



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of MARKETING

at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences

Expert panel:

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Report language – English

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Vilnius
2021

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Sales and Marketing</i>
State code	6531LX087
Type of studies	Collegial studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time 3 year
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	January 2019

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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 6 May, 2021. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the site visit was conducted online using video conferencing tools (Zoom).

Dr. Kristiina Tõnnisson (panel chairperson), *Head of Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia;*

Prof. dr. Đurđana Ozretić Došen, *Full Professor at the Department of Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia;*

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Ms. Daiva Staneikaite-Naldal, *CEO of DSTN Ventures, Denmark;*

Ms. Alicia Presencio Herrero, *1st year PhD student of Audiovisual Communication, Advertising and Public Relations, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain.*

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 the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Virtual presentation of learning facilities used by the marketing field students at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences
2.	Main marketing field subjects syllabi (course descriptions)
3.	Minutes of Marketing study field committee meetings
4.	Order of the development, defence and preservation of final theses/projects and the administration of the qualifying examinations

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

Kaunas University of Applied Sciences (hereafter - KUAS) is a public higher education institution established in 2000. Studies are implemented in 4 faculties (the Faculty of Business, the Faculty of Technologies, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Faculty of Arts and Education) in Kaunas and a regional division in Tauragė. KUAS implements 53 study programmes in 35 study fields that award the Professional Bachelor Degree.

Studies in the field of Marketing in KUAS were launched in January 2019 and they are carried out in the Faculty of Business. There are 5 departments in the Faculty: the Department of Accounting and Finance, the Department of Communication, the Department of Tourism and Leisure Management, the Department of Management and Law, the Department of Business. About 1,800 students are enrolled in the study programmes of 8 fields of study: Marketing, Business, Law, Management, Tourism and Leisure, Finance, Accounting, and Communication. There are 13 study programmes, which also include *Sales and Marketing*. It is the only study programme in the field of Marketing. According to the data of 01/10/2020, 135 students are involved in the study programmes in the field.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Marketing study field and **first cycle** at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences 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	2
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	21

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

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

3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;

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

The Sales and Marketing (SPSM) first study cycle program's aims and outcomes follow long-term forecasts and growing labor market needs for future professionals in the field. The SER document (p. 7), besides relying on the official data, points to the trends described in the report of the World Economic Forum (2020) and stresses the importance of the development of leadership, communication, negotiation, problem-solving skills and creativity as the most needed competencies. Furthermore, in Lithuania, 99,5% of all operating companies are SMEs, in which sales and marketing are often merged into one business function.

The expert committee finds the program, in principle, relevant for the needs of society and the labor market. Moreover, the need for sales and marketing professionals is on the rise in the Lithuanian market (and internationally), which is confirmed by the documents mentioned in the SER and the meeting held with social partners and employers. However, although the expert committee, while talking to different groups of representatives during the online site visit, witnessed the attitude that the program management is committed to the continuous development and adaptation of the SPSM to the changing environment, no confirmation of the program's focus to the SMEs and their particular needs of "integrated marketing and sales function," is found. Furthermore, both students and alumni stressed that more emphasis on the practical features in the program's orientation is needed. Hence, the expert committee holds that this program's distinctiveness, i.e., specialization in sales and marketing, is not recognized yet sufficiently among other first cycle marketing programs in Lithuania.

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

As reported in the SER document (p. 8), the SPSM follows the main determinants of the KUAS mission and strategic priorities. The program is directed towards carrying out high-quality professional education based on the needs of the students and society, practical training, and advancement of the applied science activities. Active involvement of business representatives in lecturing, the development of the program, integration of real business problems in modules' content and joint projects, and participating in final theses evaluation represents how to strengthen the integration of studies, science and business.

Learning goals and outcomes are to a great extent but not entirely consistent with the KUAS mission and vision. The expert committee finds insufficient alignment on the dimension of practical training, which stands out as an essential part of the KUAS mission and contributes to achieving the strategic goal of education - strengthening the connection between science,

studies, and business. Namely, during the sessions with students and graduates, it was pointed out that the involvement of practitioners (both domestic and foreign) in guest lecturing is modest, and more company visits are missing, too. Social partners and employers confirmed their involvement in different aspects (committee members, choosing topics for final theses, involvement in projects) and saw room for improvement. Since the SPSM is oriented towards preparation for professional activities, this dimension is of particular significance.

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

The structure of the SPSM is based on and follows the relevant legal documents of the Republic of Lithuania. The expert committee finds program elements complying with the general requirements of the first study cycle. The volume of the SPSM amounts to 180 ECTS, out of which 150 are allocated to achieve the learning outcomes (internships and preparation of final thesis included). The final thesis amounts to 15 ECTS (final internship 6 plus final project 9). Internships account for 36 ECTS. The number of ECTS per module of general collegial studies and for the elective modules is 15. Practical training accounts for 1718 hours (36% of the program volume). The SPSM has 2102 contact hours (44%) and 2698 (56%) student self-study hours.

