



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of MARKETING
at Klaipėda University

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Marketing</i>
State code	6211LX082
Type of studies	University studies
Cycle of studies	Second cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (2 years)
Credit volume	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Higher education (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)
Registration date of the study programme	19/05/1997

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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 7 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. 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 Klaipėda University
2.	Main marketing field subjects syllabi (course descriptions)
3.	Minutes from the meetings of the Department of Economics

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

Klaipėda University (hereafter – KU) was founded in 1991. It consists of 3 faculties: The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, The Faculty of Marine Technology and Natural Sciences, The Faculty of Health Sciences, and two research institutes: The Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology, and Marine Research Institute. KU Faculties include 17 departments, 8 centres for research and studies, 2 museums, and over 60 laboratories. KU is implementing study programmes of all study cycles. In 2020, a total of 108 three-cycle study programmes were implemented at KU.

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities' study programmes are implemented in 4 areas of studies and 21 fields of studies. In 2019, 18 Bachelor's degree and 19 Master's degree study programmes and professional pedagogy studies were implemented (total of 38 study programmes). The Department of Economics started its activities in 1995. Currently, the Department coordinates 1 first-cycle study programme (Economics) and 1 second-cycle study programme (Marketing). The Master's study programme in the field of Marketing has been implemented since 1997.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Marketing study field and **second cycle** at Klaipėda University 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	2
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	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	19

*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

As described in the SER (p. 6), the Marketing study program aims to train highly qualified marketing specialists whose knowledge and skills will be used to effectively develop and implement marketing activities in a wide range of companies and organizations. Also, the program aims to enable the development of research skills required for solving scientific and applied problems from the marketing field.

The program's aims and outcomes, in general, conform to the needs for marketing and advertising specialists who are in high demand in Western Lithuania, more specifically in the city and Klaipeda region, where most of the program's graduates find their employment. The study program tries to align with the needs described in the Klaipeda Economic Development Strategy 2030, which focuses on the necessary provision of professionals trained for implementing and operationalizing marketing in the maritime economy, bioeconomy, advanced industrial economy, creative and service economy companies, and organizations. However, during the online visit, while talking to students, alumni, and social partners, the expert committee did not find enough evidence that the program (its curriculum design) has a regional focus, despite the written claims (SER, p. 7) that regional social partners (public entities, companies) have an active role in improving the program, and that the learning outcomes are linked with the needs of regional organizations.

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 stated in the SER (p. 8), KU's mission is to create scientific contributions through new knowledge and innovations, develop humanist and cultural values, and promote the maritime mentality in the city and the country. In that vein, strategic KU goals are to educate creative specialists through advanced scientific research, to internationalize science and culture, and to increase the University's contribution to sustainable development on the industrial (maritime industry), regional (Klaipeda region), and country (Lithuania) level.

The field and cycle study program aims and outcomes partially correspond to the mission, objectives of activities, and strategic priorities of KU. Upon graduating, marketing specialists possess the required level of competencies to combine scientific research with marketing practice, apply innovative approaches in decision-making, and adapt to fast digitalization. However, the expert committee concludes that there is a need to further coordinate the program's aims and learning outcomes in order to enable graduates to successfully

contribute to the sustainable development on the industrial, regional, and country-level, as stated in the mission and strategic goals of KU, since no students, alumni, or social partners pointed out this distinctive feature of the program.

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

The study program is structured and follows the required legal documents for the second cycle study in higher education in the Republic of Lithuania. All program features are following the legal requirements. The full-time study program lasts two years (four semesters) and has 120 ECTS. The first, second and the third semester is structured of four compulsory and one elective course. Each course has 6 ECTS. The fourth semester is for the final thesis preparation. The thesis accounts for 30 ECTS. The workload per ECTS is 26,27 study hours, including classroom classes, distance learning, independent work, and preparation for reports and exams. The independent student work accounts for more than 50% of the study program.

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

The compatibility between the learning outcomes, teaching/learning methods, and assessment methods and the desired program outcomes is achieved through the two main aspects. First, on the course level, learning outcomes are determined to fulfill all or several of the five categories of the learning outcomes of the program level divided into Knowledge and its Application, Research Skills, Subject Specific Skills, Social Skills, and Personal Skills. Second, several different teaching/learning and assessment methods are used (corresponding to the Klaipeda University Study Regulations), including tests, individual work, group work, etc. The final student's evaluation consists of cumulative grades of interim assignments and an exam grade (SER, p. 11).

