



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**STUDY FIELD of THEATRE**

at Vilnius University of Applied Sciences

**Expert panel:**

1. Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches (chair of the panel), academic;
2. Doc. Dr. Hana Pruchova academic;
3. Doc. dr. Stefan Aquilina academic;
4. Doc. dr. Rūta Mažeikienė, academic;
5. Mr Laurynas Nikelis, *students' representative*.

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Agnė Grigaitė...*

Report language – English

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Vilnius  
2021

## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Musical Theatre
State code	6531PX014
Type of studies	Higher education college studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3,5)
Credit volume	210
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Entrance exam
Registration date of the study programme	2012-05-18

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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 the 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) site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this 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 then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **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 and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

### 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 11 May, 2021.

1. **Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches (chair of the panel)**, *Head of School of Performance and Cultural Industries at University of Leeds, United Kingdom;*
2. **Doc. dr. Hana Pruchova (academic)**, *Vice-Dean for Research at Janacek Academy of Performing Arts, Theatre Faculty, Czech Republic;*
3. **Doc. dr. Stefan Aquilina (academic)**, *Director at School of Performing Arts and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Malta, Malta;*
4. **Doc. dr. Rūta Mažeikienė (academic)**, *Vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts and Associate professor at Theatre Studies Department, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania;*
5. **Mr. Laurynas Nikelis (students' representative)**, *alumni of Master's programme 'Marketing and International Commerce' at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	'Study fields: THEATRE (P04) SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (henceforth abbreviated as the SER)
2.	Examples of theses and final projects (video and written material).
3.	Introduction to the VK infrastructure provided in video format

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

The Theatre study field at University of Applied Science (Vilniaus Kolegija) (hereafter – College) consists of one bachelor programme, Musical Theatre (hereafter – Programme). It is based at the largest professional higher education institution in Lithuania, in the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies. The faculty offers five study programmes in the field of Arts, of which Musical Theatre is the only one realized in the field of Theatre.

The programme was launched in 2006 (from 2006 to 2012 as the Entertaining Performing Arts, from 2013 as Musical Theatre) with the aim to prepare professional performers capable of acting, singing, and dancing equally. The programme responded to the growing popularity of the musical theatre genres and evident needs of producers and directors of musical theatre productions.

The position of the Programme is unique. It is the only study programme in Lithuania focused on musical acting at the moment. About 16 students are accepted to the Programme each year. Graduates gain the Professional Bachelors of Arts and continue either to professional practice or master programmes at other HEI (especially Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and Vytautas Magnus University).

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Theatre* study field and first cycle at University of Applied Science is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	<b>26</b>

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

2 (satisfactory) - The area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated;

3 (good) - The area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings;

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

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

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

*Study 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 labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

*(1) Factual situation*

The Musical Theatre programme is a three-year and a half year full-time programme, covering seven semesters and 210 credits. The programme was first conceived in 2006 to offer the first musical theatre training in the country, allied with the “Lithuania 2030” strategic policy for national development, which included increased access to, and enhanced diversity of, cultural production. It remains unique as an offer in the country of Lithuania. The programme’s relevance to society and the labour market is indicated in the SER. Musical theatre has enjoyed rapid growth in recent years (compared to other theatre genres) and there is strong evidence that it has “gain[ed a] foothold in Lithuanian theatrical culture”. The programme’s responsiveness to future developments in musical theatre nationally and internationally is well argued, in line with the “Lithuania 2030” cultural strategy.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The programme’s alignment with national and international needs in musical theatre development is clear and persuasive both in the SER and in the testimony heard by the expert panel during its visit. The programme is demonstrably embedded in the field of professional musical theatre, but has wider reach within the creative industries nationally. Graduates are prominent in the labour market and social partner links are strong, indicating an ongoing connectedness between the programme, its partners, and the wider needs of society. The high employment rates of its graduates exemplify further this strength, with the rate never falling below 87% in the last four years, and peaking at 100% for two years in the last four (2018 and 2019).

*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*

*(1) Factual situation*

VK offers 5 study programmes in the field of Arts: 3 in Design and one in Music and Theatre. The aim of the Programme as stated in the SER is “to prepare professional musical theatre (musical) actors who are able to create and prepare roles for musical theatre productions and perform these roles in public”. Its mission to prepare professional, market-ready graduates is seamlessly aligned with the College’s overarching strategy and the learning outcomes are targeted towards this clear goal, for instance in “train [ing] practice-oriented specialists in the field of (...) arts studies who meet the economic and social needs of Vilnius region and Lithuania as a whole ” and in the programme’s “ development of general abilities

and attitudes towards civic values” ensuring “the preparation of the graduates of VK for work and further studies”.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Throughout the documentation, and the expert panel’s visit, the robustness of the College strategy, and its clear realisation within the musical theatre programme were evident. In the meeting with senior leadership, the strategic vision of the College was very strong and in later meetings it was clear that its implementation is real and beneficial for the programme of musical theatre. Notable are the aspirations to increase further scientific and artistic activity of the staff, and to inculcate a belief in ethical and sustainable practice for students.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The Description of the Field of Theatre was only approved at National level during the period of the evaluation. In that context, several supporting documents are cited in the SER as providing legislative underpinning to the programme design. The programme meets the requirements of higher education in the Republic of Lithuania and goes beyond legal requirements in respect of contact hours and the ratio of practical work. It dedicates more time to final thesis and to professional skills development. The internship programme is internally focused and this was the subject of discussion with the expert panel. Compliance of the learning outcomes with the First Study Cycle requirements is outlined in Annex 4. Here, learning outcomes for the study cycle are matched to the learning outcomes for the programme, evidencing how knowledge (e.g: “To read and analyse literary and musical text), or research skills (e.g: “To apply the acquired knowledge, skills and technical tools [... to the] performance of a concrete role”) are tested on the Programme.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The case for the programme’s alignment with national requirements is robustly made in the SER and was coherently defended in the expert panel’s visit. The programme not only complies with but goes beyond National guidelines for teaching hours and this programme design is demonstrably part of the success of the programme and of its alumni. The current internally-focused internship scheme, however, needs to be rethought to explicitly and universally include external opportunities.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The programme uses a wide range of teaching methods (e.g. discussion, presentation, creative project, public presentation, artistic research, role-plays, portfolio of creative works). Assessment methods (e.g. rehearsal, review, performance, concert, presentation and performance of creative works) are mapped carefully onto the learning outcomes of the programme. These were augmented further in response to the pandemic, and embraced distanced and digital learning. These methods reflect the professional agenda of the programme and engage students deeply in skills-based activity, punctuated with reflection and research.