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

The necessary compatibility is achieved through a combination of different study and assessment methods, the choice of which is predetermined by the module's content and its integration and contribution to the program's aims and learning outcomes (SER, pp. 11-12). The commonly used study methods are lectures, case studies, discussions, debates, training in the companies, projects, and research activities. The assessment methods comply with the KUAS principles (reasonableness, objectivity, clarity, publicity, mutual respect and confidentiality) and include tests, integrated projects and their presentation, and presentations of the group assignments. The assessment process consists of the interim and final evaluation. Teachers who jointly teach a module participate in the final evaluations.

According to the expert committee judgment, although anticipated learning outcomes of the SPSM follow the European and the National Qualification Frameworks, their revision is necessary. The SPSM relies on combining traditional and modern teaching/learning and assessment methods. Students have positively rated that combination and emphasized they feel it enables their guided and, to the necessary extent, individual, personalized learning.

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

The Marketing study field and the SPSM were launched in January 2019 (SER, p. 6, p. 14). The old study program Sales Management was taken as a basis, and the field of study was changed from Management to Marketing. The SPSM is, in terms of the number and scope of the

courses, the structure, applied teaching and assessment methods, expected student workload, and internships, under the professional bachelor level program requirements of a duration of 3 years and volume of 180 credits. According to the SER (pp. 10-11), the modular structure is based on interdisciplinarity, has integrity, and is designed to enable the achievement of compatible knowledge, research, special, social, and personal skills.

The expert committee holds that, altogether, the program structure and scope are sufficient to ensure the development of competencies. However, there is room for improvement, which would be optimal to implement as soon as possible given that the program is relatively new and still does not have the necessary differential positioning in the market of professional higher education services. For the program to meet the expectations of the labor market, it needs to be enriched with a mandatory course Marketing for SMEs, as they are the leading representatives of the demand for marketing professionals to whom the program is oriented. Also, since SMEs are the dominant size of companies in the Lithuanian economy, the program should consider opportunities to study in detail the specifics of B2B marketing for the needs of professionals in such companies. It is encouraging that the option of directing program towards B2C and B2B tracks is under consideration, which was mentioned at the meeting with senior management and the teaching staff. Also, the program's core should be better reflected; reconsideration of the content and names of its modules is needed. For example, this program belongs to the Marketing field, and the basics of Marketing knowledge are gained through the module called Organisation and Management? Furthermore, Economics is undoubtedly an essential module, but Basics of Applied Research should be aligned with the research methods in Business Economics, not in Economics. Basics of Business Organisation are included in the module Basics of International Business instead of in the Organization and Management module. The Sales Management module would benefit from Distribution Channel Management and related topics such as retailing. In conclusion, the program needs streamlining and much better composition and sequencing between and in modules. Although students reported satisfaction with having more teachers teaching one module, this should also be reconsidered and establishing a Marketing Department in the Faculty of Business for the future of the program.

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

In addition to choosing one elective module from the KUAS list, students can customize the program by choosing the integrated and final project topics and the place to do the internship. The offer of elective courses is satisfactory only in terms of quantity. Therefore, more elective courses should be dedicated to the marketing field. In the observed period, students showed the most interest in six courses (SER, p. 12), out of which only Management of Relations with Customers is closely related to the SPSM program. While talking to students and alumni, the expert committee heard suggestions regarding introducing elective courses that will include developing and improving digital marketing knowledge and skills, like content marketing, social media, SEO, Google Analytics and Google Ads.

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

Procedures describing the preparation process, defense, and preservation of final theses are regulated at the level of the institution and prescribed by special rules for final theses in the Marketing field. Students must adhere to a code of ethics and stipulated rules to prevent plagiarism. Topics covered in the theses must have practical value in the business context. The content must be harmonized with the learning outcomes at the study program level (SER, pp. 12-13). By examining some of the available defended final theses in the observed period, the expert committee found the adequacy of the topics to the content and level of the SPSM; the distribution of final grades points to the care of the gradation and quality. Insight into structured abstracts written in English shows that the chosen topics and contents are related to real business cases. The author shows that he/she has mastered the knowledge and skills to analyze the situation, identify problems, explore alternatives to solve and offer a practical solution.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. SPSM management team is committed to developing a program that will meet the specific needs of professionals dedicated to sales and marketing management through constant monitoring and curricula improvements.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The focus of the SPSM is not clear and recognizable enough.
2. The current, existing program concept is not explicit and easy to understand (straightforward). In addition, the sequence and structure of the modules are scattered and thus create gaps in the overall program logic.
3. SPSM lacks core and elective marketing courses and content - e.g., Marketing of SMEs and Distribution Channel Management - in order to reflect its purpose and adapt to the specifics of existing demand for professionals specializing in marketing and sales.

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

The expert committee acknowledges that the applied science and art activities are carried out in accordance with the mission of KUAS. The main research body is developed in the fields of economics and management. The number and level of scientific publications is sufficient.