The learning outcomes defined for each course are numerous (almost 2/3 of courses have 5 or more). Some courses have up to seven learning outcomes (e.g., Marketing Research, Strategic Marketing, Marketing Management Seminar), which is very ambitious. Therefore, their reduction and revision are needed. Interactive teaching/learning methods are used. In terms of the assessment, the cumulative evaluation system is applied. The overall exam grade consists of the achievements of the learning outcomes evaluated through different methods – tests, individual and group work. The study is completed by the evaluation of the defense of the Master thesis. The ten-point grading system is used. During the sessions with students and alumni, the expert committee witnessed they would appreciate having more learning experiences supported by interactive technology and a possibility of project work that would unify several courses creatively and in collaboration with social partners.

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

In the formal sense, the program is structured in such a way that the content (number, scope, and content of the courses), through the planned teaching process and student workload, meets all the requirements of the master level program of the two years (4 semesters) duration, worth 120 ECTS credits. Also, the programme's structure includes courses aimed to develop research competencies as a distinctive feature of the contemporary master-level programs in marketing. Furthermore, according to the SER (p.11), the Marketing study programme is among the priority programmes of KU. Therefore, its content, goals, and learning outcomes are periodically revised following the needs of the labor market, new scientific achievements, and the requirements of new challenges in business practice to ensure students' consistent development of competencies.

The overall program's scope and structure aim to provide graduates with a theoretical background in the marketing field and develop their research skills. Although the SER document points to the regional relevance of the program and the orientation of the KU to sustainable development on the industrial (maritime industry) and regional (Klaipeda) level, and the same was highlighted during the online meetings with Senior administration, SER group, and teaching staff, there are no recognizable features of the program devoted to supporting such an orientation. For example, in terms of compulsory subjects – e.g., B2B marketing, Customer Relationship Management are not included. The elective courses' current offer suffers from the lack of marketing courses, too. Furthermore, it is odd that Marketing Research (being a fundamental course in the marketing study field) is taught during the second semester instead of the first. Another compulsory course, Consumer Behavior (different from Modern Theories of Consumption), is missing. This also implies that the current sequence of the existing courses does not allow the development of a strategic marketing perspective logically, which hinders the full exploitation of the program's existing positive aspects and potential. Furthermore, the expert committee witnessed an apparent contradiction between the claim that the program's strength is in adaptation to the changing needs and the reluctance to make changes in the programme structure expressed by teachers when asked about that during the online meeting.

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

As stated in the SER document (p. 12), KU Study Regulations allow students to personalize the structure of the program through the creation of an individual (flexible) study plan, which has to list compulsory, alternative, and free choice course units. Students choose three elective courses (one per semester). The offer of nine (three per semester) elective courses, the content of which is either from economics or business economics, enables an acceptable level of personalization of the program's structure. However, the current offer of elective courses is not satisfactory in terms of their relationship with the study field. Students should be offered more marketing elective courses. While having a meeting with them, they mentioned: B2B, AI in digital marketing, Integrated Marketing Communications, MarkTech (Marketing technology courses).

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

Regulations for final theses in the Marketing study program are specified in official KU documents and cover procedures of preparing the thesis, forming the Committee, and the defense. The thesis must address original and relevant marketing topics. Topics are offered by the program teaching staff and chosen according to the students' interests (SER, p. 13). The final theses defended during the observed period correspond regarding their titles – topics to the marketing study field. They are dedicated to either theoretical issues (investigating theoretical or methodological problems) or applied research to solve practical problems. The summaries written in English show that a student has to prove that he/she has acquired knowledge and skills to individually perform the relevant and, depending on the chosen problem, appropriate research procedure.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Interest in the program from students and social partners is growing due to the rising importance of marketing in business practice and the possibility for employed people to enroll and attend the program.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The real focus of the study program to meet the specific needs of marketing professionals in the economy of western Lithuania (focus on maritime industry and other economic entities in the Klaipeda region) is missing.
2. The study program curriculum has deficiencies:
 - a) Course-level learning outcomes are set ambitiously given their potential contribution to program-level learning outcomes. Therefore, they need to be revised following the teaching and assessment methods used to transfer knowledge and develop students' competencies.
 - b) The sequence of courses in the program structure is not good. The master-level marketing program must clearly follow the logic of the discipline, which means a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of marketing through knowledge of market research and consumer behavior and their connection and interplay with other marketing areas. Unfortunately, the program's current structure is complicated, without a desirable logical sequence, and as such, reduces the potential to achieve the desired learning outcomes.
 - c) There is a modest, insufficient offer of electives for the master-level study program. Electives must maintain a marketing perspective and offer new insights into the discipline, not represent mainly a combination of predominantly management and macroeconomic approaches as this is the case with the current offer.

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 admits the strong regional focus of Klaipėda University. This focus stems from the market demand from companies who need graduates, specialists with specific knowledge and skill sets. The expert committee admits the efforts of Klaipėda University marketing related staff to publish and to participate in conferences, mostly at national level. The self-evaluation report mostly focuses on the review of the field of management, but vaguely on marketing. For example, “In 2017–2019, 35 scientific publications in international journals with citation index were published in the *Management* field of science; 9 international scientific conferences on marketing topics were attended.” The expert committee admits that there are relevant research topic approaches available.

