STRATEGY FOR STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND THEATRE

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.   The Strategy for Student-Centred Learning and Teaching in Higher Education of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) is a document where the quality assurance policies for the mission, vision, studies, research and art activities of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter referred to as the Academy, LMTA), as well as the guidelines for the implementation of the objective set forth in LMTA'2030 Strategy – maintain the critical number of students, improve and develop study programmes, students' high motivation and engagement in the study process – are described.

2.   The aim of the Strategy is to create a student-centred environment for studies which is aligned with the policy of the Bologna Process and ECTS methodology by providing students with opportunities to participate in the study process actively and assume responsibility for the attained learning outcomes.

3.   The following are the key terms used:
3.1   **ECTS** refers to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) applied in all countries participating in the Bologna Process.
3.2   The **Bologna Process** refers to the creation of a single European Higher Education Area which is based on learning outcomes in order to compete with other higher education systems in the international higher education area.
3.3   **Student-centred learning and teaching in higher education (SCLT)** refers to the studies based on learning outcomes and their proof.
3.4   A **competence** means a dynamic combination of knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes that allow to carry out an activity adequately.
3.5   **Learning outcomes** refer to the statements that describe what a student knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of the study process based on the requirements of society and the labour world. Learning outcomes are defined by knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes related to the needs that are relevant for the labour market and society, as well as competences demonstrated.
3.6   A **study module means** a part of a study programme consisting of several study subjects related in terms of content, having a defined objective and focussed on the development of particular competences in students.

4.   Other terms used in the Strategy correspond to the terms used in the *Regulation on Study Programmes of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre*.

II. CONTEXT OF ACTIVITY

Political environment
5.   The higher education reform is linked to the need to respond to scientific progress which is changing the world dramatically, as well as changed 21st-century society, the needs of the labour market and a constantly growing competition. The formation of knowledge society, the necessity to update knowledge faced by the employed, and new opportunities to change the place of residence and work easily encouraged European states to seek for closer cooperation in order to compare different education systems and offer possibilities for lifelong learning.

6. European higher education institutions, the signatories to the Bologna Declaration, undertook to create a single higher education area which is based on an easy-to-understand structure of qualifications described by learning outcomes. Such an area makes it possible to compare qualifications acquired in different higher education systems, facilitates teacher and student mobility, ensures higher education transparency and flexibility.

7. Along with the EU Member States, the European Commission endeavours to improve the so-called generic competences, i.e., knowledge, skills and attitudes that make it possible for learners to be satisfied with their activities, be employed later and participate in the public life. The above generic competences encompass communication in the native tongue and foreign languages, use of digital technologies, the capacity to learn, social responsibility and civic awareness, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and creativity. Mastering the above skills is relevant for professionals in the areas of art, humanities, social and other.

Concept of learning outcomes

8. Taking into account their purpose, learning outcomes are described at three levels: institutional, national and international:

8.1 At the institutional level, learning outcomes are used as follows:

8.1.1 in shaping the curriculum;

8.1.2 in the assessment of learning achievements;

8.1.3 in the establishment of criteria, methods and means for assessing acquired competences.

8.2 The institutional level of learning outcomes is the most important because it is directly related to the delivery of studies and conferment of a qualification degree, and demonstrates the quality culture of an institution.

8.3 At the national level, learning outcomes are used for the design and description of national qualification systems which consist of study cycle or study field descriptors. All descriptors are based on learning outcomes. They demonstrate the level of competence which a student has to attain to be conferred a qualification they aim at.

8.4 At the international level, learning outcomes are used to compare and recognise higher education qualifications of different countries and ensure higher education transparency. The description of learning outcomes at the international level is more general than at the national level. Their purpose is to highlight the differences of learning outcomes in different study cycles (the first, second and third).

Learning outcomes, competences and qualification

9. To compare qualifications awarded in the countries of the Bologna Process, the Dublin Descriptors are used. They are brief and summarised descriptors of learning outcomes that are not related to any specific area of studies and show the major achievements of a particular qualification.

10. The Dublin Descriptors are also available for the fields of art studies: Creative Sector Studies, Music, Theatre, Film, Dance.

11. Five major areas of competence which are common for all study cycles (the first, second and third) are distinguished in the Dublin Descriptors:

11.1 Knowledge and understanding;

11.2 Applying knowledge and understanding;

11.3 Making judgements;

11.4 Communication;

11.5 Studying or ability to learn.

12. In the Republic of Lithuania, the system of qualification levels which are based on the competences required for an individual's activities is set forth in the *Descriptor of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework*.

13. Qualification and scientific/art doctoral degrees conferred in the Lithuanian higher education system are defined in the *Descriptor of Study Cycles*.

