VILNIAUS VERSLO KOLEGIJOS VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF *VILNIAUS VERSLO KOLEGIJA*

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Grupės nariai (kategorija): Panel members (category):	Prof. Dr. Klaus Peter Kratzer (academic)
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Report language – English

CONTENT

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

Ms. Ana Tecilazić

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of the Vilnius Business School, 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 stakeholders, academic community and 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 five 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:

    -   Ms. Ana Tecilazic, panel chairperson
    -   Mr. Pieter-Jan Van de Velde, review secretary
    -   Prof. Dr. Klaus Peter Kratzer, academic member
    -   Mr. Tomas Kazragis, social partner
    -   Ms. Aurėja Šarkauskaitė, student member

4. As a result of external review **Vilnius Business College** (**Vilniaus verslo kolegija**) is given a **negative evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	1
QUALITY ASSURANCE	2
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	1
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2

*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. **42** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of **Vilnius Business College (Vilniaus verslo kolegija)** (hereafter referred to as VVK or the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education SKVC and was carried out in November 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 the self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre;
    -   formation of the expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report;
    -   expert panel visit to the 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 annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; findings from the 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. Panel requested additional information, such as the Statute of the College, several internal procedures, examples of syllabi, a list of teaching staff, financial data, and additional data on international students, student mobility and graduates.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and several preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the college from November 22nd to 24th, 2022 where it had meetings with internal and external stakeholders. Subsequently, the Panel met both 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.

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 did not receive any comments from VVK.

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 it's website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the evaluation together with the external review report on it's website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

19. Vilnius Business College was founded on the basis of a private initiative as Nijolė Skučienė School of Languages and Business Management. It has become a non-university higher education institution in 2003. Since 2021, the College is owned by the Marius Jakulis Jason Foundation and two individual investors. It is managed by Director Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gitana Neverienė.

20. The college is an accredited higher education institution that has the right to grant professional bachelor's degrees to graduates of its study programme in physical and social sciences as well as the humanities. Currently, the College implemented at the moment of the external review 7 study programmes: Business Management and Marketing, Logistics Business, Tourism and Events, English for International Communication, Programming and Internet Technologies, Game Development, and Interactive Media and Technologies.

21. As of 1 October, 2021, 917 students were studying at the College, and it had 90 lecturers and 19 employees in administration. The number of lecturers decreased to 65 at the moment of the review visit.

22. Implementing several study programmes in English and Russian, Vilnius Business College has entered international markets and has attracted students from 22 countries. VBC is engaged in international activities through collaboration with foreign higher education institutions and through the recruitment of international degree students directly.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

The *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:*
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> *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.*

23. After an internal discussion in 2021, Vilnius Business College maintained its mission *"to open up opportunities for professional growth and personal development for each student by flexibly combining high-quality studies that meet the needs of modern life and business, developing applied scientific research, and by spreading ideas for sustainable development and lifelong learning"* and formulated the vision *"Vilnius Business College is an open, innovative, competitive, and resilient higher education institution with international recognition"*.

24. In its public Strategy 2021-2025 document, the director of the College presents the College's vision also in a more ambitious way: "*We will create an international and leading higher education business school, where studies will be conducted in accordance with the best-known international business standards and best practices. In the teaching process, we will accelerate the implementation of innovative technological solutions that are attractive to students to make their studies truly modern. We want the best Lithuanian and foreign teachers and representatives of the real business world to teach in our College.*"

25. In its Strategic Plan 2014-2021, VBC defined 4 strategic aims:

    a. To create exceptional teaching and learning experience and environment

    b. To develop internationality

    c. To implement project and scientific applied activities

    d. To improve the management of the organisation and to nurture ideas of sustainable development

26. In its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, VBC has defined 4 similar strategic aims:

    1. Seeking leadership in creating exceptional learning experiences and environments.

    2. Increasing the international recognition of study results

    3. Increasing regional impact through outsourced project and applied research activities

    4. Building organisational resilience

27. The Panel learned from many stakeholders that the College's ambition level has clearly increased and dynamics have changed since the transfer of ownership of the College. It surprised the Panel, therefore, that this was not reflected in a more fundamental revision of the strategic ambitions. Furthermore, the Panel missed an in-depth analysis of the results of the previous strategic plan as a basis for the Strategy 2021-2025.

28. Overall, the Panel considers that these strategic aims for 2014-2021 and 2021-2025 are in line with the mission of the College and contribute to its implementation. Nevertheless, the Panel does not consider the underlying indicators and actions to be sufficient if the College really wants to fully implement the above mentioned ambitious vision statement. The Panel encourages the College to be ambitious, but also realistic in its pursued ambitions, taking into account its available resources and current capacities.

29. The College links its strategy with the high level ambitions of national and European policy documents to provide quality higher education which prepares students for the 21st century labour market. Strategic objectives and indicators of their achievements are to a large extent in line with a broader European policy framework by including objectives such as "1.3. developing student support system, 2.3. increasing the number of students and teachers from abroad, 3.1. partnerships between research, studies and business, 4.2. continuous improvement of the internal QA system". Nevertheless, the Panel notices that there is no explicit reference to the European policies and instruments of the Bologna process (e.g. increasing social dimension in line with the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter - EHEA), improving the internal quality assurance system in line with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter – ESG), use of qualifications frameworks, ECTS, diploma supplement, etc.), the

European Education Area and the European Research Area (mobility of researchers). The Panel also notices that the strategic orientation of the institution is not always fully in line with the relevant national provisions. For example, in relation to online distance learning and teaching, a strategic indicator of an institution's performance is formulated as "digitalisation of study content". In practice, the Panel has learned that some study programmes are delivered almost fully as distance learning (with a possible exception of an assessment of the final thesis presented in person) while the provisions of the national legislation stipulate that at least 10% of a study programme should be delivered face to face. In conclusion, the Panel considers that more concrete provisions of the European research and study policies as well as better alignment with the provisions of national legislation would be beneficial, as well as a conscious integration in the policy documents and daily practices of the College.

30. The activities of the College are based on the two kinds of the documents – the Strategy and annual Plans for Strategy Implementation, which specify the aims and objectives provided in the Strategy.

31. The College claims that it has based its analysis on an analysis of the current situation and a broad range of policy documents. In the SWOT-analysis and the self-evaluation report, this analysis remains too generic. A more detailed and transparent analysis of the current situation would have been helpful. For example, the weak research outputs in the implementation period of the previous plan has been acknowledged by many stakeholders during the review visit, and also lead to a change in indicators to assess this strategic goal, but this weakness does not appear in the provided SWOT-analysis. Therefore the Panel recommends the College to base its Strategic documents on an explicit and in depth assessment of previous performance, by using priory defined performance indicators and newly established needs.

32. For each of the strategic aims for 2021-2025, several objectives and indicators have been identified. For each of the indicators, activities are planned in the annual Implementation Plan. In the opinion of the Panel, not all indicators and activities are directly related to the objectives which are set. E.g. indicator 3.1.1. is "The number of joint projects with business is at least 1 per study programme", while the activity to achieve the indicator is "Creation of study programmes ordered by business." Furthermore, the college aims to achieve Objective 3.3 "Integrating the latest research developments into study programmes" with indicator "Annual updating of all study programmes, integrating new subjects, content, study and assessment methods" by the "Organisation of training courses in teaching excellence and for developers of distance learning materials." The Panel recommends to make sure that objectives, indicators and planned activities are fully consistent and the activities are also covering the whole objective, rather than just a part of it.

33. Moreover, in the Implementation plan for 2021-2022 of the Strategy for 2021-2025 no specific resources are attributed to achieve the mentioned objectives. The Panel considers this as a deficiency.

34. The process of monitoring the implementation of the strategy in the College is described in the procedure PR04 – Activities of management. This process description defines the periodicity and scope of the monitoring of the implementation of the objectives. During the annual Management review meeting (see further) the implementation results and potential improvement measures are discussed. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the opinion that internal and external feedback should be

gathered more detailed and more systematically in order to provide the Management review meeting with substantial input to fundamentally discuss necessary improvements. One example is the lack of reference to the need for improvement of the applied research in the preparation of the Management review meeting in 2021, while this is generally accepted among stakeholders as an area for improvement.

35. Furthermore, the Panel discussed in different meetings during the review visit how learnings from surveys and informal input lead to concrete actions and how this implementation is systematically monitored. In many cases, the College staff referred to distributed responsibilities and lack of specific monitoring and, at the same time, the staff perceived the student surveys only as a tool for indication of specific problems that require reaction from the institution. The Panel recommends attributing responsibilities clearly to a specific function within the organisation and to systematically monitor implementation of the agreed actions and to use the student survey results for a more systematic approach to institutional improvements and developments.

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 General Meeting of Stakeholders (the owners) is the most important strategic meeting of the College. It takes strategic decisions. The Panel had the opportunity to meet with the owners of the College and is convinced that they have a clear ambition to help the College grow both quantitatively and qualitatively.

37. The Academic Council of the College is appointed to approve study regulations, study programmes and the internal quality assurance system for studies, to evaluate the results of applied research, to determine qualification requirements for teachers and researchers and to give advice on the strategy of the College. Based on its discussions with the members of the Academic Council, the Panel realised that the Academic Council does not entirely fulfil its role envisaged by the Statute. For example, the Academic Council is responsible for the adoption of study programmes and internal procedures but it does not discuss other quality matters. These are discussed by the Management review meetings. Moreover, in practice the role of student representatives is very limited in the work of the Academic Council, contrary to the Statute. The Panel considers that the Academic Council may be strengthened in order to fully take up the role it has according to the Statute of the College. In order to do so, active stakeholder involvement is necessary, including the student voice. It may be relevant to add a second student representative, in order to achieve this objective.

