



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS STUDIES**  
at Vilnius Business College

**Expert panel:**

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Report language – English

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Vilnius  
2022

## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Business Management and Marketing</i></b>	<b><i>Logistics Business</i></b>
State code	6531LX012	6531LX014
Type of studies	College studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years), part-time (4 years)	Full-time (3 years), part-time (4 years)
Credit volume	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business and Public Management	Professional Bachelor of Business and Public Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English, Russian	Lithuanian, Russian
Minimum education required	Secondary education, one state maturity examination.	Secondary education, one state maturity examination.
Registration date of the study programme	2001	2013

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by Higher Education Institution (HEI)*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

### 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No.V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel online on 26 April, 2022.

**Prof. Dr. Eneken Titov (panel chairperson)**, *Professor of Management, Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences, Estonia;*

**Prof. Dr. Joanna Ejdys**, *Head of International Department of Logistics and Service Engineering, Faculty of Engineering Management, Bialystok University of Technology, Poland;*

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rasa Balvočiūtė**, *Associate Professor at the Department of Management and Communication, Faculty of Business and Technology, Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania;*

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tomi Solakivi**, *Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management and Maritime Business, Department of Marketing and International Business, Turku School of Economics at the University of Turku, Finland;*

**Mr. Mantas Jonauskis (social partner)**, *CEO at “ProBaltic Consulting”, Lithuania;*

**Mr. Simonas Radzevičius (student representative)**, *3rd year student of the first cycle study programme “Economics” at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Core study subjects' descriptions (syllabi) of "Business Management and Marketing" and "Logistics Business" study programmes
2.	Teachers' Competences Development Plan for the academic year 2021-2022 and further

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF BUSINESS FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIUS BUSINESS COLLEGE

Vilnius Business College is one of the first non-state funded higher education establishments in Lithuania. The college is an accredited higher education institution entitled to grant a professional bachelor's degree to graduates of the study programmes in the study fields of *physical, social sciences* and *the humanities*. Since 2007, Vilnius Business College has been an accredited higher education institution with the right to award a professional bachelor's degree. In 2014, the activities of the College were positively evaluated by international experts and received accreditation for a maximum period.

The college is divided into the four departments – Business, IT, Foreign Languages, and Teaching Innovation Development – responsible for implementing applied scientific and teaching activities in their respective academic fields. The Business Department supervises the Business Management and Marketing, Logistics, and Digital Business study programmes.

At present, the College is implementing two study programmes in the study field of Business Studies – Business Management and Marketing (BMM) and Logistics Business (LOB).

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Business studies* study field and first cycle at Vilnius Business College is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>25</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

*Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:*

##### *3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market*

The aims and learning outcomes of the Business Studies field (L01) programmes (Business Management and Marketing, and Logistics Business), focusing on development of a creative, responsible and open personality, conform to the needs of society and the labour market. The programmes are closely linked with the strategic aims of the College. The programmes' aims and learning outcomes were reconsidered and reflected changes in the business environment taking into account the technology and environmental trends as well as needs from a number of social partners.

The study programme of Business Management and Marketing (hereafter also BMM) is oriented towards business creation, management, and development employing knowledge of management and marketing. The study programme of Logistics Business (hereafter also LB) focuses on objectives of creating, managing and developing business in logistics and transport.

It should be noted that the Marius Jakulis Jason Foundation has invested into Vilnius Business College in 2021 due to its long-established experience, high indicators of graduates' employment and employers' feedback, and study programmes that develop entrepreneurship. So it can be stated that the aims and learning outcomes have been analysed and monitored during the investment process.

##### *3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI*

The mission of the College is publicly available on the College's website, also the strategic aims for the period 2016-2021 are presented. Strategic aims for the next period (2022-...) are only mentioned in the SER. The mission of the College focuses on *"opening up opportunities for professional growth and personal development to each student allowing for flexible balancing between studies that are in line with the needs of contemporary life and business and innovative study methods as well as disseminating ideas of sustainable development and lifelong learning"*. The aims of the study programmes are about preparing specialists for the market. According to the feedback of the social partners and students, the College has managed well with its mission and offers a proper study environment for the students to achieve competencies which are mentioned in the study programmes' aims and study programme learning outcomes.

Based on the information the expert panel got from the interviews, the College has three main strategic aims (be a leader in business studies, innovative teaching methods, internationalisation) and mainly the Business study field is supporting all of those - the

innovative study methods like Team Academy are implemented, international lecturers are involved, etc. Therefore, it can be stated that the study field activities and developments are in coherence with the strategy of the College.

