KOLPINGO KOLEGIJOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
KOLPING COLLEGE

Grupės vadovas: Panel chairperson:	Prof. Peter A. Jones
Vertinimo sekretorė: Review secretary:	Dr. Fiona Hunter
Grupės nariai (kategorija): Panel members (category):	Dr. Craig Thompson (academic)
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2022

Report language – English

CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of the Kolping College.

Professor Peter A. Jones

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.

3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members:

- Prof. Peter A. Jones (Chair)
- Dr. Fiona Hunter (Secretary)
- Dr Craig Thompson (Academic Partner)
- Dr. Aimar Lukk (Academic Partner)
- Mr. Petras Baltusevičius (Social Partner)
- Ms. Toma Vaitekūnė (Student Representative)

4. As a result of external review **Kolping College** is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Judgment by the area:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	3
QUALITY ASSURANCE	4
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	3
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

*5 points - **excellent**– the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **Thirteen** examples of good practices were found; **Thirty Four** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7.   The external review of Kolping College (hereafter referred to as KC or the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in the week commencing the 15ʰ November by an Expert Panel of international experts (the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as 'the Procedure') on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 Order No V-32 (the Methodology).

8.   According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by a higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the a higher education institution; preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

9.   At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-ante and ex-post programme reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; State-budget allocations for research activities; information on academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information, including ratios of full and part time staff, student entry levels, attrition rates, graduate employment rates, and information on awards received.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel *visited* the College from 15th to 19th November 2021 where it had meetings with 12 groups of internal and external stakeholders for a total of 90 individuals. **Due to the worldwide pandemic situation, the review visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool Zoom** hosted by the Centre. Subsequently, the Panel met virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.

11. In line with the Procedure, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **management**, **quality assurance, studies and research (art)** and **impact on regional and national development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review, noting that the College had taken steps to address them and make improvements across the areas indicated.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

13. In reviewing and analysing the evidence from the SER, the additional documents provided, and from the detailed meetings with the stakeholder groups, the panel ensured that the opinions expressed in this report were evidence-based and triangulated across the different sources, taking into account multiple perspectives. Areas of detail were cross-checked to ensure the resulting opinions were verifiable and reliable.

14. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

15. In line with the Methodology, the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to comment on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.

16. The Panel received comments from Kolping College. As a result minor changes to a programme title were made to the report.

17. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 of January, 2020 Order No. V-5, SKVC takes one of the decisions:

- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

The decisions of SKVC may be appealed to the Commission for Appeals, formed by SKVC. Subsequently, the decisions of SKVC and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

18. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

- to **deny accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

19. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on its website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the evaluation of the higher education institution together with the external review report on it's website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

20. Kolping College is a non-state not for profit institution of higher education, located in Kaunas, Lithuania, providing the first cycle higher education college studies. The Founder is the Lithuanian Kolping Foundation - a Catholic charity and support organization for social responsibility, and the shareholder is Kolping Bildungswerk Wuerttemberg (KBW), Germany. The College is supported by the International Kolping Society (www.kolping.net), which has about 500 thousand members in 60 countries around the world.

21. The mission of Kolping College is to prepare practically oriented, highly qualified specialists with underlying Christian morality in their activities, who are able to successfully integrate into regional, national and European labour markets; to guarantee a modern study process that meets the requirements of the European Higher Education Area, in active cooperation with the regional, national and European social partners. It also aims educate society by developing its spirituality, humanitarian, professional and information culture, solidarity and subsidiarity, by fostering Christian values, understanding of the universal good, by using the spiritual care, competence and contacts of the International Kolping Society.

22. The College currently offers 4 first cycle professional bachelor study programs in three study fields (https://www.kolpingokolegija.lt/en/studies/) Social Work Management, Child Welfare and Social Security, Ecotourism and Transport Logistics. In 2020-2021, 267 students studied at Kolping College, and there were 35 lecturers and 14 administrative staff.   In total 1,512 students have graduated from the College since its foundation 25 years ago.

23. The Experiential Learning Centre (ELC) is responsible for the preparation and delivery of non-formal adult education (lifelong learning) programs. Since April 2021, ELC has been organising professional development for assistant social workers (accredited by the Department of Supervision of Social Services). The ELC offers a range of different seminars based on the needs of social partners and in line with its mission, including a Family Academy, which organizes seminars for families on positive parenting and children's education.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is being analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission,

assurance of its implementation:
1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area; *1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;* *1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.*

24. The College has a very strong culture, ethos, and values that are well evidenced throughout all aspects of management. The strong sense of social responsibility is reflected in its actions and behaviours and evidenced in the relationships with students, social partners and the wider community. The College demonstrates a sense of authenticity in that its actions and behaviours reflect its origin and values.

25. The College was established over 25 years ago as a community based non-state-owned institution owned by the Lithuanian Kolping Foundation, as the first educational institution within the wider International Kolping Society. One of the priority activities of the foundation is in education and this commitment is evidenced through the ongoing support of the facilities and resources provided the foundation.

26. Whilst the strategic action plan is appropriately developed and in place, a longer-term strategic vision for the positioning of the College over the next 10 years would provide a developmental focus and long-term aims and objectives that are in accord with the strong ethos and values of social responsibility, meet the educational priorities of the foundation and contribute to the development aims of the region and the country.

27. This should also reflect the projected growth in student numbers over that time frame to the founders' stated ambition of 700 students.

28. The College demonstrates effective decision-making processes and resulting actions but these appear to be based on short-term objectives as shown in the strategic plan. The planning has a sound foundation but limited evidence of the systematic scanning of the internal and external environments that could impact on the College, student recruitment, and the wider educational social and economic context. There was limited evidence presented of analysis of competitive positioning between peers and competitors. The risks inherent in this approach can be short-term measures that do not necessarily reflect the long-term vision and can result in academic drift and shortfall in student recruitment.

29. From the triangulation of evidence from the SER and that gathered during the meetings, the details of the operational planning and implementation were transparent and implemented. This supported the evidence that indicated that the College is regularly monitoring performance against the operational plan using defined performance indicators. The panel are confident, drawing on the outcomes of the relevant meetings that these performance indicators were being used to better inform planning and operational decisions.