14. The major component of the qualification proving that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved in a particular study programme is a competence:

14.1 A competence is perceived as an individual's quality taking the form of a dynamic combination of knowledge, abilities and values which is prerequisite for carrying out an intended activity in an appropriate manner;

14.2 Competences are established taking into consideration the needs of society, personal development and labour market;

14.3 Competences are a subjective measure, therefore, the level of competences achieved by students is usually different;

14.4 Depending on their nature, competences are divided into generic and subject-specific. Only the balance between generic and subject-specific competences can ensure comprehensive preparedness for professional, scientific activities or further studies;

14.5 The same competences may be developed for a number of years in different study cycles; therefore, an appropriate description of the level of competences being developed is important;

14.6 The qualification usually consists of several competences. Competences are acquired during studies or by means of non-formal or informal learning.

15. Documents governing studies described by learning outcomes show the approach of a higher education institution to the standards of education provided and responsibility for quality in higher education.

16. Study programmes described by learning outcomes are important for future students, employers and social partners wishing to receive information about the competences acquired by the specialist.

ECTS – student-centred learning and teaching in higher education

17. A single credit system (hereinafter referred to as ECTS) became an instrument for harmonisation of European higher education. It became a means to promote, intensify and develop international cooperation in recognition of competences acquired in different higher education systems.

18. ECTS is a student-centred system which is based on consistent calculation of students' actual workload required for the achievement of intended learning outcomes of a study programme:

18.1 Credits are awarded to students who successfully fulfil the requirements of the whole study programme or its part (subject or module). Credits obtained by the student may be transferred to another study programme, subject or module;

18.2 Pursuant to the provisions of the Bologna Process, credits may be awarded both for competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal teaching/learning and recognised competences.

19. Along with the changing needs of society and requirements for higher education, the approach to the study programme changes too. A gradual transition from subject- and content-centred to student-centred study programmes, i.e., competence-based study programmes, has taken place as a result of agreements on the creation of a single European Higher Education Area to achieve common higher education standards and recognition of acquired qualifications.

20. Student-centred learning and teaching in higher education are perceived as a logical, consistent and transparent study programme designed taking into consideration the competences to be acquired by the student rather than teachers' possibilities or higher education traditions.

21. Transparency of a study programme is assured by means of clear formulation of the competences and intended learning outcomes of a study programme.

22. Intended learning outcomes are established by the institution which designs a study programme and takes responsibility for the quality of specialist training. On the basis of the learning outcomes achieved and proved by the student, the qualification degree compliant with the requirements established in the *Lithuanian* and *European Qualifications Frameworks* is conferred.

23. Learning outcomes define the level of competences the student aims to achieve and is part of the descriptor of a study programme, subject or module. Learning outcomes are formulated separately for each study cycle. The higher the study cycle, the more complex or higher-level competences are developed.

24. Students' needs, expectations and teaching/learning styles differ. Therefore, there is no single right path to achieve learning outcomes. Every higher education institution, faculty, department has to find the most suitable solution.

25. Student-centred learning and teaching provisions are linked to the changing approach to the higher education system and its culture. They imply the search for and introduction of modern teaching/learning methods, closer communication between the teacher and student, promotion of the student's independence and responsibility for their learning outcomes.

26. The following are the principles of student-centred learning and teaching in higher education:

26.1 Increase students' motivation and responsibility for their learning outcomes by making it possible for them to shape the curriculum by choosing study subjects/modules within the limits established by law;

26.2 Shape students' active approach to the study process through introduction of new teaching/learning methods (replacing passive learning with active learning, introduction of e-teaching/learning elements, distance learning, etc.);

26.3 Build students' active need for continuous improvement by avoiding superficiality and encouraging to deepen understanding of the subjects studied;

26.4 Create the culture of cooperation between the teacher and student which is based on mutual respect, dialogue and joint creative and/or scientific works;

26.5 Continuously improve teaching/learning methods that develop students' independence, critical thinking, ability to notice and solve problems, raise questions and look for solutions;

26.6 Build students' need to participate in the processes of quality improvement in higher education when reviewing, assessing and improving learning outcomes, programmes, the content of study subjects/modules, teaching/learning methods, assessment strategies, etc.

III. CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS (SWAT)

27. In the context of the Bologna Process, the Academy complies with all formal criteria of student-centred studies. The following are the **strengths** of the Academy:

27.1 Studies are based on learning outcomes which are used for designing the curriculum and assessment of study achievements;

27.2 Qualifications conferred are in line with the requirements set out in the Dublin Descriptors;

27.3 Competences are described by intended learning outcomes of study programmes;

27.4 Well-developed and active international cooperation makes it possible for students and teachers to gain international experience, have different experiences and learn about new teaching methods;

27.5 Students can transfer credits among courses and institutions;

27.6 Students have a possibility to assess the quality of studies (student and graduate surveys on the content of individual subjects, quality of teaching/learning and assessment methods are conducted);

27.7 Student representatives participate, as equal members, in the activities of the Council of the Academy, Senate, Faculty Council, study programmes committees, all working groups related to the quality of studies and its improvement;

27.8 Students are entitled to lodge appeals on the evaluation of learning outcomes in accordance with the established procedure;

27.9 Quality assurance and oversight procedures encompassing the main elements of studies are carried out by the Academy.