There is a significant body of strategic partners in the implementation of applied research activities. It is strongly connected to the raised sum of money by contracted research and consulting. The expert committee acknowledges that the researchers working in applied sciences have support from the institution.

The supporting atmosphere stems not only from institutional initiatives, but the collegial cooperation too. The expert committee also admits the relevant practices in teaching marketing. The departmental attitude is also supportive, there is no burden in the way of conducting any research.

According to the site visit, the main motivating force to conduct a research comes from the self-realisation as a scientist. Regarding the domestic market size, the teaching staff agreed on the importance of being seen by generating significant publications.

The expert committee feels that the applied science results are indeed valuable assets for marketing education activities. However, if a module is taught by severely different professors, it might be too complicated for both professors and students as the field itself loses its focus.

The expert committee feels that the low aspiration for internationalization in research could pose a threat in the future. The quality of research output should be higher, especially considering the fact from the site visit that only 40% of the workload of professors is occupied by teaching. Most of the research results are just vaguely connected to marketing itself, the focus must be strengthened in the future. The expert committee acknowledges the aspiration to educate specialists with relevant answers for specific needs.

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

The site visit confirmed that one of the strengths of the teaching staff is teamwork and integration. During team meetings one important aspect is the aspiration to achieve a higher level of synergy. The research projects rise from integrated projects, sometimes they end in applicable science. There are several individual projects, and there are also faculty research groups where they develop research ideas, mostly integrated ones. The newly introduced modules (Integrated marketing communications and E-business Organization) reflect the trends in marketing. Most of the scientific outputs appear in assignments, case studies, projects and thesis works.

The expert committee emphasizes the importance of elevating the quality of scientific research results. It can strengthen international aspirations (e.g., inviting distinguished professors). Regarding the teaching content, there is no clear differentiating power from the competitors.

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

During the site visit the teaching staff admitted that cooperating with students in research projects is very rewarding. There is a synergy of interests here: the students are thinking about changes, possibilities of innovations, consumer desires. These approaches lead to the analysis of how to track consumers, how to be part of society as a consumer.

The expert committee concerns if the students have the opportunity to be involved in scientific activities: the site visit meetings with students and alumni confirmed that they participated in practice-oriented projects during their studies. As most of the research activities are just vaguely related to the marketing field, this aspect should be improved. This idea is further confirmed by the enlisted theses topics, which are mostly practice-oriented. Nevertheless, this is acceptable for first-cycle professional program students.

The research committee acknowledges that students can benefit from the research activities of the professors. The teaching staff said that if a student did substantial research on their thesis paper they are encouraged to present their findings at research conferences.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KUAS involves strategic partners in research activities.
2. Within the school there is a supporting atmosphere for linking science and studies.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The marketing program overemphasizes applied approaches and is lacking in scientific research.
2. Most of the research results are just vaguely connected to marketing.

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

General admission is administered by the Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools for General Admission (LAMA BPO), following the *Rules of Students' Admission to KUAS*, which was approved by the KUAS Academic Council and available on the KUAS website. Admission follows general criteria of first cycle studies. On KUAS website, all the information regarding admission is only available in Lithuanian (<https://www.kaunokolegija.lt/vf/>), but not in English. Enrollment fell in 2020 (69) compared to 2019 (96). It is still an attractive number of registrations that shows interest in these studies. The committee considers it essential that the information on the website be also in English. The students did not express any problems with the admission criteria.

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

The students of SPSM can submit applications for recognition of learning outcomes of previous studies achieved in a formal or non-formal way. The learning outcomes achieved in a formal way are recognised following the Procedure for crediting learning achievements in KUAS. It is possible to have personal competencies acquired at work, while studying non-formal programmes in courses, seminars, during internships or self-study recognised as non-formal learnings. The decision on the recognition of learning achievements is made by the Assessment Board formed by order of the KUAS Director. Anyway, no more than 75% of the program can be convalidated.

This committee finds evidence that the recognition of credits is fulfilled. In 2019-2020 learning achievements were credited to 21 SPSM students: 7 students in the spring semester of 2018/2019; 7 students in 2019/2020, 7 students in the autumn semester of 2020/2021. 2 students had 165 ECTS credited. All study courses that met the formal requirements were

recognized. Due to crediting learning outcomes, 2 students were transferred to the 2nd year, 2 students were admitted only to prepare and defend the final thesis.

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

All KUAS students have an opportunity to go for partial studies or professional internships and post-graduate internships under Erasmus +, Nordplus programmes and bilateral cooperation agreements. The academic mobility is organized by the International Relations Department and the coordinator of international activities at the Faculty of Business.

9 Marketing field students have had an Erasmus experience from 2019-2020 courses, and they had 6 incoming students. The participation of the students of this program in the international Nordplus EkoTekNord IP project "Customer Experience Management" in Sweden (2019), and the international project "Mac2Warsaw2018" in Poland (2018), is very positive. This committee suggests to continue promoting the international outgoings and ingoings of its students.