The expert committee urges Klaipėda University to establish a marketing department for two reasons: to provide a solid background for research and teaching activities, and to have a formalized advocacy power. According to the site visit, the expert committee supports the idea of creating a business and economic lab, to improve and adapt marketing skills and knowledge. This could also strengthen cooperation with social partners. The area of marketing seems marginal: the research output is more management and economics related than marketing. A stronger marketing focus is essential to maintain an accredited master study program in this field. Neither the field focus nor the amount of publication and/or conference participation is sufficient to achieve and maintain an eligible level of quality. A marketing master study program deserves stronger focus on the area.

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

The expert committee admits the approved research field of “On the Approval of the Klaipėda University Strategic Field of Science”, including marketing-related areas like personalized digital marketing, advertising and sales strategies, coastal tourism marketing, relationship marketing, integrated marketing communication, packaging marketing, and social network marketing.

The site visit confirmed that several research topics are integrated into study activities, like marketing research of product packaging, digital marketing, alternatives to the assessment of communication effectiveness of integrated marketing, business marketing planning, marketing communication strategy of regional planning and promotion, integrated marketing research and technologies of processing the collected data, corporate social responsibility in alternative marketing solutions, etc.

The expert committee argues that higher quality research outputs could strengthen the study activities. During the site visit it was confirmed that tasks assignments are given to different students' groups, for training purposes. The team members are responsible together for execution of each relevant task. They work and present the tasks together, using critical analysis. These methods could utilize high quality journal articles, it would serve the students' needs and improve their skills.

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

The expert committee acknowledges that the most tangible form for students to take part in research is during their thesis work. The topics are aligned with the Marketing program course units. Students have the opportunity to participate in scientific conferences, professors' individual projects. However, most of the teachers' research endeavors are not in the marketing field. Erasmus projects were also confirmed during the site visit. Internship and company visit opportunities are also significant parts of getting experiences. The institution has a strong relationship with Klaipėda science and technology park – however, even if the cooperation is strong and well-established (esp. start-up and spin-off support, events), there is an opportunity to further exploit the opportunity for scientific (applied science) partnership.

The expert committee finds it a warning sign that the exclusion of students was confirmed from multiple sides. During the site visit it was mentioned that the teaching staff don't let them participate in projects as the long term projects exceed the time the students spend in their study program. It is also troublesome that more issues (payment for them, or they already have jobs) point towards inflexibility.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Klaipėda University has a strong regional focus.
2. The thesis topics have a strong marketing relevance.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The absence of a marketing department could lead to a decreasing importance of the marketing field.
2. The research output in terms of both quality and quantity is modest.

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

The admission requirements are well-founded. This Master study program admits students with a Bachelor's qualification degree or people who have courses in the respective study field. In both cases, they meet the requirements specified in the study programme. The Admission rules are proposed by the Faculty Council and approved by the Senate. Structure of the competitive score and other criteria are published on the KU website. Since the 2017 academic year, a constant enrollment has been maintained, which has varied from 101 students to 34.

There are grading criteria that allow a selection to be made from among all students interested in taking the master's degree. Their scientific publications within the Marketing area are also taken into account. All information is public, complete, and accessible, but this committee recommends that it be displayed in English.

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 recognition is carried out in accordance with the procedures established by the laws of the KU Senate, evaluating the compliance of the learning outcomes and the subject requirements of the intended study programme. About the recognition of non-formal and informal learning achievements, the basis is the competencies provided in the study programme, and the descriptions of competencies of study fields are prepared by the respective departments. A maximum of 50% of the study program can be credited.

According to the evidence, for the last 3 years, there were no foreign students in the Master's program in Marketing requiring to have their learning achievements credited. This committee suggests that more efforts can be made when informing future students of the validations, since they tend to be unaware of this process and how to carry it out.

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

The University offers students a choice of 250 universities in all European Union countries, as well as Turkey, Switzerland and Norway. Students of the *Marketing* study programme, like all KU students, have the possibility to participate in the ERASMUS+ Exchange Programme. Actual mobility is very low. According to the SER, this is because most of the marketing students work. Since 2017, few or no students have entered the program (only 2 in 2019), according to the SER (table 9, p. 19), and a total of 12 students went outside, the majority to carry out practices. It is recommended that the internationalization and mobility of the program be promoted, taking advantage of the extensive network of agreements that the university has. Carrying out activities to promote Erasmus mobility can help. This committee has not found relevant promotional actions for the Master's 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

KU provides its students with a wide range of academic, social, and financial support services. There are different types of scholarships that help to finance the studies. KU offers incentive scholarships, like Senate scholarship, Faculty Council scholarship and incentive scholarship for learning outcomes. There are also Social scholarships, grants for participation in conferences, events, research promotion activities, etc. Disabled persons are provided with financial support for special needs. Students have psychological and spiritual help, and they are encouraged to engage in the events and activities of the University community, participate in social activities, engage in volunteer activities outside the University, as well as have an opportunity to engage in various student organizations. To support their study, students are provided with a very useful individual career counseling to take advantage of their academic results.

