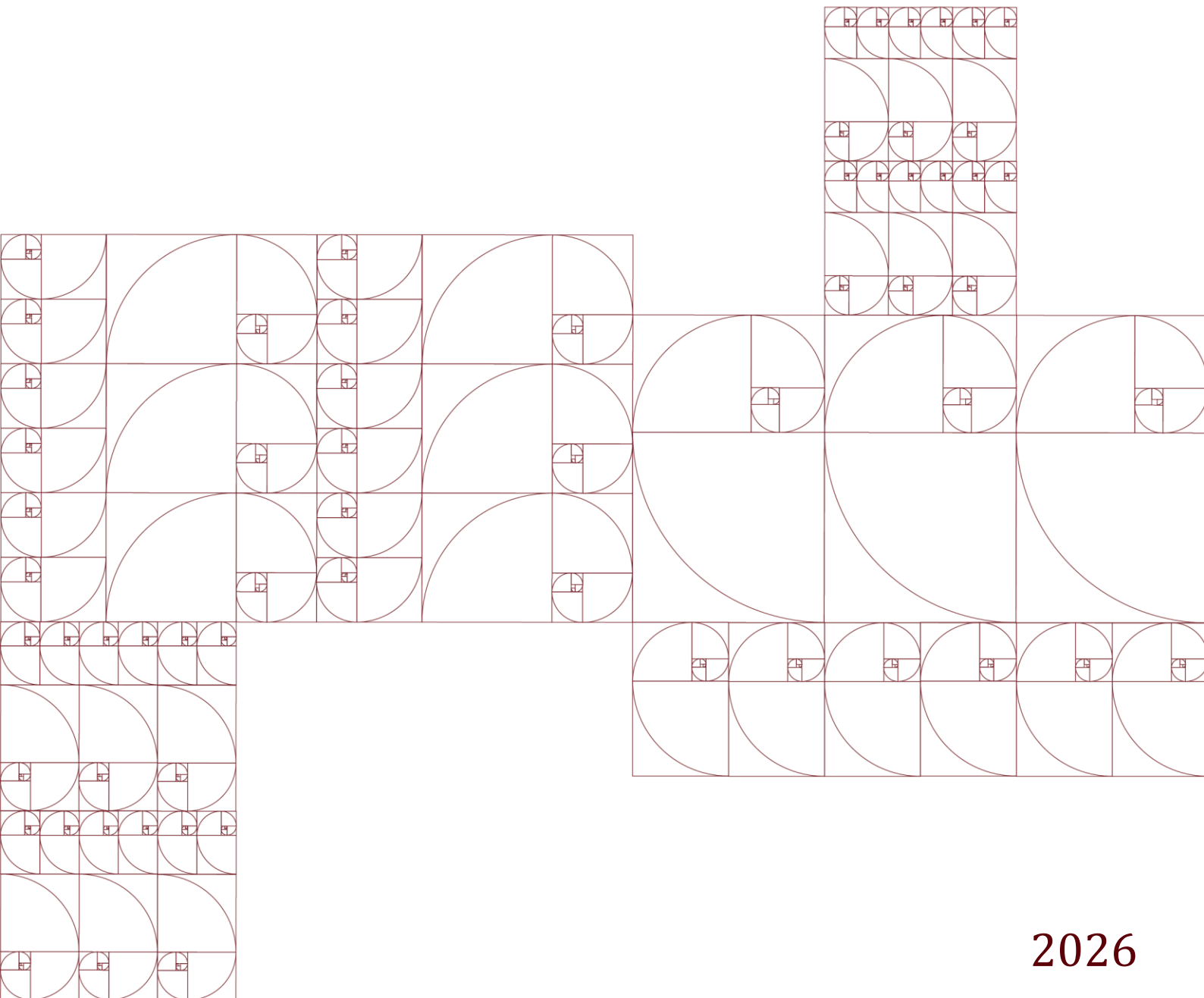




FEEDBACK ON PROGRESS AFTER INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW



The present report is one of the steps in the follow up, which is an integral part of an external review of higher education institutions (HEI) in Lithuania. The follow up starts after the institutional accreditation decision comes into force and is aimed at implementing recommendations received during the external review. It consists of several steps: an action plan, a follow up report, and external feedback on progress.

