the lowest admission grade, ranges from 19.38 for Chinese studies in 2012 to 16.68 for Indian studies in 2011. The average and lowest grades to guarantee the entry into a self-funded place experience similar tendencies as in the case of competition for state-funded studies, although tendency of relative increase is marked.

(4) Although number of applications for admission in 2012 decreased with regard to previous years, average entrance grade remained on more or less the same level or demonstrated increasing tendency, which proves that the competition is high and it ensures that only the best entrants are selected. The decrease of applications for Japanese and Chinese studies in 2012 is perhaps related to the fact that Vytautas Magnus University opened new undergraduate programme in East Asian languages and cultures the same year.

5.3. STUDENT RETENTION RATIO

(1) The lowest retention ratio is being observed in the Indian studies where up to 70 percent students admitted to the Programme in 2008 have dropped out in subsequent semesters. This tendency decreased in later admissions. However, unlike the case of the 2008 admission when 2 students out of ten were expelled in the last (eight) semester due to the failure to submit their graduation thesis and 1 student took academic leave because of illness the same semester, there increased a number of students who cancel their studies in the first semester. The same tendency is marked in the case Turkish studies which hold the second lowest retention ratio. The Chinese studies tend to hold the highest student retention ratio and together with Arabic studies do not necessarily follow the pattern of the students dropping out in the first semester.

(2) The reasons of dropping out are either objective (not having submitted final thesis or failing exams), or personal ones which in most of the occasions are not specified in the applications for permission to cancel the studies. There are also a number of students (2 to 3) in each admission to the Japanese studies who are not able to graduate together with their colleagues because they receive scholarships from Japanese universities for one–year studies in their seventh semester. Although Vilnius University does not encourage students to go abroad in the final year of their BA studies, the exception is usually made for the Japanese studies students who have limited opportunities to receive grants in earlier semesters.

(3) It is of note that 11 students returned to the Programme after temporary leave during the five-year period of 2008 to 2012 and were able to submit their final thesis and graduate later.

5.4. EXTENT AND FORMS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH AND ART ACTIVITIES

(1) The latest survey was conducted in the period from 28 January 2013 to 10 February 2013. 39 people answered the questions. The results show that the majority of students are not actively

participating in extracurricular activities – only 10% of the respondents answered that they were engaged in research, and 18% of the respondents are engaged in art activities).

(2) The survey results also demonstrate that those students who participate in art activities do not belong to groups and ensembles organized by Vilnius University (except 1 student who sings in the Female Choir of VU "Virgo"), but it should be noted that some of the students are engaged as volunteers in cultural events organized by the Confucius Institute, which is part of Vilnius University, and 6 respondents stated their participation in the ensembles outside VU or mentioned taking private lessons.

5.5. FORMS OF STUDENT SUPPORT

(1) There are several forms of student support at Vilnius University. First of all, academic counseling is provided by the Study Directorate, Communication and Information Centre, the COS itself and Vilnius University Students Representation (VUSA). Information about career opportunities can also be obtained at the VU Career Center. Students can use information technology services such as Centre of Information Technology Development (Lithuanian abbreviation is ITTC), Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and library and information services available at the VU library (borrowing and requesting books, access to subscription databases, etc.). Students are also entitled to various kinds of financial support for their studies: scholarships, promotional grants, one-time social allowances, loans, allowances for students with disabilities (to cover special needs or/and to cover study expenses), scholarships for international students, and exemption from fees. Students are provided accommodation at the University dormitory. Housing Office of the VU General Affairs Department is responsible for that.

(2) After their classes the University students are encouraged to participate in various cultural and leisure-time activities provided by the Centre for Cultural Affairs (cooperation for the VU newspaper "Universitas Vilnensis", participation in the VU Backpackers club, VU Song and Dance ensemble, folk music ensemble "Jaunimėlis", choirs "Gaudeamus" and "Pro Musica", VU folk group "Ratilio", VU Orchestra "Oktava", VU Chamber Music Ensemble, female choir "Virgo", VU theater company, VU Drama company "Minimum", VU Theatre "Kinetic troupe", and activities at the Health and Sports Center. Psychological innovation and research training center (PTMC) at the VU Faculty of Philosophy provides psychological consultation. Pastoral care services are available at the St. John's Church, which is located inside the VU campus.

