**ALEKSANDRAS STULGINSKIS UNIVERSITY
INTERNAL STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM DESCRIPTION**

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Internal Study Quality Assurance System Description (hereinafter – the Description) of Aleksandras Stulginskis University (hereinafter – the University) defines components of the internal study quality system, provides for the actions and measures that help assure the quality of university education provided by the University.

2. The Description has been developed pursuant to Article 41 of the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 70 of the University Statute, University Internal Quality Assurance Policy Description for Performance Management, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area approved by the Ministerial meeting in Bergen, and by applying the fundamental concepts of the excellence model of the European Fund for Quality Management. The documents mentioned above and changing context of higher education (globalisation, internationality of science and studies, increasing requirements to the quality of studies, changing students and employers' expectations in relation to the study content and methods, increasing competition between schools of higher education) urge for systematic handling of organisational prerequisites and specific measures assuring improvement of the quality of studies and its management at the University.

3. Terms used:

3.1. **Study quality** – full set of qualities of components of the teaching and leaning (study) system enabling maximum satisfaction of the existing and estimated needs and expectations of the University stakeholders, in particular, the society, students, and employers;

3.2. **Study quality management** – coordinated actions guiding and managing performance of the University in relation to quality assurance of the existing and projected studies;

3.3. **Study quality assurance** – part of the study quality management assuring achievement of the study quality projected;

3.4. **Study quality planning** – part of the study quality management intended to identify and set the time frames for the goals of study quality, define the required processes, resources, and competences;

3.5. **Internal assessment of study quality** – part of the study quality management intended to supervise compliance of the study quality with the set requirements and assume actions in case of non-compliance.

II. PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNAL STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE

4. In development and implementation of the internal study quality assurance system, the University follows and, in a flexible manner, coordinates:

4.1. fundamental principles of the Quality Policy under the University Internal Quality Assurance Policy Description for Performance Management approved by the Senate;

4.2. fundamental principles on internal and external study quality assurance provided for under the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area:

the University is accountable to the society for the study quality and assurance thereof;

4.2.1. responsibility of the University for the state and private funding of the studies, assurance of the study quality adequate to the funding;

4.2.2. continuous improvement of the quality of study programmes in view of the students and other stakeholders' needs, trends in evolution of science and innovation in higher education;

4.2.3. development and improvement of the organisational unit responsible for assurance and improvement of the quality of study programmes;

4.2.4. creation of the University environment favourable for assurance and improvement of the study quality;

4.2.5. transparency of the study quality assurance processes;

4.2.6. communication of the indicators and external assessment results reflecting the study quality to the public

III. STUDY QUALITY PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND INDICATORS

5. Planning and assessment of the study quality are conduced according to:

5.1. **Compliance with the mission and objectives of the University.** Mission of the University represents the purpose, role of its performance, defines the limits and highlights the substance of its performance. Mission and objectives of the University serve as guidelines for identification and assessment of the study areas, fields, branches of the existing or projected study programmes and doctoral studies and research at the University;

5.2. **Implementation of the integrity of science and higher education.** Study quality planning and assessment involve identification of the intensity and level of productivity of the research activity in the research areas of the study programmes; correspondence between the subjects delivered by teachers and their scientific interests; involvement of the researchers into the study processes; involvement of the students into research work; activities of the students' research organisations;

5.3. **Level of development and benefit of external relations.** Level of development of the external relations of the University and its academic units with other research and higher education institutions, businesses, other graduate, employer, state or regional governance organisations is considered in view of the specifics of the existing and projected study programmes. Participation in international student and academic staff exchange programmes, relations with employers are subject to individual assessment;

5.4. **Appropriateness of the qualifications and professional development of the academic staff.** Formal and actual appropriateness of the qualifications of the academic staff; teachers' teaching/educational, methodological, research skills, results of their teaching and research activity are assessed. It is also important to assess the continuity and conditions of improvement of the academic staff.

5.5. **Suitability, sufficiency and accessibility of learning resources.** Sufficiency of the premises and compliance of their facilities with the technological progress; sufficiency of the technological facilities of laboratories and their compliance with the technological progress; availability of teaching/learning aids of the study programmes; library; software, hardware, and other IT equipment are subject to assessment.