*Within six months (in case of a positive external evaluation decision) or three months (in case of a negative external evaluation decision), a higher education institution prepares **an action plan** aimed at enhancement of its activities based on the findings and recommendations of the review.*

***The action plan** represents the strategic actions and decisions taken by the institution to address the recommendations and suggestions for improvement provided in the review report. **A follow up report** is prepared to reflect the progress achieved by the higher education institution in implementing the action plan.*

*This **feedback on progress report** is an outcome of a peer discussion process between the higher education institution and external peers to reflect on the enhancement efforts and achievements of the higher education institution and adjust its actions, if necessary. The process has been coordinated by SKVC (the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Lithuania).*

*The **feedback on the progress report** aims to answer the following questions:*

- *Are outcomes of the review appropriately addressed by the provisioned actions?*
- *Do the actions have clear links with specific outputs aimed at enhancement?*
- *Is there measurable and sufficient progress already achieved?*
- *Are there any suggestions and/or commendations in terms of actions taken and/or provisioned?*
- *Are there any potential challenges in implementing the recommendations?*

Timeline of the Institutional Review

The institutional review visit took place from 24 to 26 May 2022;

The decision on accreditation granting a 7-year accreditation came into force on: 16 December 2022.

Timeline of the Follow Up

The action plan has been approved on 13 November 2025.

The progress report has been approved on 25 March 2026.

The external progress visit took place on 26 May 2026.

The feedback on the progress report has been prepared in June 2026 by:

- Prof. Dr. Mile Dželalija, Professor of Physics, University of Split, Croatia;
- Prof. Dr. Louise Kempton, Professor of Urban and Regional Policy, Director, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

Introduction

This report briefly describes the follow-up phase of the institutional review of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VilniusTECH or the University) and aims to provide external feedback on the University's enhancement efforts and achievements during the period following the accreditation decision in October 2022. The follow-up was coordinated by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and conducted according to the procedure common to all higher education institutions in Lithuania.

The institutional review in May 2022 resulted in a positive evaluation, granting VilniusTECH a seven-year accreditation, which is a strong outcome that reflects the University's well-established management and quality assurance culture. Management and Quality Assurance were both rated as very good (4 points of 5), while Studies and Research (Art) and Impact on Regional and National Development were each rated as good (3 points of 5). The panel identified nine examples of good practice and made nineteen recommendations for enhancement. In addition, a separate set of recommendations was subsequently addressed to the Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LMA), which was integrated into VilniusTECH from 1 October 2024.

The submitted action plan, progress report, and supporting documents show that VilniusTECH approached the follow-up seriously and constructively, treating it as an opportunity for systematic institutional development. The progress report is notably thorough. It is clearly structured around each recommendation, provides specific evidence for completed actions, and transparently distinguishes between what has been achieved and what remains ongoing. The level of institutional self-awareness demonstrated throughout is commendable.

As part of the follow-up, the external progress visit, held as an online meeting, took place on 26 May 2026. The visit was attended by two external experts, the SKVC coordinator, and eleven representatives from VilniusTECH, including the Vice-Rector for Studies, the Vice-Rector for Strategic Partnerships, directors of key professional services units, the President of the Student Representation, and the Vice-Dean for Studies and International Relations from the Lithuanian Maritime Academy. The meeting comprised two sessions: the first focused on progress across all four evaluation areas, moderated by Professor Mile Dželalija; the second, moderated by Professor Louise Kempton, addressed the self-identified area of enhancement: Strengthening the University's Third Mission and Effectively Integrating It into Institutional Strategy.

The atmosphere of the meeting was open, collegial, and substantive. University representatives demonstrated a confident command of the progress made, were candid about the challenges that remain, and engaged constructively with the experts' questions. The following observations and conclusions are based on both the written materials (progress report, action plan, and the 2022 review report) and the discussion that took place during the online visit.

1. Progress in the Evaluation Areas after Institutional Review

Management

The 2022 institutional review report rated Management at 4 points (very good) and made five recommendations: the external launch of the VilniusTECH Strategy 2021–2030; the development of implementation plans and KPIs; the possible commissioning of an independent review of the collegial

governance model; the further development of career structures and salary incentives for non-academic staff; and continued investment in facilities and alternative funding sources.

