SKVC

MARIJAMPOLĖS KOLEGIJOS VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF *MARIJAMPOLĖ COLLEGE*

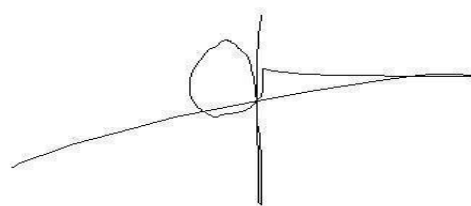|	
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2022

Report language – English

CONTENT

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

Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Hernández Buades

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

3. The Panel was composed of the 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:

    - Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Hernandèz Buades (Chair): CEO of Sant Paul CEU Andalusia Foundation, Spain;
    - Ms. Petra Pistor (Secretary): Quality Manager at FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, Germany;
    - Ms. Ana Tecilazić (Academic): Secretary General of Algebra University College, Croatia;
    - . Dr. Vitor Braga (Academic): Associate Professor at Porto Polytechnic, School of Technology and Management, Portugal;
    - Ms. Rasa Laiconienė (Social Partner): EQUASS auditor, Lithuania;
    - Ms. Kamilė Dubikaltytė (Student): Student of Food Technology at Klaipeda State College, Lithuania.

4. As a result of external review **Marijampolė College** is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. **3** examples of good practices were found; **28** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

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

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

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received MC's Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with annexes. The Panel requested a variety of additional documents (activity plan and financial support plan, revenue and expenditures, list of academic staff, regulations for staff assessment and competition for positions, information about staff support, workload rationing and distribution, list of staff development activities, procedure for crediting partial learning outcomes, procedure for the recognition of non-formal and informal achievements, process descriptions, risk management policy). Some of the documents were only provided in Lithuanian language and have been translated by the SKVC coordinator and one Lithuanian panel member. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; data about external reviews; report of previous institutional review; 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.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel „visited" the College online between 26th and 28th of April 2022, where it had meetings with internal and external stakeholders, including the governing bodies, deans, heads of administrative units, staff, students, graduates and social partners. **Due to the worldwide pandemic situation, the review visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool Zoom** hosted by the Centre. Subsequently, the Panel met 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 which took place in 2013.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

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

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

15. The Panel received comments by the College and considered them. Two corrections of factual errors were made and some minor changes were made to the report in order to explain the Panel's position in more detail. The corrections and changes have been explained in detail to the College in the form of written comments on the remarks provided by the College. The conclusions were discussed twice by the Higher Education Evaluation Commission (AMVK). Following comments from the AMVK and clarifications from the institution, the evaluation of one area was changed.

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 of the higher education institution 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. The College was established in 2001 after the merging of the former Marijampolė Advanced Pedagogical School and former Marijampolė Advanced Agricultural School. Since September 2012 The College is registered in the Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Lithuania as a Public Institution. MC is an institution that aims at serving the South-West Lithuanian region by offering both degree programmes, short-term studies and further education activities. At the same time, the College wants to strengthen its internationality to become „a full participant in the European area   of studies and research".

20. In order to optimise the management of MC, a new management structure was approved in March 2021. The management bodies of the College comprise the College Council, the Academic Council as well as the Principal, a Vice-Principal for Academic and Scientific Development and a Vice-Principal for Infrastructure and Project Activity.

21. Starting in 2019 the college has seen many profound changes in its organisational structure and operations. Among these were the establishment of a student representation, the reframing of the Vice-Principals' resorts, the reduction of staff based on the reorganisation of study programmes and other changes affecting the tasks and processes of central support units and counselling bodies.

22. MC comprises two faculties: the Faculty of Education Studies and Social Work and the Faculty of Business and Technology. The college currently offers 12 study programmes in 9 study fields (management, accounting, law, social work, pedagogy, language studies, business, computer engineering, transport engineering).

23. At the time of preparation of the self-evaluation report in October 2021, the College had 562 students. 787 students graduated from the MC during the assessment period (2014 – 2021).

24. In October 2021 the College had 105 employees, of which 40 were non - academic staff and 65 were academic staff. The MC currently employs one full-time Phd-holder among 7 full-time academic staff in total.

25. Support and administrative services for both faculties are provided by the following organisational units: Division of Studies and Career, Division of Project Activities and

International Studies Partnership, Center for Educational Higher Education, Center for Information Technology and Electronic Studies, Division of Personnel, Law and Public Procurement, Communication and Marketing Division, Accounting and Finance Division.

26. Apart from that, the College has two councils comprising internal and external members: The Research Applied Activities Council, the purpose of which is to form strategic provisions for applied research activities and the Innovation and Study Quality Council, the objectives of which are to manage innovation activities in the College and to develop the study quality assurance system.

27. In 2013 the Quality Management System (QMS) was implemented in accordance with the international management system standard ISO 9001: 2008. In 2016 the College became the first Lithuanian college to recertify its quality management system according to the new ISO 9001: 2015 international management system standard. In 2019 QMS was re-certified again and a Management System Certificate has been issued to guarantee DNV GL's compliance until October 2022. The ISO-based QMS focuses on the description of work flows (currently 28 ISO processes are modelled) in different areas of the college.

28. In the last institutional review in 2013, the international panel of experts assessed the activities in all areas positively. By order of the Director of the Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on April 18, 2014, No. SV6-23 The College was accredited for 6 years.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

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

> *1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:*
>
> *1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;*
> *1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;*
> *1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.*

29. The College has all legal permissions of the Lithuanian authorities to carry out its activity. The level of compliance with the legal regulations and the recommendations of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in specific fields (research, quality regulations, study activities, etc.) will be developed in specific chapters of this report.

30. During the reporting period, MC was guided by the Strategic Plan for 2018-2020. The College has developed the Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 as well as guidelines until 2030. The actual Strategic Plan describes the current situation, identifies priorities, the main objectives and

their indicators, includes a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and the PEST factors (political, economic, social, legal). It considers recommendations of social partners and provides 3 development programmes that are in line with the 3 priority areas of the Strategic Guidelines. These programmes are implemented through 7 goals, 13 objectives and 22 measures. The Strategy and Guidelines also establish a link to the European Higher Education (EHEA) and the European Research Areas (ERA).

31. For the Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 and guidelines until 2030, the mission was renewed reflecting the main changes in the institution and in the region, and new trends at national and international levels: short-term studies in higher education, emphasis on applied scientific research, coherence between international and social partnerships and the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy.

32. The Strategic Plan is oriented to the mission of the College. In order to implement the College's mission, the priority areas for development identified in the Strategic plan are: "high value studies and research and development", "sustainable organization", "modern infrastructure and efficient processes". The parts of the Strategic Plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified. However, although the priorities are specified and developed in the Strategic Plan, the Panel recommends that the College should include a higher level of detail and disaggregation in its Strategic Plan in order to be able to implement specific actions properly.

33. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

34. So, the strategy monitoring system is implemented and operating. It is focused on identifying problematic issues and preventive actions and to achieving improvements. The internal monitoring of the Strategic Plan is performed at all levels at the end of the calendar year, evaluating and analysing the indicators. The Strategic Plan (5 years) is developed in the annual Action Plan (1 year), that is prepared in coordination with its goals, objectives and measures, and includes the analysis of the implementation of the statement of revenue and expenditure. An annual report is prepared (the Activity Report 2021 has been delivered to the Panel). The Panel recommends to review permanently the level of alignment of the Strategic Plan to departments and personnel, and the level of implementation with targets and indicators, in order to optimise the effective monitoring and change management.

35. The Panel found little evidence from the SER and the interviews that MC analyses systematically, through advanced data mining processes, the data collected in order to evaluate its performance and inform decision-making. Apart from that data collection is dispersed throughout the institution, as it will be described later on in detail.

36. There is a need to improve the capacity to retain part-time students (most of the students are working besides their studies) and to increase the number of new students. Most students at MC are part-time students. Therefore, one of the main reasons for dropping out is the voluntary termination of studies due to the inability to combine work and studies. For this reason, in 2017 about 18.1 per cent of new students cancelled their enrolment, in 2018 - 16.5 % in 2019 - 22.4 % in 2020 - 18.6 % as was described in the SER.