5.6. PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Student performance assessment is based on the principles of transparency and student's individual progress. Officially, these principles, organisational means, and responsibilities of the stakeholders of the study process are prescribed in the Descriptor of the Student Performance Assessment.[21] Assessment strategy and criteria for each individual course at the COS are explained in the course description and communicated to the students during the first class orally and/or uploaded at the VU Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at http://vma.esec.vu.lt/. Evaluation marks of the student performance are entered into the VU Information System (VUSIS) within five working days after the final exam and accessed by the students individually, while the feedback is requested to be given either individually or collectively within the group before evaluation marks are announced.

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[21] "Studijų pasiekimų vertinimo tvarka", approved by the Vilnius University Senate Commission No. SK-2012-20-6, 13 December 2012, http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/Studiju_pasiekimu_vertinimo_Tvarka_12.21.pdf .

5.7. LIST OF THE BACHELOR'S FINAL THESIS

27 students have submitted their BA papers in the past two years (see Annex 5). All of them passed the procedure of oral defence successfully. The highest grade received was 10 points (excellent), the lowest grade was 5 points (satisfactory). Average mark is 9 points (very good). The subjects cover various aspects of Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Turkish cultures and societies as well as broader disciplinary or cross-cultural themes. Different methodological tools are employed, analyses of conducted surveys presented, and most of the works contain translations from respective languages into Lithuanian.

5.8. STUDENTS' PROGRESS

After comparing the grades of the entrants admitted to the Programme in 2008 with the results of their final thesis assessment in 2012 after four-year cycle of studies it could be concluded that the level of graduates is high with the average mark of 7.5 for the Chinese studies, 9 for the Indian studies, 8 for the Japanese studies, and 8 for the Turkish studies. Despite rather high drop-out rates, especially in Indian department, those students who chose to pursue their studies to the end and submitted their final papers can be regarded as motivated persons with professional attitude toward their chosen field.

5.9. DATA ON ATTRITION RATES, CAUSES FOR ATTRITION

The data was taken about students, who started their studies at COS in 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012. The drop-out is 50 students from 207 students. The highest rate of attrition was fixed in 1 and 3 semester, which implies that some of the students were not well informed about the program, or had different expectations. In most cases, it is difficult to know the real reasons for attrition, since the usual formulation ("on one's request") is very official, and the reasons are not specified in the applications. Few students have canceled their studies in the 8th (last) semester due to the failure to submit their graduation theses.

5.10. PROPORTION OF STUDENTS' TIME ALLOCATION

Proportions of the students' workload for the standard 5 ECTS (133 hours) module ranges from 64 + 69 hours for the language learning and some content modules to 48 contact hours + 85 independent work hours for the majority of content courses. Allocation of larger volume of independent work hours is in most cases related to paper writing, which makes a part of individual assignments for the most of the content courses. Consultations are available for all the modules.

5.11. NUMBER OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MOBILITY PROGRAMMES

(1) There is a range of mobility programmes the students of the Programme can apply for to spend a semester or a year abroad, including Asian and Middle East destinations. VU takes part in Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes, International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), has bilateral agreements with over 100 universities worldwide. Students are also eligible to be granted mobility scholarships for studies in the P.R.China, Japan, India, Turkey and Arab countries on the basis of governmental agreements.

(2) The possibilities to participate in the mobility programs since 2008 to 2012 is increasing every year, especially for the students in Chinese studies (there are three mobility programmes for them to study in the P.R.China and Taiwan for the period from five to 10 months, short-term summer courses for Chinese language, along with the Erasmus program). The least possibilities to study in the region are at present for the students in Indian and Arab studies. However, in order to maintain a

higher motivation for the participating in mobility programs (especially for studies in Asian countries) and to ensure the successful graduation, only the best students (according to their rotation) are nominated to participate in the competition for the scholarships in those programs.

Table 5.5. Number of out-going students according to the year of admission[22]

Year of admission	2008		2010		2011		2012	
Specialisation	B/E	OGS	B/E	OGS	B/E	OGS	B/E	OGS
Japanese studies	14/6	9	17/13	6	–	–	26/25*	0*
Chinese studies	10/7	5	13/12	9**	23/17	9**	16/16*	0*
Indian studies	13/5	2	11/7	3	15/10	0*	16/16*	0*
Turkish studies	9/5	6	–	–	13/9	0*	–	–
Arabic studies	–	–	13/9	5	–	–	–	–

'B/E' – n umber of students enrolled in the programme at the begining of 1st semester / the end of graduation semester;
'OGS' – number of out-going students (** including those out-going for summer courses).