*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The blend of assessment techniques, and its careful mapping to learning outcomes is persuasive and reflects the care and attention taken in the design of the programme and its contemporaneous approach to assessment. Staff will have to reflect further on the extent to which digital learning and assessment remains within the programme post-pandemic. Annex 5 represents very clearly how the students are taught to reach the learning outcomes and where the learning outcomes are met in relation to the modules.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The programme blends practical skills-based learning with theatre and music history and theory and offers further optional subjects in business, communication and psychology. Complexity and depth is designed to increase through the seven semesters; independent thinking and self-reflection enter clearly into the programme at year two, and further independence, professionalisation as well as the final thesis form the third (and a half) year. Systematic skills development is threaded through the seven semesters, focusing on movement singing and stage language.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The totality of the programme is clearly expressed in a strong identity and impressive graduate performances. Programme design is coherent, well thought through and the competences are developed systematically and progressively through the 3 ½ years. The additional time for professional skills development and final thesis allows for extremely adept performers to be trained on the programme, and the programme content is kept consistently under review in a meaningful quality assurance process.

*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*

*(1) Factual situation*

Since 2013, the programme has retreated from specialisation and towards what is termed personalisation in the SER. Personalisation is achieved by choosing electives, such as professional English or more skills based elective subjects such as improvisation or composition. These options are identified each academic year and relayed to students via an open information system. Opportunities for Erasmus plus are encouraged and students can define their studies accordingly.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The retreat from specialisation was agreed in discussion with social partners and in relation to the market needs of the graduates of the programme and their employers. As the programme is designed to train integrated performing artists, working across music and theatre, specialisation may be a misnomer. However, there are meaningful opportunities to define the programme in individual ways by the students and good examples of final thesis being adapted to professional needs. International mobility opportunities are real and facilitated within the programme structure.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The compliance and quality assurance of the final thesis is identified in the SER. Students' Final projects are implemented through the production of musical performances offered on the public stage of Vilnius theatres. The detail of these separate projects is identified in Annex 7 and includes performances of *Natasha*, *Pierre* and *Great Comet of 1812* and *Nunsense*. There is a robust evaluation process with professional directors, performers and producers formulating the evaluating commission. This creative work forms 70% of the assessment and is accompanied by a reflective log, covering the three and a half years (30%).

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Given the programme and College's aim of developing the highest quality professional performers, the focus in the final thesis on professional, public performance and reflection is appropriate. Professional scrutiny clearly adds to the visibility and credibility of the programme and the high levels of employability testify to the impact of this approach. The blend of practice and reflection is well-judged and students are able to blend their practice and theory in this final examination.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The very clear identity, design and student skill-set reflected in the programme;
2. The demonstrable alignment of market need with programme offer and training;
3. The extent to which students are able to engage with non-core modules, such as electives and/or international mobility;
4. The blend of assessment methods, and the robust response to the pandemic in relation to digital learning;
5. The emphasis on professionalisation and on developing a clear pathway to the industry.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The internally-focused internship scheme.

## **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES**

***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***

#### ***(1) Factual situation***

The SER discusses the links between science (art) and study activities. The document underlines that College gives attention to Research and Development activities, and the way they are organised and, crucially, disseminate, which as an objective is certainly to be lauded.

These activities are treated as a necessity to complement and further develop the pedagogical studies. Guidelines for such activities are prepared. Beyond this short section, more questions about the position of research within the workings of the Programme were asked during the visit.

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel strongly felt that research-based objectives are not being infused in the day-to-day running of the programme. Staff members clearly consider themselves professional practitioners first, and they had clear difficulty in articulating the difference between artistic production and applied research (where outputs and results are transmittable beyond a conventional audience to a research community in order to generate further knowledge/material). If the College is serious about engaging in artistic research, a thorough and broad exercise in embedding research systematically in the career plans for staff, and their development, should be considered. These actions would facilitate this:

1. clarify the terms of what artistic research is, in relation to national and international paradigms, particularly with reference to Practice Research;
2. create regular research training seminars/events;
3. hire staff that would be directly engaged to develop a research culture. These would be researchers primarily, with little or no teaching duties, on lines sometimes evident in UK conservatories;
4. offer sabbatical incentives.