KU University covers the complete needs of the student, offers numerous financial aids and the students have resources that allow them to take advantage of their stay at the university. This committee positively values the care that the university provides to the student. Since 2017, 6 students of the Master in Marketing were awarded with Social scholarships, and only 1 student had tuition fee reduced. No further evidence of the use of university services is provided. It would be advisable to have data that evidences the use that students make of them, and their impact on the academic program, for example, the psychological help service.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

New students have introductory lectures at the Faculty, and most of the information is given by their professors, and communication usually occurs via email or during tutoring hours. There is no information about the Student Council. After meeting with the students, they affirm that they are given the opportunity to participate in the Student Council through the website. They find the study schedule very flexible, since being in the afternoons, they can combine it with their work. They know the methods of detecting plagiarism and what they are exposed to if caught cheating. Students miss more audiovisual resources to work and enhance creativity, such as having access to the Adobe package.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The teaching schedule of the master's degree allows students to combine their studies with work.
2. Numerous resources and services are available to students at the KU.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Public information about the Marketing programme is not clear on the webpage. Information in English should be much more elaborated.
2. International mobility (incoming and outgoing) should be promoted with more concrete actions.

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 forms and methods combine classroom and independent activities and assignments. Various learning methods are utilized throughout the study program (i.e., lectures, exercise classes, seminars, individual and group work; and more pro-active methods as case studies, discussions, concept mapping, problem-based learning, simulation, etc). In addition, e-learning tools and approaches are utilized intensively, though the institution could better support the lecturers in the systematic development of their digital skills.

As the university does not offer a first cycle marketing study program, students with a diverse level of initial marketing knowledge usually enroll in the program. This represents a challenge for the teachers as they have to deal with various levels of students' understanding of the field. During the meeting with students and alumni, both groups appreciated the learning process, the openness and availability of the teachers, and the fairness of the evaluation that reflects students' performance. The lecturers provide additional materials, encourage students to think critically, support creativity, and promote discussions. Guest

lecturers participate in the teaching, though invitations to participate in the lectures are rather based on individual relationships.

The sessions with teachers and management revealed a gap between the formulated learning outcomes and the assessment methods. In many cases, the link is relatively weak and needs further attention. The graduates quickly find jobs in the region and in the region-specific businesses. Some continue in academia and enroll in the Ph.D. studies.

The institution has a sound evaluation system that reflects the needs of the students and enables them to (mostly) achieve the intended learning outcomes. The institution needs to pay attention to the link between the formulated learning goals on the program level and in the particular courses and provide more systematic support to the teachers to foster their teaching skills.

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

Students from socially vulnerable groups or with special needs have a variety of options to tailor their studies according to their specific requirements. This includes a personal tutor assigned, specific facilities for students with various impairments, an opportunity for special counselling (either from class teachers or other supportive bodies), individual study plans (including a specific schedule for exams or even classes), opportunity to suspend studies, etc. Students in challenging financial situations can receive a scholarship. There were several supports acknowledged during the evaluated period. Students with special needs seem to be well-integrated in the academic life of the faculty and university.

The institution pays attention to students from socially vulnerable groups or with special needs and provides sufficient support to such groups. It might be worth considering introducing a specific evaluation of such students' performance to identify barriers in their studies and further support their learning endeavours.

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

Student study progress monitoring is systematic and continuous. The monitoring is performed on various levels (i.e., module, program) and within various institutional bodies. The process is formalized and evidence-based. Students receive various forms of feedback, i.e., discussion of the assignment performance or examination assessment, feedback and comments by e-means, students' self- or peer-assessment, discussion of works in groups. Students' performance is also monitored on the department level and students – in case of performance issues – receive individual counselling. The final thesis represents an important component of the students' performance evaluation.

The institution collects feedback on the learning process from various internal and external stakeholders. The feedback is taken into consideration and is being continuously implemented to better reflect the business and the labor market's needs and incorporate

progress in the related research fields. According to the meeting with students, they confirm the feedback is being collected and implemented, though the students indicated the results of the feedback are not always directly and immediately shared.

The meeting with management and teachers revealed, the program is administered by the Department of Economics. Whether the program receives enough attention as the department focuses on another knowledge domain (related, though) remains a question. The institution monitors students' study progress in a systematic way and provides feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress. Though, the institution could improve the communication with students and other involved groups regarding the implemented changes. Moreover, the structure of the institution could better recognize the study program.

