



***VILNIAUS TECHNOLOGIJŲ IR DIZAINO KOLEGIJOS  
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS***

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***INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF  
VILNIUS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGIES AND DESIGN***

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2023

***Report language – English***

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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Vilnius College of Technologies and Design.

*Iztok Palčič*



## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

Panel chairperson: Prof. Dr. Iztok Palčič

Review secretary: Ms. Rowena Pelik

Panel members (category):

Prof. Roode Liias (academic)

Prof. Alexander Milton (academic)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Linas Juknevičius (social partner)

Ms. Viktorija Valaitytė (student)

4. As a result of external review **Vilnius College of Technologies and Design** is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	3
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

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

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

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

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

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

6. **2** examples of good practice were found; **22** recommendations were made.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of **Vilnius College of Technologies and Design** (hereinafter referred to as VTDK or the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in May 2022 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 [Order No. V-1529](#) and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 [Order No V-32](#) (hereinafter – the Methodology).

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

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with 30 annexes. SKVC provided the Panel with additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; findings from ex-post study field reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; State-budget allocations for research activities; information on academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information, such as Minutes of the Academic Council and the Description of the procedure for the development of the pedagogical competences of lecturers.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the college 25-27 October 2022 where it had meetings with 78 internal and external stakeholders. Subsequently, the Panel met in-person and virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.

11. In line with the Procedure, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management, Quality Assurance, Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review held in 2014.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the

minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

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

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

15. The Panel received comments from VTDK and considered them. As a result changes were made to the report, for example, to confirm the study programmes offered at the College's different sites and add the relevant addresses.

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

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

The higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre.

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

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

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;
- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;
- to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

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

## 2.2. Background information about the institution

19. Vilnius College of Technology and Design traces its roots to 1954 but was established in its current form on 1 September 2008 when Vilnius Technical College was merged into Vilnius College of Construction and Design and the name changed to Vilnius College of Technology and Design. It is located across three sites in Vilnius. The College is a public legal body with autonomy, managed on the principles of self-government, academic freedom and respect for human rights combined with accountability to the public. Its activity is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, relevant laws and the Statutes of the College.

20. The College provides professional bachelor programmes and professional qualifications based on professional practice and applied research, experimental development and artistic activities together with lifelong learning. Its mission is to “train responsible professionals, members of a sustainable society in engineering and design; to make the results of scientific research and technological development accessible and useful to the general public and business”.

21. VTDK has three faculties: Civil Engineering, Design and Technical. A Vocational Training Unit was established in September 2020. As of 1 October 2021, the College had 1703 students, a total of 244 employees (232.30 full-time equivalent posts), including 147 lecturers (110.70 full-time equivalent posts). The numbers of students have decreased steadily and significantly over the last five years and staff numbers have consequently also decreased. In 2017 the College had 2771 students; this dropped each year to 2021, however, a 15% increase in enrolments was reported for the start of 2022. In terms of academic staffing, the number of lecturers decreased from 196 in 2017 to 147 in 2021 with the number of administrative staff decreasing from 26 to 18 over the same period.

22. VTDK offers 16 first cycle study programmes in 11 fields of study. Civil Engineering includes measurement engineering and business alongside civil engineering itself and offers eight study programmes; the Design Faculty covers design and media arts and offers four study programmes; and the Technical Faculty covers six fields of study (information systems, mechanical, energy, electrical, electronic and transport engineering) and provides eight study programmes. Declining student numbers, mergers and other structural changes continue to shape VTDK and its strategic plans with the details discussed in the body of this report.

23. At the time of the external evaluation a new Director had been in post less than three months. However, he had worked at VTDK prior to being appointed as its director, it was evident that he had undertaken due diligence in deciding to apply for the post and was fully familiar with relevant strategies and internal processes as well as the external context. He was in the process of making some revisions, including to the management structure and reporting.

## III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

### 3.1. Management

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

*1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:*

*1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;*

*1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;*

*1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.*

24. The Strategic Activity Plan for 2022-2024 is consistent with the mission of the College which is to train responsible specialists and members of a sustainable society in the fields of engineering and design and to make the results of scientific research and technological development accessible and useful to the general public and to business. It is consistent with the relevant legal acts and the provisions of strategic documents of the European Union and Lithuania – e. g. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the European Green Deal, the European Industrial Strategy, the State Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030”, the National Progress Plan for 2021-2030, and the programmes of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The College has mapped this plan against the 2020 Rome Communiqué of the European Higher Education Area and the relevant national strategies; this mapping confirms and assures alignment and demonstrates engagement with external drivers and contexts.

25. Over the review period, in the College three-year strategic activity plans have been prepared in line with longer-term integrated development orientations for the period 2011-2021. With the aim of making efficient use of resources and developing the quality of operations the preceding 2019-2021 Strategic Activity Plan covered activities in the following areas:

- Optimising the College's management structure.
- Improving operational processes.
- Developing the use of management information systems.
- Increasing the effectiveness of the motivation system for academic staff.
- Increasing the efficiency of the use of assets through a more optimal use of the College infrastructure.

26. Based on the discussions during the visit, it was clear that not all the targets of that Strategic Plan had been fully met since most planned activities are not linked to clear quantitative indicators or success criteria. Especially during the period under review no evidence presented suggested that changes in the management structure had improved either the effectiveness of that structure or the operational processes. The constant reduction of the number of the students has rather increased the inefficiency of using the premises and facilities available.

27. Based on long-term practice, the SER states, that the same strategic planning system has been in place at the College already for 10 years. This statement raises the essential question about the

possibility of the long-term stability of a planning process. Though there is the long list of essential national guideline documents that have been followed when compiling the three-year plans for the College, all these documents have been approved at different moments in time creating really dynamic environment to be considered when planning the activities for an institution.

28. Looking forward, the Strategic Plan of the College for 2022-2027 foresees the following four strategic directions to be followed:

- Studies focused on green and digital transformation.
- Life-long learning that meets current market needs.
- Applied scientific and artistic activities that meet the priorities of the Green Course and modern industry.
- Academic and social development conditions that meet the needs of students.

29. Accordingly, the strategic objectives for the forthcoming period clearly describes and corresponds to the current needs of the Lithuanian economy – training high-level specialists in the fields of engineering and design by providing qualifications based on the latest scientific knowledge and technological innovations. The new three-year strategic activity plan for 2022-2024 sets out and reflects these priorities.

30. However, the main obstacle to fulfil these strategic objectives is the decrease in academic staff in the College consequent on the steady decrease in the number of students. A reasonable reduction of the number of younger lectures was also evident. In the strategic documents of the College no vision or plan is articulated to tackle the core issue of sustainability of study programmes in the College, although there was such for lifelong learning activities.

31. The established planning process is initiated by the Director and takes place over about six months and is finalised through approval by the College Council (as set out in the Statute). Discussions during the review meetings indicated that there is no in-house planning manual available that identifies the roles of the participating in-house units and administrative bodies. Some more experienced administrative staff members were able to outline their understanding, or part in the process but it was evident that this was based on ‘custom and practice’ rather than a written holistic process. The process of planning, including the setting of measurable objectives, the monitoring and evaluation of implementation, is nowhere clearly defined and described.

32. The annual activity report for 2021, which is approved by the College Council, is detailed and extensive but descriptive and lacking evaluation. It was hard to find any analytical part to the activity report that identified what are the lessons learned, planned changes and what can be considered for the forthcoming periods. The reports also make it difficult for the College to identify the main strategic factors or to take timely action; key information can get lost in the detail.

33. A risk management practice and methodology have been recently introduced in the College. Firstly, potential risks were identified based on information from departments. In total about 80 risks were identified from that stage, from which then, using brainstorming, 20 major risks for the College were identified. An important element when implementing the risk management policy in longer run has been creation of risk map for the College for the forthcoming years.



34. The systems of strategic planning and risk management are currently not interrelated, though they should be handled jointly to improve the reliability and quality of long-term planning.

35. The Panel was of the opinion that the College has not been as successful when fulfilling the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan key activities as staff considered. This over-estimation of the success in implementing planned objectives could be indicative of differences in understanding across levels of management and the general staff of the performance indicators and/or the use of terminology that is unclear and not open to measurement (such as 'optimise'). Though the new 2022-2024 Strategic Activity Plan fully corresponds the needs of the Lithuanian economy, this document does not address the critical issues for the College related especially to the continuous decrease of the number of students and related to it critical decrease of academic staff.

