



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**EVALUATION REPORT
DENTAL HYGIENE STUDY FIELD
AT PANEVĖŽYS COLLEGE**

Review' team:

1. **Dr. Catherine Waldron (team leader)** *member of academic community;*
2. **Bo Danielsen**, *member of academic community;*
3. **Assistant Professor Sandra Ribeiro Graça**, *member of academic community;*
4. **Prof. dr. Vytautė Pečiulienė**, *representative of social partners'*
5. **Meda Vaitonytė**, *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator

Dr. Ona Šakalienė

Report language – English

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Study Field Data

| | |
|--|---|
| Title of the study programme | Dental Hygiene |
| State code | 6531GX020 |
| Type of studies | College studies |
| Cycle of studies | First cycle |
| Mode of study and duration (in years) | Full-time - 3 (years) |
| Credit volume | 180 |
| Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification | Professional bachelor in health care sciences, professional qualification, dental hygienist |
| Language of instruction | Lithuania |
| Minimum education required | Secondary Education |
| Registration date of the study programme | 30-08-2002 |

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *visit of the review team at the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative such study field is not accredited.

The study field is **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “exceptional” (5 points), “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The study field is **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The study field **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. THE REVIEW TEAM

The review team was completed according the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *9th/December/2020*. *Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Review Visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool (ZOOM)*.

Dr. Catherine Waldron, (group leader) *Research Fellow, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland.*

Bo Danielsen, *School Director of School of Oral Health Sciences, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.*

Sandra Ribeiro Graça, *Assistant Professor, member of academic community, Department of Dental Hygiene, Faculty of Dental Medicine, University of Lisbon*

Prof. Dr. Vytautė Pečiulienė, *Director of the Hospital Žalgiris klinika of the Vilnius University, Lithuania.*

Meda Vaitonytė, *student of Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon, 1st-year student of the Second Cycle Study Programme Psychology of Intercultural Relations, Portugal.*

1.3. GENERAL

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before the site-visit:

| No. | Name of the document |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Summary field evaluation report |
| 2. | Response from the HEI to the Summary field evaluation report |
| 3. | Examples of thesis, videos and photos of learning resources |

1.4. BACKGROUND OF STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN HEI

Panevėžys College (PK) is a public higher education institution. The field of oral care is one of the five of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. Dental Hygiene (DH) programme was registered in 2002. Previous external evaluation conducted in 2015 accredited the programme for 6 years. The DH programme offers a 3-year full-time duration with 180 ECTS granting a professional bachelor's in Health Sciences.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Dental Hygiene study field and **first cycle** at Panevėžys College is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas.

| No. | Evaluation Area | Evaluation of an area in points* |
|------------|---|---|
| 1. | Study aims, outcomes and content | 3 |
| 2. | Links between science (art) and study activities | 3 |
| 3. | Student admission and support | 4 |
| 4. | Studying, student performance and graduate employment | 4 |
| 5. | Teaching staff | 3 |
| 6. | Learning facilities and resources | 4 |
| 7. | Study quality management and publicity | 3 |
| | Total: | 24 |

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (exceptional) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

Study programmes' aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labor market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions).

The high incidence of oral diseases in Lithuania, and particularly in Panevėžys region, justifies the need for oral care professionals dedicated to oral health education and promotion and disease prevention. The DH programme at Panevėžys College (PK) prepare students to work with most vulnerable groups of the society, namely children, elderly and special needs individuals throughout their curriculum.

The recent inclusion of dental hygienists as primary health care specialist allows them to work independently or in teams and in public health offices offers promising opportunities. To support this the DH study program aims and learning outcomes should highlight public health competences, such as biostatistics and general and oral epidemiology, and public health, in order to prepare the graduates to meet the demands of this new role as primary health care providers.

Additionally, competences of teamwork and collaborative practice could be included in the programme by promoting interprofessional courses and outreach activities with other study fields of the faculty of biomedical sciences. These experiences will allow students to acquire competences of teamwork and collaborative practice and better prepare them for the labour market.

The positive feedback from social partners, the adaptation of the programme to the changing demographics of the region/country and the final thesis topics in accordance with the needs of the society endorse the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field to the needs of the society and labour market. Social partners as well as DH graduates also demand for dental hygienists to perform duties of dental assistants, such as dental assisting in different fields. As a result, the module "Assisting in Dentistry" was created as an optional subject in the study plan. Also, a Dental Assistant non-formal training program was prepared and coordinated with the Ministry of Health, which admits only persons with a specialty in dental hygiene.

One area that requires further consideration is the demand in the labour market for dental hygienists to have the skill of taking dental radiographs. This issue will be covered in more detail later in the report. This is indicated in the "Common European Curriculum for Dental Hygiene" (EDHF, 2020) in Domain III: Patient-Centred Care, as a recommended learning outcome for dental hygiene programmes.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI.

The mission, objectives and strategy of PK is the implementation of higher education studies based on science and practice knowledge, meeting Lithuanian State, public and economy needs, level of science and modern technology, develop regional relevant applied scientific research and prepare graduates to be able to work in rapidly changing technological conditions, which are in line with field study aim to prepare dental hygiene professionals that can work independently or integrated in teams.

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements.