The teaching staff are all professional practitioners, so there should be ample potential to develop artistic research and reflective thinking on performance processes. In brief, plans should be developed that can be agreed upon and implemented systematically and consistently.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The advantages of generating a research culture underscored in critical evaluation and reflection (see above) would benefit other sectors of the programme. For instance, it would also impact the teaching content, as the panel questions the emphasis of using modern twentieth-century theatre masters as cornerstones of the programme. These masters are used to teach the basics of singing, acting, movement, and they are currently treated as such, i.e. as the basics.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel suggests a careful rethink of the implications of using twentieth century theatre masters (Stanislavski, Grotowski, Brook, Lecoq, Biomechanics etc.) to study a contemporary performance reality like musical theatre. Questions about how to rethink critically the masters and how to integrate more contemporary teaching models are important. The understanding that the programme remains contemporary by staging contemporary musicals is not enough.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Students receive a broad education in diverse skills, but then they are allowed to focus through their final project. This model has the support of social partners as well as students; the former underlined many times that graduates are flexible performers that show different skills. The broad education translates to a broad range of conditions for students to be involved in the area of study. Students perform on Lithuanian stages from Year 1, and in the past final projects have also been carried out outside of the College. There seems to be, however, little formal agreements (e.g. signed documents) for these activities to take place, and more attention needs to be given to what an internship is (see below). The most motivated students are also given the opportunity to participate in the performance projects of their teachers, which is considered another opportunity for the students to show and improve their competences. The Musical Theatre programme has 11 international partners. Understandably, this year there has been less student mobility, but more visiting professors were evident. Past experience with Erasmus mobility was positive, smooth, and students felt well-supported. Remote teaching with US professors was used this year as a test ground, successfully so.

During the meetings it was clear that students and graduates of the programme are vibrant, articulate, flexible and creative. This was also confirmed by the social partners. This success can only be the outcome of a solid learning programme that offers students ample possibilities to engage with musical theatre. The study load seems to be manageable.

The pandemic created teaching problems of course, but the students were clearly thankful that the conditions for them to get involved in activities were adapted and not lost. Efforts were clearly made to facilitate online teaching (e.g. classes split in smaller groups, use of handheld devices, recording of videos etc.), to still allow for plenty of individual attention and feedback.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

In the view of the panel, a clearer strategy and definition of artistic research would inform other aspects of the work of the programme, and a re-evaluation of the written component of the final project would be one. At the moment this is referred to as 'research' and 'theory' when in reality it is close to the background information what a student sources for a particular project (e.g. the socio-political background behind a work like *War and Peace*). The panel recommends the addition of a stringer theoretical underpinning to the final dissertation to develop the students' analytical skills. The internship scheme on the programme needs to be re-articulated and rethought so that it explicitly includes activities outside the college.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. The programme is demonstrably embedded in the field of professional musical theatre;

2. The programme offers consistent opportunities for students to develop flexible and creative skills in musical theatre;
3. Students are testament that the programme is meeting its aims and objectives;
4. Clear and proactive response to the pandemic. There are plans to continue exploring the good practices adopted during the pandemic through proper evaluation to see what could be used in more blended teaching contexts;
5. Online teaching of practice still allowed for plenty of individual feedback to be given to students, highlighting that involvement of students in theatre activity remains strong.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Definitions of artistic research and its link to professional practices remains unclear;
2. Basics of training are equated with twentieth-century masters rather than more contemporary reference points.

### **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***

##### ***(1) Factual situation***

Admission to the Programme complies with the general requirements of Lithuanian higher education institutions. As of 2019, students' competitive score consists only of entrance exams, which consist of tasks evaluating the entrants abilities in fields of acting, music and dance. In addition to the entrance exam, the student must meet other requirements of Lithuanian higher education institutions, which differ for those seeking to enter state-funded or non-state-funded places. No previous musical or theatrical education is required to enter this degree programme, but the college provides the opportunity to participate in preparatory courses in musical literacy, dance, singing, or acting. The College provides all information to prospective students about admission conditions and studies consistently and actively: in the LAMA BPO (Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų asociaciją bendrajam priėmimui organizuoti (eng. Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for organizing joint admission))system, on the faculty, college websites, study fairs and in various activities with students, lecturers or collaborations with social partners

##### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

It is important to emphasize that the College's student admission system meets all the requirements and can select the most motivated students during entrance exams. Good work has been done in developing an outreach system that includes not only formal aspects such as a College website or the LAMA BPO system, but the involvement of students, teachers and social partners, who help to publicize the study programme to a wider audience. The opportunity for prospective students to take additional courses offered by the College to fill the gaps, in the view of the expert panel, is very rewarding. All these components of the

system and the clarity of the criteria help to maintain a similar number of enrolling students and increase the average entrance score every year.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The college has clearly regulated documents to assess and recognize the formal and informal competencies, subjects and qualifications acquired by students. The descriptions indicate how students can transfer the studied subject from other Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions. Also, the procedure for recognition of formally acquired competencies applies to persons who have acquired at least the fourth (4) level qualification according to the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework. and who have been admitted to the study programmes of VK. It is presented that competencies acquired through non-formal education methods are recognised if at least 3 years of experience have been gained. The evidence was presented to the panel, of cases when qualification acquired in other Lithuanian higher education institutions or in partners institutions during the Erasmus+ programme, was recognized by the decision of the Head of the Department

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

All descriptions and assessment systems create favourable conditions for recognition students acquired competencies in a formal and informal way. Recognising study results study subjects when they are acquired in other Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions gives students flexibility and mobility.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The faculty has an extensive network of partners throughout Europe. This study programme has 11 partnerships for international student mobility in the Erasmus + programme. The faculty gives opportunity to all students of 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> study year to participate in the competition, which takes place twice a year for autumn and spring semester studies. The selection assesses their study results of the previous academic year, foreign language skills and motivation. Students are provided with information in different ways - on the website, on the Facebook page, by email, through individual consultations or during an information event about Erasmus+. Students are given the opportunity to engage in short-term international mobility through internships through the Nordic / Baltic Nordplus Network Act in Art.

As studies in the Programme are conducted only in Lithuanian, incoming international students do not have the opportunity to participate in integrated studies. However, the faculty offers a one-semester modules of 30ECTS in English that is suitable for students from foreign higher education institutions.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The administration staff of the study programme copes well with the provision of international mobility for students. The ever-growing number of partnerships opens up opportunities for students to gain international experience. As throughout their studies,



students seek to establish themselves in the local market, which results in them being reluctant to choose long-term studies abroad, thus, in the view of the panel, it is important to further expand short-term international internships and create even more opportunities by attracting foreign teachers, practitioners and experts and integrating them into the study process. It is important to further expand opportunities for foreign students and create as many conditions as possible for long-term student involvement in studies.

#### *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*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

The College strives to provide the necessary support and assistance to students, the procedure and system are formalized, documented and freely available to each student. College provides opportunities to receive incentive scholarships, and gives all information about State Studies Foundation allowances, or study loans. College and nominal scholarships encourage the most advanced and active (who have participated in projects, concerts), students to have the opportunity to receive a One-time scholarship. A funding structure is also in place for those who have incurred certain costs related to illness and a changed financial situation. In order to reduce the stress of students' involvement in the faculty community, the faculty provides all the necessary psychological support. Students are also represented on the student council, which expresses students' opinions on committees, Student representatives participate in the activities awarding scholarship, and participate in other structural bodies. All the necessary tools and conditions for individual work of students are also created. Meetings with students and the faculty community revealed that in order to better understand students' expectations and make the necessary changes, student feedback is collected periodically through individual interviews and surveys.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Discussion with students during formal meetings revealed that the help and support system is effective and helpful. A strong and supportive community unfolds through informal conversations, and students feel safe discussing issues with teachers. They are well informed about the possibility of conducting surveys, consulting a psychologist, or receiving financial support. An active and organized student council helps each student express their opinion, that could be heard about the study programme. The faculty did an excellent job of providing all the necessary assistance during the pandemic and ensured work efficiency.

#### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

General information about studies can be found on the official website of the College and on bulletin boards at the department or faculty. Students' Meetings with faculty administration and other academic staff are also organized each year, during which students can get a lot of useful information about their chosen studies such as program, subjects, or infrastructure updates, as well as during meetings, students can ask questions of concern or report on existing issues. The College has a separate study department that helps students solve a variety of problems. First-year students are also assigned a teacher-tutor who informs and introduces them to the College's procedures and environment. Also, each of the students

has the opportunity to consult with the staff of the College in case of problems not only related to the studies, but also personal issues.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Information about the study programme is provided purposefully, during lectures, meetings with teachers and administration, on the website. Student group meetings with the administration and social partners and individual consultations are well appreciated in the College, as providing first-hand information on changes in studies, student issues, and innovations. It is very helpful that the college administration provides formal and planned ways for students to express their views and receive key information, because not all students feel comfortable receiving this information in informal, individual contact.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. There is an excellent blend of formal and informal processes for gathering feedback, and students' voices are consistently heard;
2. The use of short-term international mobility has been effective in continuing students' opportunities to work beyond the borders of Lithuania;
3. The staff are devoted teachers, skilled professionals and consistently go above and beyond in their support of students, particularly evident in their response to the pandemic.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Not enough attention is paid to attracting international students for long-term study.

**3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, 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***

***(1) Factual situation***

The studies are based on individualized approach to each student which shows in the process of teaching and learning (e. g. individual workshops/subjects, small groups enabling personal approach to students, individual tasks in group subjects), discussions on students' progress (individual feedback within the learning process, including work on creative projects) and organizational support as well (e. g. spatial conditions for self-study). Constant discussion among teachers and students, both in groups and individually, is present and evident, which enables them to uncover students' needs, provide corresponding support, and take appropriate actions, if needed.



## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The discussion with all relevant groups proved the strong orientation of the Programme towards students and their needs. The individualized nature of the studies and teaching and learning processes, which take into consideration students' artistic individuality and needs, were found to be significant strengths of the Programme.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

As mentioned in the chapter 3.3, the College offers various forms of financial support both for students in financially difficult situations (e. g. social scholarship, study loans, one-time allowances) and as a motivation tool (e. g. incentive scholarships, one-time bonuses for active participation in relevant projects and activities). Students are aware of possibilities of financial support, getting information from the College, the head and teachers of the Department.

As for pastoral support, students can turn to a faculty psychologist, if needed. Within the visit, students appreciated the open atmosphere and the possibility of individual consultations with teachers of the department if they get into difficult or problematic situations of various kinds (personal, financial etc.). A monthly newsletter focused on topics related to mental health, sent to students within the pandemic period, was mentioned as a good example of a way how the institution takes actual students' needs into consideration. Special needs are perceived quite narrowly in the Programme. The only information related to this topic was included in the video which was enclosed in the report and which mentioned a lift for disabled people in the faculty building. No specific approach, practice or equipment for students with special needs was mentioned in the self-evaluation report. The understanding of high sensitivity of some students of the Programme was proved within meetings with pedagogues, other types of special needs which require specific attitudes (e. g. learning disorders like dyslexia, sensory disorders like tinnitus etc.) were neither mentioned, nor considered.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The college provides a range of financial, psychological, and moral support which helps students with special needs and/or difficult situations. Distribution of information is arranged both in a formal and informal way and it ensures the good level of students' awareness of available possibilities. The personal approach of teachers of the Department to students, not only by providing information, but also by searching solutions for individual issues and needs, is a clear strength of the Programme.