37. The College also does not use advanced analyses (synthetic variables, geodemographics) that could form the basis of developing advanced Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). To enhance the decision-making process by implementing a clear reporting structure for all committees and improving the information system for top management is vital to enable the College to identify and focus on key strategic issues. The range of data collected is sometimes too limited for a thorough evaluation of the complete performance of the College. This is not a critical negative factor but rather a recommendation that will result in the optimisation of the College's decision-making processes.

38. A special difficulty of the external evaluation faced by the Panel has been the fact that many developments and improvements are taking place recently: new organisational structure, processes and manuals (such as QA manual). This brought the Panel into the situation to base its assessment on a SER based on data and information from a previous development stage and on interviews during the online „visit" that depicted a more advanced development stage with new organisational units, processes and manuals, the impact of which have not yet been verified.

39. The Panel highly values the effort made for revising processes and structures in order to increase the efficiency and the quality of the services offered, as well as the digitalisation of teaching and learning processes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel appreciates that most of the College's activities are in accordance with the basic documents of the EHEA and the commitments provided for the Bologna Process Ministerial Conferences (such as the creation of the Innovation and Study Quality Council, ideas of sustainability and ecological preservation, etc.). However, as it will be indicated later, some aspects of the activity should be better matched with the EHEA-policies, such as with the ESG.

40. Due to the fact that the College – as a public institution - receives public funds punctually, its management controlling is basically limited to control expenses and adjusting them to incomes. The Strategic Plan (5 years) is developed in the Action plan (1 year). However, the Panel detects a lack of specificity and a higher level of detail, regarding the concrete future actions, economic resources, sources of financing and measures to be carried out to achieve the objectives. In this line, the Panel sees the need to orient the focus of the economic forecast of the College more to medium and long-term, estimating the expenses and the incomes (funds) that the College will receive in each period. This way, the College would benefit from a better estimation of current and expected costs and subsidies.

41. In the Panel's view, the College does not set up a sufficiently developed economic viability planning for its future development with predictive quantitative data and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) objectives and priorities, beyond the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is merely based on qualitative measures and results. Quantitative indicators should be measured and accompanied by more extensive qualitative information, capable of predicting and measuring the economic solvency of the College over time, both in short, medium and long term.

42. When comparing the actual and planned income and results for 2021, we detect that the actual income and results were lower than the planned ones (as the Panel could see from table 1.2 of the SER). This data add to the fact that the Panel detects an insufficient intensity of project activities to acquire additional funds (which was mentioned in the College's SWOT analysis and

confirmed by the members of the College Council), recommends to closely monitor the future evolution of the College's income statement.

43. Apart from that it was difficult for the Panel to build an opinion, since there are inconsistencies in the information on data provided in the documents: the actual incomes of 2019 and 2020 in table 1.2 in the SER and table 15 in annex 5 differ from each other.

44. The Panel has detected several points for improvement closely linked to the management area discussed here, which will be elaborated in the next specific chapters of this report, such as the lack of a QA unit, lacking actions focused on student retention, insufficient number of full-time PhD-holders, lack of sufficient resources to manage the institution, high percentage of possible recognition of informal and non-formal learning and a strong focus on serving the Marijampolė Municipality, but a modest regional and national impact and little focus on internationalisation. These should be taken into account in order to guarantee that the College meets the requirements of a higher education institution in the EHEA including the ESG.

45. The College is focussed too much on the fact that it fulfils the minimum legal requirements. Overall, the Panel misses a strategic approach (proactive instead of reactive) to human resource planning, financial planning, etc., that is capable of clearly showing that MC wants to develop further in teaching and research.

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.*

46. According to the information gained from the SER and the interviews, the MC set out a governance structure and procedures for the appointment to the governing bodies and middle-management bodies and positions. High management approvals (Governance structure, Strategic Plan, Action Plan, Annual Activity Report, etc.), academic decision makings and responsibilities are clearly defined.

47. The institution has two collegial governing bodies: The College Council (governing body dealing with strategic affairs) is composed by representatives of various stakeholders (1 student; 4 members representing MC teachers, scientific researchers, other researchers, administration and other staff; 3 members not belonging to the MC staff and students and representing respectively the social partners of the region, higher education of the state and regional self-government, and 1 member not belonging to the staff and students of the MC).

48. The Academic Council (governing body for academic affairs) is composed of internal staff (that includes also academic staff fully employed by another institution but partly engaged at the MC as external associates) and representatives of the external stakeholder groups: 3 student representatives appointed by the Student Representation; Principal of The College; 3 representatives of other research and higher education institutions representing the fields of study operating at the College; one chairman of the MC Faculty Board, appointed by the decision of the meeting of the College's academic community; 6 teachers appointed by the decision of the

meeting of the academic community of the College; 1 person appointed by decision of the MC Principals.

49. The Faculty Boards of the College (highest self-governing institutions of the faculties), are formed by the representatives of the faculty teachers and students. The College Council approves the management structure, which is lead by the Principal and two Vice-Principals. The interests of students in the governing bodies are represented by the Student Representation.

50. The presentation of the organisational structure of MC in the organigram is very confusing. The organigram does not provide a clear picture and relationship between organisational units (i.e. an entity with resources and staff allocated to it) and internal bodies (i.e. composed of representatives from various organisational units without its own resource allocation) as they were perceived in the meetings. Also, the institution failed to make the organisational structure sufficiently clear during the online "visit". Neither from the documents nor from the interviews has the organisational structure become conclusively clear. This is even more of a problem because the College has had a rather unstable organisational structure in the past and urgently needs stability. The unclarity about the organisational structure was enhanced by the fact that the organisational units or bodies were translated into English inconsistently in the documents (e.g. Scientific Development Council vs. Applied Scientific Research Council and some other examples) and also during the interviews. The Panel strongly encourages the College to make sure that organisational units, bodies and regulations are translated consistently in official documents and websites and to – first and foremost – revise their organigram.

51. Since 2018, the College's structure has changed 3 times: A major restructuring in 2018 (which indicates that previously defined structures could not accommodate and respond to the implementation of the MC's strategic objectives), and less substantial changes in 2019 and 2021. This reveals a certain level of instability in the structure. Although institutional structures should be flexible to a certain extent – which indicates a process of reflection in the institution and has to be appreciated - they should be sustainable enough to initiate and accompany long-term developments. The Panel recommends to increase the stability also by employing more full-time staff members (see in this chapter below).

52. The Panel recommends adding to its organisational structure a central unit (or to designate an existing one) to be responsible for the internal QA system of the institution. This unit should be focusing on assuring quality of teaching and learning that goes beyond ISO procedures and should coordinate all activities in relation to quality assurance: from developing a comprehensive policy, internal regulations and manuals, data collection and data analysis, continuous improvements and revisions of study programmes, use of evidence to improve the quality of study programmes and the quality of teaching and learning specifically, regular reporting, etc. all in line with the ESG. It is important to set-up a specific QA office (organisational unit), with specialised resources dedicated exclusively to this area (see chapter QA for further detail).

53. The College has implemented a comprehensive quality management and process management system based on the ISO standard 9001:2015 and reflected in MC's Quality Manual. The effectiveness of the College's actions and results are – based on the ISO standard – analysed in discussions of audit reports, directorate meetings and self-assessment meetings. The Panel assesses the process management as sufficient for the quality assurance of organisational

(especially administrative) processes, but insufficient for quality assurance of teaching and learning. This will be elaborated in the respective chapter below.

54. The institution also has in place a Risk Management Policy for risk management. It describes how to identify risks, assess their likelihood and potential harm, derive mitigation measures and define responsibilities. The Panel observes that the College's risk management is not having the desired effects. One of the purposes of risk management is to enable long-term planning by avoiding or reducing identified risks as early as possible. Overall, however, the college shows a rather short-term planning mentality. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that non-permanent staff are hired on the basis of short-term needs, that staff training is also planned for the short term, and that financial planning does not extend into the longer term neither. An applied and functioning risk management would enable reliable long-term planning.