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

The institution evaluates the employability of graduates on multiple levels. The university career centre cooperates with the graduate career management information system. Data from the Government's Strategic Analysis Centre of the Republic of Lithuania are analysed as well. Specific surveys are conducted to collect alumni opinions. Moreover, graduates' feedback (gathered during events oriented on alumni) complements the information mentioned above. As there is quite a demand for experts in the marketing field, the employment rate of the graduates is very high (100 % in 2019). Career Guidance and Career Management Process complies with ISO 9001.

During the meeting with alumni and social partners, the participants confirmed the university approaches alumni (and other partners) with surveys, information about events, invitation to lectures, etc. The contact is nourished both formally and informally (based on personal connections with former teachers). The institution has a well-established system of tracking and evaluation of graduates' employability. The system goes beyond traditional depersonalized questionnaire surveys.

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

The principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are formally expressed in university/faculty directives. Students must sign a declaration of integrity when enrolling in the study program. The evaluated study program emphasizes the academic perspective and research orientation. This is well-reflected in the institutional framework, which includes multiple and various tools to support such efforts (i.e., anti-plagiarism system). The system is well-balanced; students can also raise comments and complaints about the study process, as there is a dedicated committee established for such purposes. On the other hand – as it has been revealed during the meeting with students – the study coordinator for the marketing programme is the Head of the Department of Economics and it remains a question whether such a position is the best available to deal with such agenda. During the last three years, there were no requests made either by students or by faculty members regarding possible violations of the principles of academic

integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. No reported cases in the last three years may raise concerns about the system's effectiveness. Both, students and alumni emphasized that the institution promotes principles of tolerance and non-discrimination.

The institutional framework is robust and well-balanced. As the institution considers introducing the study program in English, this will also represent additional requirements for the infrastructure (i.e., an anti-plagiarism system for the English language). Implementation of policies to ensure tolerance and non-discrimination may benefit from inviting representatives of other stakeholder groups to include the external perspectives and facilitate a broader discussion. Again, the organisational structure of the institution could better recognize the existence of the program.

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 procedure of submitting appeals is well-established and formally expressed. A specific committee is summoned to consider the appeals. During the last three years, there have been no appeals or complaints from students submitted. On the other hand, the student seemed not to be fully aware of the formal procedures. The Student Council is established to represent students' voice in communication with the institution and the council informs students about its agenda. The procedures for submitting and examining appeals and complaints regarding the study process seem adequate and reflect common practice in academia. Though, the formal procedures could be better communicated, esp. to students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Flexibility of the teaching staff, their openness and support to students is worth to be complimented.
2. Opportunities to individualize the learning process are well reflecting student-specific needs.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Assurance of the link between learning outcomes and study assessment methods remains unclear.
2. Students are not familiar with formal study procedures.
3. The organisation structure of the institution does not support the study programme.

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

The study program, supervised by the Department of Economics, is taught by a team of 13 university teachers (5 professors, 6 associate professors, and two lecturers) from four different units (Departments of Economics, Management, Public Administration and Political Science, and Centre for Studies of Social Changes), whose research interests are related to the courses taught at a Marketing study program. All teachers have a Ph.D. degree, and besides rich pedagogical experience (which is on average 23 years), 5 of them have extensive practical experience in general management, marketing management, and business consulting in marketing and related fields. The scope of courses taught by professors comprise 28% of the entire scope of the study program (SER, p. 26). Staff members are research active and encouraged to publish in peer-reviewed scientific publications. They take part in organizing committees of international conferences and editorial boards of scientific journals, too. All teachers have a good command of English (therefore, the KU plans to introduce English as the program's language of instruction in the near future (SER, p. 27)). In the analyzed period there were, in 2017–2018, 9 students studying in the program, in 2018–2019 – 11 students, and in 2019–2020 – 12 students, which points to an acceptable ratio between numbers of teaching staff and students. The teaching staff is senior, the average age of teachers is 50, although 8 out of 13 teachers are 50 years old or younger. The turnover of teaching staff is low, and in the analyzed period, it was internal, related to the changes in internal pedagogical positions. As reported in the SER (p. 26), some of the current 4 doctoral students in the Economics and Management at KU have scientific interests related to the Marketing field and represent potential for staff renewal.

The structure of the academic staff involved in the study program complies with the legal requirements and enables the achievement of the learning outcomes. The age distribution of the teaching staff shows seniority. Five teaching staff members teach several courses and seminars, which indicates a demanding workload despite their extensive pedagogical experience. Although reported that scientific and research interests of teaching staff are directed towards marketing, researched topics reported as 3 major works over the last five years (SER, Annex 3) show the diversity and not always close alignment to subjects taught. The teaching staff is involved in many different scientific and academic activities of national and international scope, such as being active members of conferences organizing committees, editorial boards of academic journals, attendees of national and international conferences. The staff turnover is very low, related to internal promotions to higher positions in the academic structure. During the online site-visit with the expert committee it was emphasized that there is a problem of attracting desirable experts who have scientific degrees and experience combined with the top level of business practice and consulting, which is primarily related to unsatisfactory financial (salary) conditions.