*1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:*

*1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;*

*1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;*

*1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.*

36. The College reflects the legal requirements in its governance structure. The Statute sets out the roles of College Council, Academic Council and the Director. These management bodies are currently in place and are established according to The Law on Higher Education and Research and the Civil Code of Republic of Lithuania and other relevant legal acts. Management of the College is based on the principle of democracy.

37. According to the Statute (approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2020) the nine-member College Council includes representatives of stakeholders and the Council is governed by a representative of stakeholders. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level. The Council is the major management body for strategic matters in the College, ensuring its accountability to the public, its social responsibility and its rapid and effective response to environmental change.

38. This current institutional review by SKVC is being carried out at an important moment for the College given that the College Council started its five-year governance period at the end of August 2022 and the new Director took up his position about the same time. New members of the College Council met by the Panel demonstrated their enthusiasm and commitment to the College, acknowledging that for them the situation was new. The Council was fully aware that newly appointed members could not be familiar with the full background of decision-making practice so far; however, those entering their second term were able to provide the necessary historical context. The Panel members gained the understanding that on the top-level stakeholders are involved in decision-making appropriately.

39. The Academic Council is the governing body for the academic affairs of the College. It approves the quality of scientific, artistic activities and studies through the internal quality assurance system. The Academic Council has 11 members including three students representatives. The Head of Academic Council is College Deputy Director. Evidence

demonstrated that the Academic Council is very active, it meets between 10 to 15 times per year. Its main activities are publicly available on College Website.

40. Students are members of College Council and Academic Council, and, as such, are formally included in the management processes of the College. Student representatives from Academic Council expressed satisfaction with how they are included in decision-making and indicated that the College listens to students' views and needs. In general, unfortunately, student motivation for participating in Student Union is limited, with around 20 students actively involved. It was evident that this makes it hard for the Student Union to represent and work on behalf of all students or agree priorities when it works together with the College to enhance the student experience. The Student Union does receive some modest funding to support it in organising events.

41. The new Director shared a draft of his proposed new management structure with the Panel. While yet to be finalised and approved the Panel noted that the Director had identified the need to review the management structure and was taking early, rapid action. It had been evident to the Panel that the structure included with the SER for the evaluation was far from an optimal solution for the College. As the three-year Strategic plan 2019-2021 included optimisation of the organisation structure, structural changes had been carried out in 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, with his cascade of changes concentrated power in the person of the Director with a large number of direct reports. The Panel would support the draft proposals to move to a more balanced distribution of responsibilities.

42. Effective optimisation requires clear vision and criteria (measurable key performance indicators) to be defined in the strategic documents and to be monitored effectively, but also statements about the targets to be reached are required. However, both criteria for optimising and reasoning of changes are missing in the documents prepared for evaluation. Rather, it become clear, for example, that most of the structural changes have been initiated by the external forces and have not been a part of the strategic vision of the College for the reviewed period.

43. During the meetings it was evident to the Panel that the top management is facing a complex challenge. As both the Director and the Chair of the College Council had been elected to their posts recently, and after the preparation of the strategic plan and activity plan for the forthcoming period, they would necessarily, certainly initially, have to accept these strategic documents. As new actors, they will need a reasonable time to initiate necessary amendments and changes tailored by their ideas and thinking. The Deputy Director will play an important role in supporting the Director in this transition to new leadership, given her extensive and detailed knowledge of the College and its decision-making over time and continuing key role Chairing Academic Council.

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

*1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;*

*1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.*

44. Data on the activities of the College are systematically collected and used for planning, analysis, control and decision-making; the staff of the responsible structural units collect information on activities into internal and external information systems. Graduate career monitoring is organised and carried out by a specialist from the Study and Career Centre. Career monitoring of graduates at the College is carried out by analysing quantitative and qualitative data on graduates' careers.

45. These surveys are conducted in accordance with the approved Description of the Procedure for the Organisation of Feedback for the Improvement of the Quality of Studies, which regulates the procedures, ways and means of organising surveys in the internal quality assurance system of studies at the College.

46. All the data collected on graduate employability is systematised and shared with the study programme committees for further data analysis. After analysing the quantitative and qualitative data, the study programme committees organise meetings, discussions with employers and graduates to discuss the challenges of the labour market, graduates' preparedness and integration in the labour market, as well as the necessary competences. Possible solutions for the improvement of the study programmes in the field of study are discussed.

47. Based on the feedback information about the graduate employability the College's Annual Performance Report is compiled. The Report is presented on the community meeting for further discussion and finally the document is approved by the College Council. According to SER the Annual Report should include the recommendations for further activities, the challenges and the directions for further performance.

48. Very high employability statistics (even up to 97-98 % in 2021) are provided in the "Activity Report of the College Year 2021" however, there is no evidence how this performance level is assessed by the College authorities. Good examples of acting on information from feedback about the employability for the improvement of the studies and of performance of the College was not evident. Keeping in mind the future outlook of studies, especially with the constant decrease of the number of academic staff and ageing profile, such an assessment is important.

49. At the same time the document management in the College needs improvement. It was evident that, when studying the package of SER documents, some of the numeric facts in the main text of SER differ from these that are provided in the different Annexes (as the original documents) and there are some mismatches in data provided in the different Annexes. Accurate data is of crucial importance for the College, underling decision-making and effective strategic planning.

50. The College Activity Reports are compiled annually and approved by the College Council. Similar reports are available at faculty level. The content of these reports is presented for the community at meetings and the reports are published on the College website.

51. The Panel members are confident that appropriate reports and documents are regularly compiled and published by the College this information is publicly available on the its website and

is promoted via social media (further information is provided in paragraph 124). At the same time more, harmonisation between these activity reports (and the system to assure this) and also more self-assessment or analysis should be provided.

#### *1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:*

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

*1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*

*1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*

*1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*

*1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

52. Personnel management at the College is regulated by the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Statute of the College, decisions of the College Council, orders of the Director of the College, as well as by other legal acts. Procedures for recruitment, management and evaluation of staff are also laid down in internal legal acts, which are publicly available on the website of the College.

53. The Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 has set out the strategic direction of the College “to mobilise highly competent human resources”. This objective was important as, at the same time (in fact since 2017), the number of administrative staff has decreased by 31% and the number of teaching/academic staff by 25% (reflecting the decline in student enrolments).

54. During the same period there has been a reasonable change in the structure of the academic staff of the College. The share of lectures in the age up to 30 years has fallen to only 4% and the share of older staff (more than 60 years of age) has constantly increased and had reached 25% by 2021. However, amongst the administrative staff the younger generation is under-represented.

55. At the same time the professional quality of the academic staff is fully followed – all lecturers have the necessary education and qualifications to meet legal requirements. By the year 2021 the share of PhD holders and recognised artists had increased up to 28% of the total number of lecturers. Accordingly, this number exceeds the minimum requirement that not less than 10% of the first cycle of college level subjects of study must be taught by scientists or recognised artists. As qualification development of the lecturers is an integral part of their academic career special attention is paid to systematic professional training and development of professional and pedagogical competences. Professional competence of the technical staff in labs is also ensured (see also para. 98).

56. The planning of the academic staff is directly related to the ongoing and planned study programmes and to their renewal. Therefore, the need for academic staff capable of ensuring the quality of the study process is forecasted each time the study programme package is renewed. In order to ensure the quality of studies, each academic year on average about 20-30% of lecturers

are recruited directly from business enterprises for a one-year period; a significant proportion work both in the College and industry (see also para. 117).

57. To implement the directions set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-2021, a clear task was set up for the “Establishment of a system for the improvement of teachers’ competences.” The following measures have been used:

- implementation of a system of motivation of teachers oriented towards results and quality assurance and professional development of employees;
- establishment of a system for the improvement of pedagogical competences of the lecturers;
- establishment of a system for the development of internship in advanced companies by the lecturers.

58. The College has an established and periodically updated system for the selection and evaluation of teaching staff. The procedure for organising public competitions for the position of a lecturer and the minimum qualification requirements for applicants for the position of a lecturer shall be determined and the winners of the public competition shall be appointed to the position of a lecturer in accordance with the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the Statute of the College, the Description of the Procedure for the Certification of VTDK Lecturers and for the Organisation of Public Competitions for Positions, as well as with other legal acts.

