



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of MARKETING

at Vilnius University of Applied Sciences

Expert panel:

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Advertising Management</i>
State code	6531LX043
Type of studies	Professional higher education
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years); part-time (4 years)
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business Administration
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	30/06/2011

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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 3 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 and during the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Virtual presentation of learning facilities used by marketing field students at Vilnius University of Applied Sciences
2.	Main marketing field subjects syllabi (course descriptions)
3.	Description of Study Achievement Evaluation Procedure
4.	Study programme level documents: minutes of Advertising and Communication Department meetings; Advertising Management study programme Graduation Thesis Committee reports (for full-time and part-time students)
5.	Dean's order for renewed modules (24/09/2020, No. V-35)
6.	Other Faculty level documents: minutes of Faculty administration meetings; Faculty plan for reducing students' dropout rate.

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

Vilnius University of Applied Sciences (hereafter – VIKO) is a state higher education institution. Its studies are organized in seven faculties: Faculty of Electronics and Informatics, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Business Management, Faculty of Health Care, Faculty of Pedagogy, Faculty of Agrotechnologies, and Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies. Vilnius University of Applied Sciences is offering altogether 48 study programmes belonging to 28 study fields. Professional Bachelor degree in Advertising Management is offered by the Faculty of Business Management. There are 5 departments in the Faculty: Advertising and Communication, Business Innovation, International Business, Management, and Tourism.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Marketing study field and **first cycle** at Vilnius 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	25

*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

According to the SER (p. 7), the Advertising Management study program aims to prepare and train knowledgeable, competent, and skillful advertising professionals ready for facing different challenges in the advertising environment and companies dedicated to a wide range of communication activities - advertising, public relations, media, production, etc. on the national and international level. Furthermore, the program aims to enable the adaptation of the acquired skills to personal interests and needs.

Statistics (published in relevant Lithuanian sources, SER p. 7) on the need for professionals specializing in marketing, i.e., the narrower field of advertising, indicate an increase in demand, which makes the existence of this profile's study field justified. Furthermore, in order to better adapt to the needs of the market, the study program tries to follow similar programs of other HEIs from the EU. During the sessions held with the Senior administration and SER group, the expert committee was informed about the constant increase of the number of enrolled students and the program's promotion in Lithuania and abroad through PR activities. Companies' satisfaction with the knowledge and skills of students on internship further justify the compliance of the study program to the needs of the labor market.

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

VIKO's mission is directed to the education and training of practice-oriented specialists through the study process aligned with the European standards and in close cooperation with the representatives of the business world (SER, p. 8). Therefore, internationalization and mobility represent the strategic orientation of the institution's development.

The goals and outcomes of the field and cycle study program are in line with the mission, objectives of the institution's activities, and strategic priorities. Through its goal and structure, the program seeks to ensure high-level quality education by preparing competent professionals who will be easily employed and whose diplomas will be appreciated in the labor market. To this end, efforts are made to improve the competencies of the academic staff, raise the quality of studies by strengthening opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills for the applied research activities and growing internationalization. During the online site-visit sessions, the expert committee realized that VIKO is committed to preserving the long tradition of well-known and trusted professional HEI in Lithuania. Furthermore, VIKO is oriented to building strategic partnerships with local and regional companies and

municipalities to enhance focus on preparation for professional activities of graduates and increase social partners' participation in the program.

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

The program is structured and follows the relevant legal documents of the Republic of Lithuania. Furthermore, it is also developed under other pertinent documents for professional and general competencies of professional higher education graduates (SER p. 9).

Evidence shows that all program elements comply with the general requirements for professional higher education studies. The volume of the study program amounts to 180 ECTS (for full-time and part-time students). The full-time study program lasts for three years (6 semesters) and part-time for four years (8 semesters). Each semester lasts, in both cases, 20 weeks, with modules that account for 30 ECTS (full-time), i.e., for 20 ECTS (part-time, except for the 6th and 8th semester that have 30 ECTS each). Professional internship and Final internship last for 12 weeks and have 20 ECTS.

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

According to the SER (p. 10), the program is composed in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy. It is based on sequential logic and starts with acquiring competencies by getting knowledge, improving comprehension, applying acquired knowledge to practical field problems (through independent and group analysis, synthesis, evaluations), and finally offering grounded solutions. The learning outcomes descriptors are in line with the study's program objectives, and their evaluation is based on the Learning Outcomes Evaluation Description document, applied on the VIKO's institutional level.

