The Law on Higher Education and Research [1] states that the mission of higher education and research is to help ensure the country's public, cultural and economic prosperity, provide support and impetus for a full life of every citizen of Lithuania, and satisfy the natural thirst for knowledge.

The studies provided by the Lithuanian higher education institutions are conducted on the basis of study programmes conferring a degree and non-degree study programmes. There are two types of study programmes: university and college study programmes. Studies can be of continual or extended forms. On completion of either form of studies, graduates obtain equivalent education.

Higher education studies are broken down into three cycles:

1) the first cycle – Professional Bachelor’s and Bachelor’s level;

2) the second cycle – Master’s level;

3) the third cycle – Doctoral level.

The first cycle Professional Bachelor’s study programmes may be delivered by colleges, whereas the first cycle Bachelor’s programmes may be offered by universities. Study programmes conferring the second cycle degree may be conducted by universities. Doctoral studies may be delivered at universities or universities in conjunction with research institutes.

University degree conferring study programmes can be integrated, combining the first and second cycles of studies.

Study programmes aimed at retraining, which do not award a degree, may be offered by universities and colleges in the manner prescribed by legal acts.

According to the Lithuanian Classification of Education, higher education (both university and non-university) belongs to education level 6(according to ISCED 2011).

The activities of the Lithuanian higher education system are regulated by the Law on Higher Education and Research approved by the Seimas on 30 April 2009.