59. Evaluation of the academic performance of lecturers at the faculties is organised in accordance with the procedure set out in the relevant procedures for the evaluation at VTDK. Lecturers report annually at departmental meetings on their academic performance by submitting a performance evaluation questionnaire. There is the data to evaluate staff member’s applied scientific, artistic, methodological, organisational activities, contribution of the lecturer to the study process and its quality assurance. Generally, the lecturer’s productivity and significance of activities in achieving the strategic goals and objectives is evaluated.

60. Certification of lecturers is performed every five years in accordance with the Qualification Requirements for the Posts of Lecturers of VTDK and the Requirements for Certification during the Term of Office. Certification of lecturers is carried out in the context of a five-year evaluation of the academic performance of lecturers at the faculties.

61. Financial incentives for academic staff at the College are defined in the Description of the conditions of staff remuneration. This document regulates the activities for which staff members may be rewarded with increments, bonuses, one-off payments or other benefits.

62. There is the clear and legally sound system for staffing in the College, both for academic and administrative staff (see also para. 99). Performance of academic staff is regularly assessed following the necessary legal procedures to assure relevant fair competition starting from the departments and ending up in the Faculty Council when approving the results. Staff training for technicians is available. Access to specialist equipment is a key perk for teaching staff - helping enable and support staff research and artistic outputs.

63. The Strategic Plan for the forthcoming period 2022-2024 does not detail a strategy for staffing and relevant measures to stabilise the staff. There are no plans in that strategy for developing the

competences, beyond targets for improved digital skills, of staff and no longer view for the achievement of increased internationalisation as part of developing staff.

64. Academic and non-academic staff are encouraged to contribute to the strategic objectives of the College. Academic and non-academic staff are involved in the governance and decision-making of the College: they are involved in the process of developing strategic plans, working groups, commissions and committees, as appropriate. Academic staff representatives are also nominated and elected to the College, Academic and Faculty Councils, and both academic and non-academic staff are elected to the Labour Council.

65. During the meetings and discussions with the Panel members the representatives of the academic staff described the democratic system of proposing and electing the candidates to different management bodies in the College. The members of the Panel are convinced that staff management system in the College is on place and the members of the academic staff have the equal and legally guaranteed possibilities to be elected on jobs and to become the members of the elected bodies.

66. The Panel members are convinced that the existing academic staff of the College is motivated, and they are constantly developing their qualification and competences. However, at the same time the constant trend of decreasing student numbers has caused the relevant decrease of the number of the lecturers in the College. Within this, the share of younger staff members has fallen considerably – this is the threat to the continuity of academic studies in the College. Though during the forthcoming years, the number of enrolled students may turn to increase, the Panel could not see any strategies to overcome these staffing challenges.

#### *1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:*

*1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;*

*1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*

*1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*

*1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

67. The financial resources of the College are planned in the context of the three-year strategic plan and the annual budget is approved by the College Council. The budget is established for one calendar year and the revenue of the budget consists of:

- State budget appropriations for the core activities of the College;
- targeted State budget funds;
- revenue contribution funds;
- delegated funds.

68. Funds for research and experimental development, as well as artistic activities, are allocated to the College in accordance with the results of the annual evaluation of research and experimental development and artistic activities by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic

of Lithuania. Approximately 70 % of the budget is made up of State budget appropriations, the rest is the income from services provided by the academic staff of the College.

69. The College has a research fund to support the development of research activities by the academic staff in accordance with the strategic plan. The funding of the Research Fund is intended to encourage the lecturers to carry out applied research and experimental development projects in accordance with the directions of priority research approved by the Academic Council.

70. The annual estimates of expenditures of the College are based on the lists of posts approved by the Director, the workload summary of the teaching staff, the annual summary of the planned procurement plan, the regulations on the awarding of scholarships and other support to students. The approved annual budget of the College may be adjusted on the initiative of both the administration and the departments by reallocating funds between budget lines.

71. The Panel is confident that the College has reliable financial management system in place. The existing system meets the needs of the College and is adjusted appropriately, keeping in mind the regular but limited state funding, the rather stable funds earned by the College and the other revenues mainly from different foundations and organisations.

72. The managed premises generally meet the current needs of the College, and the overall impressions of facilities are largely positive. Buildings have been recently renovated. Though, according to SER the College infrastructure is insufficiently suited for the students and the staff with special needs. Still, reasonable amount of necessary works for accessibility has already been performed in the premises. During the evaluation period, the College has tried to adapt the premises according to the reducing number of students, and the number of study programmes provided. The area used for studies has been constantly reduced during the recent years; in 2021 the average space per college student and vocational department pupil has increased about up to 15 sq. meters.

73. When visiting the labs and facilities of the College the technical facilities meet expected standards. Health and safety procedures are there and also instructions are in place. Technicians seem very positive and trained to fulfil their obligations. Evening access to lab equipment possible, if requested. Some facilities also used by the industry during fallow time creating additional income for the College and building connections with social partners.

74. The Panel members have the general opinion that built environment of the College is clean and relatively recently renovated. There are relevant premises available both for the staff and for the students. In the current circumstances in relation to the rapid increase of energy prices the indoor climate in the premises still require reasonable updating. Spaces provided for the academic purposes appear under-utilised by the students during the working hours, traditional workshop spaces for the students are modest. There are quite large circulating spaces in the buildings of the College which can be better used for students and for academic, artistic and the social activities. In the classrooms there is the hardware available for the students to be used for online digital studies. Several software solutions were listed as available for academic purposes, but during the visit to these premises most of these facilities were idle.

75. **In Summary**, the College has completed its 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, although, the Panel is of the opinion that several of the major strategic management related aims had not been fulfilled.



The new Director and the College Council will be implementing the 2022-2024 Strategic Activity Plan; however, the Panel did not consider that its goals sufficiently address the current critical issues for the College. The long-term continuous trend of decreasing the number of students has been paralleled by a decrease of academic staff. Currently there is not any clear vision and approach proposed by the management to address this situation in order to ensure the sustainability of the academic studies in the College.

The formal procedures of staff and financial management in the College are clearly, legally and fairly followed. There is a system of information management, accordingly routine planning and reporting documents are compiled and published. Still more careful harmonising of the different documents is required, also required analytical assessments to the statistical data together with follow-up activities. The facilities management service is in place there and the overall impression of the facilities is positive. However, in the situation of limited resources and increasing energy prices a proactive action plan will be required to reasonably increase the efficiency of using the built environment and relevant spaces.

76. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given two points.

77. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The College should review its approach to ensure that it is able to be proactive in meeting changing technological, societal and environmental drivers to create and maintain an attractive offer for perspective students.
- In order to ensure delivery of its strategic plan the College should develop a clear, readily understood set of performance indicators and measures of success, making appropriate use of milestones and ensuring that all objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound.
- The College should support its established approach to strategic planning and risk management with a manual that details the planning and risk management processes, sets out responsibilities and the approach to linked communication.
- In completing the planned revision of the organisational structure, the College is encouraged to ensure that responsibilities are balanced and spread across the senior management team.
- The College is strongly advised to develop a clear strategy for staffing to:
  - a. ensure that the academic staff profile can be adapted effectively to meet rapidly changing societal and professional needs and thus to ensure the sustainability of a responsive programme portfolio;
  - b. ensure flexible, efficient and effective administrative management that proactively supports changing needs in College structures, processes, manuals, data collection and usage.



- The College should take a more evaluative, analytical and focused approach across its strategic, planning and reporting documents.
- The College is encouraged to make fuller use of its good and contemporary study and research facilities, for the benefit of its students, the professional communities that it serves, in promoting and marketing itself and to increase its visibility and impact.

## 3.2. Quality Assurance

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

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

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

78. VTDK has approved and made publicly available formal internal quality assurance documents, such as its Quality Manual, and meets ESG standards by publishing information about its activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

79. The Quality Manual informs students, staff and social partners about the internal quality management system of studies at the College. The Quality Manual consists of four sections for the implementation of the internal quality management system:

- The College's Quality Assurance Policy.
- The Quality Management System.
- The subjects of the College's internal quality assurance system for studies and their functions.
- Compliance with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area in the College's internal quality management system.

This information is available in Lithuanian on the College website, while the SER (including material in its annexes) further outlined the College's quality assurance work to the Panel.