55. The Panel has verified that MC's staff and students - as the main internal stakeholders - and external stakeholders, including representatives of other higher education institutions and social partners, are sufficiently involved in the management process through their representatives in the College Council and the Academic Council at the institutional level. Apart from that, they are represented in Faculty Boards and other ad-hoc committees or working groups at the unit level.

56. The management activities of the College are influenced by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports regarding the amount of basic funding, admission of students, allocation of funds for the implementation of various projects, etc. Apart from that, the Marijampolė branch of the Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, and the Marijampolė Regional Development Council also collaborate with the institution. Thus, also these external stakeholders are involved in an adequate way.

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.*

57. MC collects data in different areas:

    a. <u>Quality of studies</u> (collected by the Innovation and Study Quality council; the Vice-Principal for Academic and Research Activities; the Department of Studies and Careers; the Deans of faculties; the Head of Departments; and the Chairpersons of Study Programme Committees);

    b. <u>Graduate careers</u> (collected by Department of Studies and Careers from the chairpersons of the study programme committees, via online surveys, using data of the Career Management Information System CMIS, qualitative feedback from heads of programmes and data from STRATA, Lithuania's Governments Strategic Analysis Centre);

    c. <u>Labour market demands</u> (via surveys of and discussion with employers in the region);

d. <u>International Activities</u> (collected by the Project Activities and International Studies partnership department);

e. <u>Infrastructure and project activities</u> (collected by the Vice-Principal of Infrastructure and Project Activities);

f. <u>Financial Management</u> (collected by the Accounting and Finance Department).

58. The Panel could verify, in the interviews and from the activity report 2021, which was provided to the Panel, that data and information on studies (e.g. student numbers, graduate careers, internationalisation, etc.), applied research activities (e.g. revenues for applied research, publications, conferences etc.), resources (e.g. staff, material, finances), management (e.g. documents, quality assurance, finances) are combined in the College's annual activity report, which is prepared by the principal based on the activity reports (see next paragraph) by the different faculties and send to the College Council.

59. The activity report of the College is based on an analysis of the accomplishment of the activity reports of the faculties and other central units of the college and on central data collected from the sources mentioned above. This analysis takes place in an annual self-assessment meeting, the aim of which is to analyze the achievement of the strategic goals of the College as a whole on the basis of the aforementioned activity reports. The activity report of the College also contains suggestions for the improvement of activities in the respective area.

60. All in all, the Panel assesses this <u>process</u> of regular self-assessment on the college level as sufficient. However, as is also written in the Panel's assessment of the regular monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan in the management chapter above, the Panel recommends to base all reflections on more elaborate data and analyses.

61. There is a document management service in place, which manages, stores, and systematises all documents and that summarises data of all divisions of the College. This service was put forward in the SER in the chapter „Collection of data on MUAS' activities". This service, however, is responsible for three types of documents in the College: correspondence, contracts and orders. Thus, it is <u>not</u> a central unit responsible for collecting data and information on the College's performance, as implicitly stated in the SER.

62. The Panel clearly sees that there are potential losses of information and inefficiency concerning the workload due to the collection of data (especially in the field of teaching and learning) by different units and staff. The Panel therefore strongly recommends a centralised data collection process, for which a central QA unit is responsible, as will be described in more detail in the chapter on quality assurance.

63. The quality of studies is critical to inform the strategic goal definition and to support an effective decision making. Given its role, it is important to define a well-structured information flow so that it is efficient in the data collection and that it reaches the different decision-makers within the institution. It has become obvious to the Panel that data collection is not systematic and that there is room for improvement in this area.

64. The MC publishes qualitative and quantitative information on its educational and scientific activities on its website in Lithuanian language, namely:

- general information about study programmes

- student's success stories and testimonials

- opinions of graduates and other stakeholders on the quality of studies

- results of higher education activities

- evaluation of study programmes

- career indicators of graduates

- project activities

- publications (2003 – 2021)

- conference material (2016 – 2022)

- the College's own periodical Homo Societas Technologiae (HST)

The information published on the website in the Lithuanian language gives sufficient information about the institution and its activities. However, in order to fully comply with the ESG, additional information on a comprehensive internal institutional QA policy and activities in relation to assurance and enhancement of quality should be published.

65. The information on the College's website in English is very limited. In order to widen the international exposition of MC, the website should include additional information in English, such as (but not limited to) external evaluation reports and strategic planning information. The website is not only dedicated to address potential students, but it must also be seen as a means to address future partners. Most of the data on the MC website is in Lithuanian, therefore it is not accessible to an international audience. The SER refers to different channels of information disclosure. However, it is important to segment the type of information channelled to the different target groups, taking also into account international stakeholder that may facilitate increasing its internationalisation.

66. The effectiveness of external information is assessed through a survey administered to new students. However, the SER and the interviews did not clarify how informative this data is and who collects it. The nature and the importance of such information require a well-planned process for data collection and analysis.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:
1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;   *1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*   *1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*   *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*   *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

67. The policy of formation and evaluation of the academic staff is clearly regulated in a respective regulation of the College, which contains descriptions of organisational aspects of competitions and attestations as well as requirements for the different positions (professor, associate professor, lecturer, assistant) at the College.

68. The Attestation and Competition Commission, which is a sub-commission of the Academic Council, is responsible for carrying out the aforementioned processes.

69. Teachers are hired for permanent positions (by public competition and for a period of 5 years) or non-permanent positions (requiring a performance assessment based on documented qualification and work experience). However, MC lacks a long-term strategy for hiring academic or non-academic staff, which is in line with both the strategy and the growth of the institution. This long-term strategy is important to support a long-term growth and academic advancement of the College.

70. From the interviews with staff during the online „visit", it became obvious to the Panel that staff members are aware of the requirements and processes and do not have any recommendations for their improvement.

71. Permanent teachers are assessed every 5 years. Teachers, the Academic Council or a Faculty Board can also request an extraordinary attestation after another time period than 5 years. Non-permanent teachers are recruited without a competitive procedure for a fixed-term contract for a maximum of 2 years. After these two years non-permanent staff can undergo an assessment to extend the contract at MC. If a teacher is hired to the position of a lecturer, associate professor or professor, then before concluding a fixed-term employment contract, his or her compliance with the position shall be assessed on the basis of documents certifying the qualification and practical work experience. Given that academic employees play an important role in the academic progress of the college, the Panel recommends that particular attention be paid to a) teaching performance (evidenced e.g. by sample courses) and possibly also b) research experience (evidenced by the usual research output indicators) also for non-permanent employees before they start teaching at MC.

72. Salaries definition is in line with the "Description of the Procedure for Standardization of the Workload of the Teachers of Marijampolė University of Applied Sciences and Determination of Remuneration" and takes into account commissioned research conducted by the teacher and additional courses taught within the institution. Thus, staff of the College are given additional payment for extra work. During the interviews, the Panel could verify that there is no mismatch between payment and tasks.

73. Academic staff provision is calculated before the academic year, based on the existence of permanent teachers, varying the number of non-permanent teachers. Therefore, non-permanent teachers are primarily meant to deal with the volatility of the necessary academic workload. Also here, the aforementioned hiring strategy could be very helpful.

74. Between 2017 and 2021 staff was reduced by 40% (a reduction of 35% in the academic staff and of 46% in non-academic staff). The College explains this reduction by: (i) the re-organisation of the College's structure; (ii) the abandonment of the excess real estate and (iii) the creation of rational and flexible study programmes. This development is described by the College as an increase of efficiency and it is explained by economies of scale gained within the different study programmes.

75. The SER reports an increase in the teacher-student ratio (changed from 8,6 in 2017 to 23,6 in 2021). This is a consequence of the efficiency referred to in the previous paragraph and the institution is encouraged to continue this process. It is also recommended that the gains of such efficiency are used to invest in the skills of existing academic staff.