The review (Annex 5), which shows the correlation between the objectives of the program and learning outcomes on the study module level, study and assessment methods, is well prepared and, in general, shows a good fit. Study methods and assessment methods are clearly indicated. The plethora of various study methods - lectures, seminars, discussions, case studies, independent and group work, simulation games ensure a comprehensive approach to the teaching-learning process. Cumulative assessment of students' achievements is used, based on interim tests, independent work, presentations, project and/or exam, depending on the module. However, during the meeting with students and alumni, the expert committee was informed about students' needs and desire for better representation and more frequent use of modern, interactive teaching methods, including, e.g., simulations.

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 program comprises general professional higher education study modules, study field modules, and elective modules. The acquired theoretical knowledge is further enhanced through professional and final internships and finally integrated with the graduation thesis.

The study program is oriented to building competent professionals able to successfully face the different and complex challenges and business problems in advertising management practice. In order to respond to frequent and fast market changes, the program improvements are made regularly, following the institution's prescribed procedure (SER, pp. 9-11).

The program's scope and structure should provide students with theoretical and applied knowledge. To that end, according to the expert committee opinion, the holistic approach to developing professional skills by using theoretical concepts as a basis for problem-solving and decision-making in advertising management should be applied. The practice of benchmarking with similar European programs, the adjustments of modules, and introducing students with the linkage between each module's learning outcomes with the study objectives represent a desirable approach in continuous program development. However, the existing modules in the program curriculum must be better streamlined to offer more balance to developing specialized and trained professionals in the field. For example, the program starts with the business economics perspective offering Management, Social Business Environment, and Marketing 1 modules. Economics is introduced in the second semester. Offering Economics, Management, and Marketing in the first semester would provide students with a more coherent and focused framework for further developing their professional knowledge and skills. Besides, much more attention should be given to integrated marketing communications as an "umbrella" for nowadays growing interconnectivity between traditional and modern (technology-based) approaches and techniques.

Since the perception of consistent messages through different communication tools has been one of the basic principles of the integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach since the 1990s, communications' success is shaped by how consumers receive messages through different approaches and tools. Therefore, in this particular program dedicated to advertising management, the development of long-lasting relationships should be more emphasized as the primary goal of all different and rapidly changing marketing communications activities, especially advertising. In that vein, the inclusion of a compulsory course dedicated to the IMC, e.g., in the second semester, would provide a comprehensive and, eventually, more competitive perspective to the Advertising Management study 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

Personalization of the program occurs during the third year when it is possible to choose from the offered elective modules those that best suit the student's affinities and needs (SER, p. 11). The offer of elective courses comprises negotiation, career management, organization, business travel, and/or foreign languages. The expert committee pinpoints the need to introduce more elective courses with the marketing content (alumni and students suggested B2B marketing, personal marketing, content marketing).

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

The rules on how to prepare, present and defend the Graduation Thesis at the Advertising Management Program are stipulated by the official internal document of the institution. All graduation theses are commissioned by the social partners, which ensures that the topics and content align with applied research and are dedicated to specific business problems faced by different stakeholders in the community, region, and/or state (SER, p. 12). The list of titles of Graduation Thesis reveals that they cover various actual problems from the field. The proportion of different final grades serves as an indicator of quality assurance in the evaluation process. English summaries of the available theses reveal that students have to show they can analyze the relevant scientific literature, particular business environment connected with the problem, conduct necessary research, and finally, offer a solution to the specific marketing problem.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The study program is attractive to employers; its graduates integrate quickly and efficiently into the labor market.
2. Sustainability of the program has been achieved through relationships with companies (for students' internships, lecturing, nominating members of the committees for the evaluation and defense of the theses) and involvement of the HEI into strategic partnerships on the local and regional levels.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The program lacks the Integrated Marketing Communications perspective, necessary to understand the role and importance of contemporary advertising.
2. The offer of elective courses satisfies in number, but not in the content (too few marketing courses).

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 existence of a structural approach to the research and development activities by implementing the VIKO Applied Science and Art Activities Program. As the SER states, the aim of the program is to strengthen the bonds between science and business. The approach was further validated by the investments of the Faculty in development of new laboratories, library funds, publication of scientific papers and incoming lecturers. SER Annex 7 (VIKO applied science program implementation by marketing study field teachers) shows some results of the aforementioned investments, however, it handles

the results vaguely. Based on Annex 7 and the online site-visit, a stronger focus on academic research approaches is advised.