80. All study programmes are subject to a formal institutional approval process which is set out within VTDK's Quality Manual and are well understood. The College adheres to the ESG by ensuring that its study programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes. Programmes are designed through a process involving students and other stakeholders. The College seeks to facilitate smooth student progression, through the monitoring of formative and summative assessments and progression rates; and it defines student workloads clearly linked to ECTS.

81. The College assures the quality of scientific, artistic activities and studies through an internal quality assurance system approved by the Academic Council. The Head of the Quality and Document Management Office is responsible for the development, review, updating and publication of the Quality Manual. The Academic Council of the College supervises the implementation of the provisions of the Quality Manual and the updating of the documents regulating studies.

82. VTDK do use external expertise and reference points in the form of the participation of externals in examinations and of industry advisors in the quality assurance of their programmes, but the Panel noted a lack of a systematic and comprehensive external sectoral and international benchmarking process which would assist both in moving from a model of quality assurance to one of quality enhancement and help better align institutional practices with wider norms.

83. With regard to student-centred learning, teaching and assessment VTDK meet the ESG by seeking to ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. This was evidenced through the positive feedback from students garnered through the Panel's sessions with students and graduates. The Panel noted during discussions with academic staff that they seek to encourage a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the academic and technical staff.

84. The College's study programmes use a variety of pedagogical methods which are monitored through the annual programme review processes. In responding to the challenges of Covid the College adjusted the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods employed, as well as evaluating their effectiveness through student surveys and other forms of analysis through the use of informal and formal feedback. The College respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths, and considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate at a modular and programme level.

85. VTDK state in their SER that student and alumni participation in the survey questionnaires is decreasing, which reduces the sample of participants and the quality of the feedback provided. In order to involve the students at the College in the process of improving the quality of studies, the College is looking for other ways to do so such as roundtable discussions with student groups, systematic communication between the College administration and the members of the College's student representation, the President, and faculty with students and graduates.

86. The Panel suggests that the College should seek to build upon this and diversify its data collection, move away from the over reliance on surveys and expand the number of student representatives, as well considering the use of module fora and other student feedback methods. The Panel's discussions with students revealed a frustration that module and programme surveys were perceived to be optional and varied in format and frequency across their studies. The Panel noted that there is a reliance on faculties and study programmes teams, using 'local' surveys to drive quality enhancement activities, and would propose that procedures could be standardised across the College, as well as enhanced through the sharing of best practice.

87. Developing a comprehensive and diverse approach to gathering data is an essential tool for assisting quality assurance and ongoing enhancement, and VTDK should consider adopting examples of best sectoral practice in fostering effective feedback systems and communication between staff, students and stakeholders.

88. Assessment at VTDK adheres to the ESG by ensuring the criteria for, and method of, assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance. VTDK apply pre-defined and published regulations covering different phases of the student "life cycle" such as student admission, progression, recognition and certification. The Panel noted that there is a formal procedure for students appeals in place and the College has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

89. VTDK collect a range of relevant information to help with the management of their programmes and other activities, but the Panel noted that the systematic analysis and benchmarking of this data (qualitative and quantitative) could be enhanced by comparing modules and study programmes within and across faculties, and with sectoral norms and best practices nationally and internationally. This would help ensure a more effective and proactive management process that identified disparities of practice and avoid overly insular approaches to curriculum or pedagogical delivery that are not informed by internal or external best practice.

90. VTDK has a series of internal quality assurance measures in place including a comprehensive Quality Manual linked to College strategic plans and developments, and a quality assurance process that moves from College, to faculty, department through to study programme committees, supported by the Head of the Quality and Document Management Service, who, together with the Faculties, prepares the summaries of self-evaluations of the study fields, and organises, together with the Faculties, the conduct of surveys on the quality of studies.

91. Students met by the Panel were positive about the responsiveness and availability of lecturers but noted that modes of communication between tutors and students varied across the College, with an over reliance on informal and oral communication. This meant that communication could be unreliable or depend on being in class; students also voiced a frustration that timetables could be announced very late, too close to the start of terms, causing them significant planning and scheduling challenges.

92. Overall, the Panel found a number of shortcomings focused on internal communications and the lack of a 'feedback loop', where students and staff would be informed of institutional decision making and improvements that resulted from their comments and survey submissions in a timely manner.

93. The mode of communication outlined in the SER and confirmed in sessions with students and staff appears to be largely 'cascade' based and oral, with information trickling down from senior management to teaching staff and then to students. The Panel noted that the College could benefit from further encouraging and fostering 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' discussions, ensuring an upward recirculation of experience that informs management of the day-to-day activity in the classrooms and workshops.

94. The Panel also noted that students and staff didn't receive formal training and documentation explaining their role in quality assurance and enhancement processes. This undermines the Colleges stated ambition to deliver 'student centred' learning, and also opens up routes for misunderstanding when what is heard in an oral system is not what was intended.

95. The meeting the Panel had with social partners revealed that key stakeholders were hugely supportive of the institution, and that they played an active role in study programme committees. The Panel noted that the institution could build upon these relationships and take a more proactive approach to involving social partners in the development, delivery and enhancement of teaching, learning and research.

96. The Panel found considerable evidence of VTDK ensuring that it offers effective support for students and their learning in terms of resources, such as: access to appropriate technical facilities (studios, workshops and laboratories), access to library services, access to appropriate software and specialist equipment, along with effective support to use these services. Systems are in place to enable students to access a diverse range of appropriate support (information, orientation, academic support, psychological support, support for students with disabilities, financial support, social support).

97. Students and graduates, who participated in meetings with the Panel, demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the support received from VTDK. The Panel is convinced that the systems that ensure student support at the College are appropriate.

98. The Panel noted that the current model of students' representatives on study programme committees sees a single student sit on a committee for the length of their study. This precludes any handover of knowledge and experience between student representatives and doesn't align with best international practice where students are seen as equal partners, engaged individually and collectively in the development and enhancement of their educational experience.

99. VTDK currently has systems to offer support for staff undertaking research, and in particular staff wishing to study for a Ph.D. Following sessions with staff and management, the Panel noted that staff inductions into the College were overly reliant on oral briefings by Heads of Faculty, and as such VTDK should consider introducing formal documentation and training when onboarding staff.

100. Discussions with administrative and technical staff during the site visit and review of facilities confirmed that the College has systems in place to provide opportunities for staff development and training to non-academic staff.

101. The Panel noted that appropriate provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal, and ethics are laid out within the Quality Manual and associated documentation. VTDK have made significant strides in providing accessible facilities for those

with physical disabilities, and the Panel noted that all outstanding campus improvements and required redevelopment is scheduled for this academic year. The SER provided data demonstrating the gender balance of staff and students, which varies across its study programmes and departments. The College has appropriate policies for gender equality, and staff spoke to the need to ensure a balanced and diverse student and staff community.

102. The Panel found evidence that the VTDK had used its last external review to improve its Quality Assurance, systems and processes. However, it was clear to the Panel that the proactive adoption of data analysis, along with sectoral and international benchmarking would help embed a culture of continuous quality assurance and enhancement and provide a platform to build upon this external review process.

103. **In Summary**, based on the evidence given in the SER and its annexes, information provided by the SKVC and the site visit, the Panel found VTDK to have a robust approach to quality assurance.

However, while the Panel found that the VTDK collects material linked to quality assurance processes at a college level, the Panel noted that within the faculties and departments there was an inconsistent range of approaches taken to gathering feedback and data, and a lack of strategic sectoral and disciplinary benchmarking at all levels.

The SER and Annex 14 outlines the Quality Assurance (QA) structures within the College, which can be characterised as being largely focused within faculty formal procedures and informal practices, with little opportunities for staff to comment or act as ‘critical friends’ to colleagues within other faculties. The Panel noted that best practice was not systematically shared across these distinct ‘silos’, and as such opportunities for college wide quality enhancement were not being fully exploited.

A number of QA processes, such as staff inductions, are overly reliant on informal practices and verbal briefings rather than systematic structures, and this risks inconsistencies in approaches across programmes of study. Centralised formal inductions for new staff, as well as forms of a form of continuous professional development, such as staff formally sharing and critiquing best practices across the College, alongside the current annual programme review procedures would help ensure staff are familiar with testing and examination methods and receive support in the ongoing development of their own skills in this field, fully meeting ESG for assessment and QA.