30. The College is complying with the institution's strategic action plan that is informed by its mission 'to train highly qualified, practice oriented specialists based on Christian morality who can integrate successfully into the labour markets of the region, country and Europe.

31. The action plan is consistent with that mission and has been prepared taking due note of the appropriate national and European policies and the development plans for the Kaunas region for 2021–2027. The articulation between the strategic action plan and the relevant policies and development plans is evidenced in the SER which includes, as examples, actions in relation to: The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research, Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030', Scientific Lithuania 2030, Kaunas Regional Development Plan for 2021–2027, and the National Progress Plan for 2021–2030. In this, the plan complies with the appropriate regulatory frameworks. However, whilst meeting the Academic and broader regulatory requirements wider contextual research would provide greater evidence to support a long-term strategic vision for the College.

32. The analysis of the current situation has reflected on the changes in higher education, the influences of globalisation, the changes in the regulatory framework of education in Lithuania, the demographic downturn within the normal age profile of potential students, and the highly competitive marketplace for students from both Lithuanian and International Higher Education Institutions, both within and outside the country.

33. Regional development plans focus on developing Kaunas as a modern economic region of Lithuania and central and Eastern Europe, a hub for relevant research, high tech and information technologies, and as a focus for culture and tourism with the aim to develop the region as an integrated transport and logistics centre. The College strategic action plan as a response to these priorities and aims is defined within their strategic plan that appropriately reflects the contribution the College can make to the region. Whilst the regional focus is very evident, it was not evident from the SER or in discussions that any research or benchmarking had been undertaken to better understand the College's overall position against international competitors.

34. The reflection on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the institution are based on a sound analysis of the forecast operational situation and provide a rigorous and honest appraisal that demonstrates a commitment to the process and outcomes. The need to better understand the competitive positioning of the College would support and promote its overall value proposition and create and more distinctive higher education profile.

35. The panel expressed confidence that the College had the appropriate resources and access to additional support that would indicate that the objectives of the strategic plan could be met. The defined performance indicators suggested a realistic understanding of both the process and the resources required to meet the planned objectives with a robust monitoring and evaluation cycle in place.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:
1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;   *1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;*

36. The governance structure is described in the Statute approved by the sole shareholder in March 2010 and legally registered on the 27th April 2010. The supreme body is The General Meeting of the Shareholders that is required to be held annually within four months of the end of the financial year. The Statute is not explicit as to whether the Meeting is required to be convened as the shareholder (Owner) has the authority under the Statute to provide written decisions that are the equivalent to the resolutions of the General Meeting. The General Meeting under the Statutes takes in a wide role of determinations and approvals including the strategic action plan as submitted by the Director. The General Meeting 'hears out' the opinions of the Academic Council and receives information from the Director and bodies of the College in reaching decisions. The Academic Council is required to report annually to the General Meeting on its activities. Whilst the General Meeting is required to take note of the opinions of the Academic Council the Statute is not explicit as to the form of those opinions nor if the Academic Council can forward resolutions and recommendations to the General Meeting for determination. The panel recognises that this may be an area that is dealt with by custom and practice but felt that further consideration and clarification may be appropriate to avoid future confusion.

37. The Academic Council, which is made up of both internal and external members reflect and represent education, the community, the Foundation and social partners. This meets twice per year and has the remit as a consultative body, an approvals body for the institution and the internal regulatory body. The externality and European membership provide opportunities for contributions that ensure a wide frame of reference but the multifaceted role of the Academic Council and its ability to carry out the three key functions was not entirely clear to the Panel especially as it only met twice a year. It was clear that informal contact and communication especially between the directorate and foundation was on a more regular basis outside the formal reporting structure, but this relationship should be clarified and strengthened.

38. The composition of the membership of the Academic Council is stated in the Statute in terms of proportional representation of the different stakeholder groups but not in absolute number terms. It is a large representative body, and given the size and range of responsibilities and frequency of meetings, developing further clarity through the establishment of working groups within the council could assist. These groups would bring forward recommendations for discussion and ratification in support the strategic development processes as well as meeting the requirements of the approvals process for the study programmes and the research strategy.

39. It was noted that whilst there is student representation on the council appointed by the Student Union it was unclear how internal staff representation is determined. The Director of the College is a member by virtue of the position held but cannot be the chairperson.

40. Internally, management processes are consistent and well informed through formal and informal feedback loops. The distribution of responsibilities across the Heads of Centres provides an appropriate structure and framework for the management of resources and the implementation of decisions. These processes indicate good corporate governance but given the small size and management structure of the institution where key position holders may

have multiple roles, this may be a factor of the short lines of communication and the commitment to action of the management team.

41. There is a formal scheduled process for undertaking the analysis of measurement for actions and activities and these form the basis of a clear system of monitoring and review. An annual activity report includes the identification of risks, but he was not entirely evident how those risks would then is managed and how that would impact on the overall operational action plan.

42. The stakeholders as staff, students and social partners are appropriately involved in feedback and management processes. The Academic Council as the key stakeholder has representation from the owner as well as staff and students. It was noted that the prestigious external nature of the membership of the Academic Council is an ideal platform for the further development of the Council and enhances the prestige of the institution.

1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;
1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.

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43. Overall, the College has a very well-developed set of systems for the collection and collation of performance data. This information is regularly discussed at all levels within the management and discussion forums. These include: the Academic Council, directorate, centre meetings, committee meetings within the field of study as well as in community open meetings held between 2 to 3 times a year. Such meetings include staff, students, social partners, potential employers as well as the wider economic and local communities. While internal information systems function effectively, these do not always translate into effective external information systems as for example the website. Whilst the legal documents and strategic plan are available on the website more information, in summary form, on the key objectives and the contributions the College is making to the economic and social needs of the region would enhance the readers' understanding of the College's position within the community.

44. Data is collected systematically in accordance with the planned programme. It is widely discussed across the institution and is used to inform the decision processes and areas for improvement.

45. The data as evidenced in the report seen is clear and provides an accurate reflection of the performance across a range of indicators. There is need for greater visibility and promotion of the College at all levels. The website is under-exploited as a significant tool in this respect.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:

1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;

> *1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*
> *1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*
> *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*
> *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

46. As a small institution, where a high proportion of teaching staff are part-time lecturers the effectiveness of the management of those resources becomes even more relevant and important in comparison to an institution that has predominantly full-time staff. It was noted that the ratio of full to part-time staff of approximately 10% is similar to other private higher education institutions. Whilst this may be operationally effective for the College in its present size, further growth will require a higher proportion of full-time staff. International experience suggests that to develop a significant research profile also requires access to full rather than part-time staff.