VilniusTECH has made impressive and systematic progress in all five areas, and the experts were particularly impressed by the coherence of the changes implemented. Rather than responding to recommendations in isolation, the University has adopted an integrated approach to strategic governance, connecting institutional ambition with operational practice at every level.

The VilniusTECH Strategy 2021–2030 has been extensively communicated to external audiences, including business partners, alumni, and the public, through dedicated events, digital channels, and regular meetings. The University has digitalised its strategic planning and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) monitoring system, linking faculty indicators to the University's overarching moonshots. Annual plans are now prepared at department level, and the reporting cycle has been significantly improved. A notable ambition for the near future is the further extension of this system to individual staff planning, so that each academic's activities are aligned with their unit's and the University's strategic goals. University representatives acknowledged during the visit that this integration remains a work in progress, but explained the complexity involved in mapping individual activities, many of which contribute indirectly to departmental KPIs, and indicated that meaningful progress is expected within the next year.

Regarding the collegial governance model, VilniusTECH correctly noted that this model is mandated by Lithuanian law and cannot be unilaterally changed. Instead, the University updated its Statute in 2024, bringing greater clarity to the responsibilities of governing bodies and improving the transparency of the governance process. The panel accepts this as a substantive response to the spirit of the recommendation.

The variable remuneration system for non-academic staff has been substantially developed since 2022. Criteria have been introduced for deans, heads of departments, vice-deans, faculty managers and administrators, and Study Programme Committee (SPC) chairs, all aligned with the University's strategic objectives. As described during the visit, the system is notable for its internal coherence. The performance criteria for SPC chairs are linked to those of the vice-deans who coordinate them, and so on up the management hierarchy. This creates early visibility of any performance gaps and supports a more systemic approach to quality management. The panel commends this development as a mature and well-designed institutional response to the recommendation.

In the area of infrastructure and funding diversification, the University has pursued a multi-source financing approach, including EU grant funding and borrowed funds for infrastructure renovation. The establishment of the VilniusTECH Support Fund (endowment) in 2025 is a particularly significant development, creating the conditions for longer-term engagement of alumni, businesses, and patrons in the University's strategic ambitions. The panel notes this as an example of strategic foresight.

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance was rated 4 points (very good) in the 2022 review. Four recommendations were made: strengthening partnerships with alumni and employers; making more strategic use of the ATHENA European University Alliance membership; updating outdated teaching materials; and improving data visualisation tools.

Progress in all four areas has been strong, and in several cases VilniusTECH has exceeded the scope of the original recommendations.

The establishment of the Strategic Partnership Centre in January 2023 has provided a structural foundation for systematic engagement with alumni, employers, and the community. The revitalisation of the alumni club, the growth of business scholarship support, and the planned Boards of Trustees for individual study programmes all demonstrate a more purposeful and sustainable approach to partnerships. During the visit, University representatives noted that alumni activity in 2025 was 60% higher than the previous year across all engagement formats, from Study Programme Committees to career events.

The ATHENA Alliance has been used with considerably more strategic intent than before. New interdisciplinary programmes in Sustainability Technologies (first cycle) and Sustainability Management (second cycle) have been developed jointly with Alliance partners, along with 10 micro-credential courses. The joint Erasmus Mundus programme EMMINENT was launched in 2024. The University now leads 16 double or joint degree agreements within the Alliance. This was noted during the visit as the highest among all ATHENA partners. It is also noted that an application for the European degree label has been submitted. The panel regards VilniusTECH's evolving leadership role within ATHENA as a genuine example of good practice.

The updating of teaching materials has been addressed through a comprehensive set of measures. A full audit of all course descriptions was conducted in 2023. New regulations were approved for Study Programme Committees and Faculty Study Committees, with a digital reporting system now accessible to students, administrators, and the academic community. An extensive programme of faculty training was implemented, with representatives from all faculties participating; over 200 lecturers were engaged in training on educational technologies and innovations in 2023–2024. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has been introduced as a university-wide strategy, with targeted training at Aalborg University and 178 participants in 2025. By 2030, the University aims for all study programmes to include at least one PBL-based module per semester. During the visit, colleagues described the challenges of embedding PBL honestly. The main lesson learned was that managing the cultural change is harder than explaining the method, and that programme-level commitment from all staff, not just individual enthusiasts, is essential.