### *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*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Monitoring and subsequent evaluation of students' study progress is based both on formal and informal methods and approaches. Assessments of learning outcomes and academic achievements are formalized (see the document Description of Assessment Procedure of Academic Achievements which is publicly available at

<https://en.viko.lt/facilities-services/grading-system/>). At the beginning of each semester students are acquainted with the objectives of each subject, expected learning outcomes and assessment criteria. All information is available in the subjects' syllabi accessible in the open information system. After each semester students' achievements are reviewed at the Dean's meetings and the Departments' meetings. The Department for Studies, which collects data on the study achievements systematically, prepares materials for the Dean's meetings. Analysis of study progress and students' achievements in relation to expected learning outcomes and expectations of stakeholders, including students, is made by the Study Programme Committee.

More informal approaches to feedback are included in the process of students' progress monitoring and evaluation (teachers' meetings, sessions of teachers and students, open discussions after performances). Students get feedback also on the individual level. Teachers inform students on their achievements not only after the semester, but continuously, thus the verbal feedback applies both for learning outcomes/creative results and study process/artistic work. Students prepare annual analysis of the subjects of the Programme and the final work – a portfolio of achievements. Feedback on practical work of a student in first years of study is based on verbal form.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The process of monitoring students' study progress and feedback to students is very well formalized and implemented in practice. Teachers and students are aware of these processes and proved their vivid implementation in practice. They also confirm the viability of more informal approaches to continuous and final feedback both on study progress and artistic work of students, realized individually or in a group. While individual verbal feedback operates extremely effectively to help guide students' creative journey, it is recommended that some examples of written feedback on practical work may be helpful in constructing a portfolio of critical commentary on students' development over three years, not only in the final work.

### *3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field.*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The College runs the Career Centre which provides career management services for all students, including those from the Programme, and collects and analyses data related to employment of the college graduates. Career monitoring is based on the data from the Employment Service, Career Management Information System and surveys focused on graduates. Self-employed graduates have not been specifically monitored yet. The programme offers a special subject Performer Management which helps students to get prepared for employment in the national performing arts market.

The employment rates of the graduates of the Programme are high (they ranged from 87.5 to 100 % within the monitored period). More than two thirds of graduates work in cultural institutions and projects directly related to acquired profession. The network of employers is rich and includes not only institutions from the professional musical theatre field but also other stakeholders from the creative industries. Employers consider graduates from the Programme as very well prepared for the labour market. They appreciate their professionalism, comprehensiveness, flexibility, proactivity, and excellent competences. Close

and constantly developed relationship between the Programme and employers was proved within the visit, not only when employing graduates, but within the study process as well (employers participate in implementation and development of the study programme, artistic activities and feedback to students in form of open discussions after performance projects).

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The programme is demonstrably embedded in the field of professional musical theatre, but has wider reach within the creative industries nationally. Graduates are commended for their very high levels of skill, flexibility and creativity by employers. The partnership between the Programme and employers is vivid and significant both from the view of graduates' employment and the study programme implementation and development. The expert panel fully supports the plan of the Department to develop a tool which continuously monitors graduates' careers with regards to specifics of the profession (high rate of self-employed people) and helps to monitor changes in the labour market.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The policies concerning academic integrity and ethics are formalized by the College. Basic principles are determined in the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilniaus Kolegija which is supervised by the Committee of Academic Ethics. The implementation in practice is supported by the management of the faculty, teaching staff and Students' Council. Information on academic honesty is distributed to students from the very beginning of the study (at introductory study week, in the Declaration of Academic Honesty signed by students). Ethical principles are emphasized not only within the process of the final thesis preparation, but also when the study field subjects are evaluated. Students' Council is provided an opportunity to attend the assessment of subjects as an external supervisor. No cases of academic dishonesty were identified within the monitored period.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The policies to ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are well set-up and implemented at the institution. Discussion with students and teachers within the expert panel visit proved the open and safe atmosphere in the Programme which helps to prevent potential problems related to academic ethics and integrity. The independent element of the Students' Council is very important in the issue.

*3.4.6. 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*

*(1) Factual situation*

The process of appeals and complaints is formalized at the College. The principles and procedures are described in the Regulation of Appeals of Vilniaus Kolegija which are publicly available at: <https://en.viko.lt/facilities-services/organisation-of-studies/regulations-on-appeals-of-vilniaus-kolegija-university-of-applied-sciences/>. Within the expert panel visit it was noted that the Department and its teachers are open to hear, discuss and look for solutions to students' appeals and complaints. These issues are sorted out personally and more informally within the Department.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The system of gathering feedback at the Department is based on a functional blend of formal and informal processes. Students' voices are constantly heard, not only from the appeals and complaints point of view. The sense of partnership and community among teachers and students is a very important and strong point of the Programme.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Strong orientation of the Programme on students and their needs. High level of individualization of the studies, taking into consideration students' artistic individuality and different rates of personal progress;
2. Well set-up system of financial, psychological, and moral support, boosted by open atmosphere, close relationship and individual approach of teachers of the Programme to students and their specific situations;
3. Professional and highly commended graduates who are successful in the labour market and work in cultural institutions and projects directly related to acquired profession.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The career of self-employed graduates is not monitored systematically;
2. There is a lack of the written feedback on practical work including critical commentary on students' development over all three years of the study;
3. Special needs of students are perceived quite narrowly in the Programme. No specific approach or practice reflecting specific needs of students with e. g. learning or sensory disorders are considered.