The study field is based on legal requirements of higher education in Lithuania (Order No. V -1168, 15/06/2018; Order No. V-1075, 08/11/2017; Order No. V-1012, 16/11/2016; Resolution No. 535, 26/07/2019; Order No. ISAK-2194, 24/07/2008; Order No. ISAK -1026, 15/05/2009; Order No. V-222, 19-02-2010; Order No. 501, 26/11/2014; Order V- 801, 23/07/2015)

The scope of study field programme is 180 ECTS, full-time, divided into 6 semesters with 30 ECTS each. The programme of DH follows the requirements of Order No V-707 - MN 35:2019 "Dental Hygienist", 13/06/2019, Order No. V- 1168, 30/12/2016 and the Description of study programmes management procedure (2017). Study field subjects are 156 credits, with 36 credits for practices, 15 credits for general studies and 9 credits for final examination and final thesis. These figures demonstrate the compliance with the legal requirements of the study field for granting a Professional Bachelor's degree of Dental Care with at least 120 ECTS in the study field, a minimum of 30 ECTS of professional practical training and at least 9 ECTS for final thesis and final examination. The duration, depth and scope of the study field are adequate to accomplish the aim and learning outcomes of the programme.

The requirements for the implementation of the study field (Order No. V-801, 23/07/2015) of at least 10 % of the scope of subjects of the study field shall be taught by scientists and more than half of college study programme teachers shall have at least 3 years of professional experience corresponding to the subjects taught are presented at SER.

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes.

The learning outcomes (LO) were not provided in the Self-evaluation Report (SER). Additional information was provided regarding LO and description of each subject at request of the expert panel. The 14 LO of the DH programme meet the requirements for a Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences in Lithuania. They are divided into five domains: Knowledge Application, Research Abilities, Special Skills, Social Skills and Personal Abilities. However, the LO could be further revised and developed to incorporate the new standards and broad vision of the European Dental Hygienist Federation (EDHF). The learning/teaching and assessment methods were also sent as additional information in the description of each subject. The practical subjects enable the students to perform the procedures learnt in theory. Students substantiate what is expected from them to fulfil learning outcomes and that they are clear, relevant and helpful.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students.

The scope of studies is 180 ECTS, of which general subjects - 15 ECTS, study field - 156 ECTS and 9 ECTS of subjects determined by PK and optional subjects. Each semester has 6 to 7 total number of subjects. The percentage of independent study in the programme is around 44%. The alignment of the study plan seems to provide transitions moving to higher levels of knowledge to skill acquisition and desired learning outcomes throughout the study plan.

The study plan provides for 5 internships to be performed outside the College, the volume of which is 36 credits. These internships provide students experience in working with children, elderly, special needs patients and to perform teamwork with different professionals. According to students these experiences allow them to improve their practical skills and integrate knowledge from several subjects since there are not enough opportunities for practical training inside PK, which is mainly in phantom heads. Covid-19 pandemic has worsened this situation since some practices have to be cancelled.

The volume of work of each subject is determined by the learning outcomes and significance for the competences to be achieved. Despite student's confirmation of the high number of assessments and the hard work needed to complete them, they consider their workload as reasonable.

DH programme was last updated on 2018 by Resolution of the Academic Council attending to scientific development, changes in legal acts and feedback from stakeholders. A new module for treating children was introduced by suggestion of stakeholders. Other new topics since 2019 are professional care of dental implants, pain control, polishing teeth by air abrasion and oral care for patients with special needs.

Despite the changes in the study plan being public in PK website it was not clear how students' feedback contributes to the overall improvement of the study field.

Employers find that students are well prepared and active in promoting oral health to children and adults but sometimes they lack confidence in clinical procedures and communication. Stakeholders and employers think that it is difficult to identify what competences are missing in graduates because it depends on each individual personal motivation, not their training. Nevertheless, employers, stakeholders and graduates suggest that students could have their x-ray competences earlier in the program than at present and identified the need for more knowledge in health and safety of radiology. It was also suggested by the employers that achieving the radiology safety license should be included in the programme.

For the consistent development of student's competences, the panel suggests that some revision of the study subjects in line with the EDHF Common Curriculum should be undertaken.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes.

It seems from the SER that opportunities are given to students to personalize their studies, including the Dean's decree which provides students with an opportunity to attend lectures on an individual schedule, students may change their practice times due to illness or other important reasons, they are allowed to take exams at another time that does not coincide with the session period specified in the study schedule. It is stated on the SER that all subjects are necessary to achieve the learning outcomes. Optional subjects offered by PK are 6 ECTS and students can choose from these subjects. Although the subject Professional Foreign Language is compulsory, the students can choose between 3 languages. Students that are not able to attend classes can contact teachers by e-mail, use consulting hours on-line and access information and classes on-line.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements.

All procedures for the final thesis are formalized in intern PK documents and available in the website. Six ECTS are dedicated to the preparation of the final thesis. Students can choose the topic themselves or from a list of topics provided by the DH programme committee. Thesis topics must be in the study field area. The final thesis is first submitted to the programme study Committee that decides on the suitability of the thesis for defence. It is mandatory that the final work is uploaded in the eLABA system. Final work and examination are evaluated by the Qualification Commission composed of a minimum of 5 people approved by the director of PK. Criteria for assessment is provided in SER and a list of topics of the last 3 years is provided in annex 2.