The Power BI data visualisation platform was implemented in 2023 and is now deployed across faculties, departments, and SPC chairs. University representatives demonstrated during the visit how this tool has enabled more effective use of data for decision-making, for example, visually tracking the impact of introducing a minimum attendance requirement on academic debt rates and student retention. The digital system for individual researcher planning is also under development.

Studies and Research (Artistic Activity)

Studies and Research was rated 3 points (good) in 2022, with five recommendations addressing interdisciplinary studies, formalisation of Study Programme Committee meetings, reduction of student dropout, visibility of non-formal and informal learning recognition, and promotion of international internships.

Progress in this area is solid, with several recommendations substantially completed and others well advanced.

Interdisciplinary studies have been developed on multiple fronts. VilniusTECH participated actively in preparing the national Study Field Descriptor for Interdisciplinary Studies in 2025. New interdisciplinary programmes have been launched, including Sustainability Technologies, Sustainability Management, and Offshore Wind Turbine Engineering. The latter developed with the energy group Ignitis and notable as the only programme of its kind in Lithuania. The PBL strategy, discussed above under Quality Assurance, is itself a vehicle for interdisciplinary learning across faculties. The digital badge system, which recognises students' interdisciplinary competencies, including through mobility, extracurricular activities, and community engagement, received positive feedback from the student representative during the visit, who noted that students appreciate having a formal way to demonstrate soft skills to future employers.

The organisation of SPC meetings has been substantially improved. Annual activity plans are now prepared at the start of each academic year, closing meetings are held, all minutes are recorded in the Document Management Information System, and a financial motivation system for SPC chairs has been introduced. An SPC operational checklist and internal audit process have also been established. The panel is satisfied that meaningful formalisation has taken place, while noting that embedding these practices consistently across all programmes will require continued attention.

Student dropout remains above 10% per year. This is a figure that University representatives acknowledged openly and attributed in part to the structural challenges inherent in engineering education. However, the direction of travel is positive. The mentor system, introduced five years ago and evolved from group-based to individual-interview-based support, was cited during the visit as the intervention that most demonstrably helps. The Senate-approved Plan of Measures for the Prevention of Student Dropout formalises this work. The LMA contributes an additional dimension. The student-to-student mentoring tradition at the LMA, where second-year students mentor international first-year students, was described by the LMA Vice-Dean as yielding particularly effective results. The panel encourages the University to continue evaluating the impact of these measures systematically.

The promotion of non-formal and informal learning recognition has improved through the creation of a dedicated website module and inclusion in publicity plans. International internship promotion has been strengthened considerably, with three to four structured selection rounds per year, individual and group consultations offered by the International Relations Office, and information circulated through multiple channels. A separate Erasmus+ internship page is under development on the University's new website.

Impact on Regional and National Development

Impact on Regional and National Development was rated 3 points (good) in 2022, with five recommendations concerning alumni and community leadership at corporate level, guidelines for companies hosting internships, the lifelong learning strategy, support for technology transfer and start-ups, and the development of a detailed action plan for this area.

This is the area where VilniusTECH has perhaps most visibly exceeded the expectations set by the 2022 recommendations, moving from individual initiatives to the construction of a structured, long-term innovation and engagement ecosystem.

Alumni and community engagement at corporate level has been significantly strengthened. The Strategic Partnership Centre coordinates all alumni activities, complementing faculty-level initiatives. Career Days attracted over 10,000 participants in 2025, and the LMA hosted a dedicated Career Day in

Klaipėda. A bank of career counsellors drawn from business has been created. The VilniusTECH Support Fund, once fully operational, will provide a sustainable mechanism for alumni and business involvement in the University's strategic goals.

Comprehensive internship guidelines for hosting companies have been developed by an interdisciplinary working group, covering the objectives and structure of the internship, the roles of all parties, and the mentor's responsibilities. The panel commends this practical response to the recommendation.