5.12. EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

A questionnaire (see Annex 7) was distributed among the alumni of the COS in January 2013. It attracted 45 responses from the former students of the COS of both the BA and MA level. According to the processed data on the former BA students (36 persons altogether), 35% of them were accepted to the job even during their university years, 60% were employed right after graduation (30% in foreign countries). 45% of the alumni directly applied the skills and knowledge obtained at the COS in carrying out their work. 55% indicated that competences acquired at the COS significantly influenced their career while 37% thought that the BA diploma as such should be considered a more significant factor.

5.13. METHODS AND STRATEGIES APPLIED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

(1) VU Students' Representation (VUSA) each exam session arranges campaign „Sąžiningai" ("Honestly"), during which students are encouraged to go out and monitor exams in other academic units. It seeks to ensure that the observers were neutral and helped the teacher to discern the dishonest students. This action takes place during each exam session and VUSA is planning to monitor not only the exam sessions, but also higher interim exams during the semester. During the semester, the organizers encourage various discussions about academic integrity. In these discussions, students are encouraged to express their views and proposals on how to improve this campaign.

(2) 2012/2013 academic year, the winter session in the COS were monitored two exams (observers were invited only to the streaming lecture exams) and the Students' Representation at the COS students as observers participated in the 5 exams in other faculties.

(3) The VUSR action is not the only mean to ensure the students' academic integrity. Furthermore VU-wide students' graduation works are tested in the information system for plagiarism.

5.14. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELECTING OPTIONAL SUBJECTS AND/OR MODULES ACCORDING TO NEED

After rearrangement of the study plan in 2011 from the course to modular curriculum, the part of compulsory or alternatively selective modules was limited to 180 ECTS credits and the remaining 60 ECTS credits were allocated for the minor study programme and simultaneously the pursue of

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[22] Data of 31 December 2012.

double qualification or other choices according to the needs of the student. Within the major study programme all students are offered 10 ECTS credit for the option of alternatively selective modules of the study field. In the case the student chooses for the minor study programme, s/he is restricted to the performance of studies outside their major programme according to the prescribed plan and have lower selection possibilities. But students who do not choose for the minor studies are offered the area-related in-depth modules within the amount of 20–25 ECTS credits along with the range of free-choice modules at the COS and the rest of VU.

STUDY PROCESS AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

STRENGTHS:

1. Average entrance grade for the Programme is high and remains on more or less the same level or even demonstrates increasing tendency, which proves that the competition is serious and it ensures that only the best entrants are selected. It also allows the best students to set the standard for future studies.

2. The groups of the students who enter different specialisations of the Programme are small, not exceeding 14 persons (larger numbers are divided into two groups for the language-learning classes). Such practice allows the teaching staff to follow closely the academic performance of each student and to pay appropriate attention to the supervision of their academic papers and individual projects. It ensures that the students who enter the COS with an excellent grade maintain stable progress on the whole, and become elite graduates of the University. Despite rather high drop-out rates, especially in the Indian studies department, those students who choose to pursue their studies to the end and submit their final papers can be regarded as motivated persons with professional attitude toward their chosen field.

3. Students of the COS have increasing possibilities to participate in a wide range of mobility programmes at European Universities under the Erasmus program, as well as pursue studies in all Asian countries according to the field of their specialisation. This has a good impact on their professional motivation, effectively improves their knowledge and increases their competitiveness in future carrier, especially when it comes to securing most suitable jobs as specialists in Asian cultures and languages.

4. Students and alumni of the Programme successfully integrate themselves into the job market immediately after graduation or even during their studies, more than half of them making use of the area-specific knowledge and skills obtained at the COS.

5. The students of the Programme demonstrate personal responsibility in tackling the problems of cheating by sending a representative from the COS for the University-level campaign "Honestly" each term.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Since there is no University requirement to specify the reasons of cancelling the studies, many students who decide to leave the Programme for personal reasons are expelled at their own request but do not give written explanation of their motives in detail. It would be useful to keep informal record of the drop-out reasons as described in private interviews and give them appropriate consideration.