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

The structure of the study field programmes comply with the requirements set by Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies, Descriptor of the Business Study Field and other legislation (see Table 1). The aims and learning outcomes of the study field programmes align with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework level 6. Learning outcomes are in line with the aim of the Business Management and Marketing and Logistics Business study programmes; they cover the levels of knowledge and its application and competencies (research skills, special, social, personal competences).

**Table No. 1** Business Management and Marketing and Logistics Business field Programmes compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of college level*

Criteria	Legal requirements	In the Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	153
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	31
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	12
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	35 %
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	30% (BMM FT/PT) 28% (LB FT/PT)

The College constantly monitors the requirements and its compliance to them.

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

The College implements the Team Academy model and project-based study methods in the business management study field. The methods allow teamwork and interactive studies which support the achievement of the entrepreneurship competencies of the student. Teachers presented and social partners appreciated the study methods, which allow students to be hands on to the real business cases - detect and solve the problems of real businesses.

Although the programmes aim to prepare future entrepreneurs, the selected subjects represent traditional business studies. Focusing more on modern competencies like business models, ideation, talent attraction, risks and change management, lean and/or agile management etc. would help to use the Team Academy model better and achieve the programmes' aims at a 1st cycle higher education level.

Learning outcomes (LOs) are divided into the 5 competence areas, altogether 12 competences. According to the recommendation from the previous evaluation, the College has revised the aims and LOs of the programmes, but there are still some issues which could be taken into consideration:

1. the learning outcomes are overlapping and partially consist of the same sub-competences (e.g., problem solving, communication, collecting information etc.);
2. learning outcome is not the same as competence and needn't consist of knowledge, skills and attitude/personal motivation at the same time in one learning outcome;
3. one learning outcome consists of several verbs - several subskills (e.g., “To be able to use modern information technologies, apply quantitative and qualitative research methods, and purposefully gather information on business creation, management, development and marketing issues.”).

Learning outcome-based methodology<sup>1</sup> has several principles which are not followed (as listed above) in the College's business field programmes, e.g., “one verb per learning outcome“, number of LOs must be as low as possible, and LOs of the curriculum or subject cannot copy LOs of national standards (e.g. in this case, the national Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies). In addition, the Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies (point 16) clearly states that “*The provided learning results <...> do not serve as a specification of detailed content of a study programme or subjects*”, so they need to be specified for every particular study programme.

Chosen study and assessment methods are suitable for the professional studies and follow the EQF (and NQF) level 6 requirements.

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

The sequence of the courses is reasonable and allows students to achieve competences in a rational way.

Based on the BMM students' feedback from the online interview, they think that after graduation they are able to work in any business related specialist position or as entrepreneurs. However, one course in the study programme does not give enough skills and knowledge to become a specialist in this business function (e.g., logistics, finances, HR,

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission or its institutions (e.g. Cedefop, etc.) have published several policy papers and recommendations about the Learning Outcomes (e.g. Cedefop (2017). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook. Luxembourg: Publications Office. [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4156\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4156_en.pdf)). The latter clearly states (p. 7.1. and 7.2.), that there is one verb per learning outcome, number of LOs must be as low as possible, and cannot copy recommended LOs, e.g. national standards, that are to be followed but not copied. Also, this document explains how the assessment criteria and LOs should be linked.

etc.). According to the information on the College's webpage, the graduates of the BMM study programme will “*be able to work in personnel management, ...*”. But there is no such course in the programme at all to allow students to achieve competencies necessary to work as personnel specialists or HR managers. So to some degree the study programme is still fragmented, and should focus more on the business areas mentioned in the title (e.g. management and marketing), not on all business functions.

Students' projects are integrated into the study programme. Students need to have one study project per study year. The aim of the projects is to solve practical challenges. The third year project focuses on the data collection and analysis of the practical problem which will be developed as the final thesis. To accomplish the projects, students are expected to use the knowledge gained from the previous subject and different academic skills (like analytical skills, referencing, written and oral communication, etc.), which prepare them for the writing and presenting their final thesis. In the beginning of every study year, the students have Socialisation (general competences) Week, which is also a good opportunity to support the stronger sense of community and teams, and also help the students to develop their general competences.

The SP committee gives feedback for the teachers about the focuses and changes in the study programme. Teachers admit that they have enough academic freedom to improve the course descriptions (syllabi) and focus on student's future needs in the labour market.

