

FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY
STRATEGY [2019–2023]

WORD FROM THE DEAN

Dear colleagues,

Hereby I invite you, the community of the Faculty of Philology, to work together in implementing the Strategy. I strongly believe that we are united by common values laying the foundation for our vision and goals.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Inesa Šeškauskienė
Professor and Dean

ENVIRONMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STRATEGIC CHANGES

Tendencies of Development of Higher Education

Higher education in Lithuania is part of global and European higher education system, inseparable from technology-induced changes in attitudes and thinking. Universities, particularly their humanities units, are sensitive to the changes and have to react to them accordingly. Universities are profoundly influenced by global tendencies and by EU and Lithuanian research and education policies.

As reflected in EU documents, by the year 2025 at least half of all jobs will demand high qualifications¹. Special emphasis is placed on competences, particularly those related to entrepreneurship, processing of complex and multidimensional information, creative and innovative thinking, smart management of various, especially digital, resources, and effective communication. The time when a narrow field of competence sufficed has long passed. The last years have witnessed an awareness that one of the crucial competences nowadays is the ability to learn and improve on a regular basis. Higher education (HE) has the potential to address these problems, as it, and particularly its humanities segment, is a cornerstone of a free, democratic society, ensuring sustainable development and labour market. As HE is not capable of functioning independently, it is important to establish and maintain a strong link between HE, general education institutions, vocational training institutions, adult learning institutions, employers, and society in general. HE, especially the humanities, creates value and values that can be rarely expressed in material terms.

In recent years, Lithuanian higher education has been developing in several directions. First and foremost is the reorganisation of the network of higher education institutions and their decreased number. In this context, of particular importance is the reorganisation of HE institutions with a high potential in the humanities, such as the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. A reduced number of HE institutions is primarily related to a reform aimed at better quality in HE; however, one of key underlying causes of the reform is a demographic tendency, namely, a decreasing number of students, and an increasing number of young people who choose to study abroad.

Lithuania can hardly stay outside the process of globalization inevitably affecting most countries. One of positive tendencies of globalization is an increasing internationalization of higher education and research. Student and teaching staff mobility, dissemination of scientific ideas, and international cooperation among researchers lay grounds for joint solutions of contemporary problems and for

¹A vision for Europe <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3213b335-1cbc-11e6-ba9a-01aa75ed71a1>

developing adaptive skills of working in a multicultural environment and immersed in multiple paradigms of reasoning.

On the other hand, the humanities, which by nature are bound to raise and deal with questions related to human values, nowadays face huge challenges of the economization of research and studies² in Lithuania and worldwide. The humanities are having a hard time arguing against a widely spread idea that universities are providers of services for students, their clients, and are obliged to respond to immediate needs of the labour markets. An attempt to uniformly quantify and rate all academic fields, including the humanities, not only interferes in the scholars' research activities but also frequently makes them engage in self-defence and justification of their work.

Research into language, literature and culture as well as interdisciplinary areas as well as studies based on all the above fields are of utmost importance for the Faculty of Philology (hereinafter, the Faculty). Research into the Lithuanian language and literature, Baltic linguistics as well as studies thereof have a special place at the Faculty. Nowadays, which is a period characterized by rapid change, all areas of research and study in a multilingual and multicultural Faculty of Philology, from small-scale, unique, philologies to those focusing on world languages spoken in Lithuania and outside it, require sustained effort, new approaches, and new solutions.

²Hansen, Hans Lauge (ed.) 2002. *Changing Philologies. Contribution to the Redefinition of Foreign Language Studies in the Age of Globalisation*, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen.

³ Reid, Alasdair, Emily Wise, Michael Lemagnen, Hans-Jorg Bullinger. 2017. *Specific Support for Lithuania. Fit for the future. Incentivising research and innovation partnerships and attracting innovative investment to Lithuania. Technical Report.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320810927_Specific_Support_for_Lithuania_Fit_for_the_future_Incentivising_research_and_innovation_partnerships_and_attracting_innovative_investment_to_Lithuania

1.1 Challenges for the implementation of the Faculty's Strategy

The implementation of the Strategy is shaped by both external and internal challenges. External challenges include political, economic, social, cultural, and technological aspects, whereas internal subsume current legal framework, organisational structure, human resources, planning system, financial resources, appropriate model of accounting, communication, etc.