2. The freshmen appear to be especially vulnerable category in the cases of dropping out, and it can be assumed that some of them decide to give up studies immediately after having realised that their expectations for the Programme had not been met. Therefore, it would be helpful to diversify channels through which the potential applicants are informed about the contents and requirements of the studies. One such step has already been taken in this direction when series of public lectures on various aspects of Asian studies were organised by the faculty in spring 2013 on the occasion of 20th anniversary of the COS in order to reach as broad an audience as possible.

3. The students of the Indian and Arabic Studies departments have less opportunities to apply for studies in the area studied if compared to the students of Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish studies who can apply for scholarships or otherwise further their education at the respective Asian countries on a regular basis. For this, more active work is needed to be done in developing a dialogue and establishing direct contacts between the VU and universities of India and Arabic countries.

6. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

6.1. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

(1) The supervision of the quality of the programme, its content and competences is performed by the Committee of the Study Programme. The Committee currently consists of assoc. prof. dr. Valdas Jaskūnas (Chairman), prof. dr. (HP) Audrius Beinorius, lect. Maritana Larbi, Ina Marčiulionytė (external stakeholder), assoc prof. dr. Loreta Poškaitė, assoc. prof. dr. Dalia Švambarytė, Aušrinė Marija Valiulytė (student). The Chairmen of the Committee coordinates the work of the Committee and organizes the discussion and approval of the implementation and changes of the programme. The opinions of external stakeholders and students are taken into account. The Committee considers the programme no less than twice a year, proving proposals for the schedule of the next academic year and each semester.

(2) The responsibility for the implementation of and the oversight of the Programme also lies with the administration of the COS. Eventually all decisions related to the implementation supervision and improvement of the programme are approved by the Meeting of the COS. The responsibility for the study process within the COS is taken by the Deputy Director of Studies, who supplies the Study Programme Committee with the factual information regarding the study process and the legal and other normative information regarding the changes in administration of the Programme and proposals with regard to emerging possibilities. Administrator of Studies at the COS is engaged in routine administration of the study process and provision of support for the students.

(3) Despite the administrative bodies directly engaged with the study process, there is the Academic Ethics Commission at the COS, which acts according to the Regulations of the Academic Ethics Commission at VU[23] and the Study Assessment Appeal Commission of the COS, which acts according to the Regulations of the Study Assessment Appeal Commission at the VU Academic Core-Unite.[24]

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[23] „VU akademinės etikos komisijos nuostatai" http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studiju-procesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45-studijos/studijos/2565-aek-nuostatai.
[24] „VU akademinio kamieninio padalinio studijų pasiekimų vertinimo apeliacijos komisijos nuostatai",
http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/apeliacijos%20nuostatai_2012-12-19.pdf.

6.2. MEANS TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME

(1) On the University level quality of the programme is ensured by gathering data on the students' performance, annual admission, regular electronic surveys on students' satisfaction with the programme and courses studied as well as staff satisfaction with operating conditions at the University. This data is analysed, discussed and conveyed to decision making on quality assurance. Since 2009 a survey of students' satisfaction with studies and the quality of teaching is conducted at the end of each semester by the Centre for Study Quality management of VU. Survey results are communicated to each teacher and administration and discussed.

(2) On the COS level, there are robust means of students' and staff performance monitoring and analysis. Metrics on the issues at stake are presented and discussed at the Meeting of COS, where decisions are also taken.

6.3. DOCUMENTS DEFINING THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAMME PROVIDERS

In defining the responsibilities of the Programme providers the following documents or guidelines are followed: Provisions of Quality Assurance in Higher Education,[25] Statute of Vilnius University,[26] Regulations of Study Programmes at VU,[27] Guidelines of Quality Assurance at VU,[28] Regulations of the Study Programme Committee at VU is currently under discussion.

6.4. OPINION OF THE PROGRAMME'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND TEACHING STAFF ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Since the grand majority of the teachers doing second cycle study programme at the COS are also involved in teaching for the bachelors, the opinion of the teaching staff on the programme management and the distribution of responsibilities was surveyed without taking into consideration the involvement factor. The survey (see more in paragraph 6.9) proved that the teaching staff is mostly favorable with strategic management, administration of studies and research activities, and supervision of infrastructure. Again, the respondents admit the relevance of how decisions are made and communicated among the community of the COS, yet not all respondents feel sure about the proper implementation of all issues agreed upon.