28. Student-centred learning and teaching provisions necessitate extensive changes in the traditional thinking in terms of the approach to higher education and its culture. The following **weaknesses** of the Academy are linked to this provision:

28.1 Possibilities for introduction of modern teaching/learning methods are underexploited;

28.2 Communication between the teacher and student with regard to the discussion of teaching/learning methods, criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes and assessment procedures is not close enough;

28.3 The student's independence and responsibility for their learning outcomes are not promoted sufficiently;

28.4 In the design of the curriculum, the student's workload expressed in credits that is necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes is not always taken into account;

28.5 At the beginning of studies, students are not always introduced to intended learning outcomes and their assessment criteria.

29. The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching principles is related to the following underutilised **possibilities**:

29.1 Increase students' motivation and responsibility for their learning outcomes;

29.2 Create more liberal possibilities for shaping the curriculum by choosing study subjects/modules and/or minor studies within the limits established by law;

29.3 Build students' more active approach to the study process;

29.4 Make it possible to award credits for active involvement in the activities related to the achievement of learning outcomes outside the Academy;

29.5 Use new teaching/learning methods more extensively by replacing passive learning with active learning, introducing e-teaching/learning methods, distance learning, etc.;

29.6 Promote students' activeness in relation to the need for continuous improvement;

29.7 Strengthen students' motivation to deepen understanding of subjects studied;

29.8 Encourage and support the culture of closer cooperation between the teacher and student which is based on mutual respect, dialogue and joint creative and/or research works;

29.9 Create conditions for teachers to improve in order to promote the introduction of new teaching/learning methods intended for developing students' independence, critical thinking, the ability to detect and solve problems, raise questions and look for solutions;

29.10 Build the need among students and teachers to participate in the processes of quality improvement in higher education when reviewing, assessing and improving learning outcomes, study programmes, the content of subjects/modules, teaching/learning methods and assessment strategies.

IV. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTIONS AND PROJECTED CHANGES

30. The Strategy is implemented in the following directions:

30.1 Quality assurance in higher education (a match between ECTS and learning outcomes, environment of studies, teaching/learning methods, assessment methods, mobility, recognition of studies and prior teaching/learning);

30.2 Support to students (student consultations, the social aspect);

30.3 Support to teachers (professional and academic development).

31. The following are the projected changes:

31.1 The community of the Academy (teachers, students, the administration) closely cooperate in the activities related to quality assurance in higher education to create student-centred curriculum and environment;

31.2 Students are actively and responsibly involved in the activities related to the curriculum, learning outcomes and their evaluation, monitoring and improvement of quality in higher education;

31.3 Teachers constantly improve their pedagogical qualifications, apply new teaching and assessment methods;

31.4 Teachers and students constantly cooperate when discussing learning outcomes and the level of their achievement, teaching/learning methods;

31.5 Student-centred learning and teaching become an expression of a professional approach to one's work and the changing needs of society which takes the form of close cooperation of the whole community of the Academy to achieve continuous renewal and improvement.

Programme for Implementation of the Strategy

32.   The aim of the Programme is to ensure the quality and attractiveness of student-centred learning and teaching in higher education.

33.   The following are the goals of the Programme:

33.1 Ensure a stable number of students;

33.2 Improve the quality of study field programmes;

33.3 Develop possibilities for virtual teaching/learning.

34.   The following are the implementing measures of the Programme:

34.1 Draw a map of competences for the study fields delivered in the Academy which is related to the *Lithuanian Qualifications Framework* and *Dublin Descriptors* (see Article 10 of the Strategy);

34.2 Update the intended learning outcomes of study programmes taking into consideration the map of competences;

34.3 Design the methodology for recording students' workload which is linked to credits;

34.4 Update study programmes by assessing the ratio between intended learning outcomes, competences developed, the scope of curriculum and credits awarded, optimising students' workload that is necessary for the achievement of learning outcomes;

34.5 Build a corpus of assessment strategies, methods and assessment criteria used for the assessment of acquired competences;

34.6 Apply more actively the procedures for assessment and recognition of competences acquired formally and non-formally;

34.7 Implement the concept of modular studies;

34.8 Promote the use of distance and e-teaching/learning;

34.9 Periodically review and use, as far as practicable, best practice adopted by students and teachers in mobility programmes;

34.10 Design and constantly implement teacher professional development programmes that promote the exchange of best practice and introduce new teaching/learning methods;

34.11 Conduct student and graduate surveys on the quality of curriculum, assessment of learning outcomes and study processes on a regular basis;

34.12 Hold the days of quality in high education on regular basis where the results of student surveys are discussed, problems are looked into and solutions are sought.

35.   The following are the Programme implementation indicators:

35.1. Number of students – at least 1,000;

35.2. Study fields with maximum accreditation – 100 per cent;

35.3. Share of students with digital skills at the level of independent user – 100 per cent.

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