#### *3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes*

College provides exceptionally favourable conditions to build up competences that focus on personal learning goals in one of the study programmes. Both study programmes include elective study modules with the total volume of 9 ECTS credits. Among the electives, the college offers subjects to develop the main general competences as communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity which are focused on the business area (based on the market analysis).

The students of the study programme Business Management and Marketing, who learn through the Team Academy method, have a good possibility of individualising their learning. Pursuing the goals of the study programme, students acquire some of the competences of the study programme in an experiential way by applying active and practical learning methods.

The Logistics Business programme should be strengthened in this respect in order to equalise the individualisation of the two study programmes and to balance personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes.

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

The final theses are the integral part of the final internship. Therefore, there are two different types of final theses: 1) business plans, when students develop their own business idea; 2) theses that are directly related to the cases of the internship companies. Based on the titles of the theses defended in 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years, some patterns stood out:

1. The business-plan type of theses are not too popular. In 2020/2021, only 4 business plans were defended out of 29 theses in the BMM curriculum, and no business plan type of thesis in the LB curriculum at all (out of 18).
2. Repeating topics. Out of 18 theses in LB in 2020/2021, 12 started with the word “improving...”.
3. In the BMM curriculum many theses are about personnel management (7 out of 29 theses in 2020/2021) considering that personnel management is not even among the taught subjects.

The social partners say that the idea of linking final thesis with the internship is a good idea, because students have the possibility to “dig deeper” into the practical problem of the company and use already gained competences to find the solution. They also presented the idea that the internship period should be longer.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The developments in the business study field meet the directions prioritised in the College’s strategy.
2. The used project-based study method (incl. Team Academy) helps to develop not only student’s professional but also personal, independent work and teamwork skills.
3. The preparation and topics of the final projects are directly connected with the internship and practical cases.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The learning outcomes need revision and better following of the learning outcomes-based methodological principles must be achieved.
2. The study programmes should be updated concerning the modern entrepreneurship topics and study methods.
3. The aims and content of the BMM study programme are fragmented and indicate several competences (business functions) which cannot be achieved in the promised level (able to work in this particular business field).
4. The topics of the final thesis are too homogeneous and do not reflect the focus of the main competencies expected to achieve.

## **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES**

***Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:***

***3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study***

The College emphasises the role of research activities in various ways. As part of the process, the College encourages applied research, and has set key thematic areas to focus on, including business development, market research, research in market strategies and development of logistics processes and services. These thematic areas correspond well with the focus of teaching. Through *The Procedure for the Promotion of Research Activities*, Vilnius Business College has established a formal procedure of organising, financing and promoting applied research activities. However, the strategic focus of research activities should be emphasised more, as there is currently confusion between research efforts and focus, with many research outputs outside the focus areas. The research interests and publications vary from e-platforms to educational analysis, research focus and sustainability in the business field could be clearer.

As part of scientific activities, Vilnius Business College publishes an international journal *Innovative Infotechnologies for Science, Business and Education* to work as an outlet for publishing research. In addition to this, the College is engaged in outsourced project activities and (R&D) collaboration with partners both domestic and abroad. The College has done good in the scientific area, although several initiatives are just indirectly connected to the business field (e.g. specific IT tools).

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

Description of the link between study contents and latest developments in science and technology, which is provided in the SER (p. 21), is very general. There is a lack of indicated examples. All we can learn from the SER are different ways of building such links, such as: scientific and research activities, annual renewal of the subject description, preparation of a project and final thesis. The Team Academy method encourages students with their mentors to analyse and consider the latest technological and scientific developments and achievements, but this form is only available to a limited number of students (only BMM programme).

However, every year teachers take into account the latest scientific and technological developments when renewing their subject descriptions. Based on additional information collected during the interview with teachers, the specific examples of integrating the latest developments of science and technology into the content of study subjects were indicated. Such links included the block chain concept, e-marketing, as well as the digitalization of the study programme. During the meeting with students, it was difficult for them to indicate references to the latest technological and scientific developments. On the other hand, students agreed that teachers with practical knowledge incorporate the latest developments in technology and science during their subjects.

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

The College organises international conferences for students' applied research and takes part in applied research collaboration with individual companies, also including student participation. As the students are required to participate in at least three research projects

during their studies in addition to their final thesis, students are well engaged in applied research activities. However, more emphasis could be put on clarifying the importance of scientific approach also in the applied research activities. Currently, the research projects are mainly very practically oriented, with most of the emphasis on practical rather than scientific skills.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. A long tradition within the school of talking and listening to the business and applying gathered information in studies and research activities.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Only a few examples given by students referring to links between the content of the programme and the latest developments in science and technology.