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

Students of the Faculty of Business, including those of the SPSM, have the opportunity to improve their English language free of charge (for level C1). In 2020-2021, the SPSM students make up 25 per cent of the students who chose elective courses of English. They have financial aid, such as the University's talent scholarships, scholarships by enterprises, Sponsor's scholarship, and scholarships for having an active participation in the extracurricular activities. They also cover the expenses of representation in activities in which students represent the university. Economic funds are also used for student situations. Students benefit from the free activities of the Cultural Activities and Sports Centre and have psychological help if they need it. The students with special needs are provided with support for studies, adaptation of infrastructure, financial, psychological support, etc. Students have numerous university activities and grants at their disposal that cover all their needs. This committee positively appreciates the wide variety of activities available, as well as the opportunity for the students of this program to improve their language skills.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

KUAS Students' Representative Council solves various students' problems, participates in the process of the improvement of the study process, defends their interests, takes care of students' academic and social well-being, organises cultural leisure activities, fosters students' traditions. The information is complete. New students have Introductory Week in which all information is given. Students are clear about the operation of the Students Council, its activities and its role in the university. This committee positively values the use of social networks to maintain effective communication with students. Senior students can be mentors.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KUAS is offering additional academic activities highly valued by the students.
2. Study environment is open and supportive.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a need for a higher level of internationalization of the studies. At least the webpage information in English should be added.
2. Students are looking for more guests from other countries, more trips to companies and more real cases related to business.

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

Study methods include various approaches where the most frequently used are lectures, discussions and project preparation, case study, analysis of scientific resources, or practical activities. Predominant methods are the traditional approaches as lectures; quite surprising is the emphasis on analysis of scientific sources – as the evaluated program is a professional bachelor degree, a higher share of practical activities should be considered. E-learning tools and approaches are used to encourage self-study, foster learning independence, and allow for flexible learning. The organization of students' individual work and evaluation are well-described.

Module evaluation is cumulative; on average, the module evaluation is based on multiple (> 7) assessment components. The integrated project represents at least 50% of the cumulative score. Still, the traditional tests seem to be widely used (though, 1-2/5 learning outcomes are formulated as knowledge-oriented). It remains a question how the final thesis (which is allocated – in comparison with other modules – just 15 credits) can serve as an evaluation of all formulated learning outcomes (i.e., apply the principles of intercultural communication in theses oriented on local business problem solving). The study program has a modular structure with the participation of several lecturers in one course. This allows to provide multiple perspectives and discuss various aspects of the subject, however, students indicated that the teachers do not always share all the information and this can affect the study assessment process. KUAS management and teachers suggested a significant share of guest lectures, on the other hand, students and alumni indicated they would appreciate more invited lecturers in the classes. Students would also appreciate stronger role of the internships in the study program. Alumni also indicated some modules were a bit out-dated regarding the current state-of-the-art and reported that students on internships lack some basic skills (i.e., IT skills, language skills).

Further opportunities for graduates to pursue a career in business or studies are described. The recently added modules oriented on international business allow graduates to work in both the Lithuanian and international labor markets. Graduates are awarded a professional

bachelor's degree in Business Management and may continue on the master's level on any other Lithuanian or international HEI.

The institution has a well-described learning process which in general allows reaching the intended learning outcomes. There is a slight disbalance between the nature of the program and the study methods and evaluation components. Students would appreciate more guest lecturers invited in the classes and stronger role of the internships in the study program.

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

Socially vulnerable students may receive financial support or scholarship. The institution offers incentives based on students' performance. The number of supported students is quite high (considering the number of students in the program; 35 incentive scholarships, 74 one-off grants, and 16 social scholarships; financial support was provided to 5 students, and 4 received targeted benefits). Students may ask for professional counselling to resolve the problematic personal situation. Students with special needs may ask for adjusted and flexible forms of assessments to reflect their specific requirements. The facilities (mostly) reflect the needs of students with various (physical) impairments. The meeting with students revealed they are aware of the opportunities to acquire the support, however, they were not particularly sure about the exact application procedure.

The institution is supportive of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs and offers various schemes reflecting students' specific situations and limitations. Still, the adaptation of the study system to reflect the needs of socially vulnerable students and students with special needs lacks a systematic perspective.

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

The monitoring of student study progress is systematic and is formally delimited in the internal directives. The students receive feedback that reflects the nature of assignments. Students may raise complaints or comments on their evaluation, and their feedback is reflected on the module and program level. The results and achievements are systematically monitored and evaluated by departments and the Study Field Committee. Students' study progress is being monitored to prevent dropouts. However, students indicated that the teachers participating in the same module do not always share all the information and this can affect the study assessment process.