76. MC academic staff meets the Lithuanian legal standards. However, in order to support the further growth of the institution – and first and foremost – put it into the position to meet its own strategic goals concerning applied research and study programmes based on research, it is important to increase both the number of PhD-holders and full-time academic staff. The College has only 7 full-time academic staff members. Although the minimum legal requirements for study programs are met by this low number, the Panel sees a lack of research personnel at the College. First and foremost, the PhD-holders among staff in the faculties are responsible for the development of study programmes based on current research findings. The Panel is convinced that meeting the minimum legal requirements is not enough for the College to evolve. MC needs to recruit new full-time academic staff, who hold PhDs or increase the academic level of existing staff in the near future to take the lead and the ownership in the academic development of the institution. The College currently only employs one full time PhD-holder, so not even each of the two faculties is represented by an academician of a higher level. Although MC is a College of Applied Sciences, existing and new study programmes must be informed by PhD staff and research.

77. This means, the College lacks sufficient and appropriate institutional resources to manage the institution and carry out the applied research. This is also reflected by the fact that important internal bodies for Academic Affairs and Applied Research are chaired by the same person and comprised of half-time (i.e. almost external) employees. The Panel agrees that the institution has a clearly defined strategy to grow, but MC does not seem to consider the research dimension as a critical area for growth.

78. Increasing the number of PhD-holders among staff will allow a stronger research profile of the institution and it will allow to base commissioned research on the latest advances of scientific knowledge. Although graduates and students reported in the interviews that teachers are always reachable and flexible as well as that they have the opportunity to take part in (smaller) research activities, the Panel is convinced that a higher number of full time teachers will increase not only their involvement to the institution and their motivation, but also the quality of research-based teaching. Moreover, an investment in more full-time PhD-holders will also lead to an increase in the quality of the study programmes, as much as on the quality of the research provided to the social partners, the region and the community. Finally, a larger number of full-time employees would also enable systematic further qualification of teachers. Non-permanent staff always carries the risk of "brain-drain". Permanent staff who have access to systematic further training would ultimately lead to an upgrading of the teaching-learning quality at the College.

79. The College has in place a plan to allocate funds for staff training. The SER provides evidence of the funds allocated for skills improvement for both academic and non-academic staff. This amount decreased significantly between 2017 and 2021. In 2017 the funds allocated were €23.053 and in 2021 €8.705. Despite the decrease in both the academic and non-academic staff, the funds per number of staff have also decreased significantly (from €132,48 spent in skills development per employee in 2017 to €83,76 in 2021). The total amount of funds allocated to skills development decreased by 62%, but the funds allocated to skills development per employee only decreased by 36%. Nonetheless, the Panel came to the conclusion, based on the opinions of staff members uttered during the interviews, that the skills development programme offered to both the academic and non-academic staff is adequate as to the current needs of staff. This is due to the fact that staff in the interviews convincingly reported that the opportunities for skills

development are well-designed, effective and flexible as to the needs of the staff. Staff is asked to make suggestions for new skills development trainings and they are then implemented in the next planning period.

80. MC has also put in place an in-house training programme as an alternative for paying for external skills development of staff. This programme deserves better attention concerning the process of service allocation to the staff and the strategy for skills developed and experts in charge of the different courses in the long run. At this stage, the courses offered to the staff are listed every year (in line with the staff needs), but some of the courses offered need to be offered on a long-term basis (for example, courses allowing the research activity development or the internationalisation process) so that staff can take part in these courses any time and has expectations on the courses offered in the future. To that extent, the most underdeveloped areas of training need to be offered on a continuous basis. In addition, it is also important to design a long-term strategy to implement a robust list of courses offered and to guarantee that these meet the needs of the staff.

> *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.*

81. A large proportion of the MC's funds is public funds. The income received is enough to cover the expenses. 75% of the expenses are used to cover staff salaries. The cost of each student is around €2,500 (although in 2020 this figure was reduced to €2,156, probably explained by a cost reduction evoked by the pandemic situation). On average each degree costs €125,500.

82. The financial sources of MC, as described in the SER are:

a. Paid research and development services (total between 2017 and 2021: 395,479 – on average €79,000 per year). In 2021, commissioned research and consultation and training provided to social partners accounted with €14,000.

b. Funds received from the appropriations allocated for general education in the budgets of the county municipalities.

c. Lease and sale of property (€110,000 for the reported period / €22,000 per year).

d. Financial assistance for quarantine and emergency, in 2020-2021: €110,000.

e. Erasmus+ funding: €12,116 million for the reported period.

f. Marijampolė Municipality and the Ministry of Education for the STEAM Open Access centre: €75,000.

g. EU-funded Project "Improvement of the Study Environment and Infrastructure by Implementing the Regional College Model": €700,000.

83. The necessity of required resources is monitored and assessed on a yearly basis, although it is discussed every quarter. This involves the College Council, and the Head of the Departments. Part of the necessary resources are raised through external projects. The Panel thinks that, in general, the financial resources of the College are planned (though too short-term as was explained earlier), allocated and used rationally. Suggestions for improvement will be developed later in this report.

84. A further development of the institution and of its academic staff may allow the College to be less dependent on the Lithuanian government, as it is expected to increase the institution's commissioned research and their potential to be involved in additional European projects.

85. Books and publications are ordered based on the proposals of the heads of departments, chairmen of study programme committees, teachers and students. There is a certain amount of financial resources allocated to the library. Material at the library is replenished every year. For this, the library asks for demands of the departments and purchases the material required.

86. Purchases of software products are also included in the annual financial planning.

87. The newly established Regional Open Access Centre STEAM (2021) aims to develop students as researchers of future STEAM sciences and innovators by strengthening the interdisciplinary, creative, proactive, entrepreneurial and leadership competences needed for their successful professional careers. It was established with funding of the project *Provision of Schools with facilities for Natural and Technological Sciences*. The centre develops students' competences, strengthens practical skills, and stimulates students' and society's interest in the latest inventions in STEAM sciences and was recently integrated into MarKo Academy (see further below). The STEAM centre is also welcoming pupils from the region.

88. The College has several laboratories (e.g mechatronics laboratory, natural science laboratory, media technologies) and other facilities (e.g. for performing experimental and diagnostic research in the nursing sciences) to facilitate learning in line with the study programmes offered by the College.

89. In cooperation with the main employer in the region, Mantinga, The College recently set up a simulation company with four mock departments, where students can make practical experiences in the different departments of a big company.

90. Since 2020, the entire facilities for studies have been renewed in the framework of the EU-funded project *"Improvement of the study environment and infrastructure by implementing the regional college model"*. 700,000 € have been allocated for the project implementation. During this project, the study base at MC is being substantially renewed: computerised workplaces for students and MC staff are being modernised, the College's information technology facilities are being expanded, the library equipment is being upgraded and modern research laboratories are being set up for various study programmes (see above). During the project, it is planned to purchase over 1,500 different categories and types of instruments, which in total will amount to more than 31,000 units of goods.

91. From the SER and the interviews with staff and students it could be verified that all the learning resources are sufficient for the number of degrees and for the number of students. Also, the physical resources of the institution are sufficient for the College's academic and social activities.

92. **In summary**, the Panel was able to identify a great effort in the area of College management by its management staff in general and an appropriate mode of (though not very future-oriented) financial management. At the same time, the Panel sees need for improvement in terms of strategic management. There is a lack of a clear organisational structure and a lack of future-oriented strategies (in various fields) that are made dependent on quantitative indicators on the path of informed decision-making. With the current staffing levels (too few full-time employees, too few staff with higher academic qualifications) and the lack of a forward-looking strategy for attracting qualified academic (and also international) staff, the college cannot achieve its goals for expanding applied research and research-based teaching. In summary, the Panel has identified the following drawbacks that should be addressed:

- Data collection is dispersed and data analysis does not make use of more elaborate and future-oriented analysis methods,

- Unclear organisational structure,

- Lack of full-time staff,

- Lack of PhD-holders,

- Lack of sufficient and appropriate institutional resources to manage the institution,

- Lack of QA office,

- Short-term planning and focus on fulfilling minimum requirements.