38. Management review meetings which are held at least once a year, are planned to follow-up the implementation of the strategy, based on data on performance results, student complains, improvement of staff competences, profit indicators and other data on the College's activities. It consists of the director and the heads of Departments. Although this 'meeting' is not considered to be an official body of the College, and it is not mentioned in the Statute of the College, it has been mentioned regularly during the review visit to the College as the place where survey results

are discussed and measures for improvement are prepared. The Panel considers that the lack of clarity on the role and composition of the Management review meeting, as well as on its position in the structure of the College (especially in relation to the Academic Council), is a clear deficiency which reduces the effectiveness of process management in the College.

39. Daily operations are led by the Director. Together with the management representative for quality, the Director appoints process owners. Process owners are given responsibility for managing, measuring, documenting and improving processes. Nevertheless, the Panel found out, based on extensive discussions with the management and the staff of the College, that many responsibilities, mainly those related to monitoring of implementation, are spread among several positions, and therefore, are not clearly attributed.

40. Many staff members mention the absence of "bureaucratic apparatus" as a strength of the College. While the short communication lines in this small organisation are definitely a strength, the Panel considers that procedures which are more specific and clear responsibilities are necessary to improve the implementation and follow-up of the College's strategy and action plans. Overall, the Panel was not assured that the College's processes are effective and that there is an ownership of the outcomes and results of each process by those designated as responsible and that these are used in a continuous enhancement of quality.

41. In 2020 and 2022 an analysis of the College's process management was conducted, and the defined processes were updated. As a result of this review, the College changed its approach, from a paper, order-based description of processes, to a visual representation of processes in a macro-scheme. Although the Panel recognises that this macro-scheme gives a good visual overview of the internal processes, the Panel considers that the consistency between processes and the level of specificity of the individual process descriptions are insufficient. However, the macro-scheme of processes can be a good framework to support the implementation of internal policies and to support the internal quality assurance system but not be the scope for itself. For example, the macro-scheme presents a process for human resource management that is the institution's response to ESG 1.5. Teaching Staff. It describes the process of recruitment and integration of new staff members into the team. However, what is missing is a clear set of criteria for the recruitment and professional development of staff, the responsibilities of the staff in charge for human resource development, as well as institutional arrangements put in place to assure the competence of the teachers (ref. ESG 1.5).

42. The macro-scheme mentions the ESG. However, this is the only place where the ESG are mentioned explicitly in the process definition of the College. Based on the received documents and the exchanges during the site visit, the Panel considers that the College does not provide sufficient evidence that the internal processes are based on the ESG systematically. Some ESG requirements, such as those related to public information are clearly not fully met by the college. Therefore, the Panel insists that the College makes an in depth analysis of the ESG and the consistency of the College's processes with the ESG.

43. The management of the College indicated during the site visit that there is no explicit risk management process or procedure in place in the College. The SER indicates that the College management is responsible for identifying risks and actions necessary for risk management decisions. It also indicated that the College evaluates its own performance risks, which are discussed in periodic management meetings evaluating the current situation and responding to the

context changes. Based on the report of the management review meeting of 2021 and the discussions during the review visit, the Panel confirms that a systematic risk management approach is lacking in the College. The Panel encourages the College to consider in which way risk management could be integrated more systematically in its management processes.

44. Participation of students in the processes are of non-formal and formal character. Non-formal collaboration is the foundation of the daily activities of the College, when a student directly communicates with administration, management and lecturers. Formal participation occurs when individuals delegated by the student representation engage in the organisation of the study process, participate in the Academic Council with a right of decisive vote. They are also included in the Programme committees, Commission of Dispute Resolution and Academic Ethics, in the Commission of Appeals and participate in self-assessment of study programmes and institution.

45. Student interests are represented at the College by the Student Representation, which mainly aims to represent and protect the rights and legitimate interests of the College students related to their social situation, welfare and status in the College and outside it; to participate in organising the study process and developing study programmes, to provide recommendations for their improvement, etc. Based on the discussions with student representatives, the Panel learned that the student voice needs to be strengthened. A small group of student representatives takes responsibility for the organisation of social activities, which are valued by other students and the College. Next to the organisation of activities, student representatives signal problems of students to teaching staff and management. However, limited capacity is available among student representatives to take up their role in formal decision-making bodies of the College. Student representatives indicated that they lack capacity and skills to fully participate in management process. They also indicated that they would need support from the College to fully take up their responsibilities as student representatives. The Panel recommends the College management to discuss with student representatives which support they need to play their role effectively.

46. Lecturers participate in their department, study programme committees and the workgroup for self-evaluation preparation, but the College did not provide any documentation to the Panel on the composition or the mandate of these official bodies of the College. The Panel learnt from the discussion during the interviews that due to a small size of the institution, the staff takes very often different roles and the most common ways of cooperation are based on informal contacts and interpersonal relationships.

47. Although the College has the ambition to develop an Alumni Council, no structural involvement of graduates in management processes of the College is in place. Employers participate in some study programme committees.

48. An annual dialogue with social partners is organised to provide input for the Study Programme Committees. Social partners are, however, not involved in the Academic Council of the College. Informal and indirect input is gathered through the participation of lecturers in several sector associations: Association INFOBALT; Užupis Cluster (UCC); Lithuanian Hotel and Restaurant Association (LHRA); Lithuanian Game Developers Association (LGDA, social partner); National Association of Creative and Cultural Industries (NACCI); Conference of Lithuanian College Directors (CLCD); Lithuanian Marketing Association (LiMA); Vilnius Chamber of Industry, Commerce and Crafts (VCICC). These associations provide insights into the improvement of implemented study programmes and the development of new study programmes.

49. As indicated above, information gathering and problem solving within the College are first and foremost based on informal exchange. This is clearly also the case for the involvement of stakeholders. Although some structures are in place for this, most references made by all stakeholders on their involvement are related to informal ways to exchange. Although it is positive to have informal communication lines, more formalised management processes are needed to achieve the great ambitions the College has. The Panel, therefore, recommends to strengthen the stakeholder involvement in the management processes of the College, as an addition to the well functioning informal communication channels.

> *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.*

50. The College gathers data on the employability rate of graduates 12 months after graduation, including the classification of their jobs according to the Lithuanian Classification of Occupations. Furthermore, it gathers data provided by the Employment Services, e.g., "Employment Opportunities Barometer", or analysing the indicators of surveys conducted by the private journal "Reitingai". "Added value created by alumni and employers' evaluations" is one of the evaluation criteria in the surveys conducted by the journal "Reitingai".

51. The College gathers also more qualitative feedback from employers through the participation in sector associations and informal contacts. When setting up new programmes, more extensive efforts are made to gather feedback from employers.

52. The data gathered serve as inputs for Management review meetings (see above), where this information is discussed. However, data are used for the improvement of the performance of the higher education institution to a very limited extent.

53. Every year the College prepares activity reports, which provide information on performance and significant changes. These reports present the activities that have impact on the College's internal development and some information on the activities and results of the College. Overall, the information provided in the Annual Activity Report is more specific than the information provided in the Self-Evaluation Report. The information in the activity reports is, however, not explicitly linked to the objectives and indicators as defined in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

54. Next to the Activity Report, the College's website (www.kolegija.lt) is the major source of information. It provides information about study programmes, admission criteria, intended learning outcomes at study programme level, qualifications awarded upon completion, and some information about graduates' employability. In the opinion of the Panel, more detailed information on the subjects (contents, teaching, learning and assessment methods, number of ECTS-credits) should be published in Lithuanian and English. At this moment the information on the individual study subjects on the College's website is limited to the titles of the study subjects. The Panel also encourages the College to provide statistical data on the employment of graduates on its website.

55. Furthermore, several procedures (e.g. the Complaints procedure) are not available in English. Taking into account the ambitions of the institution to increase the share of international students and to become an internationally recognised institution, it is crucial to provide all relevant information in English. As the College also provides training in Russian, it would be relevant to also provide all relevant information in Russian.

56. The College is active on social media and uses them actively to attract new students. In 2021, 55% of new students indicated they got to know the College via Google, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. Next to adds, the College posted in 2021 64 posts on Facebook, over 140 posts on Instagram, over 50 posts on LinkedIn. More than 20 video records were created and published on the video platform "YouTube".

57. For the academic community, additional information is available through the recently implemented information system UNIMETIS, which helps to administer the whole study process, including the monitoring of student progress and statistical analysis. Specific information in individual subjects (ECTS credits, contents, teaching method, assessment method) is not publicly available. At the moment of the visit by the Panel, not all historic data had been integrated in this system. Because of this partial implementation, the data on performance which were provided to the Panel were partial and scattered, which made it difficult for the Panel to assess them.

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; a lot of room for improvement – 2 - 1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.

58. Procedure PR08 Management of human resources mainly focusses on definition of staff needs of the College and the recruitment process, as well as the related administrative aspects.

59. The heads of department plan how many lecturers and which skills they need for the coming semester. Candidates for vacancies for lecturers' positions are sought by the Director, the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, Heads of Departments, or they can be recommended by the College lecturers. The College indicates in the SER that lecturers hired for the position are evaluated by conducting attestation based on their compliance with the minimal qualification requirements for the position of professor, associate professor, lecturer or assistant lecturer of the College.