The institution conducts surveys on a regular basis, and the results are reflected in the development of the study program. The surveys and feedback are not limited just to students; other stakeholders (i.e., internship supervisors) may also sound their voice. During the meeting, students indicated that the assessment is fair in general and reflects their performance. They appreciated that the teachers are available for discussion and feedback.

Monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress is adequate, even though it remains a question how the learning outcomes are evaluated and interconnected on the module level. Modular level with participation of multiple lecturers also represents a challenge for module coordinators.

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

Graduates' employment is analyzed on an annual basis. KUAS monitors external (i.e., Lithuanian Employment Services and Government Strategic Analysis Centre) and internal sources (i.e. own surveys). Internal analysis is being performed according to the formalized directive. The monitoring is continuous to monitor how the graduates' careers evolve in time. The institution has established platforms (CRM) to stay in touch with the alumni (not only) to keep gathering informal feedback on the study program and their career development. Alumni also participate in the lectures sharing their professional experience, they are members of institutional panels and boards. On the other hand, some of the alumni and social partners indicated that the events with university were just limitedly beneficial.

Graduate career tracking is continuous and utilizes various data sources. The results of the analysis are discussed within the Study Field Committee. Still, only two-thirds of the graduates seem to be working in their field of expertise, which requires further attention. There is an opportunity to further develop the cooperation with alumni and social partners.

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

The institution has a well-established framework to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The system is both formal (institutional directives, i.e., Code of Academic Ethics) and informal (i.e., seminars on how to avoid plagiarism, specific plagiarism prevention programs). The institution uses an anti-plagiarism system to check final theses and other submitted works. Other assignments are alternated on an annual basis to further lower opportunities for non-ethical behavior. Reported cases are submitted to the KUAS Ethics Committee for consideration. Though, the institution does not report any cases of violation.

Students may also send their concerns or complaints to Students' Representation Council which also monitors the examination process and assists the academic staff in ensuring a fair process. The institution also has a formalized approach to deal with intolerance, discrimination, or harassment. Specific committees (including external experts and stakeholders) are established in such cases.

The institution has a well-established framework that includes all major stakeholder groups and consists of both formal and informal parts. The institution does not report or analyze any violation cases, which does not allow to formulate any conclusions about the system's effectiveness.

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

The application of the procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process is well-described. The students can submit an appeal to the Dean of the faculty, who establishes a specific committee to consider the plea. Certain deadlines must be met to resolve the appeal. On the other hand, during the meetings, students seemed not to be aware of any formal procedures regarding appeals and complaints.

The institution clearly describes the procedure for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process. Though, the students are not aware of the formal procedures. The institution does not report or analyze any cases, which does not allow to formulate any conclusions about the system's effectiveness.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The school is offering an opportunity to individualize the learning process to reflect student-specific needs.
2. There are well-established formal procedures regarding organisation of the study program.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a disbalance between the nature of the program (professional) and the study methods and evaluation components (rather traditional methods than practical assessments).
2. Students are not aware of the formal procedures on how to proceed in case of violations or concerns.
3. There are critical communication and evaluation issues when multiple teachers teach in the same module.
4. Procedures regarding organizing the studies should be communicated more broadly among the students.

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

According to SER (pp. 29-31), there are 22 members in the study program staff. All are recruited according to the legal requirements. Seven teachers have a Ph.D. degree; their scientific interests are in line with the modules they teach. The teaching staff is involved in

applied research; their scientific production includes journal articles, papers in conference proceedings, textbooks, research reports. Most staff members have extensive experience in teaching (the average pedagogical experience is 20 years) and research and practical experience in the industry (the average practical experience is 10 years). The specific modules are taught by lecturers-practitioners who account for 76% of the academic staff, enabling the necessary integration of theory, applied research, and the business world. Five different age groups are represented in the staff's structure (starting from young members up to 29 years old to senior teachers who are 60 or older, with an average of 45,6 years), enabling the combination of different levels of experiences and skills, and approaches to teaching. The staff turnover in the analyzed period reflects objective circumstances like the changes in the field of studies, voluntary decisions to leave, maternity leave, and new recruitment, and it is consistent with them. The current ratio between the number of the teaching staff of the field subjects and the number of students allows achieving the learning outcomes.

Teaching staff qualification and number are appropriate to achieve the learning outcomes. The structure regarding criteria of academic background, age, pedagogical and practical experience is balanced. All are involved in applied research. Although their scientific interests, in general, correspond to relevant study modules, close matching of specific researched topics with the content of the modules taught is not aligned. Teachers are members of national and international professional associations, take part in expert working groups and committees, and serve on editorial boards of academic journals. An acceptable ratio between the number of students and teaching staff of the marketing field subjects is achieved and maintained, although teachers are involved in lecturing in other KUAS study programs. The staff turnover corresponds to the needs and reasons for replacement (e.g., retirement, maternity leave, voluntary resignation). During the session with the teaching staff, the expert committee witnessed that teachers are positive, engaged, and energetic, which ensures a good team is involved in implementing this relatively new program. They have shown there is good coordination, and they asserted that their voice is heard in decision making through the regular meetings and work of the Department of Business with the dean and management of the Faculty of Business.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility

The International Relations Department and the coordinator of international activity in the Faculty of Business manage the processes of participation in various mobility programs according to the established general procedure, both for outgoing and incoming teaching staff. Mobility activities and partnerships with foreign institutions are desirable and promoted because of multiple benefits, like joint scientific and project activities, sharing good teaching and research practice, etc. Since the beginning of the study program *Sales and Marketing*, an average of 33.6 % of its academic staff participated in mobility programs (SER, p. 32).