The expert committee admits that the Advertising Management study program teachers took part in external/international research and applied science activities (SER p. 15, 46.). The expert committee also admits several positive features at VIKO that were experienced during the online site-visit. The most outstanding ones were the strong entrepreneurial approach and critical thinking. These features were supported by all parties from management to the staff, students and alumni.

As it can be seen in Annex 8, only research topics are presented, without any tangible evidence of existing academic research output. Considering the examined time frame, the expert committee finds it an alarming shortcoming.

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

It is acknowledged however that the teaching staff use their existing research materials in their classes in forms of case studies or as examples of good practice. The link between research and teaching activities was further supported by students who participate in research. Indeed, they are able to increase their knowledge and competences, however, the expert committee feels it is more practice than theory oriented.

The VIKO stated their aspiration for a stronger internationalization. The role and importance and positive aspects of mobility are recognised, even during the pandemic situation. The expert committee welcomes the idea of internationalization, along with the strong aspiration to work with particular domestic (regional or local) companies, supplemented by the cooperation with local municipalities to make regional strategies visible. This holds an additional value as it reflects the rapid changes in the market, recognising the need for strengthening cooperative projects valuable for all participants.

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

Another important aspect regarding the links between science and studies is the cooperation with alumni and social partners. The expert committee admits the skills of students which is reflecting strongly to the market demand. This idea was validated by alumni and social partners. The feedback of social partners and alumni confirm the appropriate approach of the study program. The expert committee also finds that the improvement of the content for digital tools in marketing and the integration of more digital content in the courses are necessary.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The collaboration with social partners and alumni (by integrating them in teaching, sharing real-life experiences).
2. Strong emphasis on applied approaches (creativity and innovations).

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Focusing only on applied approaches is an important area for improvement: missing the importance of academic approaches and their relevance could harm further development of the study program.
2. The lack of academic research is a disadvantage on both national and international level (especially considering VIKO's aspirations for stronger internationalization).

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

Admission to the Advertising Management study programme is in accordance with legislative requirements and is administered by LAMA BPO (Centralised National Admissions System). There are no special entry requirements for the study program, and the most important criterion is the applicant's competitive score. The information is clear, accessible and complete, the admission requirements are well-founded. Students consulted during the online site-visit stated that they knew the process well and did not point out any weaknesses when it came to enrolling. VIKO consistently applies pre-established and public standards that cover all phases of the 'life cycle' of students: admission, advancement, recognition and certification.

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 number of part-time applicants during the period 2017–2019 has increased as well as the number of signed agreements to the state funded places. The number of full-time applicants has decreased during the period 2017–2019, but the number of the signed agreements has increased (SER p. 18, table 3.2). So, the study program is consolidated as an increasingly competitive one. In addition, generally speaking, enrollment grows year by year. Procedures of recognition of partial studies, and prior non-formal and informal learning, are public and accessible on the VIKO's website. Students have the help of their coordinator to carry out these procedures.

During these academic years, a few students have requested the recognition of credits for various reasons: Erasmus stays, studies from other universities in Lithuania and abroad. In all cases, their circumstances were analysed and they were validated following current legislation, something that shows that the system works and that the figure of the coordinator is essential to explain to the student the procedure that, by nature, he or she does not know.

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

All information concerning academic mobility is available on the VIKO's website, students are consulted by the Faculty Erasmus Coordinator. Within the period of 2017–2020, 21 students

from the study program took an advantage of the ERASMUS+ exchange program. The Foreign Language Center provides students planning to go on Erasmus+ program abroad with an opportunity to test their knowledge of foreign languages (English, German, French, Russian), and issues a foreign language certificate. The study program is carried out in the Lithuanian language, therefore, there were no HEI students from abroad joining full-time or part-time studies during the analysed period.

The committee encourages to continue promoting the outgoing number of the Erasmus + students. According to the SER (p. 20), during the 2020-2021 academic year, VIKO has offered semester studies in English for incoming ERASMUS+ students, something that will promote internationalization.

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

According to the normative documents of VIKO, the Faculty provides the following types of financial support: incentive scholarship, bonus, one-time social benefit payment, tuition fee payment in parts, state-supported loans to pay for studies or living expenses, social scholarships, support for expatriate Lithuanians. Students count to apply for a one-time social benefit payment if it is needed. None of the Programme students has applied for the social benefit payment during the period of 2017–2020.