During the on-site visit students expressed a desire for a more consistent use of module surveys, and staff acknowledged the need for more formal College systems to facilitate this.

104. **Judgment:** The area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given three points.

105. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The College should build on its established approach to quality assurance to develop an institutional culture of quality enhancement, informed by sectoral and disciplinary benchmarking.

- The College should develop a robust, reliable, transparent and monitored model for sharing best practice within and between faculties.
- The College should formalise its approach to unit and programme surveys as part of a fully aligned and consistent quality assurance and enhancement system that links activity at unit, programme, departmental, faculty and institutional levels.
- The College should consider expanding the involvement of students in formal quality processes by having a student representative from each year of study (year 1, 2 and 3) in all programme committees.
- The College should ensure that the ‘feedback loop’ is closed to ensure that all students and staff can reliably see how the organisation listens, learns and improves; a ‘you said, we did’ model could form part of the approach.
- The College should establish a systematic approach to ensure that students and staff receive formal training and documentation explaining their role in quality assurance and enhancement processes, such as student and staff handbooks, formal induction processes for staff, and the sharing of best practice across the institution.

### 3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

*Studies and Research (Art)* area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

*3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:*

*3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;*

*3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*

*3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*

*3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

106. VTDK’s vision to be “your partner in the development of a sustainable society” is supported by eleven fields of study: Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Civil Engineering, Transport Engineering, Energy and Thermal Engineering, Information Systems Engineering, Materials Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Measurement Engineering, Management, Economics and Art history, across which 16 undergraduate study programmes are offered: four study programmes in two fields of study (Design; Media arts) at the Design Faculty, four study programmes in three fields of study (Civil Engineering; Measurement Engineering; Business) at the Civil Engineering Faculty, eight study programmes in six fields of study (Information Systems Engineering,

Mechanical Engineering, Energy Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Transport Engineering) at the Technical Faculty.

107. The greatest competitive advantage of VTDK in regard to other Colleges is the offer of some unique study programmes in Lithuania (e. g. from the field of Transport Engineering) and the synergy between engineering, design and business studies. In the view of the Panel, the latter is not fully exploiting the opportunities and potential of the subject mix as the cooperation among faculties, few are indicated in the SER or given as examples in meetings, and especially in joint study programmes and student projects offers more possibilities for interdisciplinary activities than are currently being exploited.

108. In the last few years VTDK withdrew three study programmes where interest of potential students fell under the minimum required number of applicants. On the other hand, they opened up a new study programme in Renewable Energy Engineering. Over the last few years all existing study programmes have been renewed with more focus on digital knowledge and competencies and to some extent on sustainability and sustainable development goals.

109. The strategic planning of study field at VTDK is currently challenged, due to both recent changes in management and an established reactive culture. The College did not provide a clear picture on what additional study fields / programmes it will focus on the future in its strategic plans, in the SER or in meetings. There are some discussions about additional study programmes that combine arts and engineering, e.g.: an industrial design study programme. Regarding changes in global industry in terms of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 concepts, VTDK is mostly reacting to national economic policies and requirements, rather than pro-actively engage in strategic planning of study fields.

110. Since VTDK is a college of applied sciences it is vital that it focuses on assessing the needs of the local and regional business environment. Based on the observations of the Panel, the evidence provided through documentation and triangulation by discussion with the College's staff and stakeholders, the Panel was convinced of VTDK's good communication and relationship with many companies in the region. The College also has good oversight of the business environment needs and they include them in existing study programmes. Social partners propose new ideas for study content. What is missing is more a pro-active role by VTDK, as the Panel observed that social partners were more active and eager to propose new ideas as VTDK itself.

111. VTDK educates graduates that are important for the local and regional economy, and the social partners speak very positively of VTDK graduates. Unfortunately, the number of graduates is in a decline (43% fewer graduates in 2021 compared to 2017). The main reason for the shortfall of graduates lately is a decline in the number of students entering the College, which is partly a consequence of demographic trends and changed admission requirements in Lithuania (which set a minimum competition score of 4.3 for state-funded study places). The Panel considered that more could be done to increase recruitment by way of a more structured approach towards marketing and promotion of the College. The Panel did not observe any particular strategy or activities at VTDK how to improve its retention of students given that another reason for the reduced number of graduates is the quite high dropout rate of students, mostly in the first year of studies. VTDK offers additional counselling for students for two specific subjects (physics and mathematics), but other supporting activities are missing (e.g.: motivational activities, greater inclusion of student

representatives and work to foster student engagement, motivating companies to offer scholarships etc.).

112. VTDK graduates are welcomed in local and regional industry, the majority of graduates are employed within the first year after graduation, which was supported also in the meeting with graduates. According to VTDK management the College sends survey to their graduates within 12 months after graduation, although discussion with graduates showed that graduates do not remember any such survey. Nevertheless, graduates are satisfied with the knowledge they obtained at VTDK, many of them are still in contact with the College (presentation of their companies, offering practical training for students, participation in a career fair) and are keen to maintain a positive relationship.

113. Students and graduates of VTDK are very satisfied with their experience in studying at VTDK. They mostly point out the practical orientation of the study process with possibilities to participate in different student projects (e.g.: to work on the hybrid car). Graduates stressed that VTDK is locally and regionally known for the practical orientation of its study programmes. Representatives from companies / social partners also praised the study process at VTDK. Graduates do not need to come back for development as they are effectively equipped with the skills and attitude to continue to upskill as independent professionals – which is a testament to how the College has developed strong ‘soft’ skills alongside subject-specific skills.

114. VTDK’s SER often makes reference to student-centred learning/studies, however, teachers mostly described this as indicating an emphasis on a practical approach in the study process, the inclusion of students in decision making, access to infrastructure, supporting activities etc. With the exception of practical work in the study process, other activities are not characteristics of student-centred learning. No real innovative teaching methods or student-centred learning activities were mentioned by teachers. The Panel found little evidence of the engagement by teaching staff with debates in pedagogy or of the understanding of more leading-edge notions of student-centred learning. This was especially true in engineering studies where the evidence of contemporary, innovative teaching was limited. Arts and Design studies offered more possibilities for unique and exciting teaching methods, which was confirmed by teachers, students and graduates.

115. A Vocational Training Unit was established in September 2020 with the Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School. The unit merged into the College to provide vocational training programmes in four educational areas (Engineering and Engineering Professions, Information and Communication Technologies, Transport Services, as well as Business and Administration). VTDK needs to design and implement a new strategy for this unit and assess the benefits of the unit’s mission and quality of input students. In a way unit’s training programmes are in competition with College’s primary educational mission within the study programmes of its three faculties.

116. Applied scientific and artistic activities at VTDK consists of applied research, experimental development and the arts in the following eleven fields of scientific activity: Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Civil Engineering, Transport Engineering, Energy and Thermal Engineering, Information Systems Engineering, Materials Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Measurement Engineering, Management, Economics, and Art History.



117. The scope and quality of the research work at VTDK is partly hindered by the fact that the funding of research activities in colleges of applied sciences is significantly lower than in “classical” education-research universities. Nevertheless, as stated in SER, VTDK scientific work in terms of total points in 2020 is fourth among Lithuanian Colleges, but when the points are calculated per teacher, VTDK performance is slightly below Lithuanian Colleges average. Besides that, the data for 2021 shows a decrease in number of specific publications and in works of art. The R&D funding from government depends on published research results as well as demand-related R&D services, the provision of additional competences, seminars, etc. The yearly number of papers in the JCR in Clarivate Analytics Web of Science is rather small - between two and four. VTDK has its own journal, titled Technology and Art. Research and Topicalities. The journal presents scientific and professional research work of VTDK teachers and researchers, as well as other authors. The journal is so far not indexed in the most prestigious databases. Over the period 2015-2021 VTDK organised several national conferences and, one international conference Technological Innovation for a Sustainable Society to present the results of scientific and applied research.

118. The quantity and quality of scientific research has the potential to be improved and should be. One of the reasons for poorer results might be the fact that, for nearly 40% of the teaching staff, VTDK is their secondary employer. It is vital to retain a sufficient base of more full-time employed teachers and researchers and to support research activities more systematically as well as to establish ways to support staff who are actively involved in industry to convert that involvement into research output, an approach which could turn VTDK’s staff mix into a positive and also embed up to date practice into the curriculum.