The thesis, combined with qualifying examination, summarize the general and special knowledge and skills acquired by the student to meet the requirements set for the qualification of a professional bachelor. Although the employers have made some suggestions for topics for the final thesis these do not appear to have been developed as research contracts during this evaluation period, this is discussed further in the next section.

It is the panel opinion that the final thesis at PK complies with study field and 1st cycle requirements.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

To give more visibility to the changes in study aims, objectives and content and to acknowledge the input of the different parties involved.

To rearrange the study plan to allow a better transition from theory to practical application of knowledge. The subjects Dental Radiology (5th semester) and Periodontology and Oral Diseases (5th semester) should precede the subject "Procedures Performed by Dental Hygienist" (where students perform various tasks related to the activities of a dental hygienist) in the study plan so that students could integrate the knowledge and skills gained to their practice.

Consider revision of the name of the final internship "Epidemiology and Prophylaxis of Dental Diseases" which doesn't reflect the content and the importance of the subject. There is another subject No. 7 in the study plan offered in the 2nd semester with the same name.

Public Health, Biostatistics, general and oral epidemiology, health promotion and behaviour change, Communication, Collaborative practice should be reinforced/introduced in the study plan to meet the new role of the dental hygienists in public health.

To increase the number of contracted thesis from social partners.

To increase the opportunities for students to have patients at the Panevėžys College oral care Laboratory. This will help to ensure the number of patient experiences or categorization of patients according to difficulty level and oral health/disease status are equal among the students, with less reliance on the external practices, ensuring more consistency in developing the clinical practice procedures and fairer assessment and feedback for the students and improve the opportunities to achieve stated learning outcomes.

To ensure calibration of practice-mentors. This would allow a standardized set of requirements that each student has to fulfil at the end of the internship ensuring clinical practice procedures, assessment and feedback are fair and consistent between practice place sites.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study.

It is described in the SER that Panevėžys College has worked on a strategic action plan to increase the amount of applied scientific research done at the college. Groups of researchers were formed from the College's faculties, one of which covers the areas of Oral Care, Nursing and Obstetrics research (the Biomedical area). Each year in the assessment period, the lecturers of the Dental Hygiene programme in cooperation with social partners have participated in international conferences, presented reports and published articles in scientific journals. Only around one-third of all college teachers publish a paper each year. Within the Biomedical area, this figure fluctuates much in the assessment period.

During the interview with the managers the expert panel was informed that about 1/3 of the teachers working time was allocated to research. During the interview with the teachers, they say they that they also have to use time during the weekends in order to be able to perform their research. Teachers encourage students to participate into research projects. The expert panel acknowledge that a small programme like Dental Hygiene can benefit a lot from working together with partners. The expert panel have not been able to see the effect of the biomedical science group formed at the college so far. Teachers within the fields seems to perform research within their own attitude. The Dental Hygiene

programme has few dental professionals attached that perform research making these competences available at the programme extremely vulnerable in case of staff turnover. It is therefore mandatory to secure enough research active teachers at the Dental Hygiene programme in order to be able to deliver and develop teaching with sufficient scientific affiliation.

Thus, it is the expert panel's opinion that the Dental Hygiene programme need to insure sufficient scientific competencies and activities for this study field.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology.

The Dental Hygiene programme management reviews and updates the content of the Dental Hygiene programme regularly with regard to the newest achievements of oral care field science and changing demands of labour market. The Dental Hygiene programme utilizes well the social partners in this process. It is clear to the expert panel that several subjects of the study programme have had such new developments incorporated as well as entire new subjects as "Oral care for patients with special needs".

Thus, the Dental Hygiene programme at Panevėžys College seems to adapt well to new scientific and technological developments.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle.

The Panevėžys College aims to strengthen the link between science and studies. It is the intention to apply for an EU grant for this purpose. The Panevėžys College organizes an annual students' research conference, which brings together participants from a variety of other higher education institutions. Over the years in the assessment period an increase of students from the Dental Hygiene programme attending this applied research activity. It is, however, still a relatively small proportion of the students that participates in this activity. The students are encouraged to prepare a presentation by prizes for the best and most interesting reports given by partners to the programme. The expert panel see that the Dental Hygiene programme have been working to create conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities during their studies. We see that some improvements have been achieved in the assessment period. Although the Panevėžys College has worked with this issue for some years we recommend further development.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

It is recommended that teachers and students become more involved in applied research activities.

The Panevėžys College intend to apply for an EU grant for this purpose. Whether or not a grant is achieved this matter should be developed. Since the Dental Hygiene programme has strong partners it might be valuable to see if students, social partners and teachers could develop some innovative research projects. This could be done by increasing the number of contracted thesis.

We suggest that specific goals are set for these recommendations.

The expert panel recommends strengthening research collaboration with international partners This would allow a commitment for excellence, a stronger dedication to both discovery and scholarly innovation, and openness toward international cooperation. Also, it would allow more visibility and more cited research. The offer of the projected double degree with an international partner will contribute to this purpose and also to improve English language skills of both students and teachers.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process.