1.1.1 External challenges

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FACULTY'S STRATEGY	
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CHALLENGES	Contemporary politics is marked by significant challenges. Globalisation opens borders and encourages free movement, yet it also poses many problems. The EU is facing challenges because of the prolonged Brexit process and increasingly authoritarian and aggressive Russia. Old values are reconsidered and new ones emerge. In this context, language skills and cultural awareness become paramount.
	The refugee and migrant problem shows that Europe has yet to fully comprehend the situation and deal with it. This is partly related to (a lack of) cultural awareness and the ability to identify the most problematic areas. A key prerequisite to cultural awareness is languages; therefore, the EU has declared that developing multilingualism would be a meaningful, albeit partial, remedy to the migrant crisis. In this context, new challenges emerge, such as developing intercultural communication skills, understanding the needs of new ethnic communities; in Lithuania, it is also an increased demand for learning Lithuanian as a foreign language.
LOCAL POLITICAL CHALLENGES	Lithuania is undergoing a higher education reform that aims at revitalising the network of higher education institutions and at raising the level of research and teaching at HE institutions. This process has inevitably posed many problems related to academic staff qualifications and study quality, and opened new opportunities.
	Lithuanian politicians are frequently reluctant to assume responsibility for the education reform and to support its sustainable development. The reform is implemented by fits and starts, without clearly articulated aims of the reform.
	Tendencies demonstrating a rather low prestige of higher education, especially the humanities, are still identifiable in Lithuania's public life. Such situation makes it difficult to raise the awareness of young people of the vital importance of the humanities and to persuade them to choose studies in this field.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES	The funding of higher education in Lithuania is meagre compared to other countries (e.g. the University of Tartu), which eventually may pose serious difficulties for Lithuanian higher education.
	The expected economic recession could also have dire consequences for higher education.
SOCIAL CHALLENGES	Youth emigration and brain drain as well as problematic demographic situation remain major social challenges.
	Poor quality of general education and fairly dated teaching methods fail to develop creativity and critical thinking, while unprofessional career profiling does not motivate secondary school graduates to choose studies that would meet their expectations and help develop their abilities.
	One of such challenges is segmentation of HEI graduates in terms of jobs and remuneration offered to them. Another is the local employers' inclination to recruit narrowly specialised graduates, usually lacking broader education. The third challenge is social exclusion identifiable between school leavers from rural and urban areas, which seems to be a cause for a failure to attract talented and motivated regional school leavers lacking mobility ensuring resources. A major challenge is also posed by salaries offered to university graduates in jobs requiring high qualifications such as translators and other specialists; the growth of their salaries is too slow.
TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES	Technological innovations ease the process of teaching and learning; however, they pose many new content and methodology-related challenges for the academic staff.
	Rapid technological advancement is profoundly changing the mentality of all generations. Technological innovation may cause mismatches between current competences and those required in the future.

1.1.2 Internal challenges

INTERNAL CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FACULTY'S DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	
THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK	The legal regulation of research and higher education is constantly changing.

	<p>Gaps in the legal framework and its lack of flexibility, inconsistent interpretation of some provisions of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania are bound to cause problems in developing international doctoral studies and international cooperation in the field of doctoral studies in general.</p>
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE	<p>The Faculty is undergoing an organisational reform and due to differences in the organisational culture and specific functions of the units, faces difficulties related to the completion of the reform. Some parts in the chain fail or malfunction; the size of the organisation inevitably slow down the changes.</p> <p>The Faculty has integrated the Institute of Foreign Languages. The process is causing many questions related to the compatibility of studies and research, larger groups of students in classes, etc.</p>
HUMAN RESOURCES	<p>Young researchers do not find the prospect of an academic career, which requires huge investment of time and effort, very attractive, mainly due to low salaries.</p> <p>The motivation of researchers and their career planning is not given enough attention.</p> <p>Teaching is not valued at the University, research has always been prioritised.</p> <p>Relatively weak identification of the staff with the University is mostly obvious in that many people lack interest in what is happening in the University and the Faculty.</p> <p>Low salaries of non-academic staff, limited resources for their promotion are major causes why it is difficult to find qualified people, motivate them and keep for a longer period of time.</p>
	<p>Qualification requirements are based on quantitative rather than qualitative criteria; changes are slow.</p>
PLANNING SYSTEM	<p>The workload planning system is neither flexible nor sustainable. The planning of research is fragmentary; monitoring and control mechanisms need improvement.</p>
FINANCIAL RESOURCES	<p>Some principles of budget planning and allocation to the University units lack stability, some are rather obscure and not sufficiently justified. Inter-faculty financial transactions are often problematic.</p>
	<p>The system of calculating the cost-effectiveness of study programmes is not working in its full capacity. The Faculty feels an obligation before the society to implement study programmes which by default (limited demand, etc.) will never have many students. However, most expenses of such programmes are not covered on a national or University level.</p>

