



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of Rehabilitation
at Alytaus kolegija

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data

| | |
|--|--|
| Title of the study programme | <i>Physiotherapy</i> |
| State code | 6531GX047 |
| Type of studies | Undergraduate (Professional bachelor) studies |
| Cycle of studies | First cycle |
| Mode of study and duration (in years) | Full-time, 3 years |
| Credit volume | 180 |
| Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification | Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences, qualification in physiotherapy |
| Language of instruction | Lithuanian |
| Minimum education required | Secondary |
| Registration date of the study programme | 07-06-2019 |

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 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 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 the 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 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 SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on *1st December, 2022*.

Dr. Raija Kuisma (panel chairperson) Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Department of Physiotherapy, Finland

Dr. Marie-Antoinette Hubertine Minis, HAN University of Allied Science, Faculty of Health, Behaviour and Society, The Netherlands,

Dr. Stephen Lungaro Mifsud, University of Malta, Dean – Faculty of Health Sciences, Malta.

Mr Tomas Sinevičius, Všį Karoliniškių poliklinika, Head of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, doctor, Lithuania

Mr Ömer Faruk Sönmez, İzmir Demokrasi University, Bachelor of Dentistry, Turkey

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER 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. | |
| 2. | |

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

Alytus College (AC) is located in the South Lithuania region. It is a state institution of higher education. AC provides higher education and professional qualification and provides conditions for continuous education, organise improvement of professional qualification and re-training, educate the society. The Physiotherapy programme is currently the only one in the Rehabilitation study field organised under the faculty of Health Sciences and Engineering.

The AC currently offers programmes in

- Informatics sciences: Technologies of information systems, multimedia and visual communication.
- Engineering sciences: building engineering systems, automobile transport engineering,
- Health sciences: nursing, physiotherapy
- Technological sciences: food technology
- Business and public management: accounting, Company Administration, Transport and Logistics Business, Business Management.

New study programmes in the plan are medical technician and radiography. Development of studies in the social science field will be considered also in the near future.

This is the first external evaluation since the program was founded in 2019.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Rehabilitation study field and *first cycle* at Alytus 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 | 2 |
| 3. | Student admission and support | 3 |
| 4. | Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment | 3 |
| 5. | Teaching staff | 2 |
| 6. | Learning facilities and resources | 3 |
| 7. | Study quality management and public information | 3 |
| | Total: | 19 |

*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 (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

a) Factual Situation

The main goals of AC, as expressed in SER p. 5 refer to the needs of the economy and level of sciences and technology in the whole country and the region. The AC aims to provide professional higher education leading to qualification corresponding to those needs. Table 1 in SER p. 7 sets out the programme aim learning outcomes of the study cycle in detail.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The documentation and the discussions with the AC director and the Mayor of Alytus support the role of the AC and the physiotherapy programme corresponding and responding to the needs of the region and the society. There are several rehabilitation centres and facilities in the region and these are increasing with the government's new initiative regarding care of the older people. Physiotherapists and also other rehabilitation professionals are in demand to fulfil these ambitions.

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

a) Factual Situation

The aim of the study programme conforms with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI by stating, that graduates are expected to offer services based on modern research and understand the importance of lifelong learning while working independently and in a team of rehabilitation professionals. The learning outcomes of the study cycle are expressed clearly at the appropriate level, which is required of any modern profession, in order to respond to the challenges in societal, economical, technological and scientific development, e. g. SER p. 7 Table 1: L011; “-able to critically evaluate vocational practical

training of physiotherapy, understand the importance of life-long learning, take independent decisions and evaluate their effect in practical situations of physiotherapy using professional knowledge and taking responsibility.”

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The programme and study cycle aims and learning outcomes are clearly presented and at the required level (EQF6). The only comment here is in reference to the L09 “work in a rehabilitation team with colleagues and specialists of other fields”, which may be difficult to achieve, since AC mission and strategy does not currently include the training of other rehabilitation professionals.

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

Table No.3.1.3 Physiotherapy study programme’s compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor)

| Criteria | General* legal requirements | In the Programmes |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Scope of the programme in ECTS | 180, 210 or 240 ECTS | 180 ECTS |
| ECTS for the study field | No less than 120 ECTS | 147 ECTS |
| ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies | No more than 120 ECTS | 15 ECTS |
| ECTS for internship | No less than 30 ECTS | 39 ECTS |
| ECTS for final thesis (project) | No less than 9 ECTS | 12 ECTS |
| Practical training and other practice placements | No less than one third of the programme | 40 percent |
| Contact hours | No less than 20 % of learning | 51 ercent |

a) Factual Situation

As presented in the SER p. 7-10 and the Annex 1, the programme aims and the intended learning outcomes of the subjects, comply with the level of study cycle and academic and professional requirements for a professional bachelor programme and the Lithuanian legal requirements. The content of subjects and the workload, expressed in ECTS (Annex 1) and detailed in hourly learning activities are sufficient to ensure learning outcomes are achieved and substantiated. SER p. 9 refers to the periodic credit review, which takes into account the results of monitoring the study programme and concludes that the content and credits of each study subject are sufficient to achieve the learning outcomes.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Descriptor of the study field of Rehabilitation (Order No V-798 of the Minister of Education and Science of the 2015), clause 32.1 states that research fields of all teachers of study field subjects shall be linked with rehabilitation issues; at least 10 percent of the scope of the subjects of college programmes of the study field of Rehabilitation programmes shall be taught scientists with a doctoral degree, performing rehabilitation field research, publishing their results in scientific journals and participating in national and international rehabilitation scientific events. The cohort of full-time teachers involved in and leading the programme, though very highly qualified and capable educators and researchers in their own field, do not have explicit qualification in the physiotherapy profession. This is reflected in the subjects included in the curriculum by rather generic names of the professional subjects and, also, the research focus. This also came evident during the visit, e. g. in the keen demonstration of some of the facilities which may not be the most relevant and important in the field of Rehabilitation and especially Physiotherapy.

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

a) Factual Situation

Constructive alignment of the field study programme aims and intended learning outcomes is presented in table 1. SER p. 7. Physiotherapy Code 6531GX047, Hydrotherapy course description is given as an example, where the alignment of programme outcomes, course outcomes, study methods and assessment are presented.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The presentation of the study subjects in Annex 1, is rather brief without detailