

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY



## MODERN ASIAN STUDIES

Study field: Area Studies  
Graduate studies level

## SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

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A.V.

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Vilnius, March 2013

## KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Title	Modern Asian Studies
Field of Study	Area Studies
National code	621U71001
Higher education type	University studies
Level of studies	Second
Mode of studies and duration	Full-time, 2 years
Scope of the programme, ECTS credits	120
Qualification awarded	Master of Asian Studies (since 2010); Master of Ethnology (until 2009)
Registration date and document number	2006-03-06, Nr. ISAK-410

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Organisational structure .....	5
Composition of the self-evaluation group .....	6
Previous evaluation of the study programme .....	6
<b>1. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	7
1.2. Public resources containing the description of the Programme aims and learning outcomes...	8
1.3. Regularity of evaluation of learning outcomes and the involvement of stakeholders .....	8
1.4. Compliance with legal acts and other documents establishing academic requirements or recommendations for the qualifications of specialists trained .....	9
1.5. Research findings in the professional practice of area studies.....	9
1.6. Professional activity areas of the specialists trained under the Programme.....	10
1.7. Place of the Programme among the other programmes of the same study field.....	10
Programme aims and learning outcomes: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement	11
<b>2. CURRICULUM DESIGN</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1. Legal requirements for the curriculum design .....	11
2.2. Study plan.....	12
2.3. Descriptions of the courses and modules taught .....	12
2.4. Logic of the Programme.....	12
2.5. Requirements for master's final thesis .....	13
Curriculum design: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement.....	13
<b>3. TEACHING STAFF</b> .....	<b>14</b>
3.1. List of the teaching staff.....	14
3.2. Compliance of the staff composition with legal requirements.....	14
3.3. Information on the teaching staff's involvement in projects and research activities .....	14
3.4. Student/teacher ratio in the provision of the study programme .....	15
3.5. Data on the teaching staff exchange.....	15
3.6. Employment procedures and teaching staff turnover.....	15
3.7. Participation of the teaching staff in scientific conferences, long-term visits.....	16
3.8. Methods of professional development of the staff .....	17
3.8.1. Educational development .....	17
3.8.2. Scientific development .....	17
3.8.3. Practical development.....	17
3.9. Age profile of the academic staff.....	18
3.10. Workload of the academic staff.....	18
Teaching staff: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement.....	19
<b>4. FACILITIES AND LEARNING RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>19</b>
4.1. Facilities used for the delivery of the Programme and their capacity .....	19
4.2. Equipment used for the delivery of the Programme.....	20
4.3. Availability of teaching/learning materials.....	20
4.4. Information on the updating and upgrading of the learning resources.....	21
Facilities and learning resources: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement.....	21
<b>5. STUDY PROCESS AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT</b> .....	<b>22</b>
5.1. Admission requirements .....	22
5.2. Admission to the study programme.....	22
5.3. Student drop-out ratio.....	23

5.4. Extent and forms of student participation in research and art activities .....	23
5.5. Forms of student support.....	23
5.6. Principles of student performance assessment .....	24
5.7. List of the master's final thesis.....	24
5.8. Students' progress.....	24
5.9. Proportion of students' time allocation.....	24
5.10. Number of students participating in mobility programmes.....	24
5.11. Employment of graduates.....	25
5.12. Methods and strategies applied to tackle the problem of plagiarism and cheating.....	25
5.13. Opportunities for selecting optional subjects and/or modules according to need.....	25
Study process and students' performance assessment: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement.....	25
<b>6. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT.....</b>	<b>26</b>
6.1. Programme management and decision-taking procedures.....	26
6.2. Means to ensure the quality of the Programme.....	27
6.3. Documents defining the responsibilities of the Programme providers .....	27
6.4. Opinion of the Programme's administrative and teaching staff on the distribution of responsibilities.....	27
6.5. Documents regulating internal quality assurance within the University.....	27
6.6. Information accumulation and analysis.....	27
6.7. Involvement of stakeholders in the process of Programme evaluation and improvement.....	28
6.8. Ways of making the process and outcomes of Programme evaluation and improvement accessible to the stakeholders.....	28
6.9. Feedback from the teaching staff, students, alumni and employers on the provision of the Programme .....	28
6.9.1. Survey of the teaching staff.....	28
6.9.2. Survey of the regular students .....	29
6.9.3. Survey of the alumni.....	29
6.9.4. Survey of the external stakeholders.....	29
Programme management: strengths, weaknesses, and measures of improvement .....	30

Annex 1. Study plan

Annex 2. Course/module descriptions

Annex 3. List of the teaching staff

Annex 4. Curriculum vitae of the teaching staff

Annex 5. List of the master's graduation thesis

Annex 6. Questionnaires of alumni's, teachers' and external stake holders' surveys

## 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 2013 there were 21,596 students at VU, 14,890 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.