### **3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT**

***Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

***3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process***

Suitability and publicity of student admission criteria and process are clear and meet formal requirements. College also pays considerable attention to entrants' motivation where they can get additional points that are included into the main admission score. During an individual conversation with members of the Admission Commission, entrants get questions on the following topics: motives for choosing a higher education institution and an area of professional activities, learning experiences, coping with learning difficulties, experience in social domain (volunteering, etc.), experience in collaboration, perspective view of own professional activities. Admission regulations, implemented study programmes, admission criteria and other information is available on the College website.

During the whole admission period entrants can have live consultations with the Admission Commission in the premises of the College. They can get information on the phone, via e-mail or video call upon individual registration as well as in the national forum "Where to study" ([www.kurstoti.lt](http://www.kurstoti.lt)). The number of applicants according to priorities in the period of 2018-2021 is increasing, and the number of students enrolled in the study programmes of Business Studies increased from 96 to 213 in the same period. Record increase in the numbers of admitted students is predetermined by the quality and content of implemented study programmes that meet the needs of present market (on the basis of the market analysis, data of employers' opinion survey and the added value created by the College alumni), and also by the variety of forms of studies and timetable that provides students with a choice of studies that meet their personal and professional needs (e.g., Team Academy).

### *3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application*

In the admission process, only the candidates with secondary education from foreign countries are accepted (they need to have a diploma recognised by SKVC). The procedure of recognition of foreign certificates is clear and is implemented.

The College acts according to the principle that various forms of studies can be offered, and competences acquired via partial or non-formal studies are evaluated and credited. They follow the *The Procedure of Crediting Learning Outcomes at VVK*, which is also publicly available for the students and student candidates. Study programme coordinator is responsible for the assessment and recognition of students' prior learning and the awareness and use of prior learning recognition possibilities by the students is increasing.

It should be noted that the College has plans to start recognition of the work experience in the autumn of 2022.

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

Conditions for academic mobility of students are great, students willingly participate in Erasmus+ program. During the assessed period in 2018-2020, the College used all the mobility funds allocated by the national agency Education Exchanges Support Foundation: 15 students took the opportunity to go to study abroad or to do their internships abroad according to Erasmus+ exchange program (5 students chose studies; 10 – internship). It is noteworthy that College students participate not only in Erasmus+ exchange program but also in other international projects and mobility programs, e.g. “European Youth Citizenship”, Nordplus, showing that the College is actively looking for opportunities to improve students’ mobility. On the other hand, there were no incoming students during the evaluation period, only 8 Kartvel students from the Centre of Lithuanian Language and Culture in Sakartvelo visited the College in 2019.

### *3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field*

Academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support to the students of the field is provided properly. College has been able to create a scholarship system that helps students financially. It is noteworthy that the College has an A.K.I.S program, an open space for conversations, where students can apply for psychological support. The College teachers provide students with academic support during consultation hours, via e-mail or in the Virtual Learning Environment. The College offers and applies two options for student consulting:

- mandatory consultations, for which contact hours are provided for in the descriptions of study subjects and timetables of consultations are publicly announced;
- if necessary, teachers consult students after lectures or at pre-arranged times individually or in groups, via e-mail or in the Virtual Learning Environment.

Study coordinators consult and help students regarding the study process and its organisation face to face in the College premises, on the phone and via e-mail. A project

supervisor and a coordinator of project-based learning coordinate and monitor project works. Internship mentors supervise and consult on issues related to internships. Heads of departments, supervisors of final theses, social partners (if necessary) are in charge of the process when students choose the theme and write the Professional Bachelor thesis.

The head of the library provides consultations on technical requirements for written papers following the methodological requirements of the College, on searching for information in international databases as well as other issues related to the activities of the library. The Head of Distance Learning was employed in 2021 to carry out monitoring of the quality of distance learning and to provide students and teachers with full support related to distance studies. The College also offers assistance to students in career planning.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

Study information and student counselling in HEI is sufficient. Study coordinators are in touch with students throughout the semester. They consult students on the phone, via e-mail or face-to-face in the premises of the College. The academic support and close relation with students are strengthened during the different mutual events, e.g. the Freshmen' Camp (cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic) and VVK EduBoom. The events during the Camp aim to develop students' sense of community and their team spirit. During the Socialisation Week, meetings are held with the Study Programme Committee and teachers, the structure and learning outcomes of their study programme are explained.