First year students have introductory days with practical seminars to get familiarized with the Studies Division functions, and communication with students is fluid and constant by Moodle, by email, virtually (via Skype, Facebook, Teams) and face-to-face. All students can receive free psychological help online, by the phone or by face-to-face meetings. For the students of the Programme, a psychological group consultation was organized in 2019. Students are provided with the possibility to develop their artistic and sports skills at VIKO's Physical training and sports centre. VIKO takes into account and addresses the diversity of students and their needs, allowing flexible learning pathways.

Communication with students is reinforced through the Moodle platform and other electronic means. During the meeting with the students, they highlighted the closeness of the university staff when it came to solving their doubts and problems. Bonuses for excellent student performance are positively valued, as well as psychological help.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

During the analysed period, there were 4 Advertising Management students in the Students' Council. According to the information provided on the SER (p. 22), Students' Council is interested in the study quality, living conditions at dormitories, takes part in the allocation of scholarships, bonuses, and allowances procedures, participate in the ERASMUS+ mobility selection committee meetings, represent students in meetings with the Faculty teachers and administration, cooperate with students' organizations in other educational institutions, participate in common events, help to organize various events, surveys, discussions, and conferences. The Mentor figures, which help the first-year students, are elected each year and are trained by Students' Council representative.

However, the information about the activities organized by the Students' Council is very general. It is recommended that its contribution to the university, and its influence on this Study Programme, would be explained more specifically. On the other hand, during the meeting with the expert committee, students valued the activity of the Students' Council and knew their representatives.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The enrollment numbers are growing from year to year.
2. The information and resources available to the student make the university experience complete and satisfactory.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. It is recommended to continue promoting students' internationalization activities, such as Erasmus +, as well as to offer to incoming students modules or subjects in English.

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

A plethora of various study forms and methods is used within the study modules (i.e., interactive lectures, seminars, discussions, case studies, group tasks, problem-solving, analysis of advanced experience, concept mapping, projects, essays, problematic training; probably as the result of recently implemented "Creative Platform" methodology). On the other hand, the assessment components do not always reflect the richness of study forms and methods, and are somewhat repetitive (usually interim tests, independent work, project). Second-year students participate in the organization of the Programme event REDI, which also contributes to their skills development. The students can gather additional perspectives and insights from guest lectures and international visiting teachers. Guest speakers participate in the lectures, though, during the session with students, they suggested that even more guest lecturers would be appreciated.

A VIKO's internal directive explains assessment principles and procedures. To further support the active participation of students during the whole semester, accumulative evaluation criteria are applied. Ongoing evaluation allows announcing the study results almost immediately after the final assignment is submitted. The correlation between the program aims, intended learning outcomes, curriculum design, and modules is presented. Professional internships are crucial components of professional education. This is well-reflected, and the

internships are evaluated from multiple perspectives (student, internship supervisor). The internship positions are carefully chosen to allow achieving the intended learning outcomes.

The meeting with students and alumni revealed that students appreciate the availability of teachers, their effort and openness. Students perceive assessment as fair and reflecting their performance.

The institution provides an overview of study program graduates who are employed and who continue in their studies. Professional study program graduates are expected to either initiate or continue (those who were already employed during their studies) their careers in business (~75 % of those who graduate are employed). Still, the graduates receive a standardized diploma accepted among other HEIs in Lithuania (or abroad). Less than 10 % of graduates continue in further studies, and there is a decline of such students between 2016 and 2017. Such a decline can be alarming and deserves further attention. The institution monitors the graduates' careers based on both – external and internal data.

The institution has a well-described study system that allows reaching the intended learning outcomes. A variety of study methods and assessment components are used. The final thesis – as a summative and long-term assignment – could be utilized more intensively when assessing the learning outcomes on the program level, as well as the professional internship(s).

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

The institution is aware of the specific needs of socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. VIKO offers financial support for those in a difficult family or financial situation. Moreover, students with special needs (visual, hearing, mobility, or other disabilities) can ask for adaptive and flexible forms of studies and assessment of learning outcomes (i.e., visual adjustments of provided materials, extended deadlines and assessment times, support of assistants, or sign language interpreters). Teachers working with students with special needs adapt their teaching and assessment methods, apply a personalized approach to help students achieve the learning outcomes. Furthermore, an individual plan can be developed for students with special needs or from specific groups.