All teaching staff members have opportunities to participate in the academic mobility programs. Most of mobility activities are realized in the frame of Erasmus+ and Nordplus exchange programs, comprising different activities: lecturing abroad, participation in training, internships, joint research and project activities with foreign partners, attending international

conferences, exhibitions, etc. However, less than 50% of outgoing academic staff lectured abroad. In total, 13 lecturers went for visits, and 17 lecturers arrived from abroad, which indicates that the involvement of the teaching staff of the SPSM in academic mobility is still modest and insufficient. According to the meeting held with senior administration and teaching staff, increasing mobility is among the priorities in order to foster internationalization and enable participation in networks of European universities' alliances and international research projects.

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

The teaching staff has to improve their didactic and professional competencies regularly, and their achievements are evaluated every five years through certification. The Head of the Department, the Dean of Faculty, and the Human Resources Service are responsible for planning and implementing in-service training of the teaching staff. Three different types of internal training are available: a) Training for the newly recruited lecturers, b) Training aimed to acquire the minimum of pedagogical/andragogical competencies, c) Training in various relevant and needed topics following the demand of the teaching staff. The Faculty of Business additionally allocated €9,724 for the improvement of the competencies of the teaching staff of the SPSM: €520 in 2018; €4,020 in 2019; €5,184 in 2020, were allocated for registration fees for conference participants in Lithuania and abroad (SER, p. 33).

The teaching staff is provided with different opportunities and support for the necessary and systematic improvement of their competencies. KUAS Human Resources Service organizes internal training according to the previously approved training plan on a yearly basis. In-service training of the teaching staff is financed from KUAS funds, EU structural funds, or paid for with personal funds. Teaching staff expressed satisfaction with the current scheme available for professional development, stressing that it is encouraging, motivating, and directed to the individual needs. Furthermore, they pointed out financial support for participating in conferences and seminars and IT support for making teaching function well in pandemic conditions.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The number of experienced lecturers-practitioners with the Ph.D. degree enables good integration of theoretical knowledge with applied research and business practice.
2. KUAS is making efforts to enhance the teaching staff professional development through various in-house (at KUAS) training options, attending courses, seminars, internships in Lithuania and abroad, with co-financing opportunities.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The teachers' engagement in lecturing at other programs of the KUAS is a sort of threat that can harm the successful program's future development.
2. Research output (publications) is insufficiently focused on marketing disciplines.

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

According to the material provided by KUAS (both SER document and video information), physical spaces & facilities at the institution are well equipped for teaching and learning purposes, as many of those have been significantly upgraded through the 2019-2020 period with modern teaching rooms, group rooms and individual study spaces. KUAS has successfully implemented remote learning tools and methodology, providing flexibility and more international opportunities. For e-learning and distance learning, the institution uses the virtual learning environment *Moodle* and video conferencing tools with *Vidyo and Adobe Connect*. During the interactive classes, Google G Suite for Education tools (Gmail, Hangouts Meet, etc.) are used as well.

The institution is well aware of, and has implemented relevant measures to accommodate students with special needs. Budget and resources have been allocated to upgrade facilities to accommodate students with physical disabilities (e.g. special elevators). For the teaching staff, specific informational material on methods and procedures on how to work with students with special needs, is available.

The library is a state-of-art modern facility. There are well equipped and comfortable spaces and rooms for self studies and group studies. Library has access to a variety of relevant study literature, as well as access to relevant international databases and periodicals. Library has been renovated and basically rebuilt to a very modern and spacious facility that provides superb places for studies and has the staff to provide service and information literacy training, as well as planning & maintaining relevant publications and other studies-relevant material.

Anti Plagiarism tools have been installed and Code of ethics applied. The institution documented to the group of experts that anti-plagiarism tools are applied regularly and both teachers and students are aware of these procedures. Internships are provided both as online simulation programs (Business process simulation tool), and then followed up by a practical onsite internship with business/company, that are mainly linked to the final theses during the last year of studies.

Besides learning and study facilities, there are good recreation and sport facilities in and outside the campus, that secure well being for the students. The Business Center provides access to meetings and workspace with business partners. Business partners can provide special classes, mentorship or workshops. Career center works as a facilitator of relevant connections and information about work possibilities between students and social partners, as well as possibilities for exchange programs.