60. The qualifications and suitability of lecturers to achieve the intended learning outcomes are assessed before hiring a lecturer. Seeking to ensure the suitability of lecturers' qualification for attainment of the intended learning outcomes, the College management evaluates their research and especially practical work experience in the field of the taught study subject.

61. According to the SER, the College has established requirements for staff admission, attestation and evaluation. The Panel discussed those requirements with the management of the College. Based on the Human Resource Management procedure and the additional information received in

the interviews during the site visit, the Panel considers that the focus in the College's processes is on the administrative process, rather than on an explicit and written strategy related to specific requirements and objectives related to professional development of academic and non-academic staff. Furthermore, the Panel considers that the requirements are not in line with the Recommendations on the Structure of Working Time of Lecturers in Higher Education Institutions (Order by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of 11 May 2020 No V-695). Taking into account the expectation that higher education institutions base their studies on applied research and experimental development, the Panel considers it necessary to include research activities in the job description of at least part of the teaching staff. Currently, this is not the case and the time to implement research is compensated via additional contracts or not at all.

62. Administrative staff participate in an annual interview with their respective direct manager when the quality of their work is evaluated. After the annual interview, a systemic process starts, during which future tasks are planned and work-related competences are evaluated. The plans for improvement are discussed, which can be changed if necessary.

63. Based on the feedback of teaching staff, performance interviews and the evaluation of their work is not implemented systematically for teaching staff. They only receive the results of student surveys if remediation is required. Evaluation seems to be mainly done at the end of an employment contract, when the College decides to offer a new contract or not. Furthermore, professional development is not discussed systematically with each member of the teaching staff. The Panel recommends to develop a more systematic approach for the professional development of all teaching staff.

64. Table 1, that is provided in the SER gives an overview of the number of lecturers related to the number of students. The Panel also received detailed information on the percentage of appointment of the teaching staff. At the moment of the review, the total teaching staff counted 35 full time equivalents. In the opinion of the Panel, the higher education institution has sufficient teaching and administrative staff to meet its current operational objectives. In order to manage the growth in number of students, number of programmes, different modes of implementation and international recognition, the College will need to hire additional teaching staff and add own research capacity.

Table 1 - Number of lecturers – research degree holders – ratio of students for one (part-time) lecturer

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Students in total	550	571	706	727	917
Lecturers in total	63	84	92	84	90
Number of lecturers with research degree	20	20	20	19	20
Percentage of lecturers with research degree	31.7%	23.8%	21.7%	22.6%	22.2%
Ratio of students for one lecturer	8.7	6.8	7.7	8.6	10.2

65. The College has reduced the number of teaching staff to 65 in 2022, while increasing the average number of hours per lecturer. 12 of them have a fulltime appointment as Lecturer at the College. The Panel considers it to be positive to focus on lecturers with a substantial involvement with the College. The Panel recommends to further strengthen the core team of full time teaching staff.

66. Table 2 indicates the number of support staff. The number of academic support staff has increased less than the number of students. This increased the work load of the support staff.

Table 2 – Number of academic support staff, auxiliary staff and students

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Number of students	550	571	706	727	917
Academic support staff	16	18	20	18	19
Proportion of students and support staff	34.38	31.72	35.3	40.39	48.26
Maintenance staff (IT, cleaning staff, watchkeepers)	1	1	2	3	3

67. As indicated in the table 1, 20 out of 90 lecturers which were employed in October 2021 had a research degree (22.2%). Most of them do research in other higher education institutions or participate in applied research and consultancy activities within the College. Nevertheless, as indicated above, research work is not considered to be an essential part of their appointment at the College. The College benefits from research done at other institutions, and offers some teaching staff an additional appointment for research activities, but in order to achieve the ambition to base all degrees at the College on research activities, it is in the opinion of the Panel (as indicated above) necessary to include research activities in the standard appointment of academic teaching staff.

68. Lecturers-practitioners, who have accumulated more than 3 years of practical work experience in the field of their taught study subject made up 70 % of all the lecturers at the College in October 2021. This is in line with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Law), which require to have more than half of the lecturers with more than three years of experience in practical work. Some lecturers also have experience of institutional expert work, they are members of various national and regional associations, organisations or societies: Lithuanian Computer Society, European Society for the Study of English (ESSE), Lithuanian Association of Language Teachers (LAKMA), Lithuanian Applied Linguistics Association (LITAKA), Lithuanian National Association of Forwarders and Logistics "LINEKA", Lithuanian Association for Quality Management and Innovation (LAQM), Lithuanian Food Exporters Association (LitMEA), Lithuanian Chamber of Auditors, Europe Women's Management Development (EWMD). Students and graduates praise their teachers' practical experience.

69. Based on the feedback received, the Panel has not discovered the main area for improvement in the qualifications of non-academic staff is the limited knowledge of English. The Panel understood that the International Office has been strengthened, which is crucial to increase the recruitment of more international students, but also other administrative staff will need to be able to support foreign students.

70. The Department of Studies and the Department of Teaching Innovation is in charge of improving the lecturers' competences employing various channels, such as trainings in the College, seminars and discussions with business representatives. Moreover, lecturers are encouraged to participate in project and research activities as well as in trainings and events organised by other educational institutions, enterprises or organisations. The exchange programme (Erasmus+) is also used for competence improvement. All lecturers can apply for participation in teaching or training visits.

71. In the beginning of each academic year, the EDUboom event is organized. Training courses are organised on how to ensure implementation of constructive alignment of learning outcomes, teaching methods, and methods of assessment in the descriptions of study subjects.

72. In the academic year 2021-2022, the Department of Teaching Innovation approved the Training Plan for Excellence in Teaching, which consists of 3 modules: Planning the Teaching/Learning Process and Content in Higher Education (30 hrs.), Teachers' Digital Competences (30 hrs.), Teachers' Leadership Competences (30 hrs.). In 2021 training courses were organised according to the training directions of lecturers established by the College: training courses on new methodology trends, basic didactics, and information and communication technologies. Although these training activities are relevant, the Panel considers that they are oriented mostly to training and professional development, and less in terms of academic development.

73. Overall, the Panel considers that it is not sufficient to provide an offer of professional development opportunities. Policies should be put in place to assure the formation, management, and evaluation of all academic staff. The Panel considers it as a drawback that there are no individual professional development goals or plans, performance criteria or indicators set by the institution, and clear opportunities for academic progression and advancement. Moreover, as indicated above, the Panel considers that the College should invest more in the academic development of its staff that is in incentivising the academic staff to undertake doctoral studies and to continuously invest in enhancing their research potential, beyond the limited financial incentives that have been implemented.

74. The College encourages non-academic staff to improve their competences in a formal and non-formal way. Competence improvement occurs in various forms: participating in seminars, courses, conferences, study visits, international mobility activities, exchanging experience with colleagues, etc. Special attention is paid to the improvement of language, intercultural and digital competences of the administrative staff. In 2021-2022, 11 members of the administrative staff participated in outgoing international mobility. This is an increase compared to the 10 outgoing mobilities between 2017 and 2021.

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.

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75. The operating budget of the College is formed for a period of one year. A three-year long-term prognostic budget is also drawn up. The College has not provided any information on the current and long-term budget. No financial responsibility is attributed to individual departments. This is acceptable for the Panel for an institution of the size of the College. Nevertheless, this reduces the financial accountability of individual departments.

76. One of the objectives of the College management is to ensure financial sustainability by using internal and external resources for key activities and creating conditions for complementary activities and infrastructure maintenance and development.

77. Furthermore, the College indicates that the main general principles of budgeting include targeted spending, transparency, and efficiency. The Director is in charge of the use of financial resources of the College and the achievement of performance results. The ambition is to have a budget which considers the need for implemented activities, evaluating expenditure of the previous year, the volume of income planned for a fiscal year, and external and internal factors that directly influence the activities of the College.

78. Accounting of budget income and expenses, financial monitoring and analysis according to the responsibility and functions is conducted by the Finance Department of the College under the direct supervision of the Director. Depending on the occurrence of revenue, immediate and unexpected expenses, the approved budget, as well as the projected budget for three years, may be adjusted.

79. Overall, the Panel considers that the College has insufficient financial resources to achieve its strategic ambitions completely. Additional resources are necessary to develop in house research capacity, attract more international staff and continue to provide enough physical space for the growing number of students. As indicated above, the Panel considers that a more explicit connection between the strategic planning and the budget would be helpful.

80. Over 90% of the budget is made up by tuition fees of students. The incomes from tuition fees increased from 635 thousand EUR in 2018 to 1.43 million EUR in 2022. The rest of the budget comes mainly from European funds, partly for the implementation of applied research activities such as the projects "Development of a Payment Platform Based on Innovative Technologies INO-PAY" and "Development and Commercialization of a Support System Based on Artificial Intelligence for the Assessment of Knowledge and Achievements".

81. One of the immediate objectives of the College is to attract additional funds from auxiliary activities, i.e., to diversify revenue. First steps to do so are taken by the development of lifelong learning activity for professionals and research projects. The Panel recommends to increase the efforts to diversify incomes.

82. The costs of provided services include lecturers' renumeration and social security contributions. Purchase of study materials also belongs to service costs, which make up 35 % of all the College expenditure, i.e. 440 thousand EUR in 2021, while General and administrative expenses account for 853 thousand EUR in 2021.