The system of support for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs seems to be adequate. The institution evaluates the performance of students with special needs and vulnerable groups and projects the results in the study program, methods, assessment components, facilities, etc.

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 is monitored on four levels (teacher's, module's, program, faculty). This represents a complex framework for comprehensive monitoring and analysis, where various stakeholders may sound their voice. Monitoring periodicity reflects the level of the

analysis and echoes various facets and perspectives of the process as a whole. Students appreciate the openness and comprehensibility of the evaluation framework.

The institution has a complex system monitoring student study progress. Students receive adequate feedback on their study progress which promotes self-assessment. Such a monitoring system is sufficient to reach the intended outcomes.

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

Graduates' employability is monitored based on both - external (Lithuanian Government Strategic Analysis Center STRATA, Career Management Information System, and Employment Services) and internal (own surveys) data. The rate of employment oscillated around 90 % in the last few years. Moreover, a significant share of the graduates had high qualifications, according to STRATA data. Also, more than 50 % of the students were employed while studying.

VIKO maintains close contacts with alumni, employers, and social partners. External stakeholder groups are represented in various institutional bodies and panels and participate in the classes. Many events are being organized to stay in touch with alumni and to allow for experience sharing between students and various stakeholder groups. Though, the contacts are rather informal and depend on personal relationships. Some of the alumni indicated they have never received any survey nor have been contacted by the institution.

Graduates who pursue their careers in business are surveyed rather informally (a system of periodical alumni surveys seems to be in development, though). This is a great opportunity for further development, which would provide valuable insights and feedback on improving the study program according to the feedback from alumni.

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

The institution has formulated Code of Academic Ethics, which addresses academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. Moreover, each student signs a Declaration of Academic Integrity at the beginning of the studies. Each module syllabus defines acceptable and unacceptable use of tools and resources, and submitted works must be verified by the anti-plagiarism system. The Commission of Ethics is summoned when a submitted paper exceeds predefined similarity measures. Institutional bodies are established to inspect submitted cases, and the process is formally described by internal directives. Student representatives have the opportunity to monitor the examination process and formulate appeals. No major cases of violation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are reported during the analysed period. Reported minor cases were resolved "within the class", which is adequate.

Even if the previous reports have raised concerns about the institutional framework addressing academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, not much seems to be done since the last report: the Academic Council approved the code of ethics; students sign a

declaration of integrity when registering the thesis topic, other recommendations were “taken in consideration” by the institution. It seems that this area needs further attention.

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 submitted by students. The session with students confirmed that students are well-informed about the internal procedures and can respond to various situations (i.e., submit an appeal, report a case of academic dishonesty, apply for additional support). The procedures for submitting and examining appeals and complaints regarding the study process seem to be adequate and reflect common practice in academia.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is a system in place for supporting socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.
2. VIKO systematically monitors student study progress and gives feedback on evaluations.
3. Teaching staff is supportive, accessible to the students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There has not much happened since the last evaluation regarding the institutional framework addressing academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination.
2. Contact with alumni are rather informal and the intensity of cooperation varies a lot (depending on teacher/module/alumni).

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 number and necessary qualifications of teachers to realize the program and achieve the learning outcomes are determined by VIKO's administration. 51 teaching staff perform the program: 31 of them have a permanent position and work within Marketing study field modules (60,78 percent), 4 work within the field modules and work part-time at the same time working for other HEI, 7 teach in optional modules, and 9 staff members are teachers-practitioners (SER, pp. 28-29). The selection process considers the teachers' primary education and its accordance with the topics they will teach, their practical work experience, pedagogical title, and their academic degree. All Programme teachers must have a Master's

degree or equivalent higher education. Seven permanent full-time and two part-time teachers with a Ph.D. degree account for 29% of all the program teachers. Twenty-six teachers who belong to permanent staff have more than three years of practical work experience in the particular subject area, which is 83,9% and well above the criterion of more than half of teachers who must have more than three years of experience (SER, p. 29). Nine teachers-practitioners (29% of teachers in the program) use their know-how and practical professional skills to transfer the latest applied knowledge in the professional field to students (SER, p. 29). Teachers perform research activities to a certain extent. The current ratio between the number of the teaching staff of the Marketing field subjects and the number of students varies between 7,2 (in 2017/2018) and 9,3 (2019/2020) students for one field subject teacher. Staff turnover shows that teachers who resign from their own will or retire are replaced by younger, competent people with adequate scientific, didactic, and professional experiences (SER, pp. 29-30).

