

APPROVED

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of the Senate of Vilnius University

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURE AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY FOR ACADEMIC RECOGNITION OF EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACQUIRED UNDER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF FOREIGN STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Description of the Procedure at Vilnius University for Academic Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations (hereinafter the 'Description') shall regulate the procedure for the academic recognition of education and qualifications concerning higher education and acquired under educational programmes of foreign states and international organisations (hereinafter the 'education and qualifications') at Vilnius University (hereinafter the 'University').

2. The University carries out the academic recognition of education and qualifications in accordance with Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No.V-376 of 23 April 2015 "On Granting the Right to Vilnius University to Carry Out Academic Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under the Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations" and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and the University.

3. The Description has been prepared in accordance with the Council of Europe and UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the Description of the Procedure for the Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under the Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 212 of 29 February 2012 "On Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations", the Methodology for the Assessment of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations approved by Order of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter the 'SKVC') No. V-48 of 28 May 2012 "On Approval of The Methodology for Assessment of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations" (the wording of Order No. V-21 of 14 March 2017, with subsequent amendments), the European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions, ENIC-NARIC network documents, and other international legal acts as well as legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and the University

4. Key terms used in the Description:

4.1. **Higher education qualification** means any diploma or other relevant document issued by a competent authority certifying the successful completion of a higher education programme or the award of a Doctoral degree (in either science or arts).

4.2. **General requirements** mean the conditions that must be fulfilled in any given case in order to be eligible for higher education or a certain level of higher education or to acquire a higher education qualification of a certain level.

4.3. **Substantial difference** means a difference when the foreign qualification differs substantially in terms of the applicable requirements for the content, purpose, scope, quality of learning (study), and learning outcomes from the corresponding requirements for secondary education or higher education qualification provided in the Republic of Lithuania.

4.4. **Qualification giving access to higher education** means any diploma or other relevant

document issued by a competent authority certifying the successful completion of an educational programme and entitling the holder of the qualification to be considered for admission to a school of higher education.

4.5. **Applicant** means the holder of a foreign qualification or their legal representative who has submitted the documents required for admission to the University, has paid the University's required admission fee and is seeking to have their foreign qualification evaluated and recognised.

4.6. **Specific requirements** mean additional admission criteria that must be met along with the general requirements to apply to the chosen study programme. These requirements in the core academic units of the University shall be determined by their councils upon the proposal of the heads of the respective core academic units or their authorised persons and shall be coordinated with the units referred to in Item 12 of the Description, which shall aggregate them and submit them for approval: the specific requirements for admissions to the first cycle, second cycle and integrated study programmes shall be approved by the Pro-Rector for Studies of the University; the specific requirements for admissions to third-cycle programmes shall be approved by the Pro-Rector for Research of the University. Approved requirements shall be published on the websites of the University and its core academic units.

4.7. **Qualification concerning higher education** means a qualification (education) that grants the right to higher education or a higher education qualification.

4.8. **Foreign qualification** means a qualification (education) concerning higher education that is not part of the education system of the Republic of Lithuania.

4.9. **Academic recognition of a foreign qualification** means a decision taken in accordance with this Description on the recognition of a qualification concerning higher education acquired under educational programmes of foreign states and international organisations, certifying that this qualification meets the requirements for a qualification which entitles its holders to study at the University.

4.10. **Evaluation of a foreign qualification** means the determination of the value and level of a foreign qualification in accordance with this Description, as well as the comparison of the foreign qualification's learning (study) outcomes, scope (duration), content, and achievement assessment requirements with the corresponding requirements established in the Republic of Lithuania.

4.11. **Evaluator** means a designated staff member of the University responsible for the evaluation and academic recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

CHAPTER II

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATION

5. The evaluation and academic recognition of foreign qualifications shall be an integral part of admission to the University.

6. During the recognition of qualifications, the holder of a foreign qualification must be granted the same rights as in the country of origin unless there are substantial differences. Decisions concerning academic recognition must be duly justified.

7. The applicant's foreign qualification shall be assessed in relation to the applicant's intention to apply for the University's study programme(s) of the chosen field and study cycle only, and upon prior submission of the necessary documents for the admission procedure.

8. A foreign qualification shall be recognised as equivalent to a secondary education qualification or a higher education qualification of the relevant level awarded in the Republic of Lithuania, provided that there are no substantial differences between the general requirements of the country where the foreign qualification was acquired and those of the Republic of Lithuania.

9. Each foreign qualification shall be evaluated and a decision on its academic recognition shall be taken on an individual basis, based on the information available and on the practice of evaluating and recognising analogous or essentially similar foreign qualifications, thus ensuring consistency in the practice of recognising qualifications. Differences in education systems, traditions and/or special circumstances, if any, shall also be taken into account.