47. The principles applied by the College for the recruitment and management of the resources of academic and non-academic staff appeared to be well founded and clearly work. There appears to be very low rate of staff turnover, with for example over 48% of academic staff, including part time staff, being at the College for five years or more, demonstrating a commitment of academic and administrative staff to the values of the institution.

48. The College has the appropriate equal opportunities and clear and comprehensive human resource management policies and procedures in place. Candidates are selected or a non-discriminate basis according to objective criteria. Annual evaluation of all staff is well established and provides opportunity to consider wider opportunities as for example in initiating courses and projects at the ELC or in supporting or leading research activities, as well as to better understand future staff development needs.

49. Staff appears to be employed principally on teaching contracts and then invited to take part in research and external engagement activities. Over time the College will need to think more in terms of a balance between the three activities and seek ways to build stronger interconnections. This will have implications for staff recruitment and development.

50. The College has sufficient academic staff to deliver the study programmes across the range of study fields and to meet its mission of high-quality programs. The staff are well qualified and in many cases are professional practitioners who have the appropriate professional experience and qualifications to better inform the teaching given the practical orientation of the programs. Professional practitioners provide an important practical orientation to the student experience which is valued by the students through introducing realism and pragmatic solutions to the study programs.

51. The administrative staff is appropriately qualified and experienced. All staff go through an annual performance evaluation during an interview with the relevant line manager. This follows a systematic process where future tasks are planned and employment competencies are assessed. Improvement plans being discussed and can be reviewed on an interim basis if appropriate.

52. Although the ratio between full-time and part time staff may look inconsistent with delivering high-quality study programmes, this is mitigated by the commitment shown by the part-time staff that also allows the institution to flexibility adjust to the changing number of students and resources.

53. Lecturers are required to hold a Masters degree or equivalent higher education qualification. Staff engaging in fields of published research including supervision and experimental development would normally have at least three years practical experience in the subject field with a relevant doctoral level qualification as required by the Law on Higher Education and Research.

54. Non-academic staff holds relevant qualifications in relation to the posts held.

55. Continuing professional staff development opportunities are available for all staff including part time staff, through a well-constructed professional development system. The panel noted that staff contracts allowed and stipulated that 10% of allotted time was for professional development, and that from the meetings with staff that the College support for continuing professional development in pedagogic, subject specific and digital professional development was significant (representing over 6% of total staff costs). This is not necessarily common practice in many higher education institutions internationally, especially in relation to part time staff, and is to be commended.

56. There is a systematic process arising from annual reviews and where development opportunities may arise. This is referred to as capacity building within the employee with the purpose of expanding the competencies of the staff to ensure high-quality student engagement. The procedure for professional development evidenced, regulates the principles behind the process including the planning, review, evaluation and financing of the development opportunities. Staff development includes a collegiate approach to the sharing of experiences, transferring good practice and a high adherence to professional ethics.

57. All staff are encouraged and supported to participate in research projects and activities and from the evidence and staff discussion these opportunities are welcomed and taken up. In order to establish the appropriate conditions for further research development there should be a developed research strategy that is responsive to the regional, national and international needs that focuses on the key strengths and values of the institution.

58. Given the strategic objective of further internationalisation, the College may wish to consider further language training opportunities for all staff.

59. All non-academic staff has the same opportunities for staff development as academic staff.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:
1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally; *1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;* *1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;* *1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are*

60. The College has a strong financial base as it is well supported by the Kolping Foundation that provides rent-free premises as well as capital for funding additional resources. This support, including building and building costs, provided by the Foundation allows the College to utilise income on salaries and student support including financial support through scholarships.

61. The short-term operational planning strategy makes it difficult to plan longer term development of learning and physical resources in line with changes in the study fields and pedagogy. For example, in the areas of blended and online provision and the further need for digital enhancement to support learning and teaching, internationalisation and further research developments.

62. Longer term financial planning in line with strategic priorities would be a useful to identify investment needs for academic and resource developments.

63. There is evidence of a well-developed strong operational budgets against which performance is systematically and regularly evaluated.

64. In addition to the support provided by the Foundation the College bids for research and external projects that are appropriately funded. The Experiential Learning Centre provides additional financial resources for its activities which in turn is utilised for staff costs and for the further development a wide range of activities.

65. The total income of the College has grown over the past three years from €255.3K to €265.2K despite a net reduction in state appropriations from €30.8K to €20.5K over the same period. The panel noted the significant proportion of the total income that was from the College's own funding streams (82%) with projects contributing 11%, support funds 5.6%, with the state appropriations at 7.06%, less than the income from projects. The main income increases over the past three years have been in the areas of own income (+ €59K) and support funds (+€6.4K). In 2020, staff costs accounted for 65% of expenditure with goods and services at 25%, investment in fixed assets at 6% and scholarships at 4%. Staff development costs are 6 % of the total staff costs.

66. Over time and in support of systematic growth there will be a continuing need for diversification of income across all areas of the College's activities. This could include: commissioned research, funded projects, and scholarships funded through relationships with social partners and donors.

67. The overall operational planning process provides for the required learning resources and should additional resource says be required, there is evidence that these are funded from within the operational budget, external funding or through the foundation support.

68. The learning resources are used in an efficient and systematic manner. However, while the Director has responsibility for drafting the operational budget, this is not linked to a longer-term strategy formation process.

69. The evidence from staff and students indicates that the learning resources are appropriate to the study fields, are sufficient and made readily available.

70. **In summary**, the College is well-founded with a strong culture and ethos that is representative of the founder and owner. Whilst small in size it demonstrates a belief in its mission and values that resonates throughout the staff and students. Being a small institution, where full-time members of staff hold multiple roles, it has short lines of communication that facilitates quick decision-making and avoids over bureaucracy. The planning horizon as presented is relatively short and the development of a long-term vision for the College would provide a focus for future academic and research developments. The governance structure has at its apex the General Meeting of Shareholders, but given the role of the Foundation as the sole shareholder, suggests that the informal structures and communication between the College and the Foundation Representative is fundamental to the overall management of the College. The wide remit of the Academic Council as both a consultative and deliberative body suggests that focused subgroups reporting to the council could be beneficial as part of the overall deliberative and management process. There is good evidence that the College systematically collects and analyses relevant data and uses the results as part of the improvements processes and publishes the information widely. The principles and policies for the effective management of the human resources are well evidenced and the staffing base is appropriate for the current size. The College is financially supported by the Kolping Foundation and enjoys a sound financial position that includes being able to provide student support through scholarships and other interventions. The learning resources are appropriate and adequate for the fields of study offered.

71. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given three (3) points.

72. **Recommendations for the area**:

● That the unique position of the College and its relationship with the foundation should form the basis for a developing vision for the College over the next 10 years. Whilst there is a well-developed strategic planning process with a comprehensive action plan this has a relatively short time horizon. Creating a longer-term vision for the College that clearly demonstrates what it stands for and where it wants to be, could assist in providing long-term objectives and aims against which all further developments would be tested.

● Such a vision would also help to develop a structured marketing strategy which in promoting those values would focus on the specific target markets who would be attracted to those values and study fields. This could be supported by developing 'learner profiles' that represent different types of learners and support targeted marketing approaches. The marketing at present uses diverse strategies including social media but with two principal selling points, price and student and external referencing. Understanding the competitive positioning of the College in relation to its pricing structure, its value proposition, the strength of the external engagement and employment, would be a useful exercise and help to inform the overall marketing strategy.

● The panel noted that there was an emerging institutional identity across the portfolio of the study fields with an underlying theme of social responsibility and this should be a key theme in any further academic developments. The College are very responsive to specialist needs in their relationship with their social partners and this strength of

relationship provides for placement and graduate opportunities. The College may wish to explore how that relationship with social partners could lead to further sponsorship opportunities for students and could become an important factor in the overall marketing approach.

● That the strengths of inclusion and the strong moral and ethical values that are found throughout the institution and how that influences and informs the learning and teaching should be strongly promoted as part of its competitive positioning as a higher education institution.

● That the institution defines its ambitions for the long-term sustainability and resilience of the institution in terms of the number of students, the coherence of the study programmes and the non-formal education and external engagement including research.

● That internal research into the "added value" that is evident in the learning and teaching approaches and the student experience is undertaken to better understand how that added value can be measured and the best practices shared across the wider communities.

● That a marketing strategy is developed with clear selling points based on the institutional values and a clear understanding of the target markets.

● That strategic, regional, national, and international partnerships with academic institutions and social partners are developed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and external engagement.

● That stronger interconnections are developed between teaching and learning, research and external engagement.

● That a strong international dimension is infused into all academic activities

● That the further adoption of technology in improving access to learning and teaching, digital resources, whilst streamlining internal processes and systems provides opportunity improve the effectiveness of the systems, transparency and better feedback opportunities to all stakeholders.

● Given the wide remit of the Academic Council as the legal entity, regulatory, ratification and consultative body it may be appropriate to consider how these roles might be separated through subgroups of the council who would then report to the council as the approval and regulatory body.

● That the Academic Council keeps under review international best practice in relation to stakeholder representation including that of management and staff.

● That the overall management structure is kept under review and adjusted to meet the ongoing needs of the organisation and to avoid undue bureaucracy.

● That the College focus on establishing a distinct marketable institutional identity and that reflects the colleges own distinctive philosophy, the strong social responsibility theme throughout the program some fields of study, the strong supportive educational pedagogy and the employment prospects and opportunities for its graduates. This should demonstrate the competitive advantage the College offers through an innovative and positive narrative.

● That staff development programs are seen to align with the Mission and Vision of the institution. This will provide greater clarity to the longer-term staff development needs as for example: developing greater capability for online provision, meeting the expectations of adult and part-time learners and understanding of international collaborative research opportunities.

● That consideration be given to developing further funding streams including a social partners scholarship scheme to support students especially part time who may find difficulty in funding their studies.

● Given the colleges current marketing strategy of cost positioning below the competitive market level, it may be better to consider an "added value" cost proposition that reflects the significant additional contribution that the College provides to the overall student experience. There is an important price and value relationship that needs to be considered when establishing a competitive position. Such a higher cost position can always be supported through advantageous scholarships for those students who require such financial support.

73. **Good practice examples:**

The panel noted the following examples of good practice:

● That the strong culture and ethos of the College is apparent across all of the operational areas and that these values are translated into actions and behaviours which are visible both internally and externally.

● The strong sense of institutional identity and community in the engagement with all staff.

● The engagement of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders ensures a wide representation and a voice as part of the College community.

● That the systematic collection and evaluation of data informs the implementation of the action plan and strong monitoring and modification processes are in place that involve all of the staff.

● The systematic collection and evaluation of data against key performance indicators is considered to be good practice as is the wider open community meetings held by the College.

● The recognised systematic evaluation and review processes with a focus on continuing professional development for all staff including excellent support for part-time staff.

3.2. Quality assurance

Quality assurance area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:

2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;
2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;
2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;
2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;
2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;
2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

74. Being a small institutional also allows relatively fast decision processes and responsiveness to feedback and input from stakeholders including social partners and students.

75. The processes and procedures are comprehensive (for example the Quality Manual) and are operational and effective; this is reflected in the administration and teaching and learning activities. The panel noted the processes of moderating or checking the quality of the learning experience and the actual academic outcomes relies more on student feedback and consider that a more formal internal moderation process should be considered.

76. The College has strength within its internal quality assurances system and that is based on its sense of social responsibility and commitment to continuous improvement. It has effectively embedded the concept of quality throughout institution and through the well-recognised and evidenced, 'Plan Implement, Evaluation, Improve, Cycle'. The systems ensure all staff and stakeholders have a role within the processes.

77. The College has the appropriate and recognised approach to internally verify quality assurance that is managed through four process groups: management processes, key operational processes, supporting processes, and improvement processes. These processes from the basis for a very comprehensive internal quality management system. This is a procedural approach focusing on quality improvement and increasing efficiency effectiveness across all operational areas to meet the needs of all the stakeholders.

78. The external and internal stakeholders are involved the quality process and procedures, data collection and evaluation and the measurement against quality indicators. There is a

periodic analysis which is systematically applied across all of the recognised European Higher Education Quality Assurance recognised protocols.