The composition and qualification of teaching staff are in line with the Statute of VIKO and Lithuanian legislation requirements. The staff has satisfactory academic education, professional background, and adequate pedagogical qualifications to produce the needed learning outcomes. As heard during the session with the teaching staff, besides being a formal requirement, the teacher certification process serves as a motivator for improving pedagogical, professional, and research competencies. It can be adjusted to the individual plans within the informal scheme (agreed by most teachers) of 60% of the time for teaching, 20% for research and 20% for self-improvement. However, the opinion of how complicated and difficult the process of formal promotion is, differs. The theoretical knowledge and practice experience of teachers shows a good balance. Teachers are engaged in different research activities – performing field research, publishing in scientific and professional journals, attending conferences; however, most of them are of national scope and character. The program maintains an acceptable ratio between the number of students and teaching staff of the marketing field subjects. The staff is stable, and turnover is at a low level. Teachers have affirmed they are satisfied with the university administration and formal feedback regarding their pedagogical and research needs, including personal problems. They have highlighted good informal communications and atmosphere, too. The expert committee positively values the encouragement of Faculty administration: a) to motivate teachers to enrol and finish Ph.D. studies b) engage Ph.D. students in marketing into a teaching process of marketing modules.

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

The institution encourages staff's academic mobility in order to enable sharing international experience, establishing new contacts, improving skills, and use best practices of the foreign partners. The information about activities are openly announced by the International Relations and Project Department, Erasmus coordinator, and Head of the Advertising and Communication Department. Eligible candidates are invited to apply according to the stipulated procedure. SER (pp. 30-31) shows that 10 Marketing field teachers (representing 29% of all marketing field teachers) went to foreign partner institutions in the academic year 2017–2018, 13 (46%) during the academic year 2018-2019. In 2019–2020 only one teacher

went abroad because of the suspended mobility caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. The number of incoming field subject teachers in the same period is smaller, accounting for 1, 5, and 4 in the respective academic years.

All teaching staff members have access to necessary information and transparent procedures regarding academic mobility. Although the number of teachers participating in the academic mobility increases every year, there is a disbalance between outgoing (24 in the analyzed period of the three academic years) and incoming teaching staff (10 in the same period). The mainframe for international mobility includes teaching abroad under the ERASMUS + program and International Teaching Week for incoming professors. The lectures delivered by visiting professors from abroad (for the analyzed period) show a good overall correlation with the Advertising Management program's relevant topics. During the meetings with the senior administration, the SER group, and the teaching staff, internationalization through academic mobility was put forth as a strategic goal.

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

The teaching staff has to improve their didactic, professional, and general competencies regularly. The institution provides the necessary environment and support for the improvement, which has to be, on an individual level, related to the modules taught. In the analyzed period of the three academic years, teachers attended 1090, 1135, and 950 hours of training related to different topics, which enabled their professional development (SER, p. 31). Professional development is encouraged through internships, conference attendance, projects activities, too.

The conditions for teachers' competencies improvement are satisfactory. Teachers develop individual plans of professional development. They are surveyed regularly about their needs for professional development. A special department within the institution arranges activities (courses, seminars, and other types of qualification enhancement) in line with the expressed needs. Activities may take place in Lithuania and abroad. As reported during the meeting with the teaching staff, they have financial support for publishing and attending conferences. Also, they are encouraged to form research teams where more experienced teachers collaborate with the less experienced to boost research competencies development.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The overall teaching staff's structure (scientific degrees, pedagogical and practical work experience in the analyzed period) is coherent with the number and content of subjects taught at the Advertising Management study program.
2. Teacher practitioners represent one of the program's strengths.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The research output of teaching staff is predominantly local and of limited scope. International focus is deficient.
2. The academic mobility is related to the small number of exchange programs – only ERASMUS +, and International Teaching Week. Although increasing, the number of incoming foreign visiting teachers is small compared to outgoing teaching staff (10 compared to 23 in the analyzed period).

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

VIKO provides an overview over facilities that indicate a big number and variety of classrooms is available for teaching the Marketing field programmes. All facilities are equipped with the necessary equipment - such as overhead projectors, wireless internet access and connected computers.