All in all – although meeting minimum requirements – the current practice of strategy development and implementation planning is not sufficient for a higher education institution with (applied) scientific aspirations.

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

94. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Bundle data in the hands of one responsible organisational unit and apply more elaborate analysis methods – also to be able to prevent students's drop-out, for example, make use of predictive models.

- Define a well-structured information flow so that it is efficient in the data collection and that it reaches the different decision-makers within the institution.

- Do not rely on fulfilling minimum legal requirements, but take on a future-oriented strategic approach to managing the College.

- Set up a quality assurance unit solely responsible for quality assurance (see chapter on quality assurance for further recommendations).

- In general, revise the organigram of MC and make clear, which entity is an organisational unit, which one is a body.

- Provide more information about the institution in English language to support the strategic goal of increasing the international orientation of the institution.

- Ensure that the Strategic Plan is fully supported by a sustainable financial policy which is linked to risk assessment directly. It is suggested to elaborate both an optimistic and a worst case scenario.

- Shift the focus of the economic forecast of the College more to medium and long-term.

- Increase the number of full-time staff to make sure that internal staff (not half-externals) sit on different important bodies of the College and to ensure a „critical mass" of researchers and teachers.

- Ensure that the qualification of newly employed non-permanent staff is assessed properly before employment to ensure a high quality of teaching performance.

- Increase the number of PhD-holders to ensure that the College can carry out applied research and research-oriented teaching.

- Develop a long-term strategy for hiring teachers and non-academic staff, which is in line with both the strategy and the growth of the institution.

- Make sure that the study programmes are informed by scientific research (in addition to the existing analysis of labour market needs).

- Improve the capacity to retain part-time students and to increase the number of new students.

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.*   *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.*

95. The College has made publicly available the outcomes of external evaluations of its programmes and the institution and some internal documents on the institutional quality management. The Quality Manual is the main document related to the internal quality assurance system. It comprises a description of the ISO-procedures and the regulations on which the QMS is based. It is prepared by the senior specialist for quality and adopted by the Principal. The institution states that the scope of the Quality Manual is twofold: it is meant to be used for internal purposes, and serves as a source of information for external stakeholders.

96. The Quality Manual provided to the Panel cannot be seen as a proper policy developed in an inclusive manner, involving internal and external stakeholders. As the Panel perceives, it is more a technical document prepared by an expert, adopted by the director. It has (i) elements of a document presenting the institution to the external readers (I. Data of MC), (ii) elements of a report on the past performance (II. General Provisions) reporting that the institution "has implemented a quality management system that meets the requirements of the international standard ISO 9001:2015", (iii) elements of clarifications (III. Abbreviations and terms), (iv) description of QMS in line with ISO standards and with reference to specific institutional procedures (IV. QMS).

97. The statement on the quality policy is published on the website of the College (in Lithuanian language) and the procedures listed in the Quality Manual cover the main areas of the ESG, including procedures with responsibilities for implementation in relation to the elements of Part 1 of the ESG in the internal QA system employed by the institution (design and approval of programmes, student centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification; teaching staff; learning resources and student support, information management).

98. Although there is a system put in place and some of the elements of the ESG Part I are covered by the ISO standards and encompassed by the respective regulating documents, there is a substantial conceptual discrepancy between the College's approach and the ESG requirements. MC has built its quality management system on the purpose of complying with the "clients' expectations" and "customer satisfaction", while the ESG focus on institutional development based on quality of teaching, learning and assessment, linked to research, and with active involvement of students. Although this has already been identified in the latest external evaluation, there is no evidence that the institution has taken those recommendations into consideration.

99. Moreover, the QA policy needs to be developed with active involvement of all stakeholders (not by a single person) and have a formal status (e.g. to be adopted by the Academic Council since it is stated that the Academic Council is responsible for academic matters), it should present a cycle for continuous improvement (including taking into account recommendations resulting from external evaluations) and be publicly available (preferably all related specific regulations and in English).

100. There is a quality policy published on the MC website that, to some extent, reflects the relationship between research and learning & teaching and takes account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. However, the Panel recommends further developments of the institutional quality policy that should support the organisation and continuous enhancement of the quality assurance system (with a central unit being responsible for internal QA). Here, all relevant stakeholders should be involved (from the development of a policy, through its implementation, monitoring, reporting and revision) and the SER should present how this policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes, how the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

101. The internal quality assurance system has many positive elements. There are different procedures corresponding to specific purposes in relation to quality: study programmes are regularly reviewed and revised following the appropriate internal institutional procedures under the competence of Heads of Study Programme Committees and the Academic Council. Apart from that, external programme accreditation is conducted by the SKVC. There is a system of academic progression and continuous development of teachers. In addition, there are activities to monitor students' performance. Also student surveys (quantitative and qualitative) are carried out and the results are used for the improvement of study programmes.

102. However, all these activities, although corresponding - to a certain extent - to the standards and principles usually applied in an institutional quality assurance system and enhancement of quality of teaching and learning are not entirely consistent with the ESG. There is a significant confusion arising from the assumption that an internal institutional quality assurance system, compatible with the ESG, could be described with the ISO standards: „The University, in compliance with the provisions of the ESG, has implemented a quality management system that meets the requirements of the international standard ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems […]. This Quality Manual describes the quality management system implemented at Marijampolė University complying with the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 standard […]". The reference to the ESG in the SER and in the Quality Manual is declarative. The ESG, Part I have not been taken as a reference point for the self-assessment of compliance but the "University management found out what documentation is required to support the QMS system" and prepared a set of documents to support the QMS in line with the ISO standards". The institution reports on ISO 9001:2015 certificate as a proof for having an internal quality assurance system established in compliance with the ESG. An attempt to align the ESG with the ISO standards is presented in the Annex 7 to the SER: "Accord of ESG provisions, Marijampolė University of Applied Sciences activities and ISO 9001:2015 standards". However, this mapping exercise hardly proves the correlation between the ESG and ISO but, in contrary, it demonstrated a lack of understanding of the European standards and the guidelines on how to achieve compliance with them. Based on these findings the overall approach to the internal quality assurance taken by the institution fails to demonstrate substantial compliance with the ESG.

103. The responsibility of assuring the quality of teaching and learning is dispersed across the institution: The "Communication and Marketing Department" is responsible for conducting students surveys, the "Innovation and Study Quality Council" is an internal body composed of representatives of different departments and responsible for the enhancement of innovative and good quality teaching and learning in line with the commitments in the EHEA and the "ISO

9001:2015 Quality Management Service" is an internal unit responsible for quality of procedures in line with ISO standards. There are examples provided by the MC on how the student survey data are used to improve the quality of study programmes. However, the Panel recommends that the processes related to quality assurance and enhancement are better linked so that the activities carried out in these different internal organisational units and bodies are structured and organised in a way to better support the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education.

104. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are partially appropriate as they are not fully in line with the ESG (see above). They are applied periodically, the cyclic procedure is applied based on the QMS model and includes self-assessment, monitoring, reporting, evaluation and revision of the activities, measures and indicators. However, this procedure, described as internal audit in the SER, is linked to the ISO standards and the relationship with the ESG is missing.

105. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement ensure the involvement of the staff and stakeholders. Heads of departments and senior staff are responsible for specific internal procedures and designations are clearly listed. Moreover, it is declared in the SER that the staff is involved in the processes: "following the MC Statute, the Study Regulations, the regulations of structural units, job descriptions and other internal procedures rules and description…". The stakeholders listed under the section 4.2 "Comprehension of the needs and expectations of stakeholders" in the Quality Manual (p.11-12), are well specified ("students/listeners, employers/social partners, teachers/administrative staff, graduate secondary schools students and other potential entrants") and their involvement is described. The stakeholders are consulted in the institutional developments by responding to surveys and are involved in the QA procedures and in the governance structures. For example, 2 out of 15 members of the working group for the preparation of the SER were external stakeholders.

106. However, the concept of the stakeholder group "students" is not presented in the standard manner more appropriate for a higher education environment. Students are referred to as customers: "Customer – learner, student, graduate, a person improving his / her qualification, a customer of applied research activities", while the "Senior specialist for quality ensures the promotion of understanding the client's requirements" (Quality Manual).