79. Regular survey instruments are used as part of the QA process to monitor and evaluate the relevance of the study fields, quality of the studies and their organisation, the quality of the academic experience, the quality of the non-formal experiential learning education provided and the broader recognition of the attractiveness of the College.

80. There is a regular planning implementation cycle for all aspects of the quality assurance process that is well set out and well-defined in a very comprehensive quality assurance manual.

81. It is evident that students and staff receive effective support throughout and value the focus on ensuring the quality of the staff and student experience. This is a feature within the culture and ethos of the College where all stakeholders are incorporated within quality process.

82. The high level of personalisation of support is strength of the overall College and growth would therefore need to be carefully managed to ensure such levels of support were maintained.

83. The provisions and procedures in relation to academic integrity are appropriately outlined. The provisions include; a code of academic ethics, regulations of dispute resolution, descriptions and procedures on appeals and following the published Lithuanian guidelines on academic and research ethics. Within the review period there has been no evidence of cases of academic dishonesty, intolerance or discrimination.

84. The College has a very strong inclusive approach to educational opportunity without discrimination and has a strong belief system based on Christian values that is recognised as the enabling factor in ensuring that approach is open to all current and future stakeholders.

85. The reliance on the student feedback loop in moderating actual academic performance across subjects could be enhanced through an internal moderation and verification process. Such a process would provide comparable data on individual student performance within the cohort and across units ensuring consistency and reliability of the internal grading process on student performance and achievement.

86. The well-developed and embedded quality assurance processes reflecting both external and internal reviews are clearly evidenced. The outcomes of these reviews are implemented through defined improvement actions the results of which are measured as part of the feedback process. The panel noted that the recommendations from previous reviews had been taken into account by the College as part of the overall quality assurance and management process. The detailed documents reviewed and in discussions with the College, provided the panel with evidence that the recommendations of the previous report had been implemented with the intended positive outcomes.

87. **In summary,** the College has a well-designed and embedded quality assurance culture that is evidenced through the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance systems. The Quality Manual is very comprehensive and is an example of international best practice for academic institutions. The planning and implementation for continuous improvement is evident and inclusive involving the internal and external stakeholders in the

processes. Processes are well defined with effective monitoring and evaluation that contribute significantly to improvements. All of the staff and students are well supported by the institution including through continuous professional development with opportunity for participation in research and scholarly activity. A high standard of academic integrity, non-discrimination and ethical values is evident throughout and feedback on external reviews are used to guide improvements. Opportunity for further development includes an enhanced internal moderation and verification process to provide comparable data on individual student performance ensuring consistency and reliability cross levels and cohorts in the grading for student performance.

88. **Judgment:** the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks and is given four (4) points.

89. **Recommendations for the area:**

● That the College considers developing an internal moderation and verification process to ensure consistency and reliability of internal grading of student assessment activities.

● That the College should consider the strength of the quality assurance processes as a potential area of research to identify the extent to which the current system would be scalable in any growth of the institution. This will include the wider use of institutional data for evidence-based decision-making and to use the outcomes as part of external promotion.

90. **Good practice examples:**

The panel noted the following example of good practice:

● The well-developed quality culture that permeates throughout the daily practice and operation of the institution.

3.3. Studies and research (art)

Studies and research (art) area is being analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

> *3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:*
>
> *3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;*
> *3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*
> *3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*
> *3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

91. The College is an inclusive institution that offers the right to educational opportunity without discrimination. In pursuing this mission, they accept students who have a lower entry grade than Lithuanian norms. This inclusive non-discriminatory approach to providing

opportunities for students creates significant "added value". This added value includes supporting and developing the student experience and through that commitment encourages students to achieve the same higher education achievements and outcomes.

92. The supportive values and culture of the College in 'adding value' to the students educational experience was very apparent in the discussions with the students who commented very positively on the availability of help and support from staff. The small group sizes and relevance of the case studies and examples to professional practice were cited by the students as significant value in the learning experience and increased their understanding and knowledge within their study fields to ensure that they meet the required higher education outcomes. Students have timetabled individual subject field tutorials with lecturers, access to counselling services and support for those with learning difficulties, extramural seminars and discussions on relevant topics, and detailed career guidance. Academic feedback is timely and relevant and the use of student peer to peer mentoring is noted as good practice.

93. The integration of professional practice with underpinning knowledge and understanding is a significant strength that is recognised by students, social partners and graduates. The students are also recognised for their creativity, commitment and innovation and their ability to contribute practical solutions to professional situations. The opportunity for students to participate in research activities including presentation of articles and attendance at conferences provides another dimension to the added value of the student experience.

94. The evidence of the transition of graduates into to professional employment is well recognised and appreciated by the social partners. Students are viewed within the College as partners in the educational process and are fully engaged in learning and are encouraged to become autonomous learners. The diversity of the student body including part time students provides opportunity to draw on the wider experiences of students and to use those experiences within learning and teaching.

95. The College has a strong regional focus with supportive social partners who are important influences in the portfolio of study fields offered. The study fields provide strong practical professional training through placement work-based opportunities that focus on the development of professional understanding and the skills and competencies required to be a professional practitioner. This is also apparent in the balance of full-time and part-time students where many are in related employment and are continuing their professional development through qualifications. The non-formal education through the Experiential Learning Centre represents an extension of the supportive educational philosophy and the sense of strong social responsibility to contribute to the community and the region.

96. The current size of the institution allows them to create a very supportive environment that offers tailor-made personalised support to students. However, given the volatility in student recruitment and the vision of the foundation to return to growing the institution to earlier student numbers of around 700, the challenge will be to maintain the institutional culture and strengths which are not easily scalable during that growth. The College develops a very collegiate, engaged staff culture where the staff feel valued and that they can contribute and those contributions are recognised and their professional development needs are supported.

97. The College could consider further development of the portfolio in line the key themes of social responsibility that would allow a broadening of the curriculum using existing components and providing some economies of scale. This would allow student deferred choice for specialisations. Such a development could be based on the overarching focus of "Sustainable Management".

98. The study fields and research are both implicit and explicit within the mission and strategic plan of the institution. The strong institutional values based around social responsibility and individual opportunity, is clearly evident in the study field of social work for which the institution has a well-recognised regional profile. The principles of sustainability are apparent within the eco-tourism and transport and logistics study fields.