As the study field programme in question is Advertising Management, a creative workshop with relevant equipment is available for students to produce their creative work. According to the SER, the additional installation of 2 creative laboratories is in progress - which will provide additional opportunities for enhancement of students' creativity and will give the institution more alternative spaces for research and innovative idea generation practice.

Surveys conducted with students during 2019 and 2020 indicate that overall evaluation of physical resources (including physical facilities, special equipment, informational resources like library and learning material) remains on satisfactory levels. The same surveys indicated specific areas of attention - like limited ability to use special equipment for creative studies, and some limitations in access to relevant information and study material - that need to be adjusted while going forward.

VIKO took efforts to upgrade and digitalize learning tools and implement digital information sharing and learning management platform Moodle during 2019-2020. This provides opportunity for sharing of all study material online, and good information flow between the students and teaching staff, especially beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic situation when the study format has been changed into remote studies.

VIKO has a solid on-site library with relevant facilities, as well as access to a variety of online databases with relevant study material, available for both students and academic staff. Indications from the surveys with students (ref. SER report, survey results) show some shortages in literature supply and access, and teaching staff (during the meeting with the expert panel) indicated that especially relevant literature in Lithuanian language is in shortage. The teaching staff is compensating by finding alternative sources and formats of needed material through available youtube, podcast and alike open sources.

According to information provided by VIKO, the upgrades of physical facilities with digital conferencing rooms are in progress. A few classrooms are available for remote or hybrid teaching, but there is a need for more resources to upgrade the remaining classrooms in order to provide hybrid teaching (i.e. in class and online streaming) in the future. Currently, most studies are carried out as remote studies due to restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VIKO has good relations with the social and business partners, and a well functioning practical internships process. These practical internships are highly valued by the students and the institution can be acknowledged for having a well functioning process for the internships and external partners who are very engaged in those internships, providing a good and relevant link between the studies and practical experience in business. VIKO has special resources like media-lab for creative work in marketing, and two more creative workshop facilities are in the plans to be implemented.

Overall, from the available data provided and from the interviews with the staff, students and social partners, the expert group can conclude that physical, informational and financial resources available are adequate to the level needed for carrying out the field studies and ensure an effective learning process and desired outcomes.

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

Overall plan and budget for upgrade and maintenance of physical facilities is in place, and renovation of physical premises is in progress. Plan for supplying and upgrading relevant study material for the library is available, based on the yearly feedback from students and teaching staff.

Previous external evaluation report indicated some challenges with fraud/plagiarism regarding the student work - including some specific software and procedures. This has been addressed by installing special anti-plagiarism methods (ESAS, Electronic Identification System) and tools to secure tracking of student material. VIKO provided requested additional information to the evaluating committee, showcasing that anti-plagiarism tools have been successfully implemented and are functioning today.

The expert panel can conclude that the overall process for planning and upgrading of resources needed for the Marketing studies is sufficient and is functioning as satisfactory.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. VIKO applies a well functioning process for evaluating and upgrading of resources that include both students and staff.
2. Special media lab and 2 creative labs in development will increase capabilities for creative work of students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Computer hardware and software is rapidly dating-out, the demand is higher than the supply. Growing number of students require to consider more technology resources to equip all physical facilities for the hybrid-mode teaching (in class and streaming online).

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 recognises the existence of “Integrated Development Strategy” and the “Quality Manual” of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences. Both documents provide an eligible structure to measure and maintain a high level of internal quality management. The process seems adequate: collecting feedback from students and teachers, graduates, staff, then publishing the results in forms of newsletters, using social media platforms, and in general, looking for participation in various programs show a systematic and viable approach. The annual self-assessment ensures high quality by focusing on several areas of activity: management, studies and achievements, human resources, applied scientific research, material and financial resources, international relationships, participation in Lithuanian and international projects, qualification improvement and organization activity, as the SER states.

The expert committee admits the usage of surveys and the importance of the existing opportunity for engaging conversations. VIKO shows a good approach to quality management by stating “it is not about the number of students but what we can support in good quality” (quoted from online site-visit). The systematic approach can also be identified in consideration to changes in national legislation in study fields, institutional documentations related to quality assurance. The systematic improvement in the questionnaires sent to stakeholders to get feedback from social partners, students, mentors also strengthens the quality assurance. These approaches show eligible improvement at institutional level.