6.5. DOCUMENTS REGULATING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

Quality assurance at VU is considered as a form of academic culture comprised of the following means: study quality planning, monitoring, development of teacher's qualification, and feedback on study quality. Principles of implementation of internal study quality management system rest on (1) research-based environment and learning outcomes-based paradigm of studies, (2) openness and internationalisation, (3) responsibility and confidence, (4) constant improvement and change. These principles are fixed in the documents basically referred to in paragraph 6.3.

6.6. INFORMATION ACCUMULATION AND ANALYSIS

(1) All the information related to the study process is constantly accumulated in Vilnius University Information System (VUSIS) since the year 2000 and accessible to both administration and students through their virtual workplace. Information available to the students is limited to the content

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[25] „Aukštojo mokslo kokybės užtikrinimo nuostatos", http://www.skvc.lt/files/leidiniai/SKVC_knyga.pdf.
[26] „Vilniaus universiteto statutas", http://www.vu.lt/site_files/Adm/statutas/VU_statutas.pdf.
[27] „Vilniaus universiteto studijų programo reglamentas", http://www.vu.lt/site_files/Adm/statutas/VU_statutas.pdf.
[28] „VU studijų kokybės užtikrinimas", http://www.kvc.cr.vu.lt/site/?q=node/90.

relevant to their study process, while administration has access to various data sets, such as studies information (lists of students in the programme, personal data, study results, study plans), staff information (personal data, employment information, and professional development), finances, regulatory documents and orders. Many of the collected data sets has statistical expression, ready for further analysis whenever needed.

(2) Each semester Centre of Quality Management of VU carries out a survey aimed at students about the quality of studies in general and the quality of specific subjects in the semester. Every teacher may see the results of the survey regarding their course in their virtual work place from VUSIS.

6.7. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Opinion of the external stakeholders regarding the programmes (indiscriminatelly sic!) of the COS is retrieved through their formal participation in the Study Programme Committee or the Commissions of Graduation Thesis Defence or through informal communication. Another source of evaluation and judgment of Programme providing a new insight to develop and to improve its quality is survey of opinion based on questionnaire distrubution. The latest survey was conveyed in late 2012 (for more see paragraph 6.9) , which received 14 responses out of 23 external stakeholders. Responses related to participation/prefered forms of participation in the implementation of the study programme proved that external stakeholders prefer (9 responses) partaking in the programme informally – the same way as majority of them (9) are currently engaged in. Only few respondents admited their willingness to take part in the study process as a member of the Study Programme Committee (3) or the Commission of Graduation Thesis Defence (2) or by providing suggestions in a written form (2).

6.8. WAYS OF MAKING THE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACCESSIBLE TO THE STAKEHOLDERS

Community of the COS – teaching staff and the Students' Representative – is kept informed about the process and outcomes of programme evaluation and the measures of improvement through the full-scale meetings. External stakeholders, along with the teachers and students, are represented on the Study Programme Committee by the Director of the Department of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Ina Marčiulionytė. Results of the studies, the process and outcomes of Programme evaluation and improvements are generally submitted and discussed at the Study Programme Committee meeting at the end of each academic year. Such publicity contributes to dissemination of information and receiving feedback from all the stakeholders involved.

6.9. FEEDBACK FROM THE TEACHING STAFF, STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND EMPLOYERS ON THE PROVISION OF THE PROGRAMME

6.9.1. SURVEY OF THE TEACHING STAFF

In January 2013 the teaching staff of the COS was questioned about satisfaction with their work, working conditions and distribution of responsibilities among teachers and administration. Questionnaire was sent to 23 recipients and 15 opinions received. Survey showed that most teachers favor the process of decision making at the COS, admit that they are duly and timely informed about decisions made with regard to study process by administration and feel as participating in the decision making where collegial decision-making bodies are involved. The teaching staff is

generally satisfied with the conditions for teaching and research work, but feel lack of research resources on their subject in the VU library, individual working places and possibilities of sabbatical leave. The latter was not used until now by any teacher at the COS, although just a part of respondents – perhaps scholars – consider it relevant for their professional progress.

6.9.2. SURVEY OF THE REGULAR STUDENTS

Survey of the regular students' opinion at COS sought to examine their satisfaction with studies in general, the content of the courses, and the quality of teaching. 78 responses were received. More than half of the respondents proved to be satisfied with studies in general (61.5%) and over half of the respondents were positive about the content of the courses studied (59%) while 11.5% were negative about that. Again, 60.3% of the respondents are satisfies with the quality of courses studies as opposed to 14.1% of negative responses. When respondents were asked if they would recommend their studies to others, 65, 4% answered positively and 34.6% negatively.