99. All of the study fields follow the stated aims of preparing practically orientated qualified specialists with underlying Christian morality and values.

100.The College is an inclusive institution that offers the right to educational opportunity without discrimination. This is evidenced through the admissions of students with lower entry grades than Lithuanian norms for entry into higher education. However, the panel were presented with significant evidence throughout the detail discussions with all of the relevant parties that the lower entry grades were not an indicator of the quality of the outcomes of the learning and teaching experience for the students. The panel considered that the reverse was true and that students benefited significantly from the detailed academic support they received through; access to teaching and support staff, the small group sizes encouraging active participation in the learning processes, the practitioner involvement, and a focus on professional practice. The professional focus includes professionally led research and project learning activities focusing on solving real-world, relevant problems. The validation of the outcomes of the learning and teaching process was evidenced through the discussions with employers and social partners who were also engaged in the final examinations. The quality and professionalism of the graduates and their roles within their professions was confirmation of the "added value" the college provides within the education process and was much valued by employers and social partners.

101.Research is encouraged and supported and students have the opportunity to partake in practical research activities oriented to social partners whilst others have the opportunity for research leading to conference papers and presentations.

102.The student experience as evidenced through the study activities provides a very supportive engaging learning environment that provides opportunities for the students to develop and mature as autonomous learners and to achieve academic outcomes equivalent to those in similar institutions. The motivation and commitment of the staff engaging with the students learning experiences alongside the strong sense of College identity and community creates significant "added value" to the students' overall education. This 'added value' is a key factor in supporting students in achieving the required level of academic outcomes and employment opportunities.

103. The strong practical professional training through placement work-based opportunities focus on the development of professional understanding and the skills and competencies required to be a professional practitioner.

104. The panel considers the measuring the "added value" the College provides to the overall student experience would be a fruitful area for further research and publication and an example of best practice.

105. The student study experience is in line with mission and the College is nondiscriminatory in its enrolment. However, that does not mean it should not define the different types of learner profile in the make up the student body. This will include balance between post school and adult learners, full-time and part-time learners and then set appropriate targets for each profile to achieve a balanced student population. The growth in part time provision is an area for further development and this could encourage a better balance in the gender profile of the student body.

106. The research engagement is limited by the size of the institution and opportunity. However the College has won a number of publicly funded research bids and engages in applied research commissioned by social partners and external organisations.

107. The research ethos is also evidenced through engagement of students in the research process and creating opportunity forced units to publish and present research conferences. The professional and practical nature of the study fields allow students to demonstrate creative and innovative approach to providing practical solutions to professional situations.

108. The College organises an annual international student conference the latest of which was "theory and practice: student insights 2020 that was attended by over 100 participants from seven different countries. The conference was hosted remotely given the current Covid restrictions.

109. Individual staff research has been recognised at the national level as being very high quality as for example in 2021, in the Lithuanian Society of Young Researchers competition for the best doctoral dissertations, the college director was recognised as one of the ten winners for her work in the field of humanities and social sciences (Education) "Grounded theory of the informal learning "pendulum": experience of non-relative foster family" and at the 7th Lithuanian Tourism Forum "Tourism for the next decade: Sustainable, Resilient, Digital…" that took place at the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, the Associate Professor of Tourism was the recipient of an award for her work on implementation of innovations during the Covid-19 period.

110. The wider external engagement through the Experiential Learning Centre whilst focusing on non-formal education also contributes to the professional development of the fields of study as evidenced through the work currently being undertaken in delivering new programmes for assistant social workers accredited by the Department of Supervision of Social Services.

111.Expanding collaborative research and utilising existing range of networks including networks; Kolping network, social partners and alumni, should all be explored in order to increase research underpinning the study programs.

112. Developing an appropriate research strategy that would include interconnection between research and learning and teaching would be valuable addition to colleges research and external study profile. This should include scholarly activities that better inform the curriculum and learning and teaching, the positioning of the research in appropriate journals

and the applied nature of the research that would encourage wider engagement with social partners and help to facilitate international collaboration.

113. The fields of study are informed through professional engagement with stake holders and professional practitioners and both formal and informal staff and student research, including the final thesis. These contribute to the overall body of knowledge as well as providing specific case studies and practical examples that better inform the learning and teaching.

114. The recognition of prior non-formal and experiential learning is evidence through the application and enrolment of students who could be considered to be older or adult learners. Such applications are considered under the terms of ESG 1.3 (the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area) and the College documents, such as 'Description of the Procedure for Crediting Partial Study Results and Description of Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition for Non-Formal and Informal Learning'. Students who may have family commitments can choose to access the College and the educational experience on a part-time basis. This conforms to the overall mission of the institution to the right to educational opportunities without discrimination. However, a formal review of applicants' backgrounds and attainments on entry that includes recognising wider non-academic attributes could assist in developing a better understanding of the learner profiles and therefore recruitment of this type of learner.

115. There was no strong evidence that indicates a defined strategy for international recruitment.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):
3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);
3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

116. The institution is part of a very extensive Kolping network through the International Kolping Society. Headquartered in Germany the society has over 5000 members in 60 countries. Within the network there is one similar higher education institution recently established in Germany but with many other types of educational institutions especially in South Asia and South America. While there is some evidence of limited internationalisation in using these networks, this could be a very fruitful and positive area for further developments.

117. The College has focused until now on Erasmus+ mobility for staff and students for study or work experience and now should consider a more strategic approach to internationalisation. This means embedding internationalisation first and foremost in the curriculum through internationalised learning outcomes, along with joint projects, programmes, virtual exchange and so on.

118. The College's institutional Internationalisation activities have had a focus on using the staff and student exchange opportunities through the Erasmus programmes although it has network links with a significant number of international higher education institutions through

its European networks. These include Universities of Applied Sciences, as well as the European Federation for Catholic Adult Education, International Federation of Catholic Universities, European Association Schools of Social Work and the European Research Institute for Social work. It has cooperation agreements with over 20 international universities.