From the SE report and from the webpage it is evident that the College perform the admission of students through the system of the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for general admission (LAMA BPO) and at the time of direct admission. The admission of students is organized in accordance with the Description of the procedure for ranking the best secondary education students approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. The procedure for admission to studies is established in the "Rules for admission of students to Panevėžys College" and is visible on the College's website. In addition, the College annually participates in higher education study fairs, develops and disseminates information on study. The number of applicants are high (well above 100 applicants) each of the three years. 25 – 35 applicants had Dental Hygiene as their first priority. The minimum competition score for 2017 was 1.6, 2.0 in 2018 and 4.3 in 2019. This score is applied to both state-funded and paid study places. Thus, the programme has good applicants to a sufficient extent to both state funded and paid studies. In order to support potential future applicants, the Panevėžys College have organized a School of Mathematics for graduates from secondary schools in order to support students of the Panevėžys College region to better prepare for the state exam of Mathematics. Since the Mathematic exam is a prerequisite for studying in a state-funded place those who are not confident in their mathematical abilities can then better prepare for passing this exam. During the interview with the students, the expert panel found support of a fair and transparent process of admission.

The expert panel finds support for a very good process of student selection and admission in place at the Dental Hygiene programme at the Panevėžys College. We found the admission criteria and students selection process suitable, fair, transparent and published with easy access for the public.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application.

The procedures for evaluation partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and recognition of foreign qualifications and its application are well described in the self-evaluation report. Student has the right to apply for recognition of prior learning or acquired competences regardless of the way in which they are acquired. Information on the procedures is publicly available on the website, first-year students are informed of them during the introductory week of their studies. The evaluation of the student applications is carried out on the basis of known procedures. Feedback is provided to applicants. The Panevėžys College include efficacy of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning in its quality measurements during the period under assessment, the Faculty received a request from nine dental hygiene students for the crediting of partial or previous study outcomes all of which were granted.

The expert panel finds the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application and the handling hereof to be very good at the Dental Hygiene programme at the Panevėžys College.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students.

Dental hygiene students at Panevėžys College are provided with the opportunity to participate in mobility programmes in several different countries. Each year during the period under assessment, a few students took advance of this opportunity – less than 10% of the students did some of their practice through Erasmus +. None foreign students came to Panevėžys College during the period under assessment. These numbers do not satisfy the College. The programme and college inform students about the possibilities for funds and exchanges.

It is clear to the expert panel that Panevėžys College manages to send students from the dental hygiene programme on Erasmus + exchange. The study programme would benefit from an increase in numbers of outgoing students. It is critical even if the Dental Hygiene students are not going on an Erasmus exchange themselves that the College receive incoming foreign students so that their own students can be exposed to dental hygiene practice in other countries.

The students are informed about the exchange possibilities on the webpage and via their mailbox. The College has collected information on the barriers for students going aboard. It is not so clear how this information is being utilized. The College has only little factual knowledge on what keeps foreign students from applying for at Erasmus exchange to Panevėžys College.

It might be valuable for the programme to utilise the knowledge on the student's barriers for seeking an exchange in increasing this in numbers e.g. involve employers who seek staff with an international mind-set and experience from abroad. It might be relevant to investigate amongst the foreign partners students why they do not apply for an exchange to Panevėžys College and identify a package of information that should be offered to the foreign partner programmes students in order to attract them.

The Dental Hygiene programme should increase students' mobility to and from foreign Dental Hygiene programmes. We suggest that the programme set a target for the numbers of the exchanges in the years to come.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field.

The Panevėžys College has a student support system in place described in the SE report. Each student receives relevant information personally in the e-mail box administered by the College. A group tutor is assigned to each academic group. All academic information is posted on the College website in the Students section. Students can combine work and studies as they have an opportunity to attend lectures on an individual schedule. Due to illness or other important reasons, students may change their practice time; they are allowed to take exams at another time that does not coincide with the session period specified in the study schedule. Teachers individually advise students who attend lectures on an individual schedule. Furthermore, students' studies are supported by materials provided for at the CMS (Moodle). Individual consultations are provided for students who continue their studies after an academic holiday or after a break of several years.

The Center for Studies, Career and Occupation ensures that student receives financial support from the State Studies Fund. Students have the opportunity to live in the College's dormitory. The College, together with the Lithuanian Students' Union, participates in a project that provides free confidential psychological consultations for students. The College employs a professional psychologist to whom students can apply for psychological help. During the interviews with students and staff it became evident that students have access to different kinds of support that differs according to their needs. Students are aware of different kinds of support and where they can seek support, although they have not had this kind of support themselves. Teachers report on how they support students with feed-back and guidance in learning when students are needing this to be able to pass their requirements.

The Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene programme seems to have suitable, adequate and effective support of different kinds (academic, financial, social, psychological and personal) in place for their students in order to support them to fulfill the requirements of the Dental Hygiene study.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling.

Each student receives an information leaflet issued by the College when signing the study agreement. The academic year for freshmen begins with an introduction to studies. Newly admitted students meet with the heads of the College and the faculty, the staff of the Center for Studies, Career and Student

Occupation and other departments of the College. Students are introduced to the study procedure and assessment system. The students receive personalized mails and information on the CMS (Moodle) from the Center for Studies, Career and Occupation and the Dental Hygiene programme and teachers. From the interviews with the students this seems to be relevant and sufficient.

The Panevėžys College has a hotline on the College's website where students can seek help in the event of inappropriate behaviour in the institution.