In 2021, the College has invested in the Internal Information System UNIMETIS, where students will have access to full information on studies, will be able to choose freely elective study subjects as well as to make inquiries and get feedback from the Division of Studies in a centralised way. VVK administration employs such social media as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, Vkontakte in the study process. Facebook is used as a channel for prompt informing. An open profile of the College and a closed group for students are used to disseminate information related to the College activities and studies, job and project offers and information related to volunteering activities. Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, Vkontakte serve as additional means of communication, where more audio-visual content is placed. Those are also used for marketing purposes.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. The College has implemented the additional admission criterion - motivation of the candidates, which is assessed during the admission interviews.
2. Recognition of prior learning processes meet the legal requirements and are well known for the potential applicants.
3. The College offers different support services for a student to assure her/his successful study process.
4. The College has established several events to help novice students to settle and understand school life and study organisation.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The number of incoming international students is low and the College is not attractive for either Erasmus+ long or short student mobility.

### **3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

***Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

*3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes*

The structure of the study programme is oriented to developing business competences in the specific professional field, which serves as foundation for the goals of the assessed study programmes. After the evaluation of the integrity of modules in business studies that ensures consistent development of competences, the self-evaluation group states that the study programmes have been designed and implemented consistently. The sequence of study subjects is focused on acquiring knowledge related to learning about the sector, on business creation and management, on the ability to apply this knowledge in the professional field of activity in a constructive way, encouraging students to learn to solve practical problems of business establishment and management and at the same time considering the changing environment.

A wide range of learning methods is applied. They embrace student-centred methods (self-evaluation and reflection, problem-based learning, Team Academy methods, project-based learning, supervision etc.) that enable students to achieve learning outcomes, encourage them to become active participants in the study process, not only provide them with knowledge but also develop their learning skills, which is considered to be most important in the long-term perspective, as well as prepare students for independent professional activity.

The College emphasises project-based and experiential teaching and learning methods. Project-based teaching and learning prepares students for teamwork, encourages them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and to self-assess the level of their own achievements. Experiential teaching and learning is applied in the BMM programme which is implemented using the Team Academy method, similar teaching approach could be expanded more in other study programmes.

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

According to the information given in the SER, the College has taken part (since 2015) in the project "Increasing the Access to Studies" implemented by the State Studies Foundation. Project goal is to improve accessibility of studies and conditions for students with disabilities or special needs in Lithuanian HEIs. In the project's framework, College

administration and teachers participate in the trainings that provide specific knowledge of types of disabilities and special needs preconditioned by these disabilities, technical assistance devices and the adaptation of the environment, individualisation of the study process and curriculum and possibilities for adaptation of assignments, assessment forms and achievement assessment (SER, p.34).

During the online interview, the academic staff didn't bring any examples of real collaboration with the disabled students, because there weren't any of them studying during the assessment period. Therefore, the College's ability to put collected knowledge and bring good practices from the trainings to studies still needs confirmation.

#### *3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress*

The system of progress monitoring and support is implemented by the College on three levels: individual, departmental and institutional (SER, p. 35). Students, teachers and study coordinators act at the individual level to evaluate and give feedback on student's progress:

- Students are responsible for monitoring their own study achievements following their interim and final evaluations;
- A teacher provides feedback to students on interim and final evaluations of study progress in the virtual learning environment, via e-mail or during individual or group consultations. Students aiming at higher evaluation are given the opportunity to resit interim tests before the examination.
- A study coordinator personally contacts a student who does not attend lectures and/or does not take interim or final tests, making attempts to clarify reasons for student's withdrawal from the study process and suggesting possible solutions before the semester finishes.
- During the semester, the problems encountered by students are addressed promptly. Moreover, at least once a semester informal meetings between student and study coordinator are held. Such meetings enable a study coordinator to get information on how students succeed in studies, how they evaluate their progress and whether learning resources are sufficient.

Thus, it can be said that the College has set up the system for monitoring study progress and attendance, although the high and growing drop-out rate is alarming and shows the need for further improvements and developments in the student support system.

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

The College has a systemic approach towards employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the Business study field, based on a formal structure where the Department of Communication and International Relations plays a key role. The employability data received from public institutions (e.g., The Government Strategic Analysis Centre, STRATA) and regular surveys are taken into account when planning the studies.

Based on provided data, the studies mostly lead to qualified jobs in the market, as well as the creation of new businesses, especially in the area of logistics. The outcomes of the studies were well perceived by the social partners and alumni during the online site visit.