10. Recognition of a foreign qualification as equivalent to a qualification awarded in the Republic of Lithuania does not guarantee admission to the University.

11. The evaluation of foreign qualifications shall be carried out only upon the Applicant's application to study at the University in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for Admission of Foreign Nationals to First and Second Cycle and Integrated Study Programmes at Vilnius University and/or the Rules for Admission to the Doctoral Studies at Vilnius University.

12. The evaluation and academic recognition of education and qualifications Acquired abroad (hereinafter the 'evaluation and recognition') shall be carried out at the University by the following:

12.1. Evaluators appointed by the Head of the Student Admissions Subdivision of the Study Quality and Development Division of the Central Administration of the University (hereinafter the 'Student Admissions Subdivision') – to evaluate the documents of education and qualifications acquired abroad by the Applicants applying for the first cycle, second cycle, and integrated study programmes.

12.2. Evaluators appointed by the Head of the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies Division of the Research and Innovation Department of the Central Administration of the University – to evaluate the documents of education and qualifications acquired abroad by the Applicants applying for the third cycle study programmes.

CHAPTER III DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED BY THE APPLICANT

13. The applicant seeking the recognition of a foreign qualification shall submit the following documents to the University together with the application for admission:

13.1. copies of documents certifying their foreign qualification (certificate, diploma) and their annexes in the original language, certified by a notary public or the originating institution.

13.2. translations into English or Lithuanian of the documents specified in Item 13(1) of the Description, if these documents have been issued in a language other than English or Lithuanian.

13.3. a copy of an ID document.

13.4. a copy of the document certifying the change of name or surname (if applicable).

13.5. at the request of the Evaluator, other documents necessary for the evaluation of the qualification, certifying other education acquired by the Applicant, explaining the qualifications acquired, and/or copies of the education documents. Certified copies and official translations of the documents specified in Items 13(1) to 13(5) of the Description must be stapled and certified by the notary public or the originating institution in accordance with the laid down procedure.

13.6. an electronic confirmation (statement) in the application system that the information provided is true and correct, and an agreement to grant permission for the University to contact third parties (schools of secondary and higher education, ENIC-NARIC centres, etc.).

14. The Evaluator may request the Applicant to submit additional documents and/or information necessary to make a decision on the recognition of the foreign qualification.

15. The requirements for the admission documents listed in Item 13 of the Description and information for holders of specific qualifications shall be published on the English version of the University's website (www.vu.lt/en).

16. The evaluation and recognition of education and qualification shall be carried out on the basis of official documents issued by authorised, competent and accredited bodies.

17. The educational qualifications submitted must demonstrate the completion of secondary or higher education. A foreign national whose school of a secondary or higher education institution is unable to provide documents confirming their education and qualification within the time limits set by the University's legislation may submit an academic certificate signed by the head of the school of secondary or higher education or an authorised person. Such an academic certificate must include the date of completion of the educational programme and the award of the qualification, as well as the name of the qualification awarded. Applicants to the first cycle, second cycle and integrated study programmes must submit their final education documents (diploma and its supplements) by 20 August. Applicants to the third cycle programmes must submit their diploma by the start of their doctoral

studies. In exceptional cases, these time limits may be extended following the applicant's reasoned written request for an extension. The request can be submitted to the Evaluator by email.

18. In case of doubt or if it is established that the submitted documents certifying the qualification acquired have been falsified, the evaluation of the documents submitted by the Applicant shall be terminated. The Evaluator shall inform the Applicant of the decision by email.

19. If the Applicant fails to submit all the documents required for the qualification evaluation by the deadlines set and/or agreed with the Evaluator, the Evaluator may terminate the evaluation of the application and inform the Applicant of this decision.

CHAPTER IV EVALUATION OF FOREIGN A QUALIFICATION

20. During the evaluation, the Evaluator shall:

- 20.1. verify the authenticity of the documents submitted;
- 20.2. determine the value of the qualification in its country of origin;
- 20.3. determine the level of the qualification in its country of origin;
- 20.4. verify whether the educational institution and the completed or partially completed secondary education or study programme are recognised and accredited in their country of origin;
- 20.5. compare the qualification being evaluated with a similar qualification provided in the Republic of Lithuania, i.e., the content, purpose, scope, quality of education and achievement requirements of the qualification are compared with the specific requirements set by the University;
- 20.6. determine whether the differences found between the Applicant's qualification and the qualification provided in the Republic of Lithuania are substantial, taking into account the purpose of the evaluation.