## **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

***Study field teaching staff 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***

#### ***(1) Factual situation***

The number of staff working on the Programme is detailed in the SER. This has remained very stable since 2016 moving from 17 to 18 in total over four years. Similarly stable is the ratio of associate professors to lecturers, and those who are recruited by contest has risen over the period to just under 50%. The staff-student ratio is appropriately low (1:8), recognising the highly practical and intensive nature of the programme. There is a healthy contribution from external teachers, picking up areas of specific need such as American tap dance and to service final projects. The balance of teaching with scholarship and professional/artistic activity is clearly set out the latter is detailed in annex 14. Staff,

generally, are pedagogically well-experienced and demonstrably involved in professional practice alongside their pedagogy, some at international level.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The expert panel found that the mix of disciplinary expertise across the programme team was appropriate for the blend of music, theatre and movement studies needed by the students and was confident that the learning outcomes of the programme are well supported by the complement of staff. Contributors to the programme were well informed, and professionally well equipped to teach on the programme. There is clear space and time to undertake artistic activity and research and this practice enriches the programme in many ways, not least in ensuring the ever-increasing quality of the final project work, which was commended by social partners in the meeting with them.

*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)*

*(1) Factual situation*

One of the recommendations from the previous expert visit in 2016 was for College strategically to build international mobility opportunities for staff (and students). Numbers reported in the SER suggest that international visits were up by almost 100% between 2016 and 2019. Beyond Erasmus plus a new network of Nordic/Baltic institutions has been established, and 11 agreements have been signed with foreign education institutions. Opportunities for international exchange and mobility within the theatre field are taken up on average more readily than across College as an institution. There is clear strategic and senior leadership support for international mobility and a very many benefits it brings, both for outward and incoming schemes.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

In the expert panel visit, the formalities of the process of international mobility were tested and there was clear evidence that high-level policy is reflected on the ground. Invitations from foreign institutions for staff exchange are shared publicly, the resource needs are assessed and colleagues habitually supported in making visits. The exponential growth in outbound international mobility provides the assessment panel with confidence that this is not a singular example. More generally, there is good evidence of sound forward thinking and planning and the freeing up of time (for instance on Mondays) for colleagues to address other aspects of their professional life, including artistic activity and research.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

Staff development and continual professional development are identified in the SER as a strategic priority for the College. This priority is underpinned by solid data gathering on the participation of lecturers in competence development. Since 2016 there has been demonstrable growth in the number of hours dedicated to competence development, although the figures year-on-year are relatively volatile, rising from 107 in 2016/17 to 760 the year later, before falling back to 410 in 2018/19. Opportunities for professional development, led by visiting professors from the United Kingdom and the USA, represent a

systematic approach to the challenge of bringing incoming stimulus to staff in the College. There is evidence of annual training planning, targeted at individuals and these have been continued in digital form through the pandemic.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Staff report high levels of satisfaction in relation to the space given over to professional development and the planning necessary for artistic practice to be balanced alongside teaching. The formalised process of individualised CPD (Continuing Professional Development) planning is authentic and reflected in tutors' experience on the ground. Notwithstanding the practical intensiveness of the course, there is college-wide recognition that staff development is necessary and valuable. No evidence either in the SER or during the visit was garnered in relation to the potential space offered for formal qualifications to be taken, such as studying for a PhD.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. The programme team are very well qualified to deliver on the programme learning outcomes, continue to refresh their learning and experience, and practice their art in the industry beyond the college;
2. There is a concerted effort on behalf of the College to continue to grow international mobility opportunities and very few institutional barriers to achieving this;
3. Strategic and faculty-planning for the support of continuing professional development is well established, meaningful and the benefits are felt by colleagues in the programme team.

### **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***

***(1) Factual situation***

The premises which are at the Programme disposal at the faculty are at very good level. After recent renovation, there is a sufficient amount of well-equipped auditoriums and spaces corresponding with special needs of the Programme. The dormitory doesn't have any specific rehearsal room for self-study work, however students of the Programme can use the space in the nearby faculty building. When students realize their artistic activities at school premises, they are supported by technicians – employers of the faculty. Cooperation with other study programme departments is realized (e. g. fashion design, management of cultural activity). The Programme also cooperates with several social partners who provide their premises/stages and equipment for students' performances and final projects. The College Library offers a huge range of printed and electronic resources which are updated annually based on teachers' and students' needs and demands. Access to several worldwide recognized



databases is ensured, both from inside and outside the university (especially important in the pandemic times). Professional and subject literature and periodicals are systematically and regularly replenished. Information on new acquisitions and resources available in the library are provided for teachers and students in different ways (information events, training on the use of databases, individual consultations). Services of the library, especially in the time of lockdown (e. g. online training courses), were mentioned and appreciated within the expert panel visit. Financial, promotional, and material support of teachers' and students' needs is well ensured. There was big investment in long-term tangible assets. Teaching staff and students expressed their satisfaction with the support of the faculty and resources available.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Spatial, material, informational and financial resources available to teachers and students of the Programme are on a very good level. Conditions for teaching, learning and artistic work meet teachers' and students' needs and they respect specific demands of the Programme. The partnership with social partners seems very important when realizing students' performances and final projects outside the institutions.

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

*(1) Factual situation*

The system of mapping the needs, planning and upgrading resources is well set-up both in short-term and long-term view (short-term annual plans of the faculty, long-term integrated development strategy of the College). The process of raising demands by teachers and students is formalized. Both groups know how to formulate and present their needs to responsible departments. Teachers and students confirmed within the expert panel visit that their requirements are heard and fulfilled, when possible.