(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 2 professors, 3 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 the aims and learning outcomes of the Programme as well as the 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 working group for the students and analysing their feedback.

**Table 1.** Agenda and timetable of the self-evaluation work group

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Work content</b>
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 self-evaluation report for the feedback from the stakeholders
7.	27 Mar 2013	Discussion of self-evaluation report with the stakeholders

#### PREVIOUS EVALUATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Since 2006, the starting year of the Programme, this is the first external evaluation of the programme.

## 1. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

### 1.1. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The aim of the study programme is to educate professionals of contemporary Asian cultures in possession of high intercultural competences and ability to work efficiently in the global multicultural society and resolve problems that issue therein based on interdisciplinary research, foster values of diversity in thinking and acting.

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)<sup>1</sup> are provided in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1.** Learning outcomes of the study programme

Clusters of qualifications		Learning outcomes		Qualifications of the Dublin Descriptors
1.	Knowledge and understanding	1.1	The multifaceted nature of area studies, its complex relationship to other disciplines and interdisciplinary formations	Knowledge and understanding
		1.2	Key methods and concepts of contributory disciplines and interdisciplinary formations of Area studies	Knowledge and understanding
		1.3	The similarities and differences between areas of the world, thus fostering attitudes of multiculturalism and cultural self-reflection	Knowledge and understanding
		1.4	The dynamics of social change in the academic field of area studies	Knowledge and understanding
		1.5	The merits of contrasting methodologies and theories applied to the analysis of the selected region's culture	Knowledge and understanding
2.	Domain-specific skills	2.1	The ability to compare and contrast the appropriateness of different disciplinary approaches in an examination of the region-specific and/or transregional contemporary Asian cultures	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.2	The ability to critically engage with the contemporary area-specific culture from an interdisciplinary approach, including culture studies, gender studies, visual culture and postcolonial studies.	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.3	The ability to use and critically interrogate a range of primary and secondary written and visual sources, in translation	Applying knowledge and understanding
		2.4	Library and internet research skills, proficiency in reading and analysis of texts both in Lithuanian and foreign languages, and abilities in the analysis of visual and aural	Applying knowledge and understanding

<sup>1</sup> Dublin Descriptors, [http://www.jointquality.nl/ge\\_descriptors.html](http://www.jointquality.nl/ge_descriptors.html) .

			material as a medium for understanding another culture	
<b>3.</b>	Generic skills	<b>3.1</b>	Read and use materials both incisively and with sensitivity to compare and contrast ideas and concepts found within different disciplinary contexts	Making judgements
		<b>3.2</b>	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 judgements; learning skills
		<b>3.3</b>	Work creatively, flexibly and adaptively with others and meet deadlines	Making judgements; learning skills
		<b>3.4</b>	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
		<b>3.5</b>	Communicate ideas with clarity, coherence and persuasiveness, and analyse issues in the light of evidence and argument	Communication
		<b>3.6</b>	Synthesise information, adopt critical appraisals and develop reasoned argument based on such appraisals	Learning skills
		<b>3.7</b>	Identify and resolve problems	Making judgements, learning skills

## 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<sup>2</sup> and the website of the Centre of Oriental Studies.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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).

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

The social partnership of the studies programs pursued at Oriental Studies Center covers a wide range of governmental institutions – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Department of Migration, State Department of Tourism, etc., as well as educational, private business, travel, teaching, mass-media companies. External stake-holders are also represented at the Study Programme Committee by the director of the Indian–Baltic Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Gediminas Citukas. Results of the

<sup>2</sup> Available from <http://www.aikos.smm.lt/aikos/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Available from <http://www.oc.vu.lt/bakalauro.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 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](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Stojantiesiems/VU-2012-pirmoji_pakopa.pdf).



studies are generally reviewed and reconsidered at the end of each studies year at the Study Programme Committee meeting.

#### 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 according 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 its work on the Area Studies Programmes' Prescripitor, 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)<sup>5</sup>.