5.6. **Efficiency of administration.** Clarity of the responsibility, subordination and relations between the administrative and academic staff in the documents; understanding and proper performance of their respective functions by the staff; efforts by the administrative staff at the University to establish and develop an environment favourable for for the studies, teaching and learning aid and other support to each academic unit; regular planning of the University activity and resource allocation; application of the assessment results in improvement of the University and its divisions;

5.7. **Effectiveness of student admission and arrangement of support to students.** Student admission results; competitiveness of the University in relation to attraction of the best

students; capability of the University to admit the students whose interests and abilities correspond (are similar) to the University mission; admissions information and study programme popularization system are subject to assessment. Assessment of effectiveness of the system of support to students involves verification of the environment encouraging students' intellectual and personal improvement, whether students' learning needs are regularly analysed and whether measures to meet the needs are undertaken or not; whether the students receive aid in addressing issues related to adaptation to the university environment and its changes or not; whether academic and psychological consulting, methodological support in developing a projection of future career are adequately provided to the students or not;

5.8. **Students' academic, professional, and personal improvement.** Provision of conditions for students' improvement is subject to assessment under the following criteria: rationale behind correlation between the aims, learning outcomes of study programme, study structure and contents; appropriateness of the teaching and learning methods and definition of the respective level of professionalism to be achieved by the students; identification of the aims of study subjects, assurance of proper conditions to achieve the learning outcomes; provision of appropriate conditions for practical learning and formation of practical skills; acquisition of generic competences (including cultural awareness, communication, scientific, analytical and critical thinking, technological competence and computer literacy);

5.9. **Effectiveness of the study quality assurance system**. Effectiveness of the study quality assurance system at the University is achieved by virtue of quality of the indicators listed above as well as by development of the structure of the internal quality assurance system; formation and activity of the study programme committees; planning and performance of self-assessment of study-programmes and their reports; supervision of the performance quality.

6. Indicators for assessment of the studies and study quality:

6.1. general indicators have been defined in the University strategy, plan for implementation of the University strategy, and system for monitoring of strategy implementation;

6.2. quality indicators of study programmes – pursuant to the methodology approved by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

7. Development of new study programmes is initiated by research teams, meetings of institutes and other academic divisions, Faculty councils, employer and alumni organisations, Students' Union at the University, Rector's Office. Initiators of development of a study programme address the University Rector with a written reasoned request to consider the initiative for development of the study programme.

8. Summary of the initiatives for development of new study programmes is prepared and submitted for consideration at the Rector's Office by the Department of Studies. The consideration at the Rector's Office involves preliminary assessment of compliance of the study programmes under the initiative with the University mission and strategy, demand of the society and labour market for the study programmes; sufficiency of the resources and competence available at the University for achievement of aims of the study programme. During the meeting at the Rector's Office, characteristics of the prospective study programmes are identified: integrity between fields, interdisciplinary, international character, Faculties participating in preparation of the study programme. The Department of Studies develops an annual plan of new study programmes according to the initiatives for development of the study programmes approved by the Rector's Office.

9. Study programme development team is formed for each new study programme to be

designed. The study programme development team includes researchers in the field(s) directly associated with the field(s) or branch(es) of the study programme, teachers with extensive background in teaching, representatives of potential employers, representatives delegated by the Students' Union of the Faculty. Teams for development of first-cycle study programmes additionally include representatives of the teaching staff of the general university education and fundamental study subjects. One member may be delegated directly by the University Rector.

10. Where a prospective study programme is to be single-field and does not possess any significant characteristics of interdisciplinary studies, composition of the study programme development team is subject to approval by the Faculty Dean. Study programme development is headed by the Faculty Dean or Vice-Dean appointed by the Dean, or another person holding expertise in development and upgrading of study programmes. One member of this study programme development team may be delegated directly by the University Rector. Where a double-field, interdisciplinary, joint or a study programme including minor studies, composition of the study programme development team is subject to approval by the University Rector (Vice-Rector authorised by the Rector).

11. A new study programme is developed pursuant to the Study Programme Regulations approved by the University Senate, general requirements to study programmed established by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, descriptors of the study cycles, descriptors of the study fields (groups thereof), requirements to description of a prospective study programme approved by the Director of the Centre of Quality Assessment in Higher Education, as well as the European and National Qualifications Framework, Bologna Process Documents.

12. The first stage of development of a new study programme shall involve field study of the demand for and profession associated with the study programme, identification of the goals and expected learning outcomes of the study programme. These primary results of development of the study programme are discussed:
- at the meeting of the Faculty Council, in case the new study programme under development is single-field;
- at the joint meeting of Councils of two Faculties, in case the new study programme is double-field or interdisciplinary, or includes minor studies.

13. In case the Faculty Council approves of the primary results of development of the study programme, the common and detailed study programme design; the system of correlation between learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessment criteria is designed; study process is projected; detailed rationale behind the human and material resources needed and compliance with the need is developed, quality assurance of the study programme is established. All the projected parameters and aspects of a new study programme under development are subject to systematisation in the study programme description.