Overall, the evaluation of the expert panel is that physical, informational and financial resources available for Marketing field studies at KUAS are very good, and allow to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The currently used lecture rooms, the Library and self-study spaces are modern and in very good condition. The study resources and literature used are regularly updated, a wide selection of electronic publications is available, and the methodological teaching resources are suitable for achieving the anticipated learning

outcomes of the institution. However, it is an impression of the expert group that students might not be aware of all the available resources, especially within the library - as they have indicated the need for more or better access to international databases and international literature. Same applies for the software tools and programs. SER indicates that some software programs (like Adobe, Google adds, Photoshop) are available, while during the interviews with students the expert group have observed that students are either not aware of the existence of these programs or they are not yet utilized by the teaching staff in the teaching curriculum.

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

Yearly planning process for both physical, information and IT resources is in place, and relevant stakeholders (both students and lecturers) are involved in the planning process of these resources. Institution has a solid plan for upgrading needed software and hardware tools for education. There are plans (SER, p. 36) for acquiring new technologies relevant for marketing studies and research. Library has a process for gathering feedback from both students and educators in order to consider relevant literature upgrades year by year. Business center and Career center are good resources in planning and executing internships, exchange programmes and career counseling activities. Factual information about budget considerations is provided by the institution and indicates well evaluated considerations and priorities (SER, p. 36-37). The expert panel concludes that the overall budget and resource planning process is in place and well functioning.

While the vast number of informational resources are available with the new modern library, the impression by the expert group taken from interviews with students suggest that students have limited knowledge of all resources available, including international databases and international research material. The institution should review the literacy training and information sharing process in order to secure that available informational resources are being utilized better.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KUAS has well equipped, modern facilities with state of the art library and information technologies.
2. There are great sports and well-being facilities available for students to relax and balance their study life.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a gap between all available technology and software programs, and utilization of these. Software and technology needed for practical training in marketing tools like Google ads, FB ads, Adobe analytics, Photoshop and other tools seem to be available, but not utilized, or students & educators are not aware of these.
2. Informational resources are not fully utilized, especially the databases and online tools. There is a need for more international literature and database access. More proactive information and teaching in literacy in information tools is recommended.

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

The expert committee acknowledges that the current year is the third year of the SPSM, considering it as a rather new program. It is also recognised that KUAS has a structural approach to quality management, based on KUAS Quality Manual. Most of the quality management approaches are based on surveys, feedback analysis from internal and external stakeholders.

The institutional approach towards quality management covers all necessary areas: study program, assessment, study course/module, internships, distance education, plagiarism detection, examination observation process. SPSM related quality management covers fields of relevant data analysis regarding enrolled student number, rates of graduation and graduates' employment, the results of internationalization, feedback from social partners and students. All steps from preparations through analysis till approval is legit.

The expert committee acknowledges the aspirations of KUAS to join the European University Alliance, aspiring further improvement in quality management, including cooperation with industrial partners, internationalization and short mobility. The quality management responsible staff elaborated their strong traditions, self evaluation methods in all levels from departments to faculty, each year.

The expert committee admits the structural approach towards quality management at KUAS. The survey based solutions to gather feedback and analyse data seem adequate. During the site visit, it was confirmed that graduate response rate is not yet satisfying, further support to strengthen this part is advised. As the institutional approach towards quality management is adequate, a systematic approach to improve survey quality is advised, in order to increase response rate.

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

As it can be seen in SER, the internal quality management and the quality of studies is ensured by periodical data analysis results (self-assessments, inputs of all stakeholders, and surveys data) as well as quickly reacting to the ongoing processes within frequent meetings and quality assurance-oriented discussions. The expert committee admits the existence of the documents Procedure for Managing Feedback From Stakeholders in KUAS as written evidence of effective and clear evaluation. The expert committee acknowledges that the students are integrated in most of the quality assurance procedures. They participate in periodical surveys and meetings with study programme coordinator at least twice per semester and with the Faculty administration once per semester to discuss the study quality issues and to get the feedback.

The expert committee found KUAS approach towards involving stakeholders in internal quality assurance good. They are involved in all horizontal and vertical levels, ensuring objectivity and quick response to issues needed to be addressed quickly. The expert

committee also acknowledges the efforts made by KUAS during the pandemic situation to maintain quality services during distance education.

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

The internal quality management is addressing all aspects by collecting and evaluating information periodically. The report's results are available at KUAS Documentation Catalogue. The findings of the periodical anonymous surveys are processed and applied adequately. The quality management processes were adapted and published during the pandemic situation.

The expert committee finds the collection and publication of information on studies good. The approaches at KUAS to share all findings clearly indicate their dedication to improve the quality of the *Sales and Marketing* study program. The availability of these findings should be published in a regular format both in Lithuanian and English.