#### 1.5. RESEARCH FINDINGS IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF AREA STUDIES

(3) 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.<sup>6</sup> 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,<sup>7</sup> 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.

(4) 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 are run by the disciplinary departments or come from the partnership between two or more departments.

(5) 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

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<sup>5</sup> 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>.

<sup>6</sup> For research done at the Centre for languages, linguistics and area studies (LLAS) see <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources>.

<sup>7</sup> 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>.

history, its culture and its language;<sup>8</sup> (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;<sup>9</sup> (3) an interdisciplinary approach, and interdisciplinary expertise, is at the least advantageous;<sup>10</sup> (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;<sup>11</sup> 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<sup>12</sup> founded on the notion that interdisciplinary “whole” stands as more than the sum of its disciplinary “parts”.<sup>13</sup>

(6) The rationale of the programme under evaluation comes from the balancing the text-based discipline results with anthropological and culture studies approaches to the study of Asian cultures and societies. The latter approaches are introduced through inclusion of courses from the disciplines such as anthropology, religious studies and culture theory.

(7) 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 strengthening 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.

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

Alumni survey showed (see more in paragraph 6.9) that many respondents were employed at the institutions and companies that required their language skills and area-specific knowledge during the time of their undergraduate studies (presumably 10 out of 21). It is worth noting that the vast majority of the employing organizations were characterized by strong international dimension of their activities. Alumni indicated that they worked in the field of teaching Asian languages, media research, translations, travel management and guiding, journalism, NGOs and governmental organizations, some of them went on with Ph.D. both in Lithuania and abroad.

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

The Programme is the only second-cycle study programme in Area Studies field run at Vilnius University, and one of two in Lithuanian HEIs, the other being (since 2007) at Vytautas Magnus

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<sup>8</sup> 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).

<sup>9</sup> John Canning, “Disciplinary: a barrier to quality assurance? The UK experience of area studies”, *Quality in Higher Education* 11, 1 (2005): 44 (37–46).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. QAA Benchmarking Document for Area Studies

<<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/areastudies.pdf>>.

<sup>11</sup> R.J. Ellis. “Interdisciplinarity”, c.2000. Available from <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1430> (accessed 06 / 01 / 2013).

<sup>12</sup> John Canning, “Disciplinary: a barrier to quality assurance? The UK experience of area studies”, *Quality in Higher Education* 11, 1 (2005): 45.

<sup>13</sup> V.B. Mansila, “Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads”, *Change Magazine* 37, 1 (2005): 14–21.

University, Kaunas. Both programmes cover a range of area-specific cultures and 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) The Programme has clear identity of interdisciplinary establishment as integrating a range of interdisciplinary approaches to modern Asia, such as culture studies, gender studies, visual culture and postcolonial studies relevant to the subject-area.
- 2) The Programme is unique among a range of second cycle programmes at VU in providing high intercultural competences for the students with different disciplinary backgrounds.

##### WEAKNESSES AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

- 1) Identity of the Programme is in need of better communication for the external stakeholders as they do not fully recognise qualifications its graduates obtain. To meet up-to-date labor market demands, there are plan to strenghten social science-oriented analytical skills to deal with Asian social and political issue in future.
- 2) Introduction of interdisciplinary- and transregional-scholarship-based approaches is in need of encouragement as most of researchers build up their academic identity in the disciplinary areas and teach few courses on multidisciplinary courses. It is planned to achieve by encouraging teachers' to engage into transregional interdisciplinary research projects and networks.

## 2. CURRICULUM DESIGN

### 2.1. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CURRICULUM DESIGN

Composition of curriculum of the second cycle programmes at VU is regulated by the Descriptor of Basic Requirements for the Master Degree Study Programmes approved by the Minister of Education and Science<sup>14</sup> and the Descriptor of the Vilnius University Study Programmes.<sup>15</sup> 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

Legal requirements	Volume of general provision	Volume of provision within the Programme
Volume of study programme, ECTS	90–120	120

<sup>14</sup> „Magistrantūros studijų programų bendrųjų reikalavimų aprašas“, [http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=374821&p\\_query=&p\\_tr2=](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=374821&p_query=&p_tr2=).

<sup>15</sup> „VU studijų programų reglamentas“, [http://www.vu.lt/site\\_files/SD/Studiju\\_programu\\_reglamentas\\_2012.pdf](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studiju_programu_reglamentas_2012.pdf).