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

The principles of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are outlined in The Code of General and Academic Ethics, which is publicly available on the College website under the section “For students” (Study Organisation) and in the Virtual Learning Environment (SER, p. 37). No breaches of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination were reported during the assessed period (SER, p. 38). During the site visit, the College gave examples of practical implementation of the above mentioned documents such as: text similarity checker, discussions after completion of assignments.

The examples of measures to enhance academic integrity, such as training procedures (SER, p. 37-38), address the problem of integrity, also in the context of remote (online) learning. The VBC identified examples of training (referring to integrity issues) that were provided when the pandemic broke out and remote learning had to be implemented.

Equal opportunities policy is a part of The Code of General and Academic Ethics. Due to the re-development of the College website, these documents were omitted but will be re-uploaded, also in English. The Code of General and Academic Ethics refers to the multicultural, multilingual environment in which the College operates. Both teachers and students are informed about the role and importance of this policy. However, the documents setting out the principles of ethics and equal opportunities should be made public.

#### *3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies*

Students have the right to appeal regarding both satisfactory and unsatisfactory final evaluations of a study subject/a module. Appeals are submitted to the Director of the College. The final decision about upholding or rejecting an appeal is made by the Appeal Commission approved in accordance with the established procedure. The procedure for analysing appeals is publicly available on the College website under section “For Students” (Study Organisation) and in the virtual learning environment.

During the evaluated period there were no formal complaints nor appeals regarding the study process. During the panel meeting with students, they indicated that all problems in the teacher-student relationship are resolved informally by reporting to administrative staff. Students indicated that minor issues are dealt with on an ongoing basis, which is indicative of a customer-oriented policy. Examples of problems that students faced included lack of communication with teachers. In order to ensure informal reporting of problems by students within the quality assurance system, the implementation of a "box" for anonymous reporting of students' complaints could be considered.

#### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Awareness of the importance of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination issues at academic level.
2. College employs an efficient system of monitoring the study progress and attendance as well as that of support to students who encounter learning difficulties.
3. A wide range of student-centred teaching and learning methods.

### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Some documents relating policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are not available in English version.
2. The documents and behaviour do not reflect that there exists specific support (individual studies, consultations, advice, etc.) provided for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.
3. Despite the possibilities to assess their personal study progress in different levels and available support, the students' drop out level due to the study difficulties is still high.

## **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

### ***Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:***

#### ***3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes***

The teaching staff of the Vilnius Business College not only fulfil the qualification requirements set by law but exceed them, as the teachers with exceptional practical experience make up 56 percent of all the teachers working in the study field; and active researchers and holders of doctor's degree comprise 32 percent of all the teachers.

In addition, all the teachers working with foreign students speak at least two foreign languages at not lower than B2 level. The 1:15 teacher-student ratio can be considered reasonable, along with the fact that 6 teachers have a teaching load of more than 0.5. This enables the teachers to focus on teaching a particular study subject.

As part of the emphasis the College is putting on ensuring the necessary competences of the teaching staff, there stands out the demonstrated capability to transfer to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

The College emphasises academic mobility of teachers by allowing them to train and teach in partner institutions. Also, foreign lecturers deliver lectures, make presentations and participate in meetings with the academic community of the College.

The academic mobility of the College is well coordinated, as the partner higher education institutions in foreign countries are selected considering the compatibility of their study

programmes with the study programmes of the College, and a diversity of countries, among other criteria. For teachers' mobility, there is a formal procedure, "The Procedure for Staff Mobility at Vilnius Business College", that enables teachers to participate in international mobility through the Erasmus+ exchange program, internships, conference participation, etc.

The academic mobility at the Vilnius Business College could be further improved by seeking other exchange possibilities outside the Erasmus+ program.

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

The competence development in the College is organised through the Department of Studies and the Department of Teaching Innovation, indicating that the competence development in the College is encouraged. The formal structure allows competence development through various channels such as in-College training, seminars and discussions. In addition, teachers are encouraged to take part in project and research activities as well as in training courses and events held by other educational institutions, enterprises or organisations.

The exchange program is engaged in competence development as well, as the teachers are allowed to apply for participation in teaching or training visits at least once an academic year. Even as there are formal structures on how to develop competences, the College would benefit from a more strategic perspective on what kind of competences should be developed.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Teachers of the assessed study programme are well-qualified, also concerning language skills.
2. College has a logical and well established structure for competence development and international mobility of the teaching staff.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The College has a consistent, strategic view on teachers' pedagogical competences development. At the same time, the strategic directions important for the College require also the development of other, subject-specific competences of teachers (e.g. ability to offer appropriate research methods, etc. to students).