14. Study subject descriptions drawn from other study programmes are selected for the study subjects projected in the study plan of the new study programme under development. Descriptions of an established form are prepared for the new subjects to be delivered. The descriptions are prepared by teachers coordinating delivery of the study subject referred to in the study programme description. Subject descriptions are subject to approval at the Institute meetings.

15. The team for development of a new study programme is consulted by and receives methodological support from the staff at the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations. Training for members of the teams for development of study programmes is organised as may be needed. Study subject descriptions are developed according to the guidelines on development of the descriptions.

16. Newly developed study programmes are subject to consideration at the Faculty Council sessions (where a newly developed study programme is double-field or interdisciplinary, or includes minor studies – at the joint session of two Faculty Councils) and to approval at the session

of the University Senate. The Committee for Studies of the University Senate may appoint internal experts for assessment of the study programme description.

17. Description of the newly developed and prospective study programme with the required annexes and accompanying documents is submitted to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. Head of the study programme development team is in charge for submission of these documents.

18. Prospective study programme accredited by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education is registered in the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications and included into the system of the University study programmes accessible to general public.

19. Detailed description of the procedures comprising the process of development, approval and accreditation of new study programmes, providing details on the actions, procedures and responsibilities pertaining to the process, is an integral part of the Quality Handbook of the University.

V. COORDINATION AND MONITORING OF EXECUTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

20. Coordination and monitoring of execution and improvement of study programmes are performed by the Study Programme Committee (hereinafter – the Committee). The same Committee is entitled to coordinate first- and second-cycle programmes having mutual affinity, and in individual cases – all study programmes registered under the same study field (branch). Functions and composition of the Committee (including the Chair) are subject to approval by Council of the Faculty which is in charge for administration of the study programme(s).

The Committee shall be comprised of at least 7 persons, including at least 5 researchers in the study field(s) or branch(es), one representative of employers and one representative delegated by the Students' Union of the Faculty (a student). Researchers are responsible for correspondence of the knowledge and competencies rendered by the studies to the latest scientific trends, their integration into specific study subjects. Representative of employers is responsible for analysis, assessment of correspondence of the study programme to the changing demands of the employers, corrections in students' practical skills. Students' representative analyses and assesses changes in students' expectations, their integration into the study programme. Chair of the Committee assesses correspondence of the study programme to the general requirements to study programmes, arranges and monitors the process of attestation of the study subject descriptions, communication with all social stakeholders of the study programme, performs general coordination of activities on assessment of the study programme and consideration of the proposals on improvement of the study programme.

21. Each member of the Committee performs within the limits of responsibility assigned to him/her. Assessments performed by the members and proposals developed are discussed at the Committee session, where assessments and proposals are approved on behalf of the Committee. In analysis and assessment of the study programme, members of the Committee cooperate with the teachers working under the study programme, as well as the students enrolled in the study programme. Teachers, students, alumni, Dean who initiate amendments and improvements in the study programme are invited to the Committee sessions. Analysis and assessments of the study programme are also based on the aggregated data of surveys conducted systematically among social stakeholders (students, teachers, alumni, employers) of the University. The level of correspondence of an individual initiative and proposals to the general requirements applicable to the University studies, purpose and aims of the study programme is discussed during the Committee sessions.

22. Study programme assessment and improvement activities are performed under the following time frames:

22.1. March to April, annually: partial assessment of the study programme according to the assessment areas identified, initiatives of the students, teaching, and administrative staff, Department and Faculty reports, student, teacher, alumni, employer surveys; assessment of issues in implementation of the study programme and needs for improvement, formation of proposals on improvement of the study programme. Proposals on improvement of study subject descriptions by revising the learning outcomes, providing for active teaching methods, updating the list of references are submitted by the Committee to the Institutes and other academic divisions. Proposals on improvement of organisation of the study process are submitted by the Committee to the Faculty Dean. Proposals on amendment of the volume of the study subjects, consistency of delivery of the study subjects are submitted by the Committee to the Faculty Council that considers the proposals and adopts final decisions. Proposals on inclusion of new study subjects into the programme and elimination of study subjects from the programme are submitted by the Committee to the Faculty Council that, upon consideration of the proposals, forwards them for approval to the University Senate.

Where, following its approval, a study programme is amended (study programme plan is amended) by more than 20 %, the study programme is submitted to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for re-accreditation. Monitoring of the volume of amendment of a study programme is the responsibility of the Committee Chair.