Legal requirements	Volume of general provision	Volume of provision within the Programme
Courses of the study field, ECTS	60<	105
Master's final project, ECTS	30<	30
Courses/modules of specialization in the subject study field or other study field	30>	15
Student's independent work per course/module, per cent	30<	65<
Number of courses/modules per semester	5	5

## 2.2. STUDY PLAN

(1) New national legislation of higher education introduced with the Law on Higher Education and Research in April 2009 had an impact on the curriculum design either. Therefore starting with the 2012 admission, ECTS credit system was established, which affected insignificantly the volume of the study subjects. The curriculum in general is arranged in two clusters of study subjects, i.e. (East and South) Asia-related subjects and subjects dealing with the methodology of a particular interdisciplinary formation, such as postcolonial studies, gender studies, intercultural communication, visual culture. One-fifth of the total student's workload per semester is allocated for the supervised independent research work, while the complete last semester is spent on writing master's graduation thesis. Programme study plan is attached as Annex 1.

(2) During the five-year period Programme improvement has led to certain changes in the study plan. The courses Reflections on Orientalism in Lithuania, Cross-Cultural Management and Marketing, Contemporary Political Processes in Asia, Legal and Social Aspects of Migration have been skipped mostly due to unfavorable feedback received from the students. Some courses like Territoriality and Globalization in Asia and Popular Culture in Asia were modified in content and consequently renamed and became a part of current study plan under other name Theories of Area Studies and Popular Culture in East Asia respectively.

## 2.3. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COURSES AND MODULES TAUGHT

(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 assignments, research and practical projects, e-learning, fieldwork, paper writing, brainstorming, peer-review, out-going classes, portfolio, etc.

(2) Student's workload varies with regards to subject between 32 contact hours per 5 ECTS module mostly for content courses and 48 contact hours for language courses, which amounts to 25–35 per cent of total students' workload. The rationale behind it is that almost all of content courses comprise written paper as an assignments form, which requires sufficient amount of student's individual work.

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

## 2.4. LOGIC OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme applies to the study of culture as social phenomenon in modern and contemporary Asia rather than its historically and geographically specific developments. The programme is of **interdisciplinary** nature and explicitly integrates a range of academic fields, such as visual culture, culture, gender, postcolonial, and ethnicity studies relevant to the subject-area.

## 2.5. REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTERS'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<sup>16</sup> and Methodological Prescription for Study Papers at the Centre of Oriental Studies.<sup>17</sup> 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) Master final thesis are defended at the open meeting of the Defence Commission of the Graduation Works 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 and usually conclude the research project started during the first semesters of studies. Procedure requires that the topic of the thesis is approved when endorsed by the supervisor and the head of the Programme Committee and presented and discussed as a project at the COS in early March of the final semester.

### CURRICULUM DESIGN: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

#### STRENGTH:

1) The Programme proves its uniqueness nationally as a single second cycle area studies programme of interdisciplinary nature, which explicitly integrates a range of interdisciplinary academic fields relevant to area studies and comprises education on more than one geographical area.

#### WEAKNESSE AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT:

1) Different disciplinary backgrounds that Programme entrants enjoy and varying level of knowledge of any Asian area they have has negative impact on efficient fulfillment of Programme aims and learning outcomes. With the commencement of minor studies programmes offered at the COS, future graduates from these programmes as well as from the undergraduate East Asian studies programme at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas) should affect positively the entrance competition as higher prerequisite domain-specific competences could be introduced. The Descriptor of Area Studies Programmes to be prepared in 2014 will have to identify a bulk of prerequisites candidates should satisfy at entering the programme in the field.

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<sup>16</sup> „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>.

<sup>17</sup> „Vilniaus universiteto Orientalistikos centro rašto darbų metodiniai nurodymai“, <http://www.oc.vu.lt/public/Methodiniainurodymaiaktualiredakcija20120627.pdf>.