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

Academic mobility is recognized as an essential activity that affects the quality of the study program and its attractiveness and competitiveness in the market of university education. Incoming and outgoing teacher mobility is encouraged, especially in the context of teaching and training within the ERASMUS+ program. There are other possibilities for short-term stays abroad for internships at universities and in companies. Among others, they are the "Partners4value" program, the consortium "EU_CONEXUS," international projects "SB BRIDGE-Building Bridges for green-tech future", and "INDIGISE- Promotion of Social Entrepreneurship in the Youth Sector by Digital Informal Education Tools" (SER, pp. 27-28).

Teaching staff members have multiple opportunities to participate in the academic mobility programs; priority is given to those who did not have such an experience yet. Outgoing mobility in the analyzed period was realized by eight teachers visiting partner universities in European countries (Spain, Turkey, Poland, Italy, Norway, Croatia, Germany, France, Malta, Cyprus). Incoming mobility was achieved through the stay and lecturing of three teachers from partner institutions at KU, from Spain, Italy, and Romania. In addition to improving teaching competencies and skills, international mobility aims to develop other forms of scientific cooperation, including joint research and publication. During the online site-visit with the expert committee, the teaching staff expressed their satisfaction with the possibilities and incentives for mobility so far (considering the specific situation of the current Pandemic conditions, too).

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

Professional development of teaching staff is a requirement for progress in their academic positions. The improvement is evaluated over five years. University encourages the professional development through several different and formal types of support: a) financial assistance for the defense of dissertations, preparation of textbooks and monographs, for participation in courses and practices that lead to the improvement of pedagogical and research skills, b) the possibility of the use of free year from teaching activities in order to conduct research and improve pedagogical and research competencies (available after every five years of teaching period), c) financial grants for participation in scientific conferences, and d) from 2019, specific remuneration system - fixed part of salary depending on the position and variable one depending on research output, participation in projects, etc. (SER, pp. 28-29).

The development (of scientific, pedagogical, and professional competencies in general) of teaching staff is harmonized with the regulations and acts of the university. Teachers prepare an individual training plan for each academic year, which in the research part should be linked to research strategic goals at the institution and the university level. In the part of the plan related to the improvement of pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, teachers plan academic mobility, attending the required courses, seminars, and training. KU offers courses for improving the English language, statistical methods skills, and the use of distance learning systems. In the analyzed period, teaching staff attended different courses, seminars, apprenticeships, and internships (the number varies according to the person). During the meeting with the teaching staff, the expert committee witnessed

their pride and satisfaction in being part of a minor, well-connected academic community. They stressed that KU helps them in coping with multitasking in performing teaching and research. Also, they highly value the possibilities of combining research and teaching ratio according to personal circumstances (e.g., if leading a scientific project, the minimum required teaching involvement is expected). They found professional development possibilities good, and are very satisfied with the library resources support. Some pointed out the need to have more assistance regarding the distance teaching needs (especially now during the Pandemic).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Teaching staff share a common positive attitude regarding the need of performing a marketing programme that has a growing demand on the regional market (despite their different academic profile).
2. There are reasonable remuneration and motivating schemes (fixed salary and variable parts that reflect extra involvement in achieving personal and programme aims) and for professional development, too, with possibilities to adjust to younger and senior teaching staff members.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Teachers who teach marketing courses belong to different departments (there is no formal Department of Marketing), and several of them (around 25%) have a high teaching load from marketing courses, although marketing is not their primary field of specialization. This presents a threat to future program development
2. There is modest representation of teachers' scientific papers in international peer-reviewed journals in the field of marketing.

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

Marketing study programme utilizes resources of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities including 28 well-equipped classrooms with 780 workplaces (SER, p. 30). During the previous evaluation round of the program, some scarcity in resources with regards to the physical work environment has been noticed. The information provided by the university in 2021 (SER, p. 30), and additional presentation on available teaching spaces showcase that the university have sufficient classroom and work space facilities to carry the education for the Marketing study programme. In addition, a big renovation and upgrade project, financed by the EU, is approved to take place in 2021 (SER, page 30). The project budget is 1 million euro (of which 886 000 euro for facility repairs and 104 000 – for equipment), that indicates a major upscale of physical and technology resources.