6.9.3. SURVEY OF THE ALUMNI

The survey of the alumni of the COS was conveyed in November 2012. The questionnaire (see Annex 6) was distributed among 106 graduates in electronic form and was completed by 45 respondents (response rate of 42%). Respondents regarding the provision of the Programme put an emphasis on the high competences of the teaching staff, excellent management and administration of the Programme, and collegial, amiable relations between teaching staff, administration, and students, especially when compared with their experience with provision the of study programmes at other universities. As their prime suggestion stands preferable introduction of more courses on contemporary Asian topics (politics, economy, anthropology), provision of opportunity for all students to spend some time in the universities of the area studied during study period, to attract more native-speaker teachers for the senior students, and to employ as teachers the graduates from the COS.

6.9.4. SURVEY OF THE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

(1) Evaluation of the study programme from the side of external stakeholders (chiefly employers of the alumni and organisations of internship placements) is clearly reflected in the last survey conducted in January 2013, which facilitated to gather opinion of 15 organisations from 23 targeted respondents. Asked about the competences students acquire during their studies, most of the partners appreciate and highly assess skills of the spoken language of the area studied (27.1%), knowledge of area-specific culture (26.64%), and cross-cultural expertise (22.2%). Analitical skills were appreciated by 18.18% of the respondents, followed by communicational skills (17.73%), skills of team work (17.55%) and of individual work (18.91%). Suprisingly, least appreciated by the respondents was ability to make decissions (17.09%).

(2) When asked to prioritise the above mentioned knowledge and skills from the point of view of aplicability in their practical field, priority again was given to the skills of the spoken language 27.1%) and knowledge of culture (26.64%). Relatively least appreciated were skills of decision making (18.36%).

(3) Among six area-specific fields covered at the COS on the first cycle studies – Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Iranian (last graduation in 2008), Indian and Turkish studies – as the most relevant by the respondents were indicated Chinese and Japanese studies, while the least priority is given to Iranian and Turkish studies. With regards to practical applicability of skills as seen from the point of view of the professional field the stakeholders are engaged in, the topmost priority is

given to the East Asian (Japanese, Chinese and Korean) area studies in general. Again, most of the respondents suggested to provide the students with more practically applicable and utilizable skills, such as proficiency in spoken language of the area, the cross-cultural communication expertise, didactic competences, as well as enhenced knowledge of sociology, economy, anthropology of contemporary Asia. According to the partners, the proper and purposive motivation of students is no less important in the implementation of the Programme.

(4) Overall, all the respondents stressed the importance and necessity of Asian study programmes run at the COS for their future activities in Lithuania and advocated for recruition of more students for area study programs as presently demand for this kind of specialists nationally is very high. This demand is generated by steadily increasing significance of Asia in the contemporary global world and especially the vacuum of professionals inherited from the Soviet era when Asian studies were ideologically forbidden.

6.10. MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES TRIGGERED BY THE LATEST EVALUATION OUTCOMES

The most important revisions of the Programme triggered by the latest evaluation in 2005 are reviewed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Comparison of weaknesses detected during the latest evaluation and improvements made by 2012

Weaknesses indicated by the expert panel (2005)	Major improvements completed by 2012
The biggest problem is official attribution of the programme to the study field of ethnology. Such attribution does not reflect the orientation of the programme towards area studies and its interdisciplinary approach.	After Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science made amendments to the General Classification of Study Fields and Areas in humanities and added 'Area Studies' to the list, the qualification degree awarded to the graduates of the programme changed from ethnology to area studies in 2010.
It is recommended to enroll freshmen on an annual basis because the present system when the programme is offered every other year distorts the job market, and, by limiting the number of applicable students, makes it difficult to implement exchange programs on regular basis without encroaching upon University restrictions against the mobility of senior students.	Annual students' enrollment to varied regional specializations within the programme was started in 2011.
Introduction of the MA program of the same description would be advantageous for the graduate students.	The MA program of Modern Asian Studies was launched in 2006. Although its name does not strictly correspond to the designation of the BA degree program, which is called Asian Studies, both programs represent the same field of area studies and offer the same qualifications.
More opportunities should be provided for the students to have internship related to their studies in corresponding Asian countries and/or Lithuania's institutions, companies, ministries, cultural organizations, etc.	Guided practice for the BA program students became compulsory starting from the academic year of 2011/12; senior students can choose to undergo the professional internship in either Lithuania's agencies and establishments or abroad but the latter cases are irregular and