### 3. TEACHING STAFF

#### 3.1. LIST OF THE TEACHING STAFF

During the years 2008–2012 the programme was implemented by 17 faculty members (2 professors, 5 associate professors, 4 lecturers Ph.D. and 6 lecturers), 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

Composition of the staff involved in teaching at the master degree programme at VU is regulated by the Descriptor of Basic Requirements for the Master Degree Study Programmes approved by the Minister of Education and Science<sup>18</sup> and the Descriptor of the Vilnius University Study Programmes.<sup>19</sup> For comparison of legal requirements for the academic staff composition of the master degree programme and its provision within the Programme is provided in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1.** Comparison of general and programme provision of legal requirements for the academic staff composition

Legal requirements	Volume of general provision, per cent	Volume of provision within the Programme, per cent
Teaching by the scholars	80≤	83,7
Lecturing by the scholars	100	100
Compliance of teachers' research interests with the courses of the study field taught	60≤	79
Courses of the study field taught by the professors	20≤	25

#### 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.

<sup>18</sup> „Magistrantūros studijų programų bendrųjų reikalavimų aprašas“, No. V-826, 3 June 2010, ([http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=374821&p\\_query=&p\\_tr2=](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=374821&p_query=&p_tr2=)).

<sup>19</sup> „VU studijų programų reglamentas“, No. SK-2012-12-4, 21 June 2012, ([http://www.vu.lt/site\\_files/SD/Studiju\\_programu\\_reglamentas\\_2012.pdf](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studiju_programu_reglamentas_2012.pdf)).

(2) Networking activities of the staff members comprise participation of the Indologists in the Central and Eastern European Network of Indian Studies (CEENIS)<sup>20</sup> 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), 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 Studies of Religions (A. Beinorius, D. Valančiūnas).

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

Given that the average number of students in the study programme in the period of 2008–2012 equals 12.25 and the average number of academic staff per semester is 4.08, the programme thus boasts very low student/teacher ratio of 3. 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.

### 3.5. DATA ON THE TEACHING STAFF EXCHANGE

Over the past five years one visiting professor, Dr Deborah Sommer from Gettysburg College (U.S.A) contributed to the implementation of the study programme as a Fulbright scholar by teaching on Visual Propaganda in Contemporary China and Body Studies and Visual Representation of the Body. 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 PROCEDURE 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) Majority of permanent full- and part-time faculty 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.

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<sup>20</sup> The official page of the CEENIS available from [www.ceenis.uw.edu.pl](http://www.ceenis.uw.edu.pl).

(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 3.2.

**Table 3.2.** Teaching staff turnover, 2008–2013

No.	Teacher	Tenure	2007/ 2008	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	X
2.	Brandišauskas Donatas	2010–2012				X		
3.	Drąsutytė Barbora	Since 2010						X
4.	Jaskūnas Valdas	Since 2003	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.	Korobov Vladimir	Since 2003		X			X	
6.	Poškaitė Loreta	Since 2000		X		X		
7.	Silius Vytis	Since 2005			X			
8.	Steponavičiūtė Agnė	Since 2012						X
9.	Švambarytė Dalia	Since 2000		X		X		
10.	Valančiūnas Deimantas	Since 2003					X	
Hourly employees								
No.	Teacher	Initial employment date	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013
11.	Gudzinskaitė Evelina	2008		X				
12.	Kajokaitė Ieva	2009					X	X
13.	Koma Kyoko	2009			X			
14.	Macevičiūtė Elena	2006		X		X		
15.	Tamošaitis Regimantas	2006		X				
16.	Vareikis Egidijus	2007	X					
Visiting teaching staff								
17.	Sommer Deborah	2010–2011				X		

### 3.7. PARTICIPATION OF THE TEACHING STAFF IN SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES, LONG-TERM VISITS, ETC.

Since 2008 the teaching staff of the Programme participated in 54 conference, 50 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). 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 (EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, PRACTICAL) DEVELOPMENT OF THE STAFF

### 3.8.1. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With the advent of new paradigm of teaching and learning as a result of 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 individually. 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) The great majority of the faculty also takes active part in teaching at the first cycle programme, so to discern the part of research which pertains specifically to the subject-field covered in the master degree programme is rather complicated. In what follows is an attempt to provide statistics of research conducted by the staff of the programme instead of its content.

(2) 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), 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). 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 engaged in the Programme from nine in 2009, 17 in 2010, 11 in 2011, and 23 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.

(3) 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 show that the age groups are quite equally distributed, with half of the staff less than, and another half more than 45 years old. There is natural correlation between higher academic position and older age (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3.** Age profile of the academic staff

Position	Age, years						
	26–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59
Professor	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Associate professor	–	–	1	–	2	–	2
Lecturer Ph.D.	–	1	1	–	1	–	1
Lecturer	2	3	–	–	–	–	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>5</b>

### 3.10. WORKLOAD OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF

(1) 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 3.4.