The expert panel finds that the Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene programme have suitable, adequate and effective support of study information and student counselling.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

No recommendations

3.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The teaching process is organized in way that follows the study plan and ensures the achievement of study outcomes. At the beginning of the study process students are being introduced with the general description of the subject, the means and methods of studying, teaching and assessment methods. A ten – point scale is applied for the assessment process, with the final grade being a composite of the accumulative grades obtained from various tasks assigned for the students in order to achieve the study outcomes necessary to complete the study program. The assessment methods used in the study process include lectures, discussions, group work, cases, situation analysis, etc. A large portion of evaluations come in oral form including some of the exams. College did not present any data representing the percentage of students failing any of the subjects leaving the expert panel under the impression that none of the students ever fail in this study program and have to retake the evaluations. This was clarified during the meetings.

Independent study of the students is monitored with Moodle where teachers can track the activity of the students.

The needs of the students appear sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.

Support for students with special needs is provided by the college in the means of counselling and providing necessary equipment (e.g. programs allowing reading in Braille, two magnifiers, adjustable tables, stationary lift). In addition, study process and forms of assessment are arranged in a flexible manner that can be adjusted to particular needs of the student. Students with special needs can also benefit from the support provided on the national level that comes from the Department of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and European Union funds, that are in accordance with legal acts of Republic of Lithuania.

Socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are provided with flexible study process that can be adapted to the individual needs for the student. During the assessment period, there were no students with the special needs in the DH study program.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress.

In order to promote a systematic monitoring of student progress in the study process, various forms of assessment take place to assure students' achievement. Main forms of student progress monitoring are interim assessments and task performance that are followed up by scheduled exam sessions.

For improvement of study progress planning and promoting self-assessment, discussions and consultations after evaluations take place between students and teachers.

Lastly, at the end of every subject students are asked to fill in surveys regarding the feedback of the subjects' quality and teachers' work that would help optimize and improve the study progress. However, the response rate is not sufficient. The College should consider ways to improve the students' participation in providing feedback. A suggestion could be to provide reminders to the student to complete the surveys.

The students' progress is well monitored, although they are given the opportunity to provide feedback, few students use the opportunity.

3.4.4. Evaluation of the feedback provided to students in the course of the studies to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress.

Students receive the feedback from teachers' after completion of assignments and exams in the form of discussions held in groups. In addition, self – reflection method of feedback has been mentioned during the visit, although no information about this type of feedback was provided in the College's SER. Student's self-assessment and peer assessment seem limited in the study field. These practices would develop critical reviewing skills giving the student the chance to manage own learning and develop more independently. With peer assessment students become more able in giving constructive feedback and receiving and acting on feedback received.

Upon completion of student's practice, social partners give the feedback about the students to their practice supervisor with detailed characteristics of the student after the placement is completed. Feedback is mainly focused on the mistakes and how to avoid them in the future.

The amount of feedback that is provided for the students is adequate.

3.4.5. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field.

Data reporting the employment levels of the Panevėžys College comes from CMIS (Career Management Information System). In 2019 85,7 % of the graduates have been employed in the field. Alumni report that it is not hard to find a job after the studies. Also, it is a common practice to stay and continue work at the initial practice placement.

The employability of the graduates is evaluated and is determined to be high.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

The academic integrity is assured by taking measures that are in accordance with Code of Academic Ethics (2018). Upon the completion of final thesis students sign a decree of honest preparation of the thesis and the honest part taking in the exams is supervised by teachers. In case of cheating during the exam, the students' work is terminated and it is considered as an academic debt. The originality of the

final thesis is monitored by Study program committee that uses electronic object repository eLABa to check for plagiarism. In the case of DH no cases of academic dishonesty has been reported.

Equal opportunities are ensured for the students at the College and the non – discrimination policy is being followed in order to prevent any cases of intolerance and discrimination.

No cases of a breach of the tolerance and non-discrimination rights in the DH program has been reported.

3.4.7. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies.

The students have an opportunity to make an appeal in case of disagreement with the assessment of the subjects and the assessment procedures of the final thesis.

No appeals in DH program have been file within the time of the program analysis.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

No recommendations.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

Eighteen teachers are engaged in the study field and 10 of them held full time position with at least 0.5 FTE and at least 3 years of pedagogical experience. A list of the 10 permanent teachers is provided, with years of practical work experience, 3 most significant works in the last 5 years, the subjects taught and the workload. All lecturers have at least master's degree except for one involved in practical classes that held a professional bachelor's degree. (Annex 3 of the SER).

Around 60-65 students a year are enrolled in the study field. The current ratio between the number of teaching staff of the field subjects and the number of students is 1:3. In practical classes students are divided in groups of 8-12. The ratio for practical classes is not provided.

Two dental hygienists are responsible for the core practical area of the study programme. It is mention in the SER due to difficulties in recruitment of scientific staff, dentists and dentists from institutions providing dental services with extensive work experience in the field are invited to teach the subjects of the study field. One of the DH started this year a PhD program in Dental Hygiene in a foreign institution.

Although the dynamics of lectures-practitioners during the period of evaluation it is not described in the SER it is mentioned as a strength that a strong team of lecturers and practitioners was formed.