Aim of the annual partial assessment is quality of implementation of the study programme. Areas of assessment are the following:

1) correspondence of the study programme to the latest trends in science – needs for improvement of the study programme objectives, content and methods are subject to assessment;

2) correspondence of the study programme to the market demands – assessment is performed according to employment indicators among alumni of the study programme and employers' feedback;

3) demand for the study programme – assessment is performed according to indicators of admissions into the study programme;

4) study programme resources – assessment is performed according to the teacher to student ratio, teachers' qualifications, availability of literature, premises, audiovisual facilities, software, and laboratory equipment;

5) students' progress and mobility – assessment is performed according to aggregated data of final assessments of the studies and student dropout rates;

6) feedback – assessment is performed according to aggregated data of student surveys, in particular, in view of the level of satisfaction of students' expectations.

22.2. Every 6 or 3 years, depending on the accreditation period of the study programme: comprehensive assessment. The areas, subareas, criteria and indicators of this assessment are in line with the methodology approved by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. Self-assessment report is submitted to international experts.

22.3. As may be needed, upon substantial change in the demand for the study programme or in the formal requirements. The assessment is initiated by the Rector or Faculty Deans.

23. Detailed description of the procedures comprising the process of improvement and updating of the study programmes, providing details on the actions, procedures and responsibilities pertaining to the process, is an integral part of the Quality Handbook of the University.

VI. ATTESTATION OF STUDY SUBJECTS

24. Attestation of study subjects and descriptions thereof is conducted 2 years upon introduction of the respective study subject into the study programme plan. Attestation of study subject descriptions is arranged by the Committee.

25. Attestation of a study subject consists of the following:

25.1. Review of the study subject description. The Committee appoints 2 reviewers - one reviewer representing the Institute delivering the study subject, and another - representing other Institute of the University, other research and educational institutions, employer organisations;

25.2. Assessment of material and teaching/learning resources available for the study subject according to the teaching/learning aids provided by teachers delivering the study subject.

25.3. Assessment of subject teachers' competence according to the previous attestation results, integrity between research activity and subject area of the study subject delivered, research productivity results after the last approval, practical experience in relation to the subject delivered.

25.4. Student survey results.

26. Study subject attestation results may be the following:

26.1. Attested in full for 2 years in case of positive reviews, appropriate availability of material and teaching/learning resources, good total results of student surveys, assured integrity between research activity and subject area of the study subject;

26.2. Attested provisionally for 1 year in case of positive reviews, but insufficient availability of material and teaching/learning resources, or substantial non-compliances in teacher's/teachers' research activity and subject area of the study subject;

26.3. Not attested, in case the reviews are negative, and the Committee deems the reviewers' remarks in the reviews substantial, and they are impossible to correct by the teacher(s), also when a teacher(s) does not perform any research activity in line with the subject area of the study subject and does not hold any practical experience; bad total results of student surveys. In case of negative attestation results, the Committee adopts a decision on invitation of other teachers to deliver the study subject, elimination of the study subject from the study programme plan, or its replacement, where this is in line with the study programme aims and expected learning outcomes.

V. ORGANISATION OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING STUDY PROGRAMMES

27. Monitoring of supervision of self-assessment reports for the existing study programmes and submission thereof to the study quality agencies are performed by the Department for Studies that also has the duty of timely communication of the time limits for the external assessment procedure to the Chair of the Committee. The study quality agency is proposed for the external assessment of the study programme by the Chair of the Committee, with the choice to be approved by the University Rector or a Vice-Rector authorised by the Rector.

28. Self-assessment of an existing study programme is conducted by the Study Programme Committee as described under clause 22.2. Methodological support and consultations are provided by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations. Organisational, material, and financial support is provided by the Faculty Dean.

29. Visit of the international external self-assessment experts is handled by the persons appointed by the Faculty Dean.

30. Preliminary results of external assessment of an existing study programme are discussed at the Committee session. Remarks, proposal and observations in relation to preliminary results of external assessment of the study programme are provided by the Chair of the Committee upon approval by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

31. The Department of Studies in responsible for communication of the information on effective period of approval of the study programmes in the University study information system and the open vocational information, counselling, and guidance system (AIKOS).

32. Detailed description of the procedures comprising the process of external assessment and approval of existing study programmes, providing details on the actions, procedures and responsibilities pertaining to the process, is an integral part of the Quality Handbook of the University.

VI. FEEDBACK IN THE PROCESS OF STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE

33. Feedback is assured by systematic representative surveys conducted among all participants of the study process and employing the aggregated survey data to improvement of the study programmes, better organisation of the study process, enhancement of the composition and competences of the academic staff.