**Table 3.4.** 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 inconsistencies 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 composition of teaching staff of the Programme maintains a balance of majority of scholars working at the COS on regular basis and constant involvement of young scholars and Ph.D. students, which has positive impact on the sustainability of the programme as well as its steady update with unique subject courses.
2. 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.
3. The Programme 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. There is lower involvement of scholars into research activities directly related to the Programme in comparison with area-specific research specific for the undergraduate programme. It has to do with tradition of area-specific studies as a foundation of Asian studies and scholars' identity as professionals in area-specific fields rather than any interdisciplinary formation, on the one hand, and generally low support of interdisciplinary research across the VU and its ambiguous status in the nomenclature of national research, on the other. To overcome this shortcoming requires synergy of initiative on both individual scholar's and academic community levels. The COS is very proactive in the policy making related to the introduction of interdisciplinary culture research into national nomenclature of research, although support of initiatives on the scholars' level is in need of increase.
2. The COS enjoys the highly teaching-laden academic staff, which is individually hard to replace for longer period, and still there is urgent need for working sabbatical system to be introduced at the COS. Monitoring of teachers workload is set out to systematically address this dormant possibility among others.

## 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 m<sup>2</sup>. The total number of students' sitting places is 299. Table 4.1 and Table 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, m <sup>2</sup>	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
<b>Total</b>	185	250.48	

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

Room	Number of sitting places	Area, m <sup>2</sup>	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
<b>Total</b>	114	220.55	

(4) The facilities are constantly renewed with a financial support which comes from the Embassies of Asian countries and other founding bodies. With the support of the Government of Japan in 2002 three rooms were equipped, 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.

#### 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 founding agencies. The COS conducts an *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* exchange programme of academic journal with nearly 30 academic institutions worldwide, 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 EXPECTED 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. There is still unequal distribution of learning resources between the area-specific and interdisciplinary and transregional studies. There were special means undertaken constantly to augment the library stock by prioritizing purchase of the Programme-targeted learning resources as well as diversifying the funding sources.
2. 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

Admission to the second-cycle programmes is organised every second year by the University itself without participation of the Ministry of Education. In order to enter the Programme no entrance examinations are taken by the applicants. Procedure of admission since 2008 requires that the applicants were rated according to the competition score comprised of the grade of BA final thesis (D), average grade of the assessment marks listed in the BA diploma supplement (minus the assessment mark of the BA final thesis) (VS) and the additional scores (P) from 5 to 20 given for the proficiency in Asian languages or for the completion of various BA-level Asia-related courses, the latter being applicable to the non-COS graduates only. The formula of the competition score is, therefore, as follows:  $VS + 3D + P$ .

### 5.2. ADMISSION TO THE STUDY PROGRAMME

(1) Since the commencement of the Programme in 2006 admission has been organised every second year. Throughout the period under the scope methodology of calculation of the entrance grade has changed, therefore comparison of data in most cases is relevant only since between the years 2010 and 2012. Tables 5.1 provides data on the number of applicants as compared with the quota of study places separately of state- and self-funded places. Table 5.2 addresses dynamics of admission grade of both groups of entrants. (Data retrieved from the the annual Admission to VU Reports.)

**Table 5.1.** Competition according to number of applications, quota of study places and its fulfilment

Type of study place	2008				2010				2012			
	Appl.	Q	Ad.	F	Appl.	Q	Ad.	F	Appl.	Q	Ad.	F
State-funded	34	15	15	100	32	15	15	88.24	43	13	14	100
Self-funded	–	–	–	–	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	100

'Appl.' – number of applications; 'Q' – quota of study places; 'Ad.' – number of admitted students, 'F' – fulfilment of quota, %.

**Table 5.2.** Admission grades

Type of study place	2008			2010			2012		
	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.	High.	Av.	Low.
State-funded	59	44	32	59.264	48.076	36.048	55.730	42.966	31.237
Self-funded	–	–	–	31.518	31.518	31.518	30.104	30.104	30.104

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

(2) Entrance competition over the period under the scope shows increasing number of applications (from 34 in 2008 to 43 in 2012) as well as the tendency that more applicants come with the background in other than Area Studies field. The latter has an effect on slightly decreasing average entrance grade since entrants with the background in Area Studies enter higher competition with higher grade due to additional scores. Admission to self-funded places is rather irregular due to the

fact that the targeted group of applicants for these places are the already graduates from other master degree programmes in Lithuania.