119. The College recognises that it does not make full use of its existing international networks and has the aim to develop the visibility of the College internationally by strengthening those networks with joint collaborative ventures including in the areas of the curriculum development, research and applied professional practice. This can be achieved through developing a partnership policy that is more than collaboration agreements but have significant defined outcomes. It has several networks that are currently underexploited. There are also a number of European associations such as the European Association for International Education that would both develop network opportunities and provide a basis for the staff development especially in the areas of internationalisation of learning and teaching.

120. This would be considered to be a work in progress but there is evidence of initial developments in area of shared academic resources and intercultural dialogue between institutions. The College has plans for strengthening these developments as well as continuing to promote transnational mobility four students and staff. One area of internationalisation includes practical placement opportunities for students and this is it area which could be expanded.

121. **In summary,** the academic profile within the study fields and research are compatible with the strategic aims of the College. The academic and pastoral support provided to the students creates a student experience that encourages the development and realisation of students' academic and professional potential, entirely in support of the College's aims of inclusivity and educational opportunity. The areas of applied practical research and professional activities make a valuable contribution to the study fields. This is particularly evident in the areas of professional placements and the use of real-world practical examples and case studies to inform the learning and teaching. The levels of research given the size of the institution is sufficient but has opportunity for further development, especially internal research focusing on the "added value" the College brings to the student experience and comparative research focussed on internal quality assurance systems. Systems are in place to recognise prior learning and alternative qualifications including partial study completions. The College internationalisation strategy has been primarily focused on mobility but significant additional international opportunities exist in the areas of intercultural dialogue, staff and student projects and developing shared resources between institutions especially with those within the Kolping Foundation network.

122. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given three (3) points.

123. **Recommendations for the area:**

● That the further development of strategic partnerships would align with the strategic vision of the College and develop an operational strategy to take advantage of the rapid changes in digital technology that can facilitate and enhance all academic activities.

● The existing study fields and the strong theme of social responsibility could provide the basis for further academic developments, based on a multidisciplinary approach with a strong management foundation that could allow the students then to make elective choices as to future study or careers. This broadening of the base of the study fields would be an alternative for students who are attracted to the College's values and culture but unsure of career choice. This approach would also consider the needs of the growing part-time adult learner population.

● Research and external engagement are evident but as these are in the early stages of development there needs to be an integrated approach which at the moment may be viewed to be responsive to opportunity but a little ad hoc rather than focused on the strategic vision.

● In terms of research, the Panel considers that the College should consider promoting a distinct research identity that would be unequivocally associated with Kolping College; elaborating a set of clear milestone achievements for the research goals; developing and communicating incentives for research; providing the necessary administrative support for current and future research activities; providing professional development and/or remedial support as required; generally exploiting well-chosen strategic regional, national and international partnerships for research purposes in designated strategic theme areas.

● Internationalisation is an important part of the institutional strategy for continuing development. The past years have curtailed the main approach to internationalisation including student and staff mobility, but opportunity exists through the Kolping network to establish a broad range of international activities offering opportunities for students and staff via curriculum development and the development of shared resources.

● In order to internationalise its teaching and learning activities, we recommend that the College should develop an overall strategy for internationalisation based on "internationalisation for all", focusing on internationalisation of the curriculum, linking it to the student and staff mobility strategy, and making full use of digital technologies; develop a distinct international identity that would be unequivocally associated with the College and its values and mission; develop a language policy and set of guidelines.

● In terms of partnership, the College should cultivate strong international partnerships that benefit a wide range of academic activities from the curriculum, virtual and physical mobility and joint/double degree opportunities to research and external engagement. It may wish to identify a number of geographical foci driven by its disciplines and by the specific language competences at the College. It can then develop annual targets for each partnership and work towards those.

● A strategic approach to partnership raises the need to develop clear policies and guidelines for partnership development and management. We recommend that the College develops a coherent institution-wide common policy on strategic international partnerships to supplement the existing very proper international connections at

individual, department or programme levels. This would imply clarification on what the College expects from partnerships in teaching and learning, research and external engagement; criteria on selection of partners at individual, programme, faculty or institutional levels; ground rules for collaborative partnerships.

● In terms of language policy, we recommend that the College develops a language policy that identifies which languages are used at the College and for what purposes (teaching and learning, research, communication), what the expectations for language acquisition are for students, academic and administrative staff, and what language learning opportunities are in place. This can also be used as a means for highlighting the importance of language learning at the College and will become increasingly important as the community becomes more diverse both through local and international engagement.

124. **Good practice examples:**

The panel noted the following examples of good practice:

● The strong student-centred approach to learning and teaching.

● The clear evidence of the integration of professional practice into academic study.

● The opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct research and present work at conferences.

● The academic and professional quality of students recognised by social partners.

3.4. Impact on regional and national development

Impact on regional and national development area is being analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;
4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.

125. The College regularly consults with a wide range of external social partners and stakeholders within the region that includes representatives of the relevant business communities and organisations in the fields of social work, tourism and transport and logistics. The College carries out workforce analysis to identify future workforce needs and prepare and present study fields that supports the national and regional workforce and economic strategy. The supportive social partners are important influences in the overall portfolio of programs offered. This focus on the local the region given the size and local profile is understandable but wider recognition would enhance the opportunity for meeting national and international needs.

126. Commissioned external research and development programs for regional stakeholders and partners form an integral part of both research activities and the Experiential Learning Centre.

127. The monitoring and analysis of the contribution is measured through four aspects: dissemination of applied science at the regional national international levels, cooperation in commissioned and professionally related research, the promotion and development of lifelong learning and the value creation of high-quality students entering the workforce.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:
4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning; *4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;* *4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

128. Lifelong learning is focused on the Experiential Learning Centre which can quickly and flexibly respond to clearly identified needs. One example is the establishment of continuing professional development programs for social work supported by the Department for Social Work. The Centre provides a wide range of non-formal education through seminars and short courses that encourages the development of lifelong learning. These lifelong learning opportunities are widely available to the community, business groups as well as for professional practitioners as has been noted with the social work professional development courses.

129. The College ethos of developing student engagement and curiosity in the learning process supports lifelong learning as part of personal, social and professional development. This is evidenced through the number of students who post-graduation and often whilst employment undertake further higher education study programmes.

130. The lifelong learning focus through the ELC represents potential for further strategic development and community impact. The introduction of the concept of "micro credentials" to be able to recognise and credit flexible learning is an interesting opportunity for aggregation of those micro credentials into lifelong learning awards.