83. The study process is implemented on the premises (1023 m2) located at Kalvarijų St. 129, Vilnius. From the start of the academic year of 2022, the College has been expanding and has started implementing studies on the additional new premises at Saltoniškių St. 2, Vilnius, with a total area of 550 m2. The new premises provide a pleasant and spacious learning environment.

Overall, the premises are sufficient for the implementation of the current activities, but there is a clear need for additional space in order to accommodate the further growth in number of students. The Panel supports the College's ambition to find a location which is adequate to organise all learning activities. This will further facilitate the interdisciplinary collaboration among students and the interaction between foreign and national students.

84. Wireless internet connection in the College covers its whole premises. There are 77 laptops in total at the College for students, which have the following software: Adobe Creative Cloud, ESET Protection Standard, ESET Protection Standard, Microsoft 365 Apps, Google Apps, Autodesk (3DMAX, MAYA, MUDBOX), Unity), video conferencing tool ZOOM. The panel considers that desktops with a second screen may be a good addition for IT-students. The library offers sufficient access to, mainly digital sources. In order to increase the access, the College collaborates with other institutions of higher education.

85. The College invests in the renewal of the learning facilities and resources: new classrooms and convenient computer laboratories have been put in place. All the classrooms and laboratories are equipped with new furniture, and some are equipped with the necessary tools to facilitate hybrid teaching.

86. **In summary,** the College has been acquired by new owners in 2021. The new owners and the director of the College have the ambition to excel and increase internationalisation of the College. The recently developed Strategy 2021-2025 is in line with the mission and the vision of the College. However, the Panel has found that some fundamentals within the organisations are not sufficiently developed in order to guarantee successful implementation of the strategy. The governance structure should be clarified, with a clear distribution of responsibilities. Internal structures, processes and procedures need to be developed further, in order to not only set ambitious goals, but also create the preconditions for consistent monitoring and improvement. The current informal feedback culture should be complemented with consistent formal decision making processes, based on the learnings from previous experience and with structural involvement of all stakeholders. Especially student involvement should be organised more effectively. Although some performance data of graduated are gathered and published, further work needs to be done on the provision of detailed information on the College's programmes and the performance of graduates, in all languages in which degrees are offered. The College has always focused on bachelor's degrees with a strong practical focus. In order to achieve the ambitions stated in the strategic plan, conditions should be created for professional development, including the development of research activities by a substantial part of the teaching staff. Attracting additional financial resources will be also necessary to create favourable conditions to achieve the objectives set in the College's strategy.

87. **Judgment:** the area does not meet the minimum requirements and is given 1 point.

88. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel encourages the College to be ambitious, but also realistic in is pursued ambitions, taking into account its available resources and current capacities.

- The Panel recommends the College to perform a more in depth analysis of the European policies and instruments of the Bologna process, the European Higher Education Area and the

European Research Area, and integrate the relevant elements consciously in the policy documents and daily practices of the College.

- The Panel recommends the College to base its Strategic documents on an explicit and in depth assessment of past performance and newly established needs.

- The Panel recommends the College to make sure that objectives, indicators and planned activities are fully consistent and the activities are also covering all aspects of the objective.

- The Panel recommends the College to gather internal and external feedback more detailed and more systematically in other to provide the Management review meeting with substantial input to fundamentally discuss necessary improvements.

- The Panel recommends to attribute responsibilities clearly to a specific function within the organisation and to systematically monitor implementation of the agreed actions and to use the student survey results for a more systematic approach to institutional improvements and developments.

- The Panel insists that the College makes an in depth analysis of the ESG and the consistency of the College's processes with the ESG.

- The Panel recommends the College to consider in which way risk management could be integrated more systematically in its management processes.

- The Panel recommends to strengthen the Academic Council to fully take up the role it has according to the Statute of the College. In order to do so, active stakeholder involvement is necessary, including the student voice. It may be relevant to add a second student representative, in order to achieve this objective.

- The Panel recommends the College management to discuss with student representatives which support they need to play their role effectively.

- The Panel recommends to strengthen the stakeholder involvement in the management processes of the College.

- The Panel urges the College to provide more detailed information on the study subjects (contents, teaching, learning and assessment methods, number of ECTS-credits) in Lithuanian and English.

- The Panel encourages the College to provide statistical data on the employment of graduates on its website.

- The Panel recommends to further strengthen the core team of full time teaching staff.

- The Panel considers it necessary to include research activities in the job description of at least part of the teaching staff.

- The Panel recommends to develop a more systematic approach for the professional development of all teaching staff.

- The Panel recommends to establish a more explicit connection between the strategic planning and the budget.

- The Panel recommends to increase the efforts to diversify incomes.

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.

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89. At the College quality is understood as the degree to which the set of features of the services provided by the College meets the requirements of stakeholders. To ensure the quality of the system of activity and studies, the College developed a Quality Management System in 2005 (hereinafter – QMS).

90. In 2012 the College implemented the project "Increasing the efficiency of the studies at Vilnius Business College", which served to improve the QMS according to the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 and the model EFQM.

91. After a review of the system in 2021, the QMS was updated according to ISO 9004:2018 and the implementation of the procedural approach was strengthened. All processes of the College were revised in terms of producing results and redrawn into a diagram that shows the representatives of the College staff responsible for the actions and internal documentation and data used.

92. The current Quality Policy document is published on the College's website. This document explains the general principles of the quality assurance policy.

93. In the recommendations from the last institutional review (2014), the panel recommended that the College should better align its quality assurance with the ESG. As a result of this recommendation the College integrated very high-level references to the ESG in the diagram which was developed only in 2021. The Panel considers this as a late an unsatisfactory reaction to the previous recommendation. A more detailed and explicit analysis of the alignment of internal quality assurance procedures with the ESG is necessary, e.g. on how student-centred learning, teaching and assessment are integrated in the College's operations and quality assurance processes (ESG 1.3). The Panel urges the College to align its internal quality assurance processes more explicitly to the individual ESG.

94. At institutional level quality management is discussed at the Management review, the Academic Council and the Stakeholder meeting (meeting with the owners), which are held at least once a year. These meetings focus on evaluating attainment of the College's goals, the changing context of activities and decisions made during the management review that are related to the assessment of the satisfaction of the stakeholders needs or the need to adjust investments in activities and their development.

95. The internal evaluation of a study programme is a continuous, but little structured, process within the College. Responsibility for this process are spread among the department supervising the programme, the study programme committee, the management representative, and the deputy director for academic affairs. According to the organigram the (only) deputy director (for academic affairs), the coordinator for research and the heads of department are all situated at the same level within the organisation. There is also a separate management representative for quality. The Panel considers that the distributed responsibility on internal quality assurance of programmes does not contribute to the transparency of the internal quality assurance, and therefore there is no clear responsibility for internal quality assurance. The Panel recommends to clearly attribute responsibilities for implementation, monitoring and follow-up to individual functions in order to increase the accountability in the system.

96. Internal evaluation of the quality of study programmes is carried out with the help of social partners, whose opinion is taken into account in the development of programmes, their implementation and improvement. The external evaluation of study programmes (study fields) and their improvement is conducted in accordance with the procedure provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

97. Evaluation of the quality of study subjects is carried out informally by the lecturer and coordinated with the head of the department, and/or the deputy director for academic activities. Feedback on study activities and their quality is received through informal contact with the students, lecturers, employers, and social partners, who observe students at the place of internship and through surveys.

98. A general student opinion survey organized once a year, whereas information on the quality of lecturers' work in the study programmes is obtained through surveys of students after the end of a semester (twice a year). The results of the latter survey are only shared in case of negative outcomes. The Panel recommends to share all results with the concerned teachers and give them the opportunity to react. Also positive feedback is helpful for teaching staff to motivate them and to learn which elements of their teaching are appreciated positively by students. The Panel values positively that several teachers ask for student-feedback at the end of their course. However, the need to do so raises questions on the usefulness of the feedback which they receive based on the formal student surveys. Furthermore, the Panel recommends to share the main findings of the student surveys with students, as well as improvement measures which have been or will be taken. Providing insight to students on the impact of their feedback generally increases the willingness of students to provide feedback.

99. As indicated above, student participation in internal quality processes is too limited. Especially in the Management review meeting, where the processing of all inputs should take place, no students are represented.

100. Furthermore, general opinion surveys are organised once a year and surveys on individual lecturers are organised after the end of each semester.

101. Graduates are surveyed half a year after graduation and they sometimes participate in study programme committees. The graduates the Panel met during the site visit did not participate in any survey nor in any formal meeting of the College.

102. A dialogue with social partners is organised at least once a year, and social partners express their opinions about the College, its graduates, study programmes and necessary improvements. A survey of interested social partners is conducted if necessary as well as when developing new study programmes or renewing the existing ones.

103. Although the College has process descriptions of all major processes within the College, the Panel considers that these process descriptions often remain quite generic and clear procedures for monitoring and improvement based on evaluation results should be added. The Panel therefore urges the College to make the process descriptions more specific and to add clear procedures for monitoring and improvement based on evaluation results should be added.

104. Furthermore, the processes often focus on timelines and steps to be taken, while they do not refer to the underlying substance. E.g. the process description on the organisation of applied research activities (PR11) describes how the international conference or the College's journal will be organised, but no references are made to the ambition level, the academic requirements or the scope of activities, and how those will be monitored and improved. The Panel recommends to add such substance to the internal quality assurance processes.