(3) Additional statistics also prove that around 35–30 per cent of successful applicants are the bachelor graduates from the earlier years than the year of admission. Informal survey confirmed that it has to do with uniqueness of the programme.

### 5.3. STUDENT DROP-OUT RATIO

The drop-out ratio of the students admitted in 2008 and 2010 is rather similar and consists of 35 to 38 per cent, which is six students out of 16 and six out of 17 respectively. The reasons of dropping out are either objective (not having submitted final thesis, failing exams, moving to another country and another university), or subjective ones which in most of the occasions are not specified in the applications for permission to cancel the studies. One student returned to the studies in 2012 but was again forced to leave the Programme because of personal reasons. The tendency of canceling the studies is relatively decreasing with 6 students dropping out out of 16 admitted from the 2008 admission (37.5 % drop-out rate), 6 students out of 17 (35.3 %) from the 2010 admission, and 1 student during the first study year from the 2012 admission. It is of note that 2 students who failed to submit final thesis in 2010 graduated in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

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

According to the survey conducted on 22 March 2013, all the students are actively engaged in extracurricular activities. Most of them participate in art events outside VU, except 1 person who is a cheerleader of the VU basketball team. 1 student is also a member of the Lithuanian History Students Association of VU, and several students take classes at the School of Oriental languages affiliated to the COS.

### 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, academic units and VU Students' Representation (VUSA). Information about career opportunities can also be obtained at the VU Career Center. Students can use information technology services such as Center 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 for which the Housing Office of the VU General Affairs Department is responsible.

(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). The Psychological Innovation and Research Training Center

(PTMC) at the VU Faculty of Philosophy provides psychological consultations. 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. Formally, these principles, organisational means, and responsibilities of the stakeholders of the study process are prescribed in the Descriptor of the Student Performance Assessment.<sup>21</sup> 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 in a group collectively within the group before evaluation marks are announced.

#### 5.7. LIST OF THE MASTER'S FINAL THESIS

12 students have submitted their MA 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 6 points (satisfactory). Average mark is 8 points (good). The subjects cover various aspects of modern Asian societies, their cultural representations, and problems of identity. Different methodological tools are employed.

#### 5.8. STUDENTS' PROGRESS

The results of the final thesis assessment in the past two years demonstrate that the level of the graduates is high with the average grade of 8. This result is analogous to the average assessment grade of two previous oral defence events in 2008 and 2010.

#### 5.9. PROPORTION OF STUDENTS' TIME ALLOCATION

Proportions of the students' workload for the standard 5 ECTS (133 hours) module allocate from 32 to 48 hours for contact work and 101 to 85 hours for independent work. Allocation of larger part for independent work hours is mostly related to the volume of reading material and paper writing, which makes a part of individual assignments for all of the content courses. Consultations are available for all the modules.

#### 5.10. 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) In the year 2008 there were out-going two students out of 10; it was followed by 3 (out of 11) in 2010. Mobility of the Programme students is not very high due to the fact that most of the mobility

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<sup>21</sup> "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](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studentams/Studiju_pasiekimu_vertinimo_Tvarka_12.21.pdf).



programmes used by the COS's students require knowledge of Asian languages, which is not always the case with students of the Programme under evaluation. Since graduate students require special placements for their graduation research and very few regular mobility programmes can ensure it, there are plans to develop system of co-operation with partner universities in Asia to safeguard supervision of out-going students' research and simultaneously to diversify possible destinations.

#### 5.11. EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

According to the data of the questionnaire distributed among the graduates of the COS of both BA and MA programmes in January 2013 (see Annex 7), which has attracted 45 responses altogether (20 % among them from former MA students), most of the students of the Programme had been employed before starting their MA-degree studies and continued to work while proceeding to their studies at the same time. Most of the respondents, on the other hand, indicated that the competences acquired at the Programme significantly influenced their career.

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

University-wide MA final theses and academic papers written in each semester are tested in the Intranet system for plagiarism, which helps to ensure academic integrity and tackle cheating.

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

The curriculum of the Programme is comprised of compulsory modules only, which is the result of small number of students enrolled. There were attempts to provide options just after the Programme was commenced, but it sometimes led to too small groups that did not meet requirements of minimum number of students per group for the graduate study programmes.