The institution feels the lack of some equipment, especially an audio recording studio which is provided to faculty by one of the social partners at present. The idea of a new professional venue resonates with intentions of the faculty management, and it was noted by the expert panel in several discussions within the visit.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The processes of the planning and upgrading of resources are formalized and well-known across relevant stakeholders (teaching staff, students). Special needs resulting from the specific character of the Programme are respected and fulfilled, if possible. The idea of a new professional venue (theatre/concert hall) is in the stage of the very beginning of a pre-project phase and requires a proper feasibility study and subsequent analyses.

*Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

*(1) Strengths:*

1. Spatial, material, technical and financial resources available to teachers and students of the Programme are on a very good level.
2. The Library offers excellent support based on an awareness of teachers and students needs and proactive approach (e. g. in the time of pandemic).

3. The system of mapping the needs, planning and upgrading resources is well set-up and carried out both in short-term and long-term view.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The idea of a new performance space needs to be transformed into concrete plans based on proper analyses and studies over the next three-five years.

### **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

***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***

##### ***(1) Factual situation***

The structure of the management of the Programme and the decision-making responsibilities are described in SER. Studies are managed and decisions are made by the participation of the following parties: Academic Councils of the College and the Faculty, The Administration of the College, the Faculty and the Department, The Study Programme Committee. The administration of the College follows the Quality Manual of the College and the Description of the Procedure for Internal Quality Assessment of Study Programmes, and supervises the implementation of the quality of studies. The Administration of the Faculty and the Department coordinates the implementation of the Programme. The main responsibility of the assurance of the programme quality lies with the Study Programme Committee (SPC). SPC consists of 9 members (Head of the Department, teachers, students, social partners) and performs internal Programme quality assessment and renewal. SPC is responsible for preparation and implementation of the programme quality improvement plans. It organizes at least 2 meetings per academic year to discuss the quality of the programme (the state of implementation and current problems) and submits the minutes of the meetings with the recommendations and / or conclusions to the Dean of the Faculty.

##### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

According to the SER, related documentation, and the meetings, the College has a good quality culture. The Panel was convinced that there are appropriate quality assurance measures in place. The internal assessment processes are systematically performed every year. The responsibilities of members in different bodies are clearly defined and the responsibility for the quality of studies is ensured at all levels.

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

##### ***(1) Factual situation***

Social partners and students of the Programme are involved in the most important internal quality assurance supervision processes: they are members of SPC, the Faculty Council and different committees of the College and of the Faculty (e.g. committee of attestation, of committee of competition for teachers). Social partners are also invited to participate in the process of the evaluation of the final (theses) projects, in the Faculty's /



Department's working groups, and in jointly (with the Faculty / Department) planned and / or organized artistic / educational activities, also in the meetings with the students. The involvement of the social partners in all these activities was strongly confirmed during the meeting with social partners. Students are invited to express their opinion on the studies via their representatives (in SPC, in Faculty Council, and in different committees) and via formal students' surveys, designed to assess teaching quality of the subjects. The involvement of students in the quality improvement as described in the SER was ensured during the meeting with students. The students confirmed that their opinions concerning teaching and learning processes are regularly asked and considered in both – formal and informal – ways.

Although it was not indicated in the SER, during the meetings with other stakeholders (teachers, alumni), the panel was informed that a) the teachers are invited to present and express their comments and suggestions regarding the improvement of the Programme to the administration of the Department; b) the alumni are encouraged to express their opinion on the Programme during the informal meetings with the administration and / or teachers of the department.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

According to the SER, related documentation, and the meetings, the College ensures the involvement of different stakeholders in the internal quality assurance. Based on the SER and the meetings, the Panel states that social partnership is vital for the management of quality of the Programme, its' assessment and its' improvement. The Department has a vast network of social partners from Lithuanian theatre and music sectors. The panel notes that the means and processes of gathering information from different stakeholders are adequate and leads to the improvements in the Programme. However, the panel recommends gathering the opinion on the Programme of social partners and alumni not only in informal, but also in formal (surveys) ways.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The information about studies is gathered, analysed and evaluated regularly in order to improve the quality of studies. All data is gathered and collected by the different subdivisions of the Faculty (Department, Study Department, Study Organization Department) and presented to the SPC, which is responsible for the quality of studies. On the basis of the collected data SPC performs annual Programme analysis, prepares quality improvement plans and submits the results of annual internal self-evaluation of the Programme to the administration of the Department and of the Faculty. A more comprehensive, detailed analysis is done for external evaluation of the study field.

In order to assess the quality of studies the Faculty performs different surveys: survey of students on the quality of subject teaching, survey of graduates on the quality of studies, survey of social partners, who accepts the trainees from the Programme. The obtained survey results are analysed, summarized, discussed (with the teachers, with the students, within the SPC) and published on the College's and Faculty's websites. Although SER states, that all feedback reports are publicly available on the College's and Faculty's websites, the panel notes that there are no published reports on the surveys of graduates and surveys of

social partners in the meantime. Nevertheless during the meetings, the panel was convinced that the collected data (results of surveys) is analysed and discussed with students, teachers and social partners.

In addition to institutional, formalized surveys of the stakeholders, the Department also uses other informal means of gathering the information on the quality of studies. It is indicated in the SER, that a) the teachers can organize their surveys of students on the subject they teach, b) the Department initiates self-reflection sessions of the students of the Programme in verbal form, providing opportunities to informally express their opinion about studies.

The SER does not present any concrete examples how the results of the formal surveys or informal discussions were used in order to improve the quality study programme, but during the meetings with the teachers, with the students and with the alumni, the panel was given several clear examples.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel assesses that the general collection, use and dissemination of information on studies is appropriate. According to SER, publicly available documentation and meetings, students, graduates, teachers and social partners are active actors in the continuous monitoring and self-analysis of the Programme, and they are well aware of their possibilities to affect the quality of studies.