	depend mostly on the personal initiative of the students participating in long-term study abroad programs.
More emphasis should be placed on the instruction about theoretical frameworks so that the students were better prepared for the writing of BA papers. The examination of the graduation papers by the expert panel led to the conclusion that the assessment criteria are consistent and the requirements are high but some of the works, nonetheless, lack methodological and bibliographical precision.	Methodological guidelines for the graduation papers were officially approved in 2005, and uploaded onto the website of the COS; the students are also required to finish a compulsory course on writing the area studies research paper; under the module system introduced in 2011, this course with 5 ECTS credits became part of the module of Area-specific Culture Studies and Research.
Top managers of VU should make more effort to equip offices and classrooms with computer hardware and software. The computer supply in the COS is insufficient with 8 or more students sharing 1 PC	After the Oriental reading room was opened inside the VU Library and a branch of VU Students' Representation was established at the COS, additional workplaces with computers and wireless network were installed for the use of the students; wireless network in the classrooms, however, remains unavailable. Besides, with establishing the VU Confucius Institute at the COS, new, fully equipped space (around 240 m2) was obtained and used for study purpose.
The weak link in developing international partnership for the programme is inadequate number of exchange agreements with foreign institutions under the Erasmus LLL programme	At present, the COS has Socrates/Erasmus exchange agreements with The Universita degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Uniwersytet Warszawski, Uppsala Universitet, Lund University, University of Ljublijana, Ankara University, Istanbul University, University of Iceland, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg.
It is advisable to prepare and offer for the students an introductory course on area studies in the framework of the programme	Introductory courses on the culture of the corresponding region or culture as well as on their research history are compulsory for the students of each specialization
In the course of interviews students expressed interest in having an introductory course on Lithuanian ethnology, which could serve for the enhancement of comparative studies and research.	A course on Lithuanian ethnology is not offered at the COS because it is not consistent with the area studies as the newly designated study field. The students can, however, choose Lithuania-related subjects as optional courses at other University departments
More emphasis should be placed on the development of interpreter skills at an MA-level programme, if possible, because the job opportunities for the graduates include, among other possibilities, translation and interpretation service	Interpreter skills are fostered on BA level and are not specifically targeted on the MA level because not only the graduates of the COS are admitted entrance to the MA degree programme of Modern Asian Studies but also former students of other departments or schools who do not necessarily have command of Asian languages

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

STRENGHTS:

1. The functions of the COS administration (director, deputy director of studies, executive administrator of studies) and Study Programme Committee are clearly segregated in the process of strategic planning, implementation, supervision and monitoring of study processes.

2. Since its origination in 2011, the Students' Representation of the COS takes an active part in the Study Programme Committee and other collegial decision-making bodies by providing fresh insights and suggestions related to Programme management. Besides, activities of the Students' Representation ensures dissemination of information on the decisions made with regard to update of the Programme, accumulation of feedback on its performance and community-building at the COS.

3. The regular increasement of the number of students over the recent two-three years, followed by employment on new teachers, introduction of the minor study programmes, has been managed successfully by sharing responsibilities among different decission-making bodies and devicing a comprehensive plan of strategic development of studies at the COS to be completed by July 2013.

4. As survey of students and alumni displays, such features as high competences of the teaching staff, the sustainable management and administration, collegial, amiable relations between teachers, administration and students, are highly appreciated by the students and alumni of the Programme.

WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Area-specific compartmentalisation of academic interests of the teaching staff, limited human resources and obviously deep-rooted traditional understanding of the study programme performance result in that the Programme management still meets low involvement of teachers and consequently the greatest bulk of work falls on the administration rather than the Study Programme Committee. Involvement of teachers is sought to encourage by large-scale discussions on the Programme provision and increasing acknowledgement of teachers' organisational work, which has been commenced to be systematically monitored and analysed on the base of annual key performance metrics.

2. There is much evidence that social and professional engagement of the graduates in the labor market has to be approached in more systematic manner. There is a need to better explore possibilities of the labor market the graduates of the Programme could enter by diversifying possible professional fields and ensuring provision of more diversified options for internship placements for the students at home and abroad. Networking outside university and gathering the forum of external stakeholders is planned to be systematically implemented as a part of strategic plan of study development.