## **3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

***Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:***

*3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process*

The College has well-equipped facilities, including lecture halls, medium-sized classrooms, computer laboratories, zones for group work, a classroom for hybrid teaching/learning, the library and the reading room with 11 computerised workplaces, as well as a leisure zone, that are sufficient to deliver both study programmes. Some investments have been made to ensure the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational resources of the field studies. To ensure an effective learning process with a possible growth of the number of students, more transport and logistics software could be acquired, especially related to the study programme Logistics Business.

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

The College has a decision making procedure regarding financial investments into upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies. Based on the provided information (the SER contains only a table of investment types, but does not specify specific items), Vilnius Business College makes regular investments into learning facilities, software, and other resources, but at the same time the plan for the investments in the future and longer term is missing. Some clear future oriented investment plan is necessary to ensure that students' learning needs are met in the best possible way.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Well-equipped learning facilities.
2. Regular investments made into learning facilities, software, and other resources.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. A clear thought future oriented investment plan could be prepared to ensure the best achievement of the learning outcomes.
2. More transport and logistics software could be acquired to better reflect learning needs of the students of the study programme 'Logistics Business'.

## **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

### ***Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

#### ***3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies***

Internal quality assurance system at the College is based on the following measures: distribution of responsibilities; involvement of social stakeholders; periodical collection and analysis of information and data; and efficiency of measures used for internal quality assurance. The main responsibility for implementing Business studies is concentrated in the Department of Economics and Business. The procedure for improvements of the study programme is clear and transparent.

One of the indicated evaluation tools within the internal quality assurance system are student surveys. Surveys are conducted at the end of each semester. The evaluation criteria include all the conditions of studying: evaluation of the conditions, method, materials, evaluation of the teachers, tuition fees, etc. As the expert panel was informed by administration during the site visit, student surveys' participation rate is 30%. During the interview, students confirmed that surveys are used, but it does not seem from their statements that they participate in them. At the same time, students indicated that all problems are solved on an ongoing basis. The College prefers less formal sources of collecting feedback from both students and teachers, e.g., face-to-face meetings. Students are encouraged to participate in surveys by informing them that their voice is important for future changes.

The College has no formal system for rewarding staff members who are highly rated by the students. Thanks and congratulations from the immediate supervisor are the main forms of gratification. However, sometimes the results of student evaluations are taken into account during the terms of salary negotiations with teachers.

Teachers are free to propose changes to the curriculum relating to the subjects they teach. The extent of the proposed changes determines the degree of formalisation of the implementation of these changes. Teachers can easily change the study methods, tools for achieving learning outcomes and literature. Curriculum changes proposed by teachers are discussed with the study program coordinators, Head of Department and the Director of the College. Major changes require the approval of the Head of Department and the Director of the College.

Social partners are involved in the process of improving study programmes and proposing new programmes. They participate in regular meetings of the Study Program Committee, propose solutions, discuss the necessary competences and skills required on the labour market.

The internal quality assurance system enables the academic staff to participate in the improvement of the teaching program. During the online visit, teachers gave examples of curriculum changes that resulted from their suggestions.

In the context of improving the quality of teaching, it is essential to close the quality loop through a formal system for collecting student feedback and taking corrective and preventive action. Only informing students about the possibility of completing the survey can be seen to be insufficient. More effective mechanisms for student participation in the study survey need to be developed.

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

The stakeholders, including students and social partners, are well represented in the College decision making system. Stakeholders have and use the possibility of contributing to curriculum development, programme improvement and other processes that influence the quality of the programmes. Social partners are well represented in decision making bodies as well as in curriculum development committees. There could be further enhancement of

the involvement through wider alumni relationship management, also boosting higher rates of participation in the surveys by students and social partners.

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

The evaluation and improvement processes and feedback include the following activities:

- evaluating the quality of work of teachers in the study programme (student survey);
- analysing data on work satisfaction among teachers working in the study programme (employers' opinion survey);
- evaluating implementation of study programmes and general services provided by the College (general opinion survey of students);
- gathering opinion surveys of study programme graduates;
- constant dialogue communicating with students, teachers, alumni and employers.

The feedback process is more informal and based on direct contacts with students and stakeholders. The feedback process should be more formal and documented.

The school should consider broadening the scope of publicly published information on the results of study programme improvements and outcomes. The main form of publicising and disseminating the results of the internal evaluation and improvement process are meetings with staff and social partners (SER, table 17, p. 52).