New teachers enter by competition and preferable having already have a scientific degree. To attract teachers there is also a possibility for non-competitive teachers for limited time till no more than 2 years. Teachers-practitioners that are invited without a competition are supervised by the chairman of the study program and prepared for tender positions. For two years in a row, public tenders for the position of a teacher with a scientific degree in Oral Care were announced, but there were no candidates.

Legal requirements for teaching staff are being met. Teachers of the study field are at least masters, practical classes teachers not lower than bachelor's or professional bachelor's qualification degree.

14.3% of modules of the study field are taught by researchers, and 83,3% of teachers have at least 3 years of practical work experience.

The composition of the academic staff complies with the legal requirements. The qualification of the academic staff is appropriate to implement the programme and achieve the learning outcomes.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile).

Teachers have opportunity to engage in mobility programs. They are informed by the Dean of the faculty and Study Programme Chairman about possibilities of mobility regularly. Criteria for selection of teachers in mobility is clear.

During the evaluation period seven different countries were visited by seven (39%) teachers of the Oral Care study field. 70% of these exchanges were done by full-time teachers. No incoming teachers from foreign higher education institutions visited PK during the same period.

The benefits of academic exchanges aim to ensure better quality of studies, develop foreign language competencies, develop teachers' intercultural communication skills and strengthen the implementation of applied research. The teacher includes them in the annual plan of the lecturer's activities and submits a request to the Coordinator of International Relations. All mobility proposals were accepted during the period of evaluation.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff.

Systematic and consistent professional development of teachers is described. At the beginning of each academic year, each lecturer submits a professional development plan to the Dean of the Faculty. Topics of professional development are directly related to the subjects taught and the scientific interests of teachers and include participation in international mobility projects, practical internships, seminars, courses and other training events. While raising their qualification, lecturers acquire new research, innovative teaching methods and methodologies and get acquainted with the relevancies of the study field.

The full-time teacher's workload is, besides contact and non-contact hours, attributed to development of applied research, project and organizational activities and professional development. Teachers denoted using extra time (during weekends) to perform their research and try to engage students in research.

At the end of the year the teacher reports the activities done, that are discussed and approved by the Dean and every 5 years teachers' evaluation is performed. There are salary benefits for teachers that exceed 5 times the minimum defined indicators and dismissal of the teacher that doesn't meet the minimal requirements.

During the evaluation period 39% of teachers of DH took part in English language courses. A 40h seminar of "Student-Oriented Didactics" was provided as well as 5 seminars to improve teachers competences in distance learning.

The support provided by the senior management was corroborated by teachers during the meetings with the expert panel and include paid business trips, internships, paid daily allowances, opportunities to combine work and development time, etc.

We observed that the teachers were motivated and dedicated to their roles while acknowledging the need for future development of their skills and those of potential new teachers.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

To increase the scientific preparation of study field lecturers. This would contribute to develop knowledge in the study field and to strengthen the study field quality and visibility.

To continue to improve professional development in teaching. Quality teachers and teaching show a strong relationship with students' achievement and continuous development of the quality and improvement of the study field.

To foster more internationalization of the study programme. This would contribute to a higher attractiveness and competitiveness of Panevėžys in the international context and improve teachers' foreign language skills. This would be a prerequisite for having teaching at the highest international standards and to develop consistency in the curriculum with international partners.

To involve more dental hygienists in teaching. The focus should be on increasing the number of profession specific teachers on the programmes, for example, dental hygienists teaching dental hygiene students.

Teachers should be encouraged to continue developing their English language skills.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process.

DH Students share physical resources (25 classrooms and laboratories) with the students of the biomedical field. Some study field subjects are taught in specialized training classrooms. Those are well equipped with internet connection, video demonstration tools, projectors and computers. Moodle and AKADIS systems are used. The college provides access to software that can be installed in personal computers.

Training rooms for dental hygiene has 5 dental chairs and the practical training oral care laboratory has 6 chairs. Both are well equipped with devices, instruments and materials for the practice of dental hygiene. External practices are carried out in specialized institutions where students perform tasks in real world conditions. 90% of the students arrange their practice places. Certain requirements need to be fulfilled by practice places: compliance with the nature of the work of the trained specialists; opportunities to implement the goals of the practice and achieve the study outcomes; and professional qualification and work experience of student mentors. Students manifest that they were satisfied with practices outside the school but at the beginning they felt not having enough practice skills, mainly because of Covid -19 situation.

Some patients can be seen in the practical training oral care laboratory. Students have to find patients for this clinic, which they stated to be easy, and the goal is to have 1 patient for full analysis. It was unclear how much actual clinical treatment was undertaken by the students in the oral care laboratory before starting their external clinical practice.

Students have access to the PK Library and the library of the faculty of Biomedical Sciences. The library uses the software ALEPH 500 supplemented by scientific information databases. There are 75 titles and 708 teaching aids for oral care field studies in the library. Students stated the resources available are good, sufficient and adequate.

The adaptation of the premises, facilities and equipment used for the field studies to persons with special needs is described: website is adapted, stationary lift, mobile stairs climber, the library, and ramps. No specific adaptations to DH programmes are mentioned. During the assessment period, there were no students with special needs in the DH study program.

It is the panel opinion that the study field possess the resources needed to ensure an effective learning process.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies.