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

##### STRENGTHS:

- 1) The number of the students who enter the Programme is small, not exceeding 17 persons. Such practice allows the teaching staff to follow closely the academic performance of each student and pay appropriate attention to the supervision of their academic papers and individual projects. Due to this fact, the students who get enrolled into the Programme are able to maintain stable progress on the whole, and it could be concluded that those students who choose to pursue their studies to the end have sufficient motivation and skill.
- 2) Students of the Programme successfully integrate themselves into the job market both before and after their graduation. At the same time, most of the alumni believe that the competences acquired at COS made significant impact on their further career development.

##### WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF EXPECTED 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 tendency of increased dropping out after the first semester is being observed, and it can be assumed that some of the entrees decide to give up the studies immediately after having realised that their expectations for the Programme had not been met. Therefore, it would be helpful to diversify the 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 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the COS in order to reach as broad an audience as possible.
3. Different disciplinary backgrounds that entrees of the Programme enjoy and varying level of knowledge of any Asian area they have makes to revise the entrance prerequisite requirements by identifying a bulk of prerequisites candidated have to satisfy. There is also discussion about possible division of East Asian Studies and South Asian and Middle East Studies specialisations within the programme in future.

## 6. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

### 6.1. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-TAKING 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 prof. dr. (HP) Audrius Beinorius (Chairman), Gediminas Citukas (external stakeholder), assoc. prof. dr. Valdas Jaskūnas, assoc. prof. dr. Loreta Poškaitė, Šarūnas Šalkauskas (student), assoc. prof. dr. Dalia Švambarytė. 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<sup>22</sup> 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-Unit.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> „VU akademinės etikos komisijos nuostatai” <http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studiju-procesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45-studijos/studijos/2565-aek-nuostatai>.

<sup>23</sup> „VU akademinio kamieninio padalinio studijų pasiekimų vertinimo apeliacijos komisijos nuostatai“, [http://www.vu.lt/site\\_files/SD/Studentams/apeliacijos%20nuostatai\\_2012-12-19.pdf](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,<sup>24</sup> Statute of Vilnius University,<sup>25</sup> Regulations of Study Programmes at VU,<sup>26</sup> Guidelines of Quality Assurance at VU,<sup>27</sup> 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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<sup>24</sup> „Aukštojo mokslo kokybės užtikrinimo nuostatos“, [http://www.skvc.lt/files/leidiniai/SKVC\\_knyga.pdf](http://www.skvc.lt/files/leidiniai/SKVC_knyga.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> „Vilniaus universiteto statutas“, [http://www.vu.lt/site\\_files/Adm/statutas/VU\\_statutas.pdf](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/Adm/statutas/VU_statutas.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> „Vilniaus universiteto studijų programo reglamentas“, [http://www.vu.lt/site\\_files/Adm/statutas/VU\\_statutas.pdf](http://www.vu.lt/site_files/Adm/statutas/VU_statutas.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> „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 (indiscriminately 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 distribution. 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/preferred 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 admitted 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 Indian–Baltic Chamber of Commerce (IBCC), Mr. Gediminas Citukas. 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 were 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 satisfied with the quality of courses studied 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 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 of study programmes at other universities, the opportunity to combine studies and employment during their master studies. As their primary suggestions for improvement were to have less self-sustaining writing work more emphasizing practical application of the competences obtained; to provide more possibilities to spend some time in Asian universities during study period, and to invite more visiting teachers from abroad.

#### 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%). Surprisingly, least appreciated by the respondents were ability to make decisions (17.09%), skills of team work (17.55%), and analytical skills (18.18%), which are among most important competences developed on master level.

(2) 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 enhanced 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.

(3) 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 recruitment 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.

#### PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT

##### STRENGTHS:

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 successful recruitment of students for state-funded places and constantly increasing interest from the side of external stakeholders over last two-three years reveals the tangible demand of professionals in contemporary Asian studies the Programme seeks to fulfil.
4. As surveys of students and alumni display, such features as high competences of the teaching staff, the sustainable management and administration of the Programme, collegial, amiable relations between teaching staff, administration and students, the opportunity to combine studies and employment during the MA studies, are highly appreciated by the students and alumni.

##### 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. Some students entering the Programme have an intention to proceed later with the Ph.D. studies and naturally consider graduate studies as a preparational stage for scholarly career. However, according to the present national research classification there is no such field as Area or Culture Studies and the programme graduates are eligible proceed with disciplinary Ph.D. only. As a possible measure for improvement a proposal is made to the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania to supplement the Standard Research Classification with the field of Cultural Studies in humanities that could lead to enhancement of students' motivation to get more research skills on MA level.
3. 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. 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.