107. According to the SER, „the internal quality assurance measures, used in the College are appropriate and implemented periodically. Process evaluations are performed annually, internal and external quality audits are performed." These processes are in the Quality Manual. However, the institution is very much focused on the "customer satisfaction" with the service provided and surveys are described as aiming to collect information on the satisfaction. In the interviews, the institution explained that the students' surveys are more comprehensive and aiming at assessing the quality of the higher education provision. However, these processes do not encompass all activities in relation to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, e.g. allocation and continuous revision of ECTS in relation to respective learning outcomes.

108. Academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive institutional support. According to the Quality Manual, the "Procedure of Personnel Management and Training" is under the responsibility of the Director, supported by the Head of Personnel, Law and public Procurement

while the "Procedures of Providing In-service Training services" is under the responsibility of the Methodologist at the Educational Centre for Higher Education studies.

109. The staff used the opportunity of professional development through cooperation projects and ERASMUS+ staff mobilities. The College encourages participation of staff in Eramus+ activities; on the basis of a motivation letter, staff of MC receive additional funding to take part in these activities. During the online „visit" the Panel heard of several examples, such as different guest lectureships and delegation visits. The Panel appreciates that 2020 also 5 non-academic staff members participated in such activities.

110. Students receive various kinds of support (information, orientation, academic support, psychological support, support for students with disabilities, financial support, social support) and some data are available. It is also stated in the SER that, according to the students' surveys results, the students evaluate positively the support received. Students and graduates, who participated in the interviews, demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the support received from the institution. The Panel is convinced that student support at MC is good.

111. The SER provides sufficient and specific information on the existence of the appropriate structure and processes in relation to the academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. MUAS has adopted the Code of Academic Ethics the use of which is overseen by the Ethics Committee. The institution aims to act preventively and to encourage members of the academic community to adhere to the principles of academic ethics. Several cases have been resolved without any penalties imposed. The Panel has no evidence to doubt the descriptions in the documents what demonstrated the processes described in SER are functioning well.

112. According to the information received through the interviews, the autonomy of the institution is supported by the inclusive governance model involving external stakeholders and, in particular, social partners and local community.

113. According to the SER, after the external evaluation of MC in 2013, the College's Improvement Plan for 2014-2020 was adopted with 28 measures implementing the recommendations made by the experts. The Implementation Report is submitted as an annex to the SER. The College reported that "almost all" of the recommendations have been implemented and, as a proof, it has been stated that 4 new study programmes have been approved by the SKVC. Moreover, the MC responded by „carrying out an analysis of the College's quality management system and taking steps to ensure its compliance with the "European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)" and by "carrying out recertification of the ISO 9001 quality management system." However, these two measures do not respond properly to the findings and recommendations of the previous Panel and the institution still refers to its students as customers and plans the measures accordingly. The EQARF is the quality framework for vocational education and training and not for higher education and ISO is again not the most appropriate quality framework for teaching and learning.

114. **In summary**, it has become apparent to the Panel that a number of processes are being used with the aim of improving the quality of the MC's operations. These processes are in the hands of a number of different units and bodies. A coherent QM system, consistently aligned with the ESG, has not become convincingly visible. The Panel assesses the strong focus on process descriptions according to the ISO standard as not fully suitable for the quality management of an

educational institution. We still see starting points for improvement in various places, but also note that the minimum requirements are met.

115. **Judgement:** The area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed. It is given 2 points.

116. **Recommendations for the area:**

● Reconsider the role of students in learning and teaching, to be more of internal institutional stakeholders and partners engaged in teaching, learning and assessment activities rather than customers to be served.

● Use the students' surveys to monitor the appropriateness of allocation of ECTS to modules and units of learning outcomes and to continuously revise the workload respectively.

● The institution should better align its quality policy with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA and change the paradigm from "serving the clients" to supporting students and teachers in student-centred learning and teaching.

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.*

117. The SER provides evidence to support the statement that research activities of the MC are in the same fields as the study programmes as well as the conferences organised by the College and commissioned research carried out by the College's researchers. For example, in 2017 a group of researchers from the College conducted a commissioned research in the field of management science "Consumer opinions on the dissemination and communication of information about the EU and its institutions at the Europe Direct Information Center in Marijampole". In 2018 a project called "Possibilities of Cloud Computing Services in the Study Process" was conducted, which corresponds to the field of informatics engineering. In 2019, commissioned research on "Motivating and Demotivating Factors Determining the Choice of Pre-school and Pre-primary Pedagogy Studies", which corresponds to the field of educology sciences, was conducted.

118. According to the SER, "the sufficiency of the level of research activities at MC is determined by the fact that in response to the strategy of the College, consistent coordination of research activities is carried out and research is conducted in connection with the study fields". It is

visible, that the profile of research is corresponding to the institutional strategy and the profile of study programmes. However, the evidence on the intensity of research activities is not sufficient to support the aforementioned statement of the SER concerning the sufficiency of research. Although research activities may be conducted in the same area as of the study fields, the data do not support the statement that the intensity of the research activities is sufficient and that the quality and relevance of research is assured through a recognised peer review approach. The SER refers to research as being informative to the study programmes. The statements in the interviews only highlighted that the study programme development is based on the needs of the labour market and no reference to research as a basis for study programme development was made. Nonetheless, study programmes need to be informed by a combination of current research and demands of the labour market.

119. Although the minimum legal requirements (10% of subjects must be taught by PhD-holders) for teaching provisions are met, the Panel is convinced that there is not a "critical mass" of researchers employed at the college to sufficiently perform applied research activities and to support the advancement of the institution in this field, because almost all of them are employed half-time.

120. Apart from that, full-time staff is also necessary to motivate colleagues for research and to implement an effective and well reflected research strategy of the institution. Although part-time staff may conduct research, only fully dedicated academic staff is able to put in place coherent, strategically oriented and well thought through lines of research that are able to represent the institution's research state-of-art and that meets the regional demand for research.

121. Apart from that, the Panel could verify from the interviews with students, graduates and teachers that there are some activities ongoing to involve students in research activities. For example, graduates have the opportunity to present their own applied research findings (often together with their lecturers) in articles or conferences.

122. According to the SER the "Description of the Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Achievements (Order No. 1V-173 of the Director of MARIJAMPOLĖ COLLEGE on 23 December, 2021)" establishes the procedure for the assessment and recognition of "persons who have acquired study outcomes of non-formal and informal learning achievements."

123. The Vice-deans of the faculties act as advisors helping the applicants to prepare for the assessment of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning achievements, and the assessment of the recognition of learning achievements is organised by the deans.

124. In the case of recognition of non-formal and informal learning achievements, interviews are conducted with applicants. Here, professional work experience is sometimes taken as a proof for having appropriate skills and knowledge, while sometimes additional tests are conducted to assess the candidate's level of skills and knowledge. However, the aforementioned regulation only describes the procedures. It does not provide information about the methods and criteria used for recognition, validation, certification or assessment of skills and knowledge as learning outcomes required by the study programme.

125. The institution presents statistics on recognition in terms of modules and number of learning outcomes and not in terms of applicants, which makes it difficult to assess how many ECTS credits or learning outcomes have been recognised per person or what percentage of ECTS may

have been acquired outside of higher education. Also, in the interviews it could not be clarified how many students sought recognition. The Panel was informed that there are „only a few" cases. The College is encouraged to collect more useful and valid data on cases, where recognition was sought.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):
3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents); *3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.*

126. The College does not have a specific strategy for internationalisation of research and study activities. The strategic objective on internationalisation is included in the overall Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan outlines several activities to "strengthen the internationalisation of studies in order to became full participants in the European Area of Study and Research."

127. The institution has been awarded with the Erasmus Higher Education Charter (ECHE) in 2020, it has 4 study programmes offered in English, 21 inter-institutional agreements and it regularly implements Erasmus projects. However, absolute data on students and staff mobilities are modest.