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

#### *(1) Factual situation*

As it was already said, the administration regularly collects (via survey of students and survey of graduates) the opinion of the field students about the quality of the studies at the College. The survey of students about the study courses is conducted at the end of each semester. The survey of graduates about the general quality of the Programme is conducted at the end of the studies. The SER presents a short overview of the results of the surveys and states that, according to the surveys, “the quality of studies of the Programme meets the expectations of students”. During the meetings with students and alumni, the panel was convinced that the general opinion of the field students about the quality of the studies was very good: students were satisfied with the studies, and graduates confirmed that the Programme prepares well for future professional activities in the field of performing arts.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel is satisfied that there are systematic and comprehensive methods for collecting opinions of the field students. However, it seems that the contact with alumni is mostly informal, based upon interpersonal relations. It might be advisable to formalize the contact with alumni on the level of the Department / Faculty (organize Department’s surveys) or to encourage alumni to participate more actively in the institutional surveys, organized by the College.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. There are systematic and comprehensive methods for collecting opinions of the field students;
2. The responsibilities for the Programme's implementation, monitoring and decision making are clearly distributed thus ensuring the quality of studies management.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Although the Department has very good informal relationships with social partners and alumni, they could be more actively and formally engaged in quality assurance procedures and decisions regarding the development of the Programme. It might be advisable to formalize the contact with social partners and alumni on the level of the Department / Faculty (organize Department's surveys) or to encourage social partners and alumni to participate more actively in the institutional surveys, organized by the College.

## IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

**Core definition:** Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

If, according to the expert panel, there are no such exceptional characteristics demonstrated by the HEI in this particular study field, this section should be skipped / left empty.

1. The strong vision of the College leadership and its implementation of this strategy is real and evidently beneficial for the programme of musical theatre.
2. The programme is demonstrably embedded in the field of professional musical theatre, and has wide reach within the creative industries, preparing nationally and internationally recognised practitioners of musical theatre for stable careers.
3. The sense of partnership and community, across teachers, students and social partners is embedded, authentic and palpable.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rethink the so-called internship scheme so that it explicitly includes activities outside the college.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek to develop a common understanding of artistic research as distinct from professional practice.</li> <li>2. Broaden the basics of training from the twentieth-century masters to develop more contemporary reference points for the students.</li> <li>3. Consolidate the good practices explored during the pandemic and consider what could be used in more blended teaching contexts going forward.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a consistent strategy to attract international students for long-term involvement in the study programme.</li> </ol>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor systematically the career trajectory of self-employed graduates.</li> <li>2. Consider offering written feedback on practical work at moments in the programme to facilitate students' development over the three years of study.</li> <li>3. Give the final thesis a stronger theoretical underpinning.</li> <li>4. Rethink and broaden understanding of special needs of students and relevantly react to them.</li> </ol>
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realise the proposed professional development programme for participants outside the college (including local teachers).</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realise the ambitious plans for a new performance space needs and transform the long-term aspirations into concrete plans based on proper analyses and studies over the next three-five years.</li> </ol>
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maximise the department's very good relationships with social partners and alumni, by more actively and formally engaging them in feedback on, and decisions regarding, the development of the Programme.</li> </ol>

## VI. SUMMARY

### **Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Theatre at University of Applied Science:***

The panel was impressed by the strong vision of the college leadership and its implementation of this strategy is real and evidently beneficial for the programme of musical theatre. The programme is demonstrably embedded in the field of professional musical theatre, and has wide reach within the creative industries nationally. The sense of partnership and community, across teachers, students and social partners was palpable. There is an open and professional culture underpinning the entire operation of the programme, and staff are devoted teachers and skilled professionals, consistently going above and beyond in their support of students. This, the panel found, was particularly evident in Programme staff's proactive and imaginative response to the pandemic. There is an excellent blend of formal and informal processes for gathering feedback, and students' voices are consistently heard, ensuring quality is sustained and enhanced. Graduates are commended for their very high levels of skill, flexibility and creativity by social partners and the quality bar of the work is increasing year-on-year. Accordingly, there is excellent library and technical support, complemented by clear examples of strong pastoral support, well-being and financial advice. The use of short-term international mobility has been effective in continuing students' opportunities to work beyond the borders of Lithuania. Above all, students and graduates of the programme are vibrantly expressive, confident and creative, and have a clear sense of what their contribution is to national culture.

Given the programme's excellent response to the pandemic, it is recommended that the strategic plan for further academic development is rethought in the light of good practice which has emerged from responses to the Covid-19, including online teaching of practice, individual tutorials, library support, and availability of contextual resources. Relatedly, programme staff can think more carefully through the implications of a classical skills training which draws on old masters, and yet feeds the 21<sup>st</sup> century art form of Musical Theatre. Individual verbal feedback operates extremely effectively to help guide students' creative journey, but offering some examples of written feedback on practical work may be helpful at specific moments over the three years. In addition, the panel recommends that the final thesis is given a stronger theoretical underpinning. For staff, the distinction between applied research, on the one hand, and professional practice on the other, could be further understood by colleagues, and the value of the former embedded in personal development plans. Targeted financial support for staff research could help this process. In relation to further academic developments in or beyond the programme, the panel felt that the internship scheme needs to be re-articulated and rethought such that it explicitly includes activities outside of the college. It encourages colleagues to bring into reality the proposed professional development programme for participants outside the college (including local teachers). Finally, it is hoped

that the team continues to strive for the building of a new performance space and to transform aspirations into concrete plans over the next three-five years.

The panel chair's signature:

Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches, academic.