The overall overview (SER, table 21) on facilities indicate there are several rooms at the university that are equipped with necessary technology to conduct remote studies, and during the site visit, the university staff have indicated their plans to continue the remote or hybrid (onsite and virtual combined) study format for Marketing studies going forward. The institution provides wireless internet connection through the campus. An online learning environment Moodle has been implemented, allowing for remote access to all teaching material, and a suitable student-lecturer collaboration environment. Other relevant software like *Google Analytics*, *Mailchimp* newsletter program are available for studies as well (SER, p. 31).

The institution is aware of and has implemented several solutions to accommodate students with special needs. The SER indicated there are special lifts for students with limited mobility and the library has specialized equipment and software for students with limited sight (blindness) – such as *Dolphin-EasyConverter*, *EasyReader*, and Braille reading and printing services. In addition, during the site visit, the university staff have reported about a successful adoption of study methods and materials for the students with limited hearing, during the recent years.

The institution has both the onsite-library with the relevant number of publications for the studies, as well as online access to relevant literature and research databases, ebooks and periodical literature. While library's opening hours are limited from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm during the work days only, the university staff reports that most of library-services are provided through the online literature-ordering system and that the annual surveys with stakeholders (students and teaching staff) evaluate library services as sufficient and satisfactory.

Overall, the physical, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient to carry out the Marketing field study programme, and to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The new modernisation project will provide relevant upgrades of the facilities and technology resources – especially relevant when planning full scale remote or hybrid-studies in the future.

From the conversations with students, it became evident that more marketing specific software like *Adobe* creative tools would be relevant to include in the program, in order to provide more hands-on experience to students with the tools that are highly relevant for creative work in the field of marketing. Great to see (ref. information during the meeting with teaching staff and students) that there are possibilities for cross-study synergies, with available Business Accelerator program facilities, allowing both marketing and technology students to work together.

According to all the information provided, we can conclude that all necessary equipment are in place to move marketing studies to remote learning style from 2021, which can benefit the university by attracting more students to the program. The ongoing major renovation project of the physical facilities can however impact the hybrid learning mode during some period of time.

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

Yearly plan for budgeting resources for upgrading informational resources and relevant literature is in place, and the feedback from students and teaching staff is being taken into consideration in those plans. Major renovation of physical facilities and upgrade of technology plan (and the budget) is in place for 2021 (SER, p. 30-31). New *Business Design and Economic Research lab* is planned to be established, aiming to provide more hands-on projects in marketing research. No specific date on expected implementation has been informed. Overall, the expert panel can conclude that the resource planning process is sufficient.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Flexibility of staff and the programme allows to accommodate the needs of the students for remote studies and evening hours classes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Both the general (overall teaching and learning environment on site) and special facilities (e.g. Design and Economic Research lab) are either undergoing renovation or to be yet established, with no specific end-date. While this does not provide limitations for remote-studies in the marketing field, the planned establishment of hybrid-studies (teaching in class and online streaming at the same time) could be impacted.

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 quality management at Klaipėda University is complying with ISO 9001:2015 standards. It is also recognised that the Quality Management System document regulates several aspects of internal study quality assurance: development, evaluation, improvement, students' scientific activities, stakeholders' feedback management, etc. These descriptions ensure all phases (planning, implementation, control and improvement) are handled accordingly.

According to the self-evaluation report, the study program quality assurance is regulated by Business and Public Management Study Field Groups and the Economics Study Field Committee. Several participants in the committee ensure a higher standard. The responsibilities of the committee (e.g. approving study plans, handling changes, coordinating with departments, accrediting modules, ensuring follow-up activities, organizing measurements, ensuring information flow about the study program, and preparing progress reports) shows a structural approach towards quality management. The responsibilities of internal quality management are structured adequately. All participants (from teaching staff to rector) have clearly defined roles in the process in the self-evaluation report.

As it can be seen from the factual situation, the quality management is generalized and centralized, it operates with central decisions. The expert committee recommends that the study program should establish its own organizational body and form its own specific quality management procedures and approaches, giving validity to the marketing field.

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

Representatives of the Student Union are participating in the Study Field Committee. The stakeholders (e.g., students, study field committee, university, alumni, social partners) represent an integral part of quality management through their answers for surveys. As it was stated during the site visit, and also it can be found in the self-evaluation report, a standardized assessment of the study process is carried out at the end of each semester: students are interviewed in accordance with a standardized questionnaire and are also questioned after each practical training and upon termination of the study agreement. The meetings at the end of the semester hold account for evaluating qualitative and quantitative data and implementing necessary improvements. These changes serve the students' need for professional knowledge.

The constant changes in trends, followed by the applied changes in the study program could pose a challenge for professors as they need to follow the trends and maintain high quality professionalism. Klaipėda University, and especially the examined study program, must find a way to integrate the social partners and other external stakeholders into the quality management process.