105. The College lecturers monitor student achievements and introduce strategies for successful learning in their study subjects. They also provide students with academic support during consultation hours, via e-mail or the Virtual Learning Environment.

106. Support to students is taken up by different staff members of the college:

- Study coordinators help and give advice to students regarding the study process and its organisation face to face at the College premises, by phone and e-mail.
- A project supervisor and a coordinator of project-based learning coordinate and monitor project works.
- The internship supervisor searches for internships that comply with the goals of the study field, formulates personal internship tasks depending on the study programme and specifics of enterprise activities. Internship mentors supervise and give advice on issues related to internships.
- Heads of departments, supervisors of final theses and social partners (if necessary) are in charge of the process when students choose the theme and write their professional bachelor thesis.
- The head of the library provides consultations on technical requirements for written papers following the methodological requirements of the College, on searching for information in international databases as well as other issues related to the activities of the library.

107. The Head of Distance Learning was employed in 2021 to monitor the quality of distance learning and to provide students and lecturers with full support related to distance studies.

108. Support for career planning is also provided engaging social partners into the study process: employers propose work and internship places, assign project tasks, participate in student examinations, project meetings, and final thesis defence. The College also organises meetings of students and employers. Seeking to expand the support provided in career planning of students and graduates, in 2022-2023 the College has plans to establish a Career Centre, which would be distinguished by assistance and mediation not only for Lithuanian citizens but also for those from foreign countries.

109. Providing assistance, the College makes attempts to consider the individual situation of each student who needs support. The College's support system is mostly based on the principles of the social dimension in higher education. The College applies a system of tuition fee reduction. The tuition fee can be reduced for members of students' and graduates' families, for study subjects (credits) transferred from the College or other higher education institutions, as well as for disabled students. On the average, discounts for students comprise about 7% of all the income in the study field. Students are provided with the possibility of paying their tuition fee in instalments. Annually about 30% of the students are granted various discounts.

110. The College is open and ensures appropriate study conditions for disabled students. During admission to the College, the needs arising from the disability are evaluated during an individual meeting with the student. The College considers individual needs emerging in the context of studies due to disability: more flexible forms of tests and exams, prolongation of duration of tests or exams, individualisation of the study process according to needs related to disability. The College provides and administers financial and social support distributed by the State Studies Foundation and the Department for the Affairs of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The College assists students in receiving the support from the State Studies Foundation. The infrastructure at the main campus is, however, not accessible for physically disabled students.

111. The international office takes care for the selection and integration of foreign students. As indicated above, not all information is available in English and a part of the administrative staff does not speak English fluently. The Panel recommends to re-assess the College's student support and administrative processes from the perspective of foreign students and make sure that all support offered to Lithuanian students is also available in English.

112. Employees are eligible to financial benefits and their health insurance is paid for. The international office supports the staff who participates in international projects.

113. The College has developed a Code of General and Academic Ethics. A dedicated process "PR01 Assurance of academic integrity at the College" aims at ensuring academic integrity of students. The policy is oriented towards preventive activities: the events of the introductory week are used to explain what academic integrity is and why it is important to adhere to it. Written works are checked using a tool created by the Lithuanian Consortium eLABa. Furthermore, as lecturers are encouraged to formulate unique tasks, there is no opportunity to copy the solutions.

114. Students of various cultures and countries study at the College. The events of the introductory week were organised for Lithuanian and foreign students together. International students organised International Days. Such events facilitated the integration of international students into studies in another culture, while local students were able to establish friendly relations with international students and develop tolerance and a desire to learn about other cultures. Nevertheless, the Panel

recommends the College to develop an explicit policy on non-discrimination, as well as an analysis of current needs and the definition of targeted actions for improvement.

115. Furthermore, the College developed a Procedure for Dealing with Appeals of Vilnius Business College. The College indicates in the SER that in 2021 1 case in 2021 and in 2022 2 cases related to academic integrity, tolerance, non-discrimination, appeals and violations of ethical regulations were recorded at the College.

116. Although the College has taken some steps to implement the recommendations identified by the previous external review, the Panel considers that most of the recommendations stay relevant and further efforts are needed to fully implement the following recommendations:

- The College should redefine the quality assurance system based on its current systems in order to create a coherent system with the integrated European Standards and Guidelines.
- The College should improve its Strategic Action Plan and include an analysis of the educational services market in it and highlight the main performance indicators.
- A coherent marketing strategy should be developed that includes growth and business development opportunities that clearly reflect its unique position in the marketing plan.
- To develop more new non-formal education educational programs based on the new philosophy and niche marketing strategy of the College.
- The College maintains useful informal relationships with former students and should rely on them to involve them in the activities of the Alumni Association and thereby support it.
- The College should use relations with its social partners and graduates to develop applied science activities focused on the needs of the region and business entities.

117. **In summary**, the College has a public Quality Policy and has written process descriptions. Nevertheless, there is a substantial room for improvement relating to clear attribution of responsibilities and to more focus on implementation, monitoring and follow-up. In practice a lot of processes rely on mutual confidence and short lines of informal communication. Although this approach is valued by all stakeholders, it is important to also involve stakeholders in a structural way and to further invest in a well-functioning student representation, alumni network and involvement of social partners.

118. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given 2 points.

119. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel urges the College to align its internal quality assurance processes more explicitly to the individual ESG.

- The Panel recommends to clearly attribute responsibilities for implementation, monitoring and follow-up to individual functions in order to increase the accountability in the system.

- The Panel recommends to always share the results of individual course surveys with the concerned teachers and give them the opportunity to react.

- The Panel recommends to share the main findings of the student surveys with students, as well as improvement measures which have been or will be taken.

- The Panel urges the College to make the process descriptions more specific and to add clear procedures for monitoring and improvement based on evaluation results should be added.

- The Panel recommends to add substance to the internal quality assurance processes, as addition to the focus on timelines and steps to be taken.

- The Panel recommends to re-assess the College's student support and administrative processes from the perspective of foreign students and make sure that all support offered to Lithuanian students is also available in English.

- The Panel recommends the College to develop an explicit policy on non-discrimination, as well as an analysis of current needs and the definition of targeted actions for improvement.

- The Panel recommends to further implement the recommendations of the previous external review.

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.*

120. In the academic year 2021-2022, the College delivered the following study programmes:

- *Business Management and Marketing* (traditional or in Team Academy Method) – 359 students
- *Logistics Business* – 149 students
- *Tourism and Events* – 52 students
- *English for International Communication* – 134 students
- *Programming and Internet Technologies* – 126 students
- *Game Development* – 49 students
- *Interactive Media and Technologies* – 48 students.

    The total number of students grew by 66% between 2017-2018 (550) and 2021-2022 (917).

121. Since 2019, the College offers students of the professional Bachelor in *Business Management and Marketing* the choice between a more classical approach or the learning-by-doing approach 'Team Academy method'. The Team Academy method has been created in Finland. It aims to enable students to acquire real experience in business organization and project implementation while studying, and thus, to facilitate the students' adaptation to the changing business environment. This method aims to teach students how to work in a team, to understand their own contribution as a team member to the implemented project, and to assume responsibility for the results of team activities. After successful evaluation in 2021, the accreditation of the study

programme of *Business Management and Marketing* according to the Finnish Team Academy method was extended until 2024. Evaluation was conducted by Tiimiakatemia Global, Partus Ltd, a Finnish consulting company, which created the Team Academy method. The study programme of *Business Management and Marketing* at the College was assigned Tiimiakatemia® Basic Level Certificate.

122. The new owners wanted to complement the educational offer with specific teaching programmes which could respond to needs of the Lithuanian labour market. In 2022 a first new study programme, i.e., professional Bachelor in *Digital business*, has been launched. In 2023 the professional Bachelor in *Programming for Financial Technologies* and the professional Bachelor in *International Hospitality Management* will be launched. The content of the latter is formed adapting the study programme of *Hospitality Management* implemented by Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), a hospitality management university, which has been training specialists in hospitality for more than 125 years. All these programmes are offered in English.

123. Since 2019, the College has implemented full-time study programmes in English and Russian with the ambition to attract foreign students. The Russian taught *Business Management and Marketing* programme attracted 23 students 2021, while the English taught *Game Development* programme attracted 15 students. The College has the ambition to attract more international students in the future.

124. The duration of studies depends on the chosen mode of delivery: full-time studies last 3 years, part-time studies last 4 years. The classes for part-time studies are mainly offered in the evenings and on Saturdays. 100 out of 334 new entrants chose to study in part-time mode.

125. Since 2020, the College has been implementing distance studies. This mode of delivery is mainly developed for people who want to combine their job with higher education studies and for Lithuanians living abroad to obtain education in the Lithuanian language. Students and graduates value this offer. In 2021-2022 176 (19%) of students subscribed to the distance learning offer.

126. The Panel recognises that duplicating the learning process by just changing the delivery mode is the fastest and easiest way to develop a distance learning offer with a certain quality level. To further raise the quality of distance learning, a more fundamental reconsideration of every aspect of the learning process should be reconsidered: for some parts online group teaching may be relevant, while also self-study based on reading or video material, self-tests, individual feedback and peer-learning are important building blocks within distance learning, as they are in on-site education, but the balance between the building blocks and the interaction between them may be different in an ideal distance learning environment. Also technical aspects such as identity control and 24/7 technical support create specific requirements for high quality distance learning. Furthermore, the Panel learned that Lithuanian legislation requires that at least 10% of education is organised on-site. Based on the answers received during the site visit, the Panel considers that the College should better demonstrate its compliance with this legal provision. The defence of the Bachelor's thesis is always organised on-site, as well as some other activities, but it was not possible for the Panel to assess in the framework of this institutional review whether each distance learning programme complies with this legal requirement.