131. The College ethos and principles of inclusivity and diversity and the strength of non-formal education encourages the conditions for lifelong learning is focused on the experiential. Although it is not clear whether a systematic and analytical approach is taken to identify the need for LLL, nor how the ELC programmes are determined.

132. All non-formal programs are part of the ongoing quality assurance review processes and evaluated monitored through that process.

133. **In summary,** the College has a wide group of regional stakeholders who are regularly consulted and engaged in the analysis of regional demands in terms of new study developments, research and longer-term manpower needs. The impact on national and international developments is less clear as the College focus is on the strong regional identity and the support the local stakeholders and communities. The Experiential Learning Centre

provides a strong focus for the regional, community and stakeholder needs of lifelong learning, although this appears to be more on demand rather than through a strategic analysis of future trends. The non-formal education and learning provided through the Centre has significant opportunity for development including extending its reach through integrated hybrid learning opportunities and the development of micro credentials.

134. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given three (3) points.

135. **Recommendations for the area:**

● We recommend developing a strategic vision for external engagement that encompasses the ELC and connects it the teaching and learning and research agendas to ensure greater impact in the community. This would include research into the wider lifelong learning needs and requirements including the opportunities in hybrid and online provision.

136.**Good practice examples:**

The panel noted the following examples of good practice:

● There is effective relationship management with the social partners.

● There are strong community opportunities for lifelong learning programs involving staff, students and alumni.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in Kolping College.

Management:

● That the strong culture and ethos of the College is apparent across all of the operational areas and that these values are translated into actions and behaviours which are visible both internally and externally.

● The strong sense of institutional identity and community in the engagement with all staff.

● The engagement of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders ensures a wide representation and a voice as part of the College community.

● That the systematic collection and evaluation of data informs the implementation of the action plan and strong monitoring and modification processes are in place that involve all of the staff.

● The systematic collection and evaluation of data against key performance indicators is considered to be good practice as is the wider open community meetings held by the College.

● The recognised systematic evaluation and review processes with a focus on continuing professional development for all staff including excellent support for part-time staff.

Quality assurance:

- The well-developed quality culture that permeates throughout the daily practice and operation of the institution.

Studies and research (art):

- The strong student-centered approach to learning and teaching.

- The clear evidence of the integration of professional practice into academic study.

- The opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct research and present work at conferences.

- The academic and professional quality of students recognised by social partners.

Impact on regional and national development:

- There is effective relationship management with the social partners.

- There are strong community opportunities for lifelong learning programs involving staff, students and alumni.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement have been presented at the end of each section in detail. In this final section they are presented in a more condensed format to facilitate the development of an action plan by the College.

Management:

1) **Long-term strategic planning**: the unique position of the College and its relationship with the foundation should form the basis for a developing vision for the College over the next 10 years. Whilst there is a well-developed strategic planning process with a comprehensive action plan this has a relatively short time horizon. Creating a longer-term vision for the College that clearly demonstrates what it stands for and where it wants to be, could assist in providing long-term objectives and aims against which all further developments would be tested. This will include the ambitions in terms of student numbers, development and coherence of the study programs and development of non-formal education and external engagement including research

2) **Internal Management Structures**: that the role and remit of the Academic Council be reviewed to ensure that it meets the objects and visions of the institution and that its role as the regulatory, ratification, and consultative body is clear and transparent to all of the relevant stakeholders.

3) **Structured Marketing Strategy**: developing a marketing strategy based on the values of the college and its wider inclusivity. This would focus on target markets with the main selling points, the supportive nature of the student experience, price and the "added value" the College provides in supporting students through the learning and teaching experience into professional employment.

4) **Staff Development**: that staff development processes are directly aligned with the mission and vision of the institution to provide greater clarity to the long-term staff development needs.

5) **Funding:** that a wider funding strategy is developed to identify potential additional funding streams that could include; social partner scholarships, funded research and additional research grant opportunities.

Quality assurance:

1) **Internal Moderation:** that the College consider developing an internal moderation and verification process to ensure consistency and reliability of internal grading of student assessment activities.

2) **Institutional Research**: that the College consider the considerable strength of the quality assurance processes as a potential area of research to identify the extent to which the current system would be scalable in any growth in the institution. This will include the wider use of institutional data for evidence-based decision-making and to use the outcomes as part of external promotion.

Studies and research (art):

1) **Academic enhancement:** the existing study fields and the strong theme of social responsibility provide the basis for further academic developments, based on a multidisciplinary approach with a strong management foundation that could allow the students then to make elective choices as to future study or careers. This broadening of the base of the study fields would be an alternative for students who are attracted to the College's values and culture but unsure of career choice. This approach would also consider the needs of the growing part-time adult learner population.

2) **Measuring and communicating "Added Value":** that the college undertake internal research into the added value that is evidenced through the student experience and develop measurements that recognise the enhancement that experience adds to the student outcomes. This will include the strong relationships between the professional practice, placements, learning and teaching, student-based research and wider external engagement.

3) **Developing a research identity:** promoting a distinct research identity that would be unequivocally associated with Kolping College this would include; a set of clear milestone achievements for the research goals; developing and communicating incentives for research; providing the necessary administrative support for current and future research activities; providing professional development and support as required; and exploiting well-chosen strategic regional, national and international partnerships for research purposes in designated strategic theme areas.

4) **Digital Enhancement:** that the further development of digital technologies is considered to improve access to all aspects of learning and teaching, research and

external engagement, whilst supporting the streamlining and transparency of the internal processes and systems.

5) **International engagement**: The College should cultivate strong international partnerships that benefit a wide range of academic activities from the curriculum, virtual and physical mobility and joint/double degree opportunities to research and external engagement. The opportunity for internationalisation given the colleges relationship with the Kolping Foundation should be further developed with academic institutions and social partners to ensure a strong international dimension is embedded across all academic activities. The further development of strategic partnerships would align with the strategic vision of the College and develop capability to take advantage of the rapid changes in digital technology that can facilitate and enhance all academic activities.

Impact on regional and national development:

1) **Regional and National Development:** The College should develop a strategic capability for external engagement that encompasses the ELC and connects the teaching and learning and research agendas to ensure greater impact in the community. This would include research into the wider regional and national lifelong learning needs and requirements including the opportunities for developing hybrid and online provision.