119. Although the focus is on commissioned applied research activities for mostly domestic companies the generated income in the last five years is rather low: around 380.000 EUR. In 2021 the income from applied research activities for companies increased, but it is still quite low judging on the College size and potential. Applied research activities with companies are important as they bring valuable input in the study process, where teachers can provide practical experience to students in taught sessions and present real challenges.

120. The Panel requested clarification on the mode of evaluating the artistic research conducted by their design faculty staff, and a detailed breakdown was provided. The Panel considered that the quality and audit processes of design research activities and outputs would improve through the adoption of regular benchmarking against internationally recognised criteria and standards for artistic research.

121. Study programmes consist of theoretical and practical lectures. One of the most important VTDK goals is to develop the practical skills of students. Students and graduates were very positive about the extent of the practical work in study programmes. Examples were given of teachers including students in projects (such as Science Shop projects and hybrid car development), although only a limited number of students are involved. The majority of courses includes seminar work that is also based on practical / applied research work. According to teachers, they have the opportunity and freedom to upgrade their courses with up to 20% of new content (bigger changes require official procedures to take place). This allows teacher to bring into the study process up-to-date knowledge from their research work and from practice, if they are employed in companies or other

organisations. The SER makes reference to the fact that the results of research are integrated into study programmes to improve their content.

122. Students have opportunities to work on real practical projects and initiatives from companies and other organisations (e.g.: Science Shops projects). Graduate theses are also based on real challenges identified in cooperation with companies. The Panel viewed the practical emphasis and opportunities as a very positive feature of the study process at VTDK.

123. VTDK is currently not running any major research projects with companies or with other domestic and international partners, with the exception of the Erasmus+ strategic Partnership Projects or cooperation projects, and ILCA Innovation Laboratories for Climate Actions project, that are focused on educational area of the College (which is, of course, admirable). The Panel believes that there must be potential for VTDK to increase the number of applications they made for funding of research activities within different international financing mechanisms and that it should continue actively to explore those possibilities.

124. As noted above, whilst study programmes are informed by research, this is applied research rather than scientific research, so the needs and requirements from local and regional economies are considered. Many teachers come from companies, which provides good opportunities to transfer practical knowledge from companies into academic programmes. However, as VTDK is an engineering educational institution, developing and implementing study programmes in some very advanced engineering fields, it is important for the College research and teaching staff to engage more actively in scientific research. The engineering fields are developing fast and require state-of-the-art knowledge and competencies that cannot be always available in local or regional industry.

125. Promotional activities of the College are on-going, using social media, visiting schools, participating in fairs, competitions etc. Unfortunately, the main website of the College does not do it any favours as it is graphically obsolete and also missing a lot of important information. The College benefits from having in house design expertise through its Design Faculty and the Panel feels VTDK should use this largely untapped resource for enhancing the promotion and communication of its research activities, study programmes and the work of students. The Panel also suggests that VTDK buildings could more explicitly express the spirit of engineering and design / art nature of the College far more extensively through physically presenting work (visuals, prototypes, models etc.) within the campuses. This could support the promotion of research activities and students in their studies.

126. Overall, the Panel's impressions of the College infrastructure are largely positive and are appropriate to support the fields of study offered, students in their studies and staff in pursuing their research. The main building of the Civil Engineering Faculty is located at 54 Antakalnio St. (housing study programmes in the Civil Engineering, Measurement Engineering and Business study fields) is a bit older, but mostly renovated, except some basement places. It has wide halls, but not too many places for students to hang out/sit. There are two library rooms with computers, copying machine, reading room and rooms for student project and teamwork. The building includes laboratories for geodesy, for hydro energetics, and for testing of civil engineering materials (several testing machines) etc. All laboratories have basic, but sufficient equipment for education purposes (no high-tech). There are also laboratories for transport simulation with computer rooms and simulation software, for warehouse processes, and a new laboratory (a work in progress) for virtual

and augmented reality in building design. Students are familiar with safety protocols and measures. The building has no elevator, and it is not adjusted to students with physical disabilities. Student representatives have their own office, where they can work and meet.

127. The second building, of the Design Faculty and the Technical Faculty at 16 Olandu St., has been recently renovated. This building houses Design and Media Arts study field study programmes, Mechanical Engineering, Information Systems Engineering, Energy Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, and Transport Engineering study fields study programmes. Accessibility issues have been resolved (lifts installed etc). Space is very generous and appears under-utilised. Technical facilities meet expected standards. Digital facilities are good. Some student work is on display, but large corridors and flyers could be made into permanent galleries / project spaces and activated as internal promotional and dissemination spaces. Health and safety procedures and student inductions to equipment are in place. Design studios do not feel truly inhabited. The building has the space to provide project rooms and support a studio culture - facilitating peer learning, but this opportunity seems to be barely grasped by staff.

128. The process of assessing competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning is organised according to the Procedure approved by the Academic Council from January 31st, 2013. The process of this recognition of prior learning is formalised and individual. VTDK liaises as needed with SKVC to confirm the level of qualifications of foreign students/applicants. Assessment and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal education and self-learning is subjected to a systematic approach that includes pre-determined activities and persons/bodies, such as Head of Department, Competence Assessment and Recognition Board, Dean of the relevant Faculty, and finally Director. There was only one person in the last 8 years that went through this process. The Panel was satisfied that this area was operating securely and that appropriate processes were both in place and being followed.

### *3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):*

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

*3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.*

129. VTDK does have a formal internationalisation strategy and is implementing several internationalisation activities, but a systematic and pro-active approach towards internationalisation does not exist. The College has an internationalisation development strategy for period 2020-2025, and before that for the 2015-2017 and 2018-2020 periods which would suggest a long-standing strategic commitment to internationalisation. However, the overall strategic plan for the period 2022-2024 hardly discusses internationality of the College.

130. The internationalisation development strategy 2020-2025 consists of three pillars: internationalisation of studies, strengthening of international cooperation in the field of applied research and knowledge transfer, and development of environment and systems supporting

internationalisation. Given the importance of internationally informed research and studies in engineering, the Panel considered it unfortunate that planned activities do not offer any radical, or even particular, change in the approach to internationalisation; the strategy is a prolongation of existing activities. The Panel recommends that the College review and refine its approach to internationalisation.

131. The internationalisation development strategy 2020-2025 includes a set of ten quantitative and eight qualitative indicators for monitoring the progress of its implementation. The VTDK strategic plan for the period 2022-2024 includes only two indicators that deal with the internationalisation strategy. Neither document is aligned regarding the strategy for internationalisation development. The yearly Activity Report of the College for 2021 analyses several quantitative indicators, but neglects the qualitative progress of the strategy. It is clear that the strategic plans and public reports are not fully aligned. The discussion with several stakeholders (management, teaching staff) also showed that, at the moment, there is no clear strategy in terms of study internationalisation, for example, there is no clear opinion on which study programme should be offered in English language for foreign students.

132. The majority of VTDK internationalisation activities revolve around Erasmus exchange programmes and internships for students and teachers. Different kinds of agreements are established with higher education institutions and business institutions. A positive finding is that VTDK is very active in Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Projects and Erasmus+ Cooperation Projects. These projects serve as a very good basis to improve study process at the College, especially in terms of new teaching methods, digital competences and virtual teaching. Several results have been implemented into the study process, such as the development of digital competences.

133. Unfortunately, no other major joint activities with international partners were evidenced, especially in terms of research and scientific projects. Such projects are necessary to exchange experiences and develop new knowledge in the field of education and research activities. This, in turn, could develop into an opportunity to engage in more scientific research and obtain more financial funds and support activity in this area to build – as well as feeding into the curriculum.

134. Since the internationalisation strategy was not aligned with the main strategy of the College, the Panel did not see the active use of exact indicators or measures to measure progress on how to implement future internationalisation activities and how to measure the effectiveness of on-going and future activities. To strengthen performance in this area, the Panel recommends that the College develops a more fully developed, pro-active and integrated Internationalisation Strategy. This should have clear goals and measurable key performance indicators, and be underpinned by a detailed promotion plan, identifying countries and institutions from where VTDK would like to attract more students and visiting teachers and other staff as well as how it intends to develop the internationalisation of its research and scientific activity. Such a strategy should be overseen directly by an identified member of the senior management team to ensure both the authority and accountability that are necessary to enable successful delivery.