<p>APPROPRIATE MODEL OF CALCULATING THE WORKLOAD</p>	<p>There is a system of calculating the workload per academic position when it comes to contact hours; however, not enough attention is paid to feedback about its implementation and to the system's improvement. The calculation of research work remains problematic.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIPS</p>	<p>Many valuable contacts and partnerships have been established between VU researchers and teaching staff and other Lithuanian and foreign institutions; however, their more systematic development is still missing. Establishing positions of (associate) professors in partnership at the Faculty is not supported. Communication with the central administration of the University is sometimes problematic, one-way, the goals are not always clear. Smooth effective communication with other units of the University is not always possible, which seems to be a major cause why new inter-faculty minor study programmes are not initiated or their initiation stumbles, so does the mobility of students and staff within the University. The Faculty's communication is being reorganised to achieve clearer and more focused communication with teaching and administrative staff, researchers, students, and external stakeholders; however, communication is not always effective. Communication with the public and private sectors, i.e. potential employers of the Faculty's graduates, is unsystematic, the aims and objectives of such communication are not always clearly identified. Clarity is particularly important for the academic staff.</p>
<p>INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	<p>Working conditions are improving; however, it is very important to have more work places for staff. Compared to the libraries of foreign universities, the funds of the VU library are very limited. The Faculty's infrastructure adjusted for staff and students with special needs is insufficient.</p>
<p>SERVICES</p>	<p>The commercialisation, application, and selling research have not been properly discussed, let alone solved. The Faculty provides language teaching services, which are expanding and in demand. Further expansion could include language testing, translation and editing services, general courses focusing on literature and culture.</p>

1.1.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis⁴

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
(internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high potential of researchers, a large number of publications; - high quality research journals; - a large number of international research events; - diversity of study programmes, including unique, one-off study programmes; - active participation of teaching staff and students in the Erasmus+ exchange programme. 	(internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a relatively low number of top quality publications; - sporadic organisation of research events due to a lack of internal communication at the Faculty and the University; - lack of interdisciplinarity both in research and in study programmes; - weak international component in study programmes (too few students from abroad, too few courses offered in English).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
(external) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation with businesses and other stakeholders to raise funds (through alumni, etc.) - further development of all schemes of the Erasmus+ programme; - attracting top researchers and teaching staff from foreign universities; - recovery of expatriate talent; - educating talented students in cooperation with schools; offering more services to the public; remote international applied humanities and interdisciplinary projects. 	(external) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - funding from EU Structural Funds will cease in 2020; - national funding of research is lacks stability and sustainability (no strategy); - despite an increase in the salaries of researchers and teaching staff, their remuneration remains low, which may a major obstacle when inviting top specialists to the University. - No sustainable and consistent national education policy, especially in higher education.

2. MISSION AND VALUES**Mission**

To strengthen cognitive and creative powers of Lithuania and the world, to educate specialists in the humanities, taking up the role of leaders in the society by:

- maintaining and passing on traditions of Baltic, Lithuanian, classical, and other European languages and cultures;
- enhancing linguistic and literary research, levelling up to the best centres of linguistic, literary, and cultural research and studies in Europe;

⁴Experts recommend a package of reforms to upgrade Lithuania's research and innovation ecosystem.

<https://mosta.lt/en/contacts/29-news/397-experts-recommend-a-package-of-reforms-to-upgrade-lithuania-s-research-and-innovation-ecosystem>

Lithuania: Research Assessment Exercise. Panel H: Humanities.

https://mosta.lt/images/vertinimas/Benchmarkingo_ataskaitos/research_assessment_exercise_humanities.pdf

- promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism, fostering social responsibility and openness to the world.

Values

- freedom of academic thought and diversity of opinion;
- maintenance of traditions and promotion of new ideas;
- openness to the society and social accountability;
- spirit of community and volunteering;
- mutual respect and trust.

3. VISION

The Faculty of Philology is one of the leading European centres for the study of languages, literatures, and cultures.