127. Admission to the College is conducted in two ways: admission based on the national admission system organised by the Association of Higher Education Institutions for the Organisation of General Admission (LAMA BPO) and admission based on an own intake process by the College.

The College accepts students with a relatively low national admission score, provided that those entrants show a strong motivation to study at the College. In 2020-2021, 84 new students (63 percent) entered with an entrance score lower than 4,3, compared to 23 percent on average for all Lithuanian colleges. This approach allows to attract motivated students who would not be allowed to other higher education institutions because of their weak results in secondary school, and thus provides a second chance to those students. With this practice, the institution does not follow the national recommendations on admission criteria in relation to the minimum learning achievements in secondary education considered to be a prerequisite for continuation of studies at the level of higher education. However, in the interviews, the institution explained that it provides an additional academic support to those students lacking specific knowledge although as an example of academic support training courses in communication and other transversal skills have been mentioned. Based on its assessment that students who graduate meet the standards for professional higher education, the Panel considers the College's approach to be acceptable. Nevertheless, the Panel strongly encourages the College to further increase its targeted support to students achieving lower results during their secondary education.

128. Various learning methods are applied at the College. Most of the teaching activities are organised in small groups. Next to the learning-by-doing approach of the Team Academy track, also in other programmes student-centred methods are used. Student regularly perform projects, which are based on real cases or are organised in collaboration with social partners which allows students to learn in real life contexts. This practice-oriented approach contributes to the preparation of students for professional activity. The study programmes also include elective modules which aim at the development of the key competences such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Graduates and social partners mention the practical orientation of the training at the College as an important strength of the College. This positive evaluation is confirmed by the privately owned journal "Reitingai", which ranked the College first in Lithuania in the category "added value created by alumni and employer evaluation".

129. A significant part of the lecturers (70 %) are experienced professionals-practitioners. Students and graduates testified that they integrate valuable and recent business experience in their teaching activities. This is seen as an important strength of the College.

130. In order to increase the international recognition of the learning outcomes, the College aims to implement learning resources created by the recognised institutions (e.g., Coursera for Campus) and international certificate training (project management according to Prince2, Scrum Master standards; English according to the standards of Cambridge Assessment English Examination, etc.) in the study programmes from the academic year of 2022-2023 on.

131. The Panel also assessed the numbers provided about graduates' success to find employment after graduation. There are several indicators which are used. On the one hand national statistics are provided about graduates, employed in positions requiring high qualifications (managers, specialists, technicians and junior specialists), or those who started business of their own within 12 month after graduation. According to the data (SKVC IS), the percentage of the College's graduates being employed in such positions was on average 45% for graduates graduated in the period 2017-2020. Although the College accepts students with a lower entry score than other Colleges, the average employment correspond to the average for all Lithuanian colleges, which was 44 percent over the same period. On the other hand, the College also provides numbers on the overall employability 12 months after graduation (taking into account all kind of jobs and not only

those requiring high qualifications. This level increased from 75% in 2018 to 80% in 2020. Finally, the College provides the numbers of graduates who did not find a job withing 9 months after graduation, based on numbers of the Employment Service, the National Agency for Education and Strata. Between 2019 and 2022 this percentage ranged between 0,1% and 5,6%.

132. Based on the provided information and feedback, the Panel learned that the College provides practice-oriented training to a growing population of students who have on average a relatively weak study background, but a strong motivation. Thanks to small groups of students and interactive teaching and learning methods, it manages to deliver graduates to the labour market which are well received and valued for their practical skills, and achieve comparable employment rates to other Lithuanian colleges. The Panel considers that, by doing so, the teaching activities of the College clearly meet minimum requirements and have a positive impact on the regional and national context. However, the Panel recommends the College to analyse whether these outcomes are satisfying the College's ambition to become an international and leading higher education school, where studies will be conducted in accordance with the best-known international business standards and best practices.

133. The Strategic Activity Plan of the College for 2014-2021 includes the ambition to carry out applied research and experimental development activities (R&ED), as reflected in Strategic aim 3 of the Strategic Activity Plan – to carry out project and applied research activities. Also in the Strategy for 2021-2025, R&ED-activities are mentioned in Strategic aim 3 – to increase regional impact through outsourced project and applied research activities. Over the next three years, expenditure on R&ED activities is planned to be increased to 5% of the College's total expenditure. This is a positive step, but the Panel encourages the College to be more ambitious in the growth of research and experimental development activities.

134. Although more than 20 % of all the lecturers working at the higher education institution are holders of doctor's degree, the College does not include in the standard employment contract for teaching staff any specific requirements, nor time, for applied research activities. Although, some financial incentives are created for staff who publish scientific work, the lack of dedicated time for research leads to a very limited research production. During the period of evaluation (2018-2021), College's lecturers engaged to a limited extend in R&ED activities. This resulted in published in international and national scientific publications: 5 articles were published in the reviewed scientific periodical publications (ISI), 5 articles in the proceedings of international conferences organised in foreign countries, 1 publication with affiliation to the College in the own scientific publication and 1 methodological publication. Only 2 of these publications were submitted and approved by the National Research Council to obtain additional funding.

135. In case applied research funding or consultancy activities are attracted, teaching staff is invited to participate in these activities through an additional contract. Recently, 2 outsourced project activities of a substantial size are being implemented:
- Together with UAB System Integrated Solutions, a model for individual Authentication and Authorization in Decentralized Systems has been developed. During the project a payment platform based has been developed, which will be first in the world to combine the "blockchain" technology and "Request-to-Pay" standardization solution. The project includes 8 researchers (lecturers) in Business and IT from the College.
- MB Miskantas was set up to create an artificial intelligence-based support system for the assessment of knowledge and achievements and to commercialize this product created by the

researchers of the College. This project is closely linked to the applied research directions in teaching innovation and in technology. The developed system aims to automate the assessment of both closed and open-type questions and not limited to the assessment of achievements in a specific subject area and forming feedback to both the tested and the testing person. This system will be also used at the College.

136. In order to implement the own strategy the College needs to create research groups according to the directions of research defined by the College, which can create the critical mass and receive the necessary resources to set-up research projects.

137. Overall, the Panel considers the performed applied research during the evaluation to be clearly insufficient for a higher education institution with the ambition to base its teaching activities on applied scientific research. Recent efforts are taken to invest more in applied research, but the Panel considers that there is a need of a clear research strategy, including the necessary resources for implementation, in order to achieve the standards for a higher education institution.

138. The College relies heavily on the research work teaching staff has performed previously or still performs outside their teaching appointment at the College, to base the studies on scientific knowledge and recent research outcomes. During the site visit several members of the teaching staff explained how they integrate research findings in teaching activities, but no active policy exists within the College to monitor to which extent all teaching activities are based on research outcomes. The Panel recommends to monitor the integration of research outcomes in the teaching and learning activities of the College.

139. The College argues that it involves students in applied research activities through writing company-specific final theses and project work. However, the Panel considers these activities as practice-oriented application of the knowledge students have accumulated during their studies, rather than as applied research activities.

140. General education obtained abroad by citizens of the Republic of Lithuania or foreign citizens is evaluated and recognised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) at their request. Only applicants who have submitted a certificate of equivalent education issued by SKVC are admitted to the College.

141. Crediting of partial studies is conducted by the College in accordance with its Procedure of Crediting Learning Outcomes. The procedure applies to individuals who graduated, studied or have been studying in Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions in higher education study programmes, and want to continue their studies in the College and apply for credit transfer of their previously achieved learning outcomes in the same or different study programmes. During the period of evaluation, 106 students of the study programmes delivered at the College applied for recognition of their formally obtained learning outcomes.

142. The College has a procedure for the recognition of previous non-formal and informal learning. This procedure applies to people who have secondary education and at least three years of working experience and who express a wish for their knowledge and skills acquired both non-formally and informally in their direct work, volunteering, courses, study visits, learning independently to be formally evaluated and recognized as learning outcomes. The procedure of evaluating learning achievement at the College is organized using a mixed model, in which the learning achievement portfolio methodology is used as the main evaluation method, and other learning evidence collection techniques are additionally used (interview, exam, testing, project preparation and

presentation, essay, etc.). Until now, no requests for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning has been submitted.

<table>
<tr><td>3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td></tr>
</table>

143. The promotion and implementation of internationalization is one of the key strategic directions of the College embodied in the institutional strategy to fulfil the institution's mission and vision and to contribute to the creation of the European Education Area. The goals of internationalization are:
    - creating exceptional international study programmes;
    - seeking to integrate the training of international certificates into the study programs;
    - improving international communication competences of lecturers and administrative staff;
    - increasing the attraction of students from abroad and promoting the mobility of VBC students through exchange programs;
    - promoting international mobility of the academic community and administration of VBC and partner higher education institutions.

144. The achievement of those objectives is measured by a set of indicators which are listed in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and annual plans for strategy implementation. The following objectives are set:
    - 1-2 integrated international certificate trainings per study programme.
    - Lecturer mobility: the number of outgoing/incoming lecturers each year shall be 10% of the total number of lecturers in the study field.
    - Number of international students: 30-40% of the total number of students.
    - Number of foreign lecturers: 10% of the total number of lecturers.