It would be advisable to make the aggregated reports of implemented improvements based on the collected feedback public for the wider community.

### *3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI*

During the online meeting, students express their opinion about the quality of studies as great, the same trend is shown from the students' surveys results, but the students' participation rate in surveys is low and is not possible to generalise the results to the whole student community. Collected data and analysis/reports of surveys are not accessible to the wider community, which limits opportunities for gathering insights from the broader community. Based on the on-site interviews, the students were satisfied with the lecturers and the selection of the provided courses and valued generally good relations between the students and administration.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Generally, clear and sufficient description of Internal Quality Assurance system with clearly defined responsibilities.
2. Strong involvement of social partners in the curriculum evaluation process within the internal quality assurance system.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Not clear enough process of employees' (teachers, administrative staff) opinion survey.
2. Lack of a clearly defined system, what are the possible implementation areas of the results from the student survey (where the results can be used as input).

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>The learning outcomes need revision and better following of the learning outcomes based on methodological principles must be achieved.</p> <p>The study programmes should be updated concerning the modern entrepreneurship topics and study methods (e.g. business models, ideation, talent attraction, risks and change management, lean and/or agile management etc.).</p> <p>The topics of the final thesis should be not so homogeneous and should better reflect the focus of the main competencies expected to achieve.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>The link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology should be strengthened in the subject content.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>The number of incoming international students is low and the College could find ways to attract the students to use Erasmus+ long and short student mobility possibilities.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Ensure that integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination policy existing at the College is publicly available in language versions that enable all stakeholders to be aware of them.</p> <p>The documents and practice do not reflect that there exists specific support (individual studies, consultations, advice, etc.) provided for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>The College has a consistent, strategic view on teachers' pedagogical competences development. At the same time, the strategic directions important for the College require also the development of other, subject-specific competences of teachers (e.g. ability to offer appropriate research methods, etc. to students).</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>A clear thought future oriented investment plan could be prepared to ensure the best achievement of the learning outcomes.</p> <p>The facilities must meet the needs of the students with special needs.</p> <p>More transport and logistics software could be acquired to better reflect learning needs of the students of the study programme</p>

	'Logistics Business'.
Study quality management and public information	<p>The teacher and curriculum evaluation process should be more formal based on a structured survey form. It is advisable to develop a tool which involves students to a greater extent in the evaluation process. Aggregate results should also be available as part of a continuous improvement process.</p> <p>More effective mechanisms for student participation in the study survey need to be developed.</p>

## V. SUMMARY

Vilnius Business College is the developing higher education institution, which is not afraid to implement new study methods and is able to apply a student-centric study approach. Comprehensive self-evaluation report and content-rich answers during the evaluation interviews gave valuable information about the development and quality of the Business study field in VVK.

Institution has made efforts to overcome the Covid-19 period and setbacks.

VVK demonstrates the systematic focusing on the achievement of its strategic aims and shows clearly how the business field studies help to achieve strategic aims of the college. The College values the involvement of social partners to build the bridge between studies and labour market needs and expectations. Strong involvement of social partners in the curriculum evaluation and development processes is appreciated among students, graduates and employers. The strength of the business field study programmes stays in practical relevance. Social partners' perception of graduates' ease of adaptation to business conditions is assured with the graduates' in-depth knowledge of the field of study, allowing them not only to detect problems but also to indicate possible solutions

The College has established good possibilities and networks for its academic staff to develop their professional and pedagogical skills – teaching innovation centre, in-house training platform and possibilities, mobility, implementation of new innovative study methods (e.g., team academy) are just some good examples to evidence that the working environment is motivative and directed everyone to achieve the lifelong learning principles. Despite of the formal procedures and documentations, the teachers are left sufficient amount of academic freedom to use different and innovative teaching methods and promote her/his study discipline and organisational culture ensures the awareness of the importance of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination issues at academic level.

As well as the general strategy is implemented into the aims of every study field, also the College's R&D area needs clearer focus and priorities. Science and evidence-based academic approach in studies and in writing the research papers must be the responsibility of every teacher as well as every higher education student. Students need to understand how science is connected to the practical relevance of their studies and that the science oriented approach is also important, not just hands-on skills. Some growth difficulties are reflected in the supportive procedures – how to better build up the international collaboration, implement and integrate the innovative study methods (as Team Academy) with the traditional teaching experiences and expectations and to engage alumni, are just some of the challenges to solve during the next development period.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Eneken Titov