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

As it can be seen in the self-evaluation report, the summarized results of the regular surveys are discussed with stakeholders and reflected in the reports of departments. The annual indicators that are provided in the relevant descriptions of processes, are collected and analysed. They are open to all members of the academic community. Generalized information is publicly available in the annual KU report on the KU website. The website serves as the main platform for sharing information publicly, including admissions, study program descriptions, legal acts and several activities.

The expert committee recommends Klaipėda University to establish new forms of information sharing besides their website. It is a must, but not the only way to share information. As the study program needs to strengthen its bond with graduates and social partners, existing and future students, they must develop new channels and forms of communication to share up to date information about the study program.

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 university. Specific information on the work of the Student Council is not included. After the meeting

held with the students, the committee considers that the university should reinforce its culture of quality, reporting the results of the satisfaction surveys to the interest groups, as well as the improvement plan. It is also recommended to give more visibility and power to the Student Council and its activities.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The quality management is aligned with international standards.
2. The students have the opportunity to participate in conversation with decision makers regarding study field related quality management issues.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There are limited channels and forms to share marketing study program quality management related information publicly.
2. There are limited approaches to integrate social partners and stakeholders into quality management.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>The program focus should be improved to reflect the declared orientations on sustainability, industrial and regional levels.</p> <p>Revision and changes concerning the program content and sequences of courses are needed. Comparisons and benchmarking with similar programs in national and foreign universities would help in that endeavor.</p> <p>The introduction of new elective courses with contemporary marketing content is indispensable.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>KU should establish a marketing department to elevate the importance of the marketing field.</p> <p>The research output in terms of both quality and quantity should be increased significantly.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>The information on the webpage about the Marketing program should be completed also in English. Internationalization and mobility should be further promoted.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>There is a need to perform systematic curriculum mapping to ensure the fit between learning goals on the program and module level and the appropriateness of assessment methods according to the desired learning outcomes.</p> <p>Continue to communicate further the formal procedures and directives to all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>There is a need for higher recognition of the existence of the programme (from the organizational point-of-view).</p>
Teaching staff	<p>The development of teaching staff with a primary specialization in the marketing field is essential (due to the need for one teacher to teach multiple marketing disciplines).</p> <p>The Department of marketing as an academic unit is needed to enable the coordination of all efforts related to the development, implementation, and improvement of the program following marketing science and practice trends.</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>Continue to monitor the need of software & tech tools needed for rapidly changing demands in the marketing discipline. Short term - the creative software tools like <i>adobe</i> - could be a relevant edition for the hands-on learning for the students.</p> <p>Consider all aspects of the resources when moving the studies</p>

	<p>online or hybrid format: for example, how the upcoming design & economic research lab will be integrated into remote studies format.</p>
<p>Study quality management and public information</p>	<p>KU should increase the number of channels and forms to share information about quality management results publicly.</p> <p>The institute also should find formal ways to integrate social partners and stakeholders into quality management.</p>

V. SUMMARY

The programme's aims and outcomes, in general, conform to the needs for marketing and advertising specialists. At the same time, the real focus of the study programme to meet the specific needs of marketing professionals in the economy of western Lithuania is still missing. The programme itself also has some major deficiencies. The sequence of courses in the programme structure is not good and there is an insufficient offer of elective courses. Assurance of the link between learning outcomes and study assessment methods remains unclear.

The information presented is mostly focusing on management, but vaguely on marketing. The expert committee urges Klaipėda University to establish a marketing department to provide a solid background for research and teaching activities, and to have a formalized advocacy power. A stronger marketing focus is essential to maintain an accredited master study program in this field and to promote research further. Teachers who teach marketing courses belong to different departments, marketing is not their primary specialization. There is modest representation of teachers' scientific papers in international peer-reviewed journals in marketing. Currently not the field focus, nor the amount of publication and/or conference participation is sufficient to achieve and maintain an eligible level of quality.

The teaching schedule of the master's degree allows students to combine their studies with work. Numerous resources and services are available to students at the KU. At the same time, public information about the Marketing programme is not clear on the webpage. Information in English should be elaborated much more. Also international mobility (incoming and outgoing) should be promoted with more concrete actions.

Flexibility of the teaching staff, their openness towards the students is worth to be complimented. Teaching staff share a common positive attitude regarding the need of a marketing programme. There are reasonable remuneration and motivating schemes for professional development.

Flexibility of staff and the programme allows to accommodate the needs of the students for remote studies and evening hours classes. Both the general (overall teaching and learning environment on site) and special facilities (e.g. Design and Economic Research lab) are either undergoing renovation or to be yet established.

The responsibilities of internal quality management are structured adequately. All participants have clearly defined roles. Still, the university should reinforce its culture of quality, reporting the results of the satisfaction surveys to the interest groups, as well as the improvement plans. It is also recommended to give more visibility and power to the Student Council and its activities.

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*