145. The College seeks international recognition by increasing the number of study programmes in English, trying to attract more foreign students from Eastern and Central Asia and Central and Western African countries. In the academic year 2021-2022 75 foreigners were studying in the College. The 3 new study programmes *Digital business, Programming for Financial Technologies* and *International Hospitality Management* will be delivered in English, aiming to attract more international students. In order to achieve the target of 30-40% international students, substantial additional efforts will be required.

146. Furthermore, the College has 45 Erasmus+ collaboration agreements signed with higher education institutions: 35 out of them are signed with partners from the European Union (EU) and 10 agreements with the countries outside the European Union. In 2021-2022 the College counted 3 outgoing students for studies and 8 outgoing students for traineeships within the Erasmus+ Programme, and no incoming students. The Panel considers this too limited in relation to the ambitions of the College. The College argues that the observed insufficient mobility of students is determined by several reasons: it was difficult to take advantage of mobility project opportunities due to the emergency situation that arose in 2019-2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic in

Lithuania and the world, due to family obligations, increasing work, etc. Although the numbers were even lower during COVID-19, the numbers of outgoing students before and since COVID-19 were also quite low (average of 2 outgoing students for studies and 8 for traineeships, taking into account 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2021-2022). Also the number of incoming students (7 on average from 2017-2019) is low, considering the total number of students and the ambitions of the College. In 2020 the College attracted 18 incoming mobile students thanks to a one-off short term mobility. In the opinion of the Panel, the College needs to invest additionally if it wants to achieve its international ambitions.

147. Next to student mobility, the College also invests in mobility for employees. Employees of the College have participated in several international exchange activities, including project meetings, Erasmus+ exchange programme, study visits, study fairs, conferences, etc. Lecturers from abroad periodically come to the College to deliver lectures, give presentations and participate in meetings with the College's academic community. In 2021-2022 13 lecturers and 11 administrative staff participated in outgoing mobility activities and 4 foreign lecturers and administrative were involved in incoming staff mobility.

148. All lecturers working with foreign students are required to speak at least 2 languages at a level not lower than B2.

149. Seeking improvement of the study quality and increase in internationality, the College community actively participates in the activities of international projects. The topics of already implemented projects and projects that are still being implemented are related to thematic directions of applied research established by the College:
    - Language skills and intercultural challenges (problems) in the hospitality industry: unity in diversity in the EU labour market",
    - "IDEATE High Tech: Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurial Application for Transforming Education in High Technologies",
    - "Development of Student Social Entrepreneurship Skills and Promotion of Creativity",
    - "Vocational Guidance for Socially Vulnerable Young People".

Nevertheless, the Panel learned that the College doesn't participate in any Horizon Europe project or other big scale research projects. Participation in such kind of projects would not only allow to attract substantial funding for research, but also to build up strong research onlines with foreign institutions.

150. To integrate international aspects into all ongoing study programmes, the study subject Intercultural Communication in Business has been included in the list of freely optional subjects.

151. While the international aspects in the English taught programmes is obvious, the Panel recommends the College to further invest in the interaction between foreign and national students, not only through leisure activities, but also through the common project work and other joint learning activities.

152. **In summary**, the college provided up-to-date practice oriented training, and involves a significant part of the lecturers who are experienced professionals-practitioners. Students, graduates and employers value the quality of the training the College provides and its outcomes. Although the College has recently invested to accelerate internationalisation of the College, the results in this area were quite limited during the evaluation period. Furthermore, the College has only begun to develop applied research activities and results during the evaluation period do not

require the minimum requirements for this area, neither are they complying with the own strategic objectives, yet.

153. **Judgment:** the area does not meet the minimum requirements and is given 1 point.

154. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends the College to analyse whether the current outcomes of the study programmes are satisfying the College's ambition to become an international and leading higher education school, where studies will be conducted in accordance with the best-known international business standards and best practices.

- The Panel strongly encourages the College to increase its more targeted support to students achieving lower results during their secondary education.

- The Panel recommends a more fundamental reconsideration of every aspect of the distance learning process to further raise the quality of distance learning.

- The Panel urges the College to develop a clear research strategy, including the necessary resources for implementation

- The Panel strongly recommends to create research groups according to the directions of research as defined by the College.

- The Panel strongly recommends to be more ambitious in the growth of research and experimental development activities.

- The Panel recommends to monitor the integration of research outcomes in the teaching and learning activities of the College.

- The Panel recommends the College to invest more in attracting more international degree students and to increase the participation in both incoming and outgoing Erasmus+ mobility if it wants to achieve its international ambitions.

- The Panel recommends the College to further invest in the interaction between foreign and national students, not only through leisure activities, but also through the common project work and other joint learning activities.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

Impact on Regional and National Development area is being 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.*

155. The College indicates in the SER that it has analysed a broad range of policy documents of the Republic of Lithuania in order to identify regional, national and European needs it could meet.

This analysis is reflected in Strategic aim 3 of the Strategy for 2021-2025 – "to increase regional impact through outsourced project and applied research activities". The following objectives were formulated for:

1) developing the partnership of research, studies, and business;
2) increasing the dissemination of the results of scientific applied activities;
3) integrating the latest scientific achievements in study programmes.

156. Since 2021 the results have been analysed considering the following indicators:
   - the number of joint projects with business - at least 1 per study programme;
   - an annual growth of 10% in the number of targeted outsourcing activities (applied research, consulting, company-specific thesis topics, feasibility studies, market research);
   - an annual increase of at least 10% in the number of publications in international publications;
   - 4 research teams in operation, in accordance with the directions of applied research approved by the College;
   - annual updating of all study programmes, integrating new subjects, content, study and assessment methods.

157. The Panel considers that not all of the chosen indicators relate directly to the aim "to increase regional impact through outsourced project and applied research activities". The objective "integrating the latest scientific achievements in study programmes" and the related indicator "annual updating of all study programmes, integrating new subjects, content, study and assessment methods" relate more to the quality of the study programmes offered.

158. The Panel values the ambition to increase the number of applied research projects with social partners. At the moment of the site visit, the College had 2 substantial projects involving research and consulting activities for innovation in collaboration with local businesses. The Panel encourages the College to strengthen those efforts, and set-up, as indicated in the last indicator, at least 4 research teams. Each of this research team should aim to set up several applied research projects and consulting activities. This will help the College to attract additional resources and develop own capacity to increase the dissemination of the results of applied research and to integrate more own research in its study programmes.

159. The College actively integrates project work in its study programmes. Many of the topics for project work are sourced among social partners. The College also encourages students to perform its thesis in collaboration with social partners. Through these activities social partners may benefit from the knowledge students have acquired during their studies. The results of a graduate survey conducted in 2021 showed that 34 % of students got jobs after professional or final internships. This is an indication that graduates have acquired competences which are welcomed by the business sector.

160. College staff carry out consulting activities, training courses for Lithuanian economic entities and Lithuanian state institutions. For example, Vilnius Business College is an accredited English language testing centre for civil servants. At the College, civil servants and candidates for public office positions can take the international English level placement test, i.e., Oxford Online Placement Test. The College also offers a course in Modern Translation Technologies, etc. Furthermore, College lecturers delivered entrepreneurship training courses in nine gymnasiums in Lithuania.

161. The College maintains close ties with business representatives in order to be able to react to changes in the market. The study programme "International Hospitality Management" is a new study programme which has been developed based on detected needs of the Lithuanian labour market.

162. The College organised in 2021 organised a series of public lectures and discussions with entrepreneurs, heads of companies, professionals in different fields for the College students, academic staff and administration. It also offers sector federations the opportunity to organise events in the College's premises.

163. Beyond the regular teaching and learning activities of the College, it also participates in the entrepreneurship education programmes "Lithuania Junior Achievement" together with the Marius Jakulis Jason (MJJ) Foundation. More than 3.000 pupils from all over Lithuania have participated in the project and developed business ideas. They learn entrepreneurship skills establishing their own businesses.

164. Student representatives organise regularly social activities for the College's students, encouraging national and international students to meet and projects with a broader societal benefit.

165. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the efficiency of implementation of the Strategic plan is a part of the quality assessment of the College's performance, which is analysed during the Management review. However, the indicators which are set to monitor the implementation are mainly oriented at activities to implement, while they do not focus on the effectiveness of the measures and the ultimate impact on national and regional development. In its discussions with the owners of the College and the director, a clear ambition was pronounced to increase the impact of the College on national and regional development. The Panel encourages the College to make this intended impact more explicit and integrate it more extensively in the indicators which are set. Moreover, in line with the general remarks, the Panel considers that there is substantial room for improvement in the monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the efforts made by the College.

166. As indicated above, the Panel considers that the Strategic plan does not include all relevant aspects of impact on national and regional development. The Panel recommends developing a strategic vision for external engagement that connects the College's teaching and learning and research agendas to ensure greater impact on regional and national development. This would include research into the wider lifelong learning needs and requirements including the opportunities in hybrid and online provision.