A list of materials and equipment is provided as well as planning costs to acquire them in annex 4 of the SER. To overcome financial limitations PK is looking for EU structural funds to acquire additional equipment.

The senior management and Faculty administration mentioned a strategic plan for digitalization of all academic procedures and virtual study process in 5 year with an investment of 1,5 thousand €/yr. There is also a plan to develop a double degree studies with an international partner.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

No recommendations

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies.

The Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene have a system of internal quality assurance and development of studies described in their Quality Manual, the Manual of the Internal Study Quality Assurance System, descriptions of procedures, which set out the requirements for the processes, responsibilities for performed actions and interfaces with other internal and external documents. Other study-related processes are managed through procedures and regulations described by the College. The quality management system follows international standards (ISO). Since 2014 the College is a member of Lithuanian Quality Management and Innovation Association. The centre of main the quality assurance of study programs in the field of oral care is the faculty and the Dental Hygiene Study Programme Committee of the Oral Care Study Field (DH SPC). Functions and responsibilities of the different levels are well described. It is clear from the SER and from the interviews with management, staff, students and partners that the quality management system is operating as intended and results in valuable improvements. It is evident that changes are made to the quality assurance and development system e.g. introduction on new students' satisfactions questionnaires, the College works with a new concept of risk-based thinking. The College support the DH SPC in its work. The human resources, facilities and learning resources allocated to the management and development of the field studies are described in the SER.

The expert panel acknowledge that the Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene Programme seems to have an effective quality assurance and developmental system running. We see evidence of its effect on quality development. We see that the quality assurance and developmental system is adjusted and developed. We anticipate that this is happening base on motivated reflections; however, we see no clear signs of a systematic approach of reconsiderations of the effectiveness of the chosen procedures and processes.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance.

The Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene programme involves the most important stakeholders in the internal quality assurance and development in a well-planned yearly sequence. It is clear to the expert panel that the Panevėžys College supports the DH SPC and the programme development with substantial resources. The Dental Hygiene programme employ social partners, employers and professionals effectively in the evaluation of the students in various ways e.g. from student practices and assessment of compliance of study programme outcomes with labour market needs, and competences of graduates, proposing subjects for final theses and consulting in their preparation, reviewing them, participating in study outcomes.

During the interview, it became clear that the social partners and employers value and see their input on the development of the Dental Hygiene programme. During the interview with the students, it became clear that the students do not see themselves as an important part of the quality assurance and development of the DH programme. They do not see the links between the students' satisfaction questionnaires and changes in the programme. Therefore, they do not tend to respond to surveys.

The students have many ideas on how the College could improve their response rate. One input was the timing of the students' questionnaires and the follow up of those. Thus, the expert panel appreciate the College's effort to include the important stakeholders. Input from social partners and employers seems to operate well. The students input and involvement could be better.

There seems to be sufficient resources for undertaking quality assurance. The expert panel finds some of the quality assurance processes would benefit from a thorough reassessment and redesign. The students do not engage with the process in its present format and have suggestions as to how this might be improved.

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes.

The Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene programme collect, use and publish (on the internet) a huge variety of relevant information related to ensuring and improving the quality of the Dental Hygiene study. On the webpage of the College information on studies, admission requirements, outcome of student surveys and students follow up on those, outcomes of students' employment are presented together with a much more information to applicants, students and stakeholders. Not all are in English. It is not clear from the text available on the internet how the data presented here are used in the College quality assurance and developmental work.

The expert panel acknowledge the huge amount of information the Panevėžys College and the Dental Hygiene programme collect and use. However, the expert panel could not find many signs of systematic reconsiderations on which data should be collected, how and when. Thus, although it is a strength that the College and Dental Hygiene programme have a history of systematic quality assurance and development – it is a weakness that the quality development of the quality assurance and developmental programme and procedures are not more visible.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVS or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI.

The Panevėžys College utilises its own student survey questionnaire. It is not clear to the expert panel to what degree these data collection tools are in accordance with recommended protocols used by the SKVC or the HEI. The student satisfaction data collected, during the period in focus, has been gathered using different questionnaires.

Student surveys at the College shows that the students appreciate their learning on the programme and that they find that they learn what is needed for them to qualify for the labour market. The students find the teachers sufficiently collaborative and acknowledge that the teachers encouraging

them to participate in doing research. The majority of respondents indicated that the College's infrastructure is adequate and meets their needs. The results of the surveys showed that all students indicated that information about study exchange opportunities is public, but still indicated that it is not clear to them how selections are made, what assistance a student receives. The student satisfaction with the programme was very much confirmed during the expert panel meeting with the Dental Hygiene students and alumni. The students' response rate has been dealt with elsewhere. The student's opinion of the quality of Dental Hygiene studies at the Panevėžys College is high.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

The expert panel recommends that more attention be given to developing the different methods used in the internal quality assurance and how the development of the studies contributes to the efficacy and effectiveness of the quality assurance system. The methods and procedures used needs constant and systematic development just as the study programmes.

The expert panel suggest that the study programme considers utilising the SKVC questionnaire as this could ensure the fulfilment of the requirements of the HEI, furthermore, it would also allow benchmarking with other similar programmes in Lithuanian that might also use this tool.