The lifelong learning offer has been substantially expanded. A micro-credential e-shop was launched in 2024–2025, currently offering 127 study subjects and modules. The scale of upskilling activity has grown dramatically: 537 courses were organised in 2025, with 4,665 participants, almost four times the 2024 figure. Thirty-two master's programmes are now offered in hybrid format. The integration of the LMA has added significant new capacity in this area, including professional training for over 2,500–3,000 seafarers annually through the LMA's Seafarers Training Centre.

Technology transfer and start-up support have been transformed. The Knowledge and Technology Transfer Strategy for 2023–2026 has been approved and is being implemented. The Business Acceleration Programme is running, with 11-week cycles providing mentoring, proof-of-concept activities, and investor engagement. The full-time equivalent of knowledge and technology transfer staff increased from 3 to 7. Licence agreements grew from 7 in 2024 to 14 in 2025, and 4 start-ups were created in 2025. A broad patent portfolio is actively maintained at national, European, and international levels. The NEMO Research and Technology Services Catalogue is being developed to connect the University's laboratories and testing facilities with external users.

During the visit, University representatives described their approach to building long-term industry partnerships: rather than one-off consultancy engagements, the aim is to develop relationships progressively, from initial engagement through to sustained research collaboration and commercialisation. The panel noted the University's perceptive observation that the absorptive capacity of local industry remains a constraint, and that VilniusTECH actively works to help build this capacity rather than simply presenting its own offer.

On the question of monitoring societal impact, the University acknowledged that moving from output measurement to genuine outcome assessment remains a challenge. The Third Mission indicators introduced into the Strategic Plan, and the systematic data collection now being carried out by the Centre for Strategic Planning, Quality Management and Analysis, are positive steps. The panel notes Professor Kempton's observation during the visit that this is a shared challenge for institutions across Europe, and suggests that VilniusTECH continue developing its impact assessment methodology drawing on relevant international frameworks.

Conclusion

In summary, VilniusTECH approaches its next institutional review from a position of considerable strength and maturity. The progress achieved since 2022 is measurable and well evidenced, but more importantly, it reflects the maturation of a quality culture now deeply embedded throughout the University. By treating previous recommendations as catalysts for systemic transformation rather than mere compliance tasks, the University has fostered a unified operational environment that effectively connects strategic ambition with practical execution.

Although specific initiatives, such as refining the digital planning system, fully embedding Problem-Based Learning, and completing the integration of the Lithuanian Maritime Academy, are ongoing, the University has demonstrated the analytical capacity and strategic foresight to manage these tasks confidently. The panel is fully satisfied that VilniusTECH possesses the necessary management culture, institutional agility, and clear strategic vision to sustain this positive trajectory. The University has moved beyond the remediation phase and is now positioned to leverage its current momentum for future excellence, ensuring that its ongoing development remains coherent and impactful.

General Commentary and Reflections

The panel is pleased to conclude that VilniusTECH has addressed the 2022 institutional review with seriousness, ambition, and institutional maturity. Progress has been made across all four evaluation areas, and in several cases, particularly in management, quality assurance, and regional and national impact. The University has exceeded the minimum required by the recommendations.

Notably commendable are the development of a coherent and cascading strategic planning and performance system that increasingly links institutional goals with individual academic activity; the systematic transformation of the University's innovation and technology transfer capacity; the expansion and diversification of lifelong learning and micro-credential offerings; the strategic deepening of the ATHENA Alliance partnership; and the ambitious management of the integration of the Lithuanian Maritime Academy, which has added significant new capabilities and distinctiveness to the University's portfolio.

Several important processes remain ongoing, as expected at this stage: the full embedding of PBL as a programme-level strategy; the extension of the digitalised planning system to individual staff plans; the development of a robust societal impact assessment methodology; and the completion of the LMA integration. The panel is confident that the University's strong management and quality assurance culture, and the institutional commitment to evidence-based improvement demonstrated throughout the progress report and the visit, provide a sound basis for completing this work.

VilniusTECH enters its next institutional review period in a strong position. The panel wishes the University and the entire VilniusTECH community continued success in building on the considerable achievements of the past four years.

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