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.*

167. The College indicates in its SER that it has analysed international and national policy documents in order to analyse the need for lifelong learning, such as STRATA: Lifelong learning: habits, attractiveness, barriers, awareness of benefits, September 2020; The State of Human

Capital in Lithuania in 2021; OECD Skills Strategy: Lithuania, 2021 June 11; MOSTA: 2017 Research and Business Cooperation in R&D and the National Education Strategy for 2013-2022, The EU Life-long Learning Strategy, Skills and Qualifications - Lifelong Learning Platform, New Skills Agenda for Europe, XXI Century Skill, Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. Furthermore, the College exchanges views with social partners via formal channels, but also informally on the needs for lifelong learning. It also has frequent discussions with the Marius Jakulis Jason Foundation on this topic. Although the Panel recognises those efforts, it recommends to process the insights gathered from the analysis of those inputs into a succinct overview which may lead the further development of new lifelong learning activities. Furthermore, the Panel recommends to develop a more pro-active policy to detect specific needs for lifelong learning in the Lithuanian Society which are aligned with the expertise of the College.

168. Next to offering the professional bachelor's courses to students in the context of their lifelong learning, the College started recently to develop courses for continued education for its own graduates and other practitioners in the fields of study in which the College is specialised:
    - In 2022, the College offered a course in Modern Translation Technologies to familiarise with novelties in the linguistic service sector, modern process of translation, benefits of translation technologies and possibilities for using automatic translation. The training courses are held at two levels - for beginners and advanced users.
    - From 2023 on, the College will also provide a leadership development course for middle management.
    - Furthermore, the College organised a series of public lectures-discussions with entrepreneurs, heads of companies, professionals in their fields, which targeted at students, academic staff and administration, in the autumn semester of 2021.

The Panel recognises the recent efforts in this area, but notices that during the evaluation period the offer of this kind of continued education was very limited. The Panel recommends to further develop its continued education offer for its own graduates and other practitioners in the fields of study in which the College is specialised. It considers that this is not only a good way to improve the reputation of the College and to strengthen the ties with graduates and social partners, but it may also be a good way to diversify its incomes.

169. Furthermore, the College takes some initiatives in the broader context of lifelong learning, such as:
    - In 2022 the College received funding from the Education Exchange Support Foundation for the organization of Lithuanian language and culture courses for Ukrainian citizens.
    - The Teaching Innovation Department provides a broad range of courses for lecturers to ensure their professional development, including academic staff from other higher education institutions. In 2021, 47 of the own lecturers took part in training courses.
    - The College is an accredited English language testing centre for civil servants. At the College civil servants and candidates for public office positions can take the international English level placement test, i.e., Oxford Online Placement Test, helping to assess the applicant's General English level. Those who pass the test are issued a certificate in the form prescribed by the Civil Service Department. From 2017 to 2021, 81 candidates for civil service used the College's testing services.

170. The College indicates in the SER that the assessment of conditions for ensuring lifelong learning is conducted by constantly comparing the College's potential with the opportunities

predetermined by the environment. Based on the interviews, it is clear to the Panel that the College has frequent exchanges with the Marius Jakulis Jason Foundation on the future growth of the College, including its role in lifelong learning. Furthermore, the College uses its, mainly informal, contacts with sector federations and employers to get feedback on its lifelong learning activities. Nevertheless, the Panel noticed that the College does not evaluate the assurance of conditions for lifelong learning in a structured way. As no aims and objectives are set for lifelong learning, there is no explicit framework for assessing those. Therefore, the Panel encourages the College to conduct the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning in a more systematic way.

171. **In summary,** the College offers 7 Bachelor's degree programmes which are relevant to Lithuanian society. It also invests in research and experimental development projects together with Lithuanian companies in order to contribute to innovation and economic growth in Lithuania. The College should make its intended impact more explicit and monitor the achieved impact more systematically. The College provides its educational offer in part-time and distance mode, which allow students to learn in a flexible way. An important area for future development is the offer of lifelong learning for its own graduates and other professionals interested in continued education. Furthermore, the Teaching Innovation Department offers training on innovative teaching methods and the College participates in some projects to develop entrepreneurial spirit among the Lithuanian youth. Nevertheless, the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning should be conducted in a more systematic way.

172. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks that must me addressed and is given 2 points.

173. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel encourages the College to make the intended impact on national and regional development more explicit and integrate it more explicitly in the indicators which are set.

- The Panel encourages the College to strengthen its efforts, and set-up, as indicated in tits own indicators, at least 4 research teams. Each of this research team should aim to set up several applied research projects and consulting activities.

- The panel recommends developing a strategic vision for external engagement that connects the College's teaching and learning and research agendas to ensure greater impact on regional and national development.

- The Panel encourages the College to actively source student projects in which businesses' needs and applied research knowledge of the College may be integrated.

- The Panel recommends to process insights gathered from its analysis of lifelong learning needs into a succinct overview which may lead the further development of new lifelong learning activities.

- The Panel recommends to develop a more pro-active policy to detect specific needs for lifelong learning in the Lithuanian Society which are aligned with the expertise of the College.

- The Panel encourages the College to conduct the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning in a more systematic way.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- The Panel encourages the College to be ambitious, but also realistic in is pursued ambitions, taking into account its available resources and current capacities.

- The Panel recommends the College to perform a more in depth analysis of the European policies and instruments of the Bologna process, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, and integrate the relevant elements consciously in the policy documents and daily practices of the College.

- The Panel recommends the College to base its Strategic documents on an explicit and in depth assessment of past performance and newly established needs.

- The Panel recommends the College to make sure that objectives, indicators and planned activities are fully consistent and the activities are also covering all aspects of the objective.

- The Panel recommends the College to gather internal and external feedback more detailed and more systematically in other to provide the Management review meeting with substantial input to fundamentally discuss necessary improvements.

- The Panel recommends to attribute responsibilities clearly to a specific function within the organisation and to systematically monitor implementation of the agreed actions and to use the student survey results for a more systematic approach to institutional improvements and developments.

- The Panel insists that the College makes an in depth analysis of the ESG and the consistency of the College's processes with the ESG.

- The Panel recommends the College to consider in which way risk management could be integrated more systematically in its management processes.

- The Panel recommends to strengthen the Academic Council to fully take up the role it has according to the Statute of the College. In order to do so, active stakeholder involvement is necessary, including the student voice. It may be relevant to add a second student representative, in order to achieve this objective.

- The Panel recommends the College management to discuss with student representatives which support they need to play their role effectively.

- The Panel recommends to strengthen the stakeholder involvement in the management processes of the College.

- The Panel urges the College to provide more detailed information on the study subjects (contents, teaching, learning and assessment methods, number of ECTS-credits) in Lithuanian and English.

- The Panel encourages the College to provide statistical data on the employment of graduates on its website.

- The Panel recommends to further strengthen the core team of full time teaching staff.

- The Panel considers it necessary to include research activities in the job description of at least part of the teaching staff.

- The Panel recommends to develop a more systematic approach for the professional development of all teaching staff.

- The Panel recommends to establish a more explicit connection between the strategic planning and the budget.

- The Panel recommends to increase the efforts to diversify incomes.

Quality Assurance:

- The Panel urges the College to align its internal quality assurance processes more explicitly to the individual ESG.

- The Panel recommends to clearly attribute responsibilities for implementation, monitoring and follow-up to individual functions in order to increase the accountability in the system.

- The Panel recommends to always share the results of individual course surveys with the concerned teachers and give them the opportunity to react.

- The Panel recommends to share the main findings of the student surveys with students, as well as improvement measures which have been or will be taken.

- The Panel urges the College to make the process descriptions more specific and to add clear procedures for monitoring and improvement based on evaluation results should be added.

- The Panel recommends to add substance to the internal quality assurance processes, as addition to the focus on timelines and steps to be taken.

- The Panel recommends to re-assess the College's student support and administrative processes from the perspective of foreign students and make sure that all support offered to Lithuanian students is also available in English.

- The Panel recommends the College to develop an explicit policy on non-discrimination, as well as an analysis of current needs and the definition of targeted actions for improvement.

- The Panel recommends to further implement the recommendations of the previous external review.

Studies and Research (Art):

- The Panel recommends the College to analyse whether the current outcomes of the study programmes are satisfying the College's ambition to become an international and leading higher education school, where studies will be conducted in accordance with the best-known international business standards and best practices.

- The Panel strongly encourages the College to increase its more targeted support to students achieving lower results during their secondary education.

- The Panel recommends a more fundamental reconsideration of every aspect of the distance learning process to further raise the quality of distance learning.

- The Panel urges the College to develop a clear research strategy, including the necessary resources for implementation

- The Panel strongly recommends to create research groups according to the directions of research as defined by the College.

- The Panel strongly recommends to be more ambitious in the growth of research and experimental development activities.

- The Panel recommends to monitor the integration of research outcomes in the teaching and learning activities of the College.

- The Panel recommends the College to invest more in attracting more international degree students and to increase the participation in both incoming and outgoing Erasmus+ mobility if it wants to achieve its international ambitions.

- The Panel recommends the College to further invest in the interaction between foreign and national students, not only through leisure activities, but also through the common project work and other joint learning activities.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The Panel encourages the College to make the intended impact on national and regional development more explicit and integrate it more explicitly in the indicators which are set.

- The Panel encourages the College to strengthen its efforts, and set-up, as indicated in tits own indicators, at least 4 research teams. Each of this research team should aim to set up several applied research projects and consulting activities.

- The panel recommends developing a strategic vision for external engagement that connects the College's teaching and learning and research agendas to ensure greater impact on regional and national development.

- The Panel recommends to process insights gathered from its analysis of lifelong learning needs into a succinct overview which may lead the further development of new lifelong learning activities.

- The Panel recommends to develop a more pro-active policy to detect specific needs for lifelong learning in the Lithuanian Society which are aligned with the expertise of the College.

- The Panel encourages the College to conduct the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning in a more systematic way.