135. In the course of its meetings with staff, and only partly with students and graduates of the College, the Panel observed significant variation in English language skills and/or confidence in using the English language. This is likely to be a limiting factor in internationalisation of studies

and VTDK is encouraged to continue its support for especially staff and also students in developing their English language skills and their confidence in using the English language.

136. **In summary**, VTDK implements 16 study programmes in 11 fields, where they try to ensure synergy between engineering, design and business studies. Their first competitive advantage in regard to other Colleges is the offer of some unique study programmes in Lithuania (e. g. from the field of transport engineering). VTDK second competitive advantage is practical orientation of their study programmes, which is emphasised by all stakeholders, especially students. This practical approach in education process is known in wider community. Their graduates are welcomed in local, regional and national companies.

VTDK points out the importance of student-centred learning/studies, however, their understanding of this concept is somewhat limited. Also, the use of real innovative teaching methods is, similarly, rather limited.

The amount of joint research and applicative work with companies and other organisations is rather low. Although VTDK has good relationships and communication with external stakeholders, they do not engage in sufficient activities in R&D or project areas. The level of scientific work is rather modest in terms of quantity and quality. VTDK is currently not running any major research projects with companies or with other domestic and international partners, with the exception of the Erasmus+ strategic Partnership Projects or cooperation projects.

VTDK has a formal internationalisation strategy and is implementing several internationalisation activities, however, the strategic approach to internationalisation is not at the desired level. There are elements of internationalisation especially in terms of student and staff exchange and some international projects. but a systematic and pro-active approach towards internationalisation does not exist. This strategy is not aligned with VTDK strategic plan for the period 2022-2024. VTDK management is needs to make a new long-term plan for its internationalisation activities.

137. **Judgment**: the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given three points.

138. **Recommendations for the area**:

- The College should review the breadth and nature of its provision and develop a studies and research plan to deliver the strategic goals of the institution, meet sectoral needs and address global trends and issues.
- The College should develop and publish a Learning and Teaching Strategy. As part of an articulated learning and teaching strategy:
  - The College should further consider the meaning of student-centred learning and teaching and innovative teaching methods; it is recommended that its approach is updated and benchmarked against international exemplars;
  - The College should increase interdisciplinary approaches and activities between faculties and programmes of study through thematic projects, modules and programmes of study such as sustainability;

- The College should also consider its learning and teaching strategy could include approaches to offering support and advice through the use of internal ‘critical friends’, staff peer mentoring, and sharing of best practice.
- The College should redefine its internationalisation strategy and seek opportunities to engage in joint research work and research projects with international collaborators, increase the number of scientific publications, important for R&D funding from the government.
- The College should develop a marketing, promotion and recruitment strategy that reflects and actively utilises the distinct nature of the College.

#### 139. **Good practice example:**

- The study programme of Railway Transport Engineering in the field of transport engineering is unique in Lithuania and present a competitive advantage for the college and its graduates.

### 3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

*Impact on Regional and National Development* area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

#### *4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:*

*4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;*

*4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

140. The College generally reflects the needs of regional and national industry for skilled professionals, especially in the various fields of engineering. For example, in mapping its 2019-21 strategic action plan against relevant national policies the College considers ‘Lithuania 2030’ with its emphasis on creating a smart society and smart, flexible economy and responsible green growth in both its mainstream studies and work and the non-formal education of adults. Similarly, in mapping its forward strategy to 2027, it foresees the establishment of a competence centre to increase the scope and coverage of services of life-long learning to address the XVVIII programme of the Lithuanian government. The focus of the College on the training of specialists in engineering sciences and arts is in line with both national and regional development plans, e.g.: Vilnius Regional Development Plan for 2014-2020; National Progress Plan 2021-2030. In regional terms, the College states in its SER that its activities are particularly developed in the Vilnius region of Eastern Lithuania.

141. The impact on regional development in general and fulfilling the demand for skilled professionals in particular, is served by the College in various ways: there are a substantial number of cooperation agreements with companies regarding the internships for the students (final practice

with supervisors from both college and company); real-life topics for the final thesis; participation in regional social and multi-disciplinary projects; non-formal education for adults (training courses); some facilities (library, gym) are open for the general public; Career Days, Vilnius Engineering Days – IDI are organized; there is participation in relevant professional associations; consultancy services and similar activities are offered.

142. Both SER and meetings with the College staff illustrated the close connections with industrial partners, local government, professional associations and other public bodies. Industrial partners known worldwide, such as Toyota, HAAS and others, donate modern equipment for the College, offer internships and practical training for both students and lecturers, employ graduates and participate in the development of study programmes.

143. Most of the relationships were described as stemming from an approach by the external partner and rarely vice-versa. The responsiveness of the College is highly appreciated by the social partners but also restrictive or limited and the Panel would encourage the proactive planning and development of collaborations identified as strategically needed by the College. A systematic, coordinated and pro-active approach is required to match the plans of the College for its further development which include the introduction of the new study programmes and re-arranging of existing ones, attracting new lecturers, offering more courses in English, organising tailored marketing activities and tackling the significant decrease of the enrolled students.

144. The reactive approach also results in the lack of a deeper analysis of today's needs and really modern trends. The College is continuing to place stress on well-established matters such as the green deal, digitalisation and industry 4.0 and the Panel would encourage it to use its connections with industry and social partners to help ensure that it is also better able to enable to provide study programmes and lifelong learning that anticipate social and economic needs in engineering and design. The Panel also noted that most partners of the College, indicated in SER and during the meetings, are national companies or the local representatives of international companies. International collaboration itself outside Lithuania is quite low and could be improved and developed strategically.

145. During the meetings, neither social partners nor College staff, were able to identify any clear KPIs (or equivalent), which are systematically used and monitored, and which would allow the College to assess the effectiveness of its measures regarding its impact on regional and national development. There is the information in SER about the general analysis of national economic surveys and publicly available statistical data, although such general data is not directly related to the College activities and their impact and can't be treated as sufficient in order to make data-based conclusions and further strategic decisions. The lack of systematic in-depth analysis could be considered as both the reason and consequence for the reactive collaboration with social partners.

146. Over the review period, the College has strengthened its research related activities, including those with social partners, it has participated in various national and international projects, encouraged the academic staff members to pursue PhD studies in universities, established a Science Fund to support scientific publications, participation in scientific conferences, etc. Nevertheless, the scope of activities is scattered, and the revenue generated by research services

for industry is lower than one would expect from an institution of applied sciences and needed to match the strategic needs and ambitions of the College.

*4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:*

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

147. The College offers a variety of training seminars, courses and other activities that could be considered as lifelong learning activities. College has established “Sectoral Practical Training Centre for Railway Transport Specialist Training”, which is the only training unit for such specialists in Lithuania. The lifelong training activities also include the extensive collaboration with some industrial partners, e.g.: HAAS Technical Training Centre provides training courses for CNC machine operators-programmers, TOYOTA Technical Training Centre provides training for Toyota service staff and college teachers. There are 15 modular vocational training programmes offered by VTDK’s Vocational Training Department, but the scope of those programmes is limited to rail transport professionals.

148. The Panel noted that a long, but rather scattered, list of available training courses is presented on the College website (in the Lithuanian version only). The training courses are mostly dedicated to the acquisition of very specific skills, for example, courses for driving instructors or train operators. The courses are charged for. The list of courses offered does not reflect the full breadth of the study programme portfolio. This fact, together with the general underuse of college infrastructure observed, may be considered as a missed opportunity for additional income. On the other hand, during the meeting, the graduates were quite sceptical regarding the lifelong learning that the College could offer them after graduation despite the active approach to their own continued professional development that they displayed. In such situation, the reactive College behaviour prevents the capture of new possibilities before somebody has asked for them.

149. The courses offered by the College vary in duration (60 to 450 hours). The non-formal adult education is provided in a variety of ways: face-to-face sessions, distant learning or the combination of both (hybrid learning) which reflect the actual demand by the professionals with busy schedules. The delivery methods are traditional, but some courses offer the possibility of arranging individual training programmes. Most of the training courses include more or less practical training elements. The training is provided by the academic staff of the College. Some courses require examination and successful participants are awarded due certification.