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

There are defined systems for collecting satisfaction information from the institution. Students know and fill out satisfaction surveys. Stakeholders participate in the design and continuous improvement of the Quality Plan. This committee considers the existence of a quality culture to be proven, since KUAS not only collects the satisfaction of its stakeholders, but also reports on the results thereof. In addition, students are aware of the activities of the Student Council and are informed of its activities through different communication channels.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The quality management is mostly based on surveys, feedback analysis from internal and external stakeholders.
2. There is an opportunity for students to have a conversation with decision makers about their study program.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The response rate of surveys is rather low, a systematic approach to improve survey quality is advised.
2. Not all information about quality management processes is publicly available (especially in English).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>The strengthening of close contact with the business community is desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● inviting more guest lecturers (from Lithuanian and foreign companies) ● organizing more company visits for students ● strengthening the relationship between business people and teaching staff involved in the program's delivery. <p>In order to further develop the still relatively new program's curriculum and to better adapt to the market needs, benchmarking with similar international programs is needed. The continuous upgrade should be made in compulsory and elective courses, content, and module sequencing.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>The marketing program should develop a more balanced approach regarding scientific and applied research activities.</p> <p>The scientific research outputs in marketing must be significantly elevated.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>Continue promoting the internationalization of students. This is already seen as an area for improvement. Web information in English is a must.</p> <p>Students are demanding more guests from other countries, more trips to companies, more real case work related to business.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Implement learning assessment methods that reflect the professional and practical orientation of the study program.</p> <p>Improve communication between teachers who participate in the same model to address the communication issues.</p> <p>Better communicate formal procedures (i.e. how to raise a complaint or an appeal) to the students.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>Teaching staff should increase outgoing mobility in terms of lecturing abroad (fostering internationalization).</p> <p>Research activities and output (publications in scientific and professional journals) of teaching staff should be streamlined with</p>

	the marketing disciplines.
Learning facilities and resources	<p>The impression of the expert group is that students are not aware of all available resources at the library, and do not utilize these to their full potential. Please consider more proactive information sharing and more info-literacy training.</p> <p>There is a gap between all available technology and software programs, and utilization of these. Software in marketing tools like Google ads, FB ads, Adobe, seem to be available, but not utilized, or students & educators are not aware of these. Please consider better integration of available software tools into the curriculum.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<p>The response rate of surveys should be elevated, perhaps by developing a motivation system.</p> <p>All information about quality management survey results should be publicly available (especially in English).</p>

V. SUMMARY

Sales and Marketing programme's structure and scope are sufficient to ensure the development of competencies. However, there is room for improvement. More emphasis on the practical features in the programme's orientation is needed. Also, the revision of the learning outcomes and a better balance of the modules would be necessary. The option of directing the programme towards B2C and B2B tracks should be given more consideration. Also, the program's core could be better reflected. Reconsideration of the content and names of its modules is additionally needed.

KUAS involves strategic partners in research activities and the students can benefit from the research activities of the professors. Within the school there is a supporting atmosphere for linking science and studies. If a student did substantial research on the thesis paper, the school is encouraging him/her to present the findings at research conferences. On the other hand, most of the research results of the marketing field staff are just vaguely connected to the marketing and they are often of medium quality.

The school is offering additional academic activities highly valued by the students. The school's study environment is open and supportive. At the same time, there is a need for a higher level of internationalization of the studies. At least the webpage with some major parts should be in English. Students are also looking for more guests from other countries, more trips to companies and more real cases related to business.

The *Sales and Marketing* program is offering an opportunity to individualize the learning process to reflect student-specific needs. There are well-established formal procedures regarding organisation of the study program. On the other hand, there is a disbalance between the nature of the programme (professional) and the study methods and evaluation components (rather traditional methods than practical assessments). There are critical communication and evaluation issues when multiple teachers teach in the same module. Also, procedures regarding organizing the studies should be communicated more broadly.

The number of experienced lecturers-practitioners with the Ph.D. degree enables good integration of theoretical knowledge with applied research and business practice. KUAS is making efforts to enhance the teaching staff professional development through various in-house training options and internships.

KUAS has well equipped, modern facilities with state of the art library and information technologies. There are great sports and well-being facilities available for students to relax and balance their study life. Then again, there is a gap between all available technology and software programs, and utilization of these. Informational resources are not fully utilized, especially the databases and online tools. More proactive information sharing and teaching in literacy in information tools would be recommended.

The institutional approach towards quality management covers all necessary areas. The students are integrated in most of the quality assurance procedures. KUAS not only collects the satisfaction of its stakeholders, but also reports on the results thereof. Though, a systematic approach to improve surveys' quality is advised.

Expert panel signatures:

1. **Dr. Kristiina Tõnnisson (panel chairperson)**, *academic*
2. **Prof. dr. Đurđana Ozretić Došen**, *academic*
3. **Dr. Ákos Varga**, *academic*
4. **Dr. Tomáš Kincl**, *academic*
5. **Ms. Daiva Staneikaite-Naldal**, *representative of social partners*
6. **Ms. Alicia Presencio Herrero**, *students' representative*