When implementing the Vision of the University, in the Faculty of Philology we will attain that:

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- *at least three agreements on joint PhD studies are concluded with universities in other countries;*
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- *at least half of all research publications are of international level;*
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- *a transparent scheme of incentives for highest academic achievements is fully operational;*
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- *an International Advisory Council is established and operational;*
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- *the system of financial support aimed at promoting research and research communication is consistently applied;*
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- *at least two international projects are implemented;*
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- *the language of instruction in at least three study programmes is other than Lithuanian;*
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- *students from abroad comprise at least 20 per cent of the total number of students at the Faculty;*
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- *feedback to students is provided in all study programmes;*
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- *most members of the community and alumni of the Faculty identify with the University and the Faculty;*
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- *at least half of the Faculty's community are actively engaged in activities related to educating the society and volunteering.*
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1ST STRATEGIC PRIORITY. INNOVATIVE RESEARCH**Table No 1. Aims and objectives of 1st strategic priority**

Aim		Objective	
1.1	Strong research skills	1.1.1	To improve doctoral (PhD) studies as the most important stage in a young researcher's career
		1.1.2	To promote international doctoral and post-doctoral studies
		1.1.3	To involve more students in research
		1.1.4	To set up and consistently apply a system of preparing and editing publications in foreign languages
		1.1.5	To set up and consistently apply the system of developing research competences (application of innovative methodologies, project initiation and development, networking and fund raising events, etc.).
1.2	Expansion and dissemination of international level research	1.2.1	To encourage researcher participation in high-level research events by implementing an adequate financial support system
		1.2.2	To review and improve the sabbatical leave system
		1.2.3	To set up and maintain a transparent system of incentives for high level research achievements
		1.2.4	To set up and operationalise the International Advisory Council
1.3	Effective project management and publication of research	1.3.1	To optimise the composition of administrative staff by allocating more human resources to project-related administration, supervision, and consulting
		1.3.2	To develop and systematically apply a system of incentives for project-related activities
		1.3.3	To improve the quality of the Faculty's research journals
		1.3.4	To cooperate with Vilnius University Press on book and journal publishing

2ND STRATEGIC PRIORITY. HIGH QUALITY AND MODERN STUDIES**Table No 2. Aims and objectives of 2nd strategic priority**

Aim		Objective	
2.1	International, multilingual, and interdisciplinary studies	2.1.1	To expand the range of study programmes and specific modules where the language of instruction is other than Lithuanian
		2.1.2	To increase the openness of studies and expand their interdisciplinary component
		2.1.3	To encourage the Faculty's students and teaching staff to join international academic networks
		2.1.4	To improve the dissemination of information in Lithuanian and in other languages about studies offered by the Faculty
2.2	High quality, student-oriented studies	2.2.1	To encourage cooperation between students and teaching staff with the aim to improve the quality of studies.
		2.2.2	To improve the system of academic consultations and make it more effective
		2.2.3	To improve the organisation of the study process and to individualise studies based on student needs
		2.2.4	To develop e-studies
		2.2.5	To improve the teaching competences of teaching staff
		2.2.6	To strengthen the functions and responsibility of each Study Programme (SP) Committee, and to encourage cooperation between the SP Committee and the SP teaching staff and students
2.3	Language teaching for contemporary society	2.3.1	In cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy, to increase the range of teacher training SPs, subject specialisations, teacher training modules, and teaching competence improvement programmes

3RD STRATEGIC PRIORITY. OPEN AND MOTIVATED COMMUNITY**Table No 3. Aims and objectives of 3rd strategic priority**

Aim		Objective	
3.1	Promoting trust and internal communication in the community	3.1.1	To strengthen institutional identity of the community members and to promote mutual trust and respect
		3.1.2	To implement an effective intra-Faculty communication system, and to ensure high-quality feedback
		3.1.3	To incentivise active members of the community contributing to the implementation of University's and the Faculty's mission
3.2	Openness to society and promotion of volunteering	3.2.1	To cooperate with schools and other institutions and organisations whose aims are linked to the welfare of the Lithuanian society, supporting the Faculty and the University
		3.2.2	To deliver educational lectures to the public; to establish and maintain relationships with companies and organisations; to join professional and public organisations (associations, networks, etc.); to provide free-of-charge expert consulting services
		3.2.3	To organise events on a voluntary basis addressing and involving the Faculty's community, alumni, and partners
3.3	Improvement of work conditions	3.3.1	To increase the number of computerised work places for academic staff, and to improve the provision of work-related items.
		3.3.2	To provide common areas for Faculty units (departments, centres, etc.); to renovate lecture rooms and to adapt them to the needs of the teaching process; to provide relaxation areas for teaching staff and students.