128. As it was written in the SER and confirmed in the interviews, international partners are involved in the learning process through online sessions.

129. Since 2017 the College participates in at least one partnership project under the Key Action 2 of Eramus+ annually. The College has implemented the following projects: *Culinary Arts in Support of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion* (2015-2017), *Job Placement App* (2015-2017), *SCORE* (2016-2017), *Project Based Learning* (2017-2019), *Industry 4.0 Era* (2019-2022), *Outdoor with EU* (2021-2023). For a College as small as MC, it is quite good to engage in this number of Erasmus+ activities. However, the Panel could not find all of the projects listed above in the Erasmus+ project database (access on 26.05.2022). The projects that have been found are mostly in the area of vocational education. The College should put a stronger focus on higher education, since – as a college – it is an institution of higher education.

130. **In summary**, the Panel was able to find sufficient evidence in the SER and the interviews that the minimum requirements in the area of studies and research are being met. At the same time, the Panel sees potential for improvement with regard to the overall academic standards of the college. As explained in detail in Chapter 1, it lacks critical mass to further develop the academic potential of the college. The very open practice of recognising non-formal and informal learning also contributes to this. The Strategic Plan does formulate the goal of advancing the internationalisation of the MC, among other things with the increased acquisition of international (research) projects. The effects of the new Strategic Plan (2021 - 2025) cannot yet be estimated. However, the Panel does not consider the current starting position to be a good basis for this.

131. **Judgement:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and it is given 2 point(s).

132. **Recommendations**

● Enhance research capacities by assuring more than a minimum number of fully employed teaching staff with PhD.

● Consequently inform the development of study programmes by research.

● Increase the number of international partnership projects in the field of higher education.

● Better link recognition, validation, assessment, certification of prior non-formal and informal learning with the study programme learning outcomes.

● Reduce the percentage of possible recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning.

● Keep and systematically present records on recognition of applications and corresponding learning outcomes and modules.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

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

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development; *4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

133. The College is the only higher education institution in the region. Meeting the needs of the region is important to the College. This is shown by the fact that one of the strategic objectives of its Strategic Action Plan for 2021-2025 is: "To implement high-quality, high-value-added studies that meet the needs of the regional labor market".

134. In order to identify national and regional needs in the field of higher education, the College carries out the evaluation of national, Marijampolė region and Marijampolė municipality strategic development documents. The College surveys the social partners regularly and discusses with them current needs of the regional labor market. MC implements the priority goals of the State Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030", realises common ideas in business and science and develops non-formal education and lifelong learning.

135. To respond to the needs of the region, the College carries out surveys of social partners, commissioned studies and applied research. For example, in 2021, the research on *"Training of Specialists Meeting the Needs of the Region by Introducing a New Field of Nursing Studies"* was conducted, in 2020, the research on *"Identification and Need of Transport Logistics Managers' Competencies in the Market"* and *"Increasing the Availability of Higher Education in Marijampole Municipality to Ensure the Quality of University Studies"*, in 2019, *"Research on the Youth Motivation for Studies and Increasing Career Preparation Opportunities in Marijampole Municipality"* in order to find out the youth motivation for studies and career preparation aspirations and opportunities in the region of Southwest Lithuania.

136. These activities provide the basis for the need for missing professionals in the country and the region, and for the development of study programmes. For example, in recent years the municipality faced the challenge of lacking kindergarden places, but due to the fact that MC opened a study programme on childhood pedagogy, new places could be provided, as was reported by the interviewees in the meeting with social partners.

137. Currently, especially practical nurses are missing in the region's healthcare system. This finding was supported also by the aforementioned study on the needs of a new field of nursing study. To fulfill this need, MC will set up a new study programme on practical nursing. Apart from that, since Marijampole is an industrial city, technologists and engineers will be needed in the future, which is why a new programme on transport logistics will be set up. In the future – as was mentioned in the interview with social partners – school teachers will be needed. Already now, discussions about the generation change in the teaching body at schools are taking place.

138. During the interviews, students and social partners confirmed that they participate in study programme committees and make suggestions for improving the study programmes. The social partners also noted the high quality of the commissioned studies carried out by the college and the usefulness of their results in practice.

139. The College cooperates with the Marijampolė Regional Development Department under the Ministry of the Interior and its managers participate in the working groups for the strategic planning for the region. In response to the needs of Marijampolė region, the College prepares new study programmes or stops irrelevant study programmes. Thus, the programmes Dance Pedagogy, Catering Technology, Agricultural Technology, Car Technical Exploitation have been stopped due to a lack of demand for professionals from these fields on the labour market. In response to the articulated need of social partners for specialists in the region two new study programmes are currently being implemented: Transport Logistics and General Practice Nursing (see above).

140. MC students undertake internships in the region's business enterprises and public service institutions. Very many graduates of MC are employed in companies, schools etc. of the municipality. For example, currently 73 staff members of Mantinga, the region's biggest employer, graduated from the College. The Rygiskes Jonas Gymnasium currently has employed 3 English teachers, who graduated from the College.

141. The social partners identified the students' preparation for practical work as very good during the interviews. The students and graduates were also very satisfied with the practice-orientation of the study programmes, which is based on the cooperation between the work sector and the College.

142. Regional legislation emphasizes the importance of access to higher education, which is why the College has set up the MarKo Students' Academy, which is open to school leavers who want to improve their school-leaving exam grades and go on to higher education.

143. On the one hand, the existence of a college in the region opens up access to education for those who cannot afford to study outside the region. On the other hand, the college helps to keep skilled workers in the region who would otherwise have studied in other regions and might have stayed in these regions. The MarKo Students' Academy also contributes to the Marijampolė municipality's aim to retain young people in the region. During the interviews, the interviewees emphasised that the „College gives life to our region".

144. The College also introduces technological innovation into the region. By the STEAM centre, to which also high school pupils have access, technology can better be incorporated into school teaching, as was reported by the representatives of the social partners. The Panel appreciates the existence of the STEAM centre and its openness for not only MC students.

145. The College is an important cultural centre in the region, bringing together business, the public sector and communities. The meeting with the social partners confirmed MC's position that its decisions are taken in consultation with the social partners, students and alumni. The college works in a socially responsible way, involving students in social responsibility activities, encouraging them to participate in Marijampolė city events, charity and volunteering activities, such as contributing to the organisation of „Food Bank" campaigns, participating in environmental campaigns, various Christmas campaigns, etc. MC's lecturers are also active members of NGOs in the region, organising events, for example, the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of teacher training in Marijampolė, which brought together representatives not only regional but also republican teacher training institutions as well as the 20th anniversary event of the College's activities. It is thus to be positively emphasised that the college not only prepares young people for professional activities, but also raising them as responsible citizens.

146. The Panel could see, especially from the interviews with the social partners, that the College is important for Marijampolė city in particular. It did not become visible, however, that MC is serving the whole Marijampolė region. The College should allocate more resources and implement measurable results to meet the goals of serving the region (not only the city of Marijampolė) and of internationalisation, e.g. by implementing effective marketing strategies to attract staff and students from the region and from other countries.

147. Monitoring of the impact of the College's activities on the region is carried out through surveys of students, alumni and social partners. The surveys reflect a qualitative assessment of MC's activities. As a quantitative measure of regional relevance, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport collects data on the number of graduates working in positions that require higher education. The average number of MC's graduates in employment in places requiring higher education degrees is 36% in general in 2017-2020. This is lower than the average for all colleges - 44%. It should be noted that the College should take measures to improve this indicator.

148. The SER contains information that periodical analyses of the economic and social changes taking place in the region are carried out. However, there is little quantitative analysis and no benchmarks against which the impact of the college can be measured. In the SER and the interviews, no concrete statements were made about which indicators are used to carry out the analysis described. Indicators that allow a proper analysis (in the sense of a timeline comparison) of economic and social changes and a subsequent derivation of improvement measures could be, for example: percentage of demand for specialists trained by the MC, number of graduates staying and working in the region, number of long-term unemployed with no vocational training and many more. The dynamics and trends of the indicators can be used to draw conclusions about impact.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;

149. The College contributes to the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy in the region. In its educational activities, MC is focused on different groups of residents: pupils, high school graduates, students, working persons and seniors. The College has identified the learning needs of all these groups through surveys and discussions.