The expert panel recommend that the Dental Hygiene programme develop the students involvement further in the quality assurance and development processes in a dialogue with the students, preferable in a way wherein the students can utilize this competence in their professional life e.g. it could be a learning outcome on quality assurance and development in relation to patient treatment.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to help Panevėžys College to direct greater attention to some areas in its commitment to continuous improvement of the study field.

1. *To promote more interprofessional education among the different programmes of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences.*
2. *To increase opportunities for students to work with patients at the Panevėžys oral care laboratory.*
3. *To focus on development of wider skills, such as communication and entrepreneurship, public health, general and oral epidemiology, biostatistics, health promotion and behaviour change.*
4. *To consider advocating for the addition of the competency of taking/ exposure of dental radiographs into the scope of practice for dental hygienists in Lithuania.*
5. *To further promote active involvement of students into research activities from the beginning of their programme.*
6. *To strengthen research collaboration with international partners.*
7. *To increase students' mobility to and from foreign Dental Hygiene programmes. Targets for the numbers of the exchanges in the years to come should be set.*

8. *To place more emphasis on competencies that improve the students' digital literacy, preparing them for the future demands of the workforce.*
9. *To further embed student self-assessment and peer assessment in the study field.*
10. *To improve the scientific qualification of teachers.*
11. *To continue to foster strategic teacher professional development.*
12. *To foster greater academic mobility of teachers.*
13. *To promote calibration of practice-mentors and to develop a standard protocol for professional internships.*
14. *To further develop the internal quality assurance system for the programmes in Panevėžys College.*
15. *To further develop the student's involvement in the quality assurance and development processes in a dialogue with the students.*
16. *To consider utilizing the SKVC questionnaire as this could ensure the fulfilment of the requirements of the HEI, furthermore, it would also allow benchmarking with other similar programmes in Lithuanian that might also use this tool.*
17. *To consider collaboration between study field teachers in the colleges and universities in Lithuania in relation to the standardization of programme content and development.*

V. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of Dental Hygiene Programme at Panevėžys College.

The aims and learning outcomes of the DH programme correspond to the higher education in Lithuania and approved Lithuanian Medical Norms. The aims of the study field are clearly stated and matched to the learning outcomes focusing on practical activities and the development of applied research. The duration, depth and scope of the programme is adequate to accomplish the aim and learning outcomes.

The subjects are aligned to provide a transition from theoretical knowledge to more practical activities. Nevertheless, some changes are recommended to better integrate some subjects in the curriculum to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The programme is in high demand and the students speak very highly of the support they receive from their teachers.

The volume of the practical component is adequate and practical activities start early in the programme. The involvement of practice mentors in the study field benefit the development of the professional identity in students and enhance quality of the study field, however, less reliance on such external practices and enhancing the number of patients in PK premises would greatly benefit students to master techniques, procedures and therapeutic protocols. There is also a need to establish minimal standards for practice placements in terms of number of patients, complexity and type of patients to ensure balance between different student practical experiences and calibration of practice-mentors to ensure a more consistent assessment between students.

The study field presents conditions to undertake interprofessional education, yet these are not fully explored.

Efforts have been made to improve the scientific level of the programme. Still there is a need to improve the academic qualifications of the teaching staff and more actively enrol students in applied research throughout their academic route. Additionally, there is also a need to increase the visibility of the research produced at an international level.

Admission of the students is organized in accordance with the regulations and are clearly defined. The number of candidates that apply to the study field is high as well as the entry grade, which ensures better prepared students in the study field. Opportunities for student's mobility exist and an increasing number of students are participating yet there is a need to explore solutions to attract foreign students. Financial, social, psychological and personal support for students at Panevėžys College DH programme is appropriate, sufficient and effective.

Teaching and assessment methods support opportunity for students to be active participants in the learning process. The methods of assessment of each subject are clear for the students, and feedback is constant and timely. Still there is a need to explore how students apply teachers' feedback on their learning progress and to promote more self-assessment and peer assessment on the study field. Teachers seemed very committed to students' achievements. A free schedule is offered in specified conditions and sufficient support for socially vulnerable and special needs students is provided.

The graduate employment rate is good, no difficulties in finding jobs were reported, as well as their readiness to enter the labour market. A longer follow up period of graduate employment is recommended.

The composition of the academic staff complies with the legal requirements. The study field is run by engaged and committed teachers that strive for students' achievements. Teachers are qualified on their study areas and prepared to meet the requirements of the Programme, although the scientific qualification needs to be augmented, as well as the involvement of more dental hygiene professionals particularly in the courses specific for dental hygiene practice.

The study field possesses the physical, informational, and financial resources suitable for achieving the anticipated learning outcomes. These resources are updated and renewed according to the needs and possibilities. The students are introduced to information technology that is used widely in the programme; however, it was not evident how students are prepared for the digital future.

Panevėžys College quality management and assurance systems are in place and assign many resources to these activities, however despite participation of stakeholders, graduates and students on the study field is ensured, their benefit in terms of quality development remains unclear.

Expert panel:

1. **Dr. Catherine Waldron (team leader)** *member of academic community;*
2. **Assistant Professor Sandra Ribeiro Graça,** *member of academic community;*
3. **Bo Danielsen,** *member of academic community;*
4. **Prof. dr. Vytautė Pečiulienė,** *representative of social partners’;*
5. **Meda Vaitonytė,** *students’ representative.*