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 the SER, the internal quality management and decision-making system relies on a basis of various periodical data analysis results (self-assessments, inputs of all stakeholders, and surveys data) as well as immediately reacting to the ongoing processes within frequent meetings and quality assurance-oriented discussions. The expert committee admits the existence of the documents (Study Procedure, A Description of Study Results Evaluation Procedure, and Appeal Provisions) 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 VIKO's 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.

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 reports of the Qualification Committee evaluation of Graduation Thesis gives an opportunity to make necessary quality improvements. The findings of the periodical anonymous surveys are processed and applied adequately. The quality management processes were adopted during the pandemic situation.

The expert committee finds the collection and publication of information on studies good. The approaches at VIKO to share all findings clearly indicate their dedication to improve the quality of the Advertising Management 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

The opinion of the students is taken into account and managed through satisfaction surveys. In addition, the students emphasize the closeness of the teachers and their quick intervention to solve their problems. Expert committee considers the existence of a quality culture to be proven, since the university not only collects the satisfaction of its stakeholders, but also reports on the results thereof.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. VIKO is collecting and using periodical surveys and data analysis.
2. Various stakeholders (staff, students, alumni, social partners) are involved in quality management processes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The modular studies system could pose a threat for further quality improvement as the differences could lead to loss of marketing focus.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>The program needs to be given a complete and comprehensive framework in the integrated marketing communications field, of which advertising is only one specialized part.</p> <p>The offer of elective courses has to be revised and updated by introducing attractive courses in marketing disciplines for this study programme.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>Develop a motivation system to conduct more academic research.</p> <p>Balance the study content in terms of scientific and applied aspects.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>To continue promoting the outgoing number of the Erasmus + students and their internationalization activities.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Establish more formal contact with alumni and social partners. The system relies on informal contacts (depending on concrete teacher/module/alumni) which may affect the sustainability of the contacts in the future.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>Because the study programme specializes in advertising management, the teaching staff should strive to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) attend national and international conferences specialized in the field of integrated marketing communications; b) publish more in academic and professional journals related to marketing communications – advertising.
Learning facilities and resources	<p>Continue strong collaboration with business partners and utilize the strength of the well functioning internship programs.</p> <p>Continue to upgrade onsite facilities to make them available for hybrid/mixed format (in class and online) studies in order to accommodate growing number of the students.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<p>Strengthen the cooperation with social partners and alumni in terms of quality management.</p> <p>Support the cooperation of teachers in the teaching modules to improve study materials and methods.</p>

VI. SUMMARY

Professional Bachelor's degree programme Advertising Management is attractive to employers. Its graduates integrate quickly and efficiently into the labor market. Sustainability of the program has been achieved through relationships with companies (for students' internships, lecturing, nominating members of the committees for the evaluation, etc.) and involvement of the HEI into strategic partnerships on the local and regional levels. The collaboration with social partners and alumni is good and there is a strong emphasis on applied approaches (creativity and innovations). The very well functioning internship programme, closely linked to business and social partners, is highly valued by the students and appreciated by the partners. The overall teaching staff's structure (scientific degrees, pedagogical and practical work experience in the analyzed period) is coherent with the number and content of subjects taught. Teacher practitioners represent one of the program's strengths.

At the same time, the program lacks the Integrated Marketing Communications perspective, necessary to understand the role and importance of contemporary advertising. The offer of elective courses satisfies in number, but not in the content (too few marketing courses). Focusing only on applied approaches is an important area for improvement: missing the importance of academic approaches and their relevance could harm the further development of the study program. The modular studies system could pose a threat for further quality improvement as the differences could lead to loss of focus.

The enrollment numbers are growing from year to year. The information and resources available to the student make the university experience complete and satisfactory. There is a system in place for supporting socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. VIKO systematically monitors student study progress and gives feedback on evaluations. Teaching staff is supportive, accessible to the students. The school is collecting and using periodical surveys and data analysis.

On the other hand, there has not much happened since the last evaluation regarding the institutional framework addressing academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. It is recommended to promote students' internationalization activities, such as Erasmus+, as well as to offer to incoming students modules or subjects in English. The research output of teaching staff is predominantly local and of limited scope. International focus is deficient. The academic mobility is related to the small number of exchange programs.

As computer hardware and software is rapidly dating-out, the demand is higher than the supply. Growing number of the students require to consider more technology resources to equip all physical facilities for the hybrid-mode teaching (in class and streaming online).

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*