21. Substantial differences shall be determined for each foreign qualification on an individual basis, taking into account the qualification holder's purpose, learning outcomes and the status of the awarding body, based on the information available and on previous recognition practices.

22. The evaluation according to the general requirements shall be carried out in accordance with the SKVC's General Guidelines on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and the University's experience in recognition.

23. In cases where the SKVC has not developed general guidelines on the evaluation of specific qualifications, or where there is no experience in the recognition of certain foreign qualifications, the Evaluator shall seek individual guidance from the SKVC and/or from third countries, ENIC-NARIC centres, etc.

24. The final decision on the evaluation and recognition of an individual qualification on the basis of an individual recommendation of the SKVC shall be made by the Evaluator, depending on the quality, purpose, learning outcomes, content, scope (duration) of the studies completed and the specific requirements for admission to the specific study programme.

CHAPTER V ACADEMIC RECOGNITION OF A FOREIGN QUALIFICATION

25. Following the evaluation, the Evaluator shall take one of the following decisions (and shall inform the Applicant of the decision by e-mail no later than within 5 working days of the date of the decision, except for the decision referred to in Item 25(1) of the Description):

- 25.1. to recognise the qualification acquired abroad, allowing further study at the University in a higher cycle. This decision shall entitle the Applicant to take part in the competition for a study place at the University which the Applicant shall not be separately notified of;
- 25.2. to recognise the foreign qualification and grant access only to study programmes in a specific field of study;
- 25.3. to recognise the qualification acquired abroad, allowing further study at the University in a higher cycle, provided the holder fulfils specific additional requirements (e.g., passing a knowledge

and abilities test, additional examinations, completing additional courses, etc.);

25.4. in the event of substantial differences, to evaluate and recognise the applicant's acquired qualification allowing further studies at the University in the same cycle as the acquired qualification;

25.5. in the event of substantial differences, to allow the crediting of certain course units (modules) at a higher cycle of study;

25.6. not to recognise the foreign qualification as equivalent to the qualification provided in the Republic of Lithuania.

26. The academic recognition decisions specified in Items 25(2) to 25(6) of this Description, together with clearly stated reasons for the decision and the conditions for appeal, shall be sent to the Applicant by e-mail or via the electronic application system. If the Applicant's qualification does not match the desired study programme, the Applicant shall be offered, if available, alternatives at the University that match their qualification.

27. Where it is established that the Applicant's qualification belongs to the non-formal education system and/or knowledge and skills acquired through informal education, the crediting of course units (modules) may be carried out in accordance with the Description of the Procedures for the Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Education Competences and Crediting of Course Units (Modules) of Vilnius University Students. The applicant shall be notified of this possibility by email.

28. After the Applicant's qualification has been evaluated and the foreign qualification has been recognised as equivalent to the qualification provided in the Republic of Lithuania or if it has been established that the Applicant's admission may be considered with the conditions listed in Items 25(1) to 25(5) of the Description, the Applicant's documents shall be sent to the relevant core academic unit of the University via the electronic application system or by e-mail.

29. If a recognition decision is taken as provided for in Items 25(2) or 25(3) of the Description, or if there is a reasonable doubt as to the quality of the education, or if the foreigner has been granted refugee status and the qualification cannot be proven by documents, the core academic units of the University may test the knowledge and abilities of the applicant, or apply other additional requirements (additional studies, etc). The form, duration and content of the knowledge and abilities test and additional studies depend on the study programme and the cycle of study. The University's core academic units shall be responsible for the organisation and/or supervision of the knowledge and abilities test and additional studies. These units shall coordinate the form and organisation of the aforementioned knowledge and abilities test and additional studies with the Student Admissions Subdivision.

30. For a joint study programme involving the University and another higher education institution(s), documents certifying the education of foreign nationals shall be evaluated and recognised by one of the institutions conducting the joint study programme in accordance with the procedure laid down in the agreement on the conduct of the relevant joint study programme. The evaluation and recognition carried out at the partner institution shall also have an effect at the University

31. If the Applicant disagrees with the University's decision on recognition, they may, within 14 calendar days from the receipt of the decision, submit an appeal to the SKVC's Appeal Commission for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under the Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations, operating in accordance with the regulations agreed upon by the SKVC together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, or file a claim to an administrative court in accordance with the procedure set out in the Republic of Lithuania Law on Administrative Proceedings.

CHAPTER VI FINAL PROVISIONS

32. In order to carry out and ensure the supervision of evaluation and recognition, the responsible units of the University shall collect and systematise evaluation and recognition practices

and their examples, which shall be taken into account when making recognition decisions.

33. This Description shall be reviewed annually by the responsible units of the University and updated as necessary.