150. Since 2019, the College operates MarKo Students' Academy. The Academy supports young people from the region to deepen their knowledge in various fields of study. The Academy is also open for high school graduates, who did not graduate with marks sufficient to enter higher education, to get additional scores after participation in the Academy's courses, which enables them to enter the College. Thus MarKo Students' Academy creates conditions for increasing the availability of higher education in the region.

151. Also, the regional Open Access Center STEAM at the college provides opportunities for pupils in the region to deepen their knowledge in the fields of nature, engineering, IT and the arts as was already described in more detail in the previous chapter. The STEAM centre was recently incorporated in the MarKo Students' Academy.

152. MC's Educational Center for Higher Education (hereinafter - ECHE) provides professional competence development services for people from Marijampolė municipality and other regions of Lithuania. These services are also open for MC's teachers and students and other higher education institutions, employees of social institutions of Marijampolė and other municipalities - managers, social workers, their assistants, driving teachers and driving instructors, tailors, etc. 450 professional competence development events (93 of which were online) were held between 2017 and 2021.

153. From 2017 – 2021, 10,037 participants took part in the professional competence development events. 8428 certificates were issued to event participants - listeners, lecturers, organisers. 1281 lecturers organised and delivered competence development events.

154. The aforementioned figures are impressive numbers and the Panel appreciates the College's activities in its „third mission" and especially lifelong learning. Nevertheless, the college should be careful on not focusing too much on the Marijampolė Municipality, as it can be read in various other places in this report. If the college wants to develop and grow and achieve its strategic goal of greater internationalisation, its activities must go beyond local.

155. Courses at ECHE are developed on the basis of feedback from social partners and the expressed needs of MC's staff. During the interviews, the social partners as well as MC staff confirmed that the content of the competence development training was tailored to their specific needs.

156. ECHE provides English language courses, sewing training courses, trainings for assistants of social workers and courses for driving teachers. 71 courses were organised 2017 - 2021. From the figures in the SER it becomes visible, that there is a constant decrease in the number of participants in these courses. The Panel encourages the College to find out the reasons for this decrease (e.g. by participants' surveys) and to adapt their course offer accordingly.

157. In order to meet the needs of the residents of the Marijampolė region for the lifelong learning, the conditions for Master's studies are created in the base of MC. During the period of 2017-2021 122 graduates of the college studied for a Master's degree under the concluded cooperation agreements.

158. MC provides its premises to other Higher Education Institutions to carry out study programmes in the Marijampolė region. According to the SER 2017-2022, Master's studies of two universities were carried out in the College's rooms. 2017-2020 Mykolas Romeris University offered Master's studies in *Legal Education and until now - Master's studies in Social Work*. Until 2018, Kaunas University of Technology offered Master's studies in *Business Economics*. Although this provision of the College's premises does not provide any evidence about the College's performance, the Panel appreciates this activity, because it gives residents of the region (and thus graduates of MC), who cannot or do not want to move to another location, the possibility to study for a Master's degree or to study other subjects offered by another institution than MC.

159. MC also focuses on the elderly: 8 lecturers are TAU (Third Age University) lecturers and faculty deans. Their unpaid work provides opportunities for seniors to express themselves and improve their quality of life.

160. Conferences and seminars organised by the college broaden the horizons of professionals from all over Lithuania. 18 conferences and 413 seminars were organised between 2017 and 2021. This demonstrates the MC's significant contribution to educating the people of the region and the country about social work, business, students applied research, science popularisation, education and culture.

161. The college ensures a variety of forms of lifelong learning. It also conducts surveys of participants in competency development training and courses to assess their quality and relevance to needs. The SER provides the information, that more than two thirds of the training participants positively evaluated the process of professional competence development events.

162. **In summary,** the Panel evaluates MC's impact on regional and national development positively and no major drawbacks were found in this area. The impact on regional and national development is clearly visible and it is evaluated and analysed by MC. The Panel would like to emphasise once again the cooperation between the College and alumni and social partners. MC effectively supports lifelong learning through the learning opportunities it offers.

163. **Judgement:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

164. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Establish objective criteria to formally evaluate and quantify the College's impact on national and regional development and its other achievements.

- Take measures to increase the number of graduates employed in positions requiring higher education.

- Focus more on other municipalities in the region, and not exclusively on Marijampolė.

- Take measures to increase the number of participants in training courses.

165. **Good practice examples:**

● The very good exchange of the College with the partners from the Marijampolė region should be emphasised. All stakeholder groups we interviewed were very satisfied with the cooperation. The regular surveys on the needs of the region, but also the active involvement of staff and students in the activities and further development of the region contribute to this.

● The accessibility of the STEAM centre for pupils is also a good practical example.

● Finally, MarKo Students' Academy is a good example to offer higher education to highschool graduates in the region.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in:

Impact on Regional and National Development:

● The very good exchange of the College with the partners from the Marijampolė region should be emphasised. All stakeholder groups we interviewed were very satisfied with the cooperation. The regular surveys on the needs of the region, but also the active involvement of staff and students in the activities and further development of the region contribute to this.

● The accessibility of the STEAM centre for pupils is also a good practical example.

● Finally, MarKo Students' Academy is a good example to offer higher education to highschool graduates in the region.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

● Bundle data in the hands of one responsible organisational unit and apply more elaborate analysis methods – also to be able to prevent students's drop-out, for example, make use of predictive models.

● Define a well-structured information flow so that it is efficient in the data collection and that it reaches the different decision-makers within the institution.

● Do not rely on fulfilling minimum legal requirements, but take on a future-oriented strategic approach to managing the College.

● Set up a quality assurance unit solely responsible for quality assurance (see chapter on quality assurance for further recommendations).

● In general, revise the organigram of MC and make clear, which entity is an organisational unit, and which one is one body.

● Provide more information about the institution in English language to support the strategic goal of increasing the international orientation of the institution.

● Ensure that the Strategic Plan is fully supported by a sustainable financial policy which is linked to risk assessment directly. It is suggested to elaborate both an optimistic and a worst cases scenario.

● Shift the focus of the economic forecast of the College more to medium and long-term.

● Increase the number of full-time staff to make sure that internal staff (not half-externals) sit on different important bodies of the College and to ensure a „critical mass" of researchers and teachers.

● Ensure that the qualification of newly employed non-permanent staff is assessed properly before employment to ensure a high quality of teaching performance.

● Increase the number of PhD-holders to ensure that the College can carry out applied research and research-oriented teaching.

● Develop a long-term strategy for hiring teachers and non-academic staff, which is in line with both the strategy and the growth of the institution.

● Make sure that the study programmes are informed by scientific research (in addition to the existing analysis of labour market needs).

● Improve the capacity to retain part-time students and to increase the number of new students.

Quality Assurance:

● Reconsider the role of students in learning and teaching, to be more of internal institutional stakeholders and partners engaged in teaching, learning and assessment activities rather than customers to be served.

● Use the students' surveys to monitor the appropriateness of allocation of ECTS to modules and units of learning outcomes and to continuously revise the workload respectively.

● The institution should better align its quality policy with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA and change the paradigm from "serving the clients" to supporting students and teachers in student-centred learning and teaching.

Studies and Research (Art):

● Enhance research capacities by assuring more than a minimum number of fully employed teaching staff with PhD.

● Consequently inform the development of study programmes by research.

● Increase the number of international partnership projects in the field of higher education.

● Better link recognition, validation, assessment, certification of prior non-formal and informal learning with the study programme learning outcomes.

● Reduce the percentage of possible recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning.

● Keep and systematically present records on recognition of applications and corresponding learning outcomes and modules.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- Establish objective criteria to, formally, evaluate and quantify the College's impact on national and regional development and its other achievements.

- Focus more on other municipalities in the region, not just Marijampolė.

- Take measures to increase the number of participants in training courses.