34. Systematic survey of the University study process participants covers students, teachers, alumni, and employers.

35. The following student surveys are conducted:

35.1. First-cycle first year students (any study mode) survey in the first months of their studies. Key goal of the survey is to identify the expectations and motivation of the students who have recently enrolled in the studies. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations;

35.2. Survey among students of all cycles and modes upon completion of each semester. Goal of the survey is to learn about students' attitude towards the subjects studied, methods for knowledge transfer and formation of the generic and special competences; assessment of the knowledge and competences, etc. Results of the survey are subject to adaptation for teacher attestation needs, improvement of study programmes and the study subjects. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations;

35.3. Survey of the students who have returned from studies at foreign universities under international student exchange programmes. Goal of the survey is to learn about students' opinions on organisation of the student exchange program, choice of the universities for the studies, differences in organisation and quality of the studies at ASU vs. the hosting university (under an agreement for partial studies). The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the International Department.

35.4. Survey of the students who have completed their professional practice training. Goal of the survey is to learn about students' opinions on the benefit, organisation of professional practice training, appropriateness of the practice placement. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Career Centre.

35.5. Survey of the first- and second-cycle final year students upon defence of their final works. Goal of the survey is to learn about how well the students' expectations have been met throughout the study period, students' opinions on organisation, material base, teachers' teaching and research competence. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations;

36. Teacher survey is organised every 2 academic years, at the end of year. Goal of the survey is to learn about teachers' opinions on students' motivation, quality of the study programmes and study process, administration of the University, motivation of teachers, possibilities for improvement of teaching and research competence. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations;

37. Alumni surveys are conducted:

37.1. 6 months after graduation. Goal of the survey is to identify the level and quality of employment among the alumni by assessing the relation between the work and the specialisation acquired and the areas of activity that the study programme is intended for. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Centre for Study Quality and Innovations together with the Dean's Offices of the Faculties;

37.2. Alumni survey during meetings with alumni. Goal of the survey is to learn the general opinion among alumni on the studies completed, possibilities for the alumni on the labour market, prospects and areas of improvement of the studies. The surveys are organised and survey

results are summarised and spread by the Dean's Offices of the Faculties and the Career Centre.

38. Employer surveys are conducted:

38.1. Survey among the employers who have provided employment for the University alumni 6 months after start of the employment. Goal of the survey is to learn about employers' opinions on the knowledge, generic and special competences held by the employed alumni, their adaptation at the work place, satisfaction of the employer's expectations. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Career Centre;

38.2. Employer survey during meetings with employers. Goal of the survey is to learn the general opinion among the employers on the University alumni, possibilities for the alumni on the labour market, areas of improvement of the studies. The surveys are organised and survey results are summarised and spread by the Career Centre.

VII. INFORMATION DATABASES FOR STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE

39. The following databases necessary for analysis and assessment of the study programmes are available at the University:

39.1. Student admissions database integrated with the database of the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (LAMA BPO). The database contains statistical data by study programmes on the number of students enrolled in the study programme, admission competitions, applicants' geographical characteristics, etc.;

39.2. Computer database of students' mobility. The database contains statistical data by study programmes on the study modes, student progression to senior years, repetition of courses, termination of the studies, including expulsion from the University, academic leave, termination of the studies;

39.3. Computer database of students' learning outcomes. The database contains individual data of all students by study programmes on the learning outcomes achieved, as well as aggregated data of students' progress.

39.4. Computer database of systematic survey of social stakeholders (students, teachers, alumni, employers). The aggregated data are filtered and analysed by study programmes;

39.5. Computer database for monitoring of alumni employment since 2007. Data on alumni employment 6 months following graduation collected by phone survey are entered into this database.

39.6. Database of Electronic Documents of the Final Papers of the Lithuanian Master's Students and Doctoral Dissertations;

39.7. Computer database of contact details of the alumni.

40. Analysis and assessment of the study programmes also includes consideration of annual reports of the Departments, Faculties, reports by chairpersons of defence of final works, lists of topics of Bachelor's and Master's final works held in electronic archives, data on students and teachers' international mobility held by the International Department, etc.

41. The University uses national AIKOS, LAMA BPO, Student Register and other databases.

VIII. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STUDY QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

42. Study programme descriptions, study programme amendments as well as subject descriptions are uploaded to the University website for public access.

43. Conclusions by external study programme assessment experts and results of the accreditation are published on the University website for public access.

44. Faculty Deans are responsible for availability of public access to the study programmes, subject descriptions and external assessment conclusions and accreditation results.

The processes of assurance of public availability are coordinated by the Department for Studies.

IX. FINAL PROVISIONS

45. The general process of internal study quality assurance at the University is coordinated and monitored by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

46. Processes of quality assurance of study programmes at the Faculties are coordinated by the Faculty Deans.