150. The College also provides the opportunity for individuals to collect missing credits in specific study subjects required for some professional certificates, e. g. civil engineers. In such cases, the applicants usually join the respective student groups for the particular courses (following an individual study programme). Although this lifelong learning possibility is not marketed clearly and widely enough for general public. Thus, each prospective “client” must find his/her way to the



College individually. The usual way – by addressing the head of particular department, as it was said during the meetings – cannot be considered as the most effective or attractive.

151. The Panel noted that the lifelong learning courses were subject to a different approach to quality assurance than the ‘regular’ study programmes and activities, only partly due to the recent integration of some of professional level courses into the institution following the merger of 2020 (with Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School) There was no evidence regarding any formal, written and published, consistent quality assurance system for lifelong learning activities, however, it was noted that there is no requirement to describe them in any legal documents (unlike the case of general study programmes offered by the institution). During the meetings – the informal questionnaires for attendees of training courses were mentioned as the main source for the College to obtain feedback on training quality, relevance of the topics, etc. The questionnaires were also described as not mandatory, i.e.: the lecturers decide on the scope of questionnaires and whether they are needed at all.

152. As such the Panel suggests that these courses are brought in line with the college’s standard procedures and practices. The sharing of best practice, the use of internal peer reviews and similar activities will help build connections between the lifelong learning activities and mainstream activities conducted by VTDK.

153. According to the College staff, the surveying of the participants is used (after completion of the course), but such activities are not mandatory, are highly dependent on the lecturers and are not systematically collected or analysed. The results of such surveys are not necessarily shared between the colleagues, thus the transfer of any learning or “good practice” is limited. The feedback to the lifelong training attendees is also informal and not guaranteed by any formal procedures or requirements.

154. The combination of vocational and higher education training is described (in SER and during the meetings) as unique case in Lithuania and potentially could foster even better links with the railway transport industry, but despite some shared infrastructure and lecturers – there is no evidence of clear strategy for the increased integration of this new department into the college structure or its effective promotion to help realise the potential.

155. The College unit – Study and Career Centre – does not play the most significant role in, or act as a hub for, connecting academic staff, students, graduates and social partners. During the meetings, all of the mentioned stakeholders indicated that they usually find their own and direct contacts thus making the effective planning, coordinating and monitoring of such collaborations virtually impossible.

156. **In summary,** The College has the established position in the region and nationwide, but the lack of pro-active strategies, clear measures and systematic analysis creates some unnecessary limits for the further (faster) development and a better position in the highly competitive market given that the biggest concentration of higher education institutions in the country is in Vilnius. Social partners mostly treat the College as the “producer” of skilled professionals for their companies and this is not a good recipe for future-proofed partnerships. Despite the shortcomings indicated, in the view of the Panel most of them could easily be converted into the opportunities with a greater strategic vision and coordinated actions based on market research.

157. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks or other option and is given three points.

158. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The College should develop a more strategic and pro-active approach to engaging with social partners and developing new partnerships. As part of this the College should:
  - devise a plan to increase the scope of research cooperation with social partners, and in turn increase the revenue from this cooperation;
  - seek to strengthen the international dimension of its work and partnerships with the aim of creating more opportunities across its activities;
  - develop a clear and user-friendly feedback system to its social partners who are engaged in various activities, e.g.: study programme committees to strengthen engagement and involvement.
- The College should extend the inclusion of social partners in communication and promotion; it should actively promote and disseminate its collaboration with social partners at a local, national and international levels; and should actively and systematically share the success stories of its graduates with its social partners and the wider community.
- The College should carefully plan a set of life-long learning activities, involving and communicating such possibilities with social partners and more widely.
- The College should undertake dedicated labour market surveys and feasibility studies with the aim of developing competitive advantage by discovering potential future fields for cooperation before the specific issue is addressed by social partners.
- The College should bring the quality assurance of its lifelong learning provision in line with its standard procedures and practices to ensure consistency and to help realise the benefits of closer integration.

159. **Good practice example:**

- The close cooperation with industrial partners and public bodies in all study areas together with the quick response to the needs they express.

## **IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in:

### **Studies and Research (Art):**

- The study programmes such as in the field of transport engineering that are unique in Lithuania and present a competitive advantage for the college and its graduates.

### **Impact on Regional and National Development**

- The close cooperation with industrial partners and public bodies in all study areas together with the quick response to the needs they express.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

### Management:

- The College should review its approach to ensure that it is able to be proactive in meeting changing technological, societal and environmental drivers to create and maintain an attractive portfolio of relevant study programmes.
- In order to ensure delivery of its strategic plan the College should develop a clear, readily understood set of performance indicators and measures of success, making appropriate use of milestones and ensuring that all objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound.
- The College should support its established approach to strategic planning and risk management with a manual that details the planning and risk management processes, sets out responsibilities and the approach to linked communication.
- In completing the planned revision of the organisational structure, the College is encouraged to ensure that responsibilities are balanced and spread across the senior management team.
- The College is strongly advised to develop a clear strategy for staffing to:
  - a. ensure that the academic staff profile can be adapted effectively to meet rapidly changing societal and professional needs and thus to ensure the sustainability of a responsive programme portfolio;
  - b. ensure flexible, efficient and effective administrative management that proactively supports changing needs.
- The College should take a more evaluative, analytical and focused approach across its strategic, planning and reporting documents.
- The College is encouraged to make fuller use of its good and contemporary study and research facilities, for the benefit of its students, the professional communities that it serves, in promoting and marketing itself and to increase its visibility and impact.

### Quality Assurance:

- The College should build on its established approach to quality assurance to develop an institutional culture of quality enhancement, informed by sectoral and disciplinary benchmarking.

- The College should develop a robust, reliable, transparent and monitored model for sharing best practice within and between faculties.
- The College should formalise its approach to unit and programme surveys as part of a fully aligned and consistent quality assurance and enhancement system that links activity at unit, programme, departmental, faculty and institutional levels.
- The College should consider expanding the involvement of students in formal quality processes by having a student representative from each year of study (year 1, 2 and 3) in all programme committees.
- The College should ensure that the ‘feedback loop’ is closed to ensure that all students and staff can reliably see how the organisation listens, learns and improves; a ‘you said, we did’ model could form part of the approach.
- The College should establish a systematic approach to ensure that students and staff receive formal training and documentation explaining their role in quality assurance and enhancement processes, such as student and staff handbooks, formal induction processes for staff, and the sharing of best practice across the institution.

#### **Studies and Research (Art):**

- The College should review the breadth and nature of its provision and develop a studies and research plan to deliver the strategic goals of the institution, meet sectoral needs and address global trends and issues.
- The College should develop and publish a Learning and Teaching Strategy. As part of an articulated learning and teaching strategy:
  - The College should further consider the meaning of student-centred learning and teaching and innovative teaching methods; it is recommended that its approach is updated and benchmarked against international exemplars;
  - The College should increase interdisciplinary approaches and activities between faculties and programmes of study through thematic projects, modules and programmes of study such as sustainability;
  - The College should also consider its learning and teaching strategy could include approaches to offering support and advice through the use of internal ‘critical friends’, staff peer mentoring, and sharing of best practice.
- The College should redefine its internationalisation strategy and seek opportunities to engage in joint research work and research projects with international collaborators, increase the number of scientific publications, important for R&D funding from the government.
- The College should develop a marketing, promotion and recruitment strategy that reflects and actively utilises the distinct nature of the College.

### **Impact on Regional and National Development:**

- The College should develop a more strategic and pro-active approach to engaging with social partners and developing new partnerships. As part of this the College should:
  - devise a plan to increase the scope of research cooperation with social partners, and in turn increase the revenue from this cooperation;
  - seek to strengthen the international dimension of its work and partnerships with the aim of creating more opportunities across its activities;
  - develop a clear and user-friendly feedback system to its social partners who are engaged in various activities, e.g.: study programme committees to strengthen engagement and involvement.
- The College should extend the inclusion of social partners in communication and promotion; it should actively promote and disseminate its collaboration with social partners at a local, national and international levels; and should actively and systematically share the success stories of its graduates with its social partners and the wider community.
- The College should carefully plan a set of life-long learning activities, involving and communicating such possibilities with social partners and more widely.
- The College should undertake dedicated labour market surveys and feasibility studies with the aim of developing competitive advantage by discovering potential future fields for cooperation before the specific issue is addressed by social partners.
- The College should bring the quality assurance of its lifelong learning provision in line with its standard procedures and practices to ensure consistency and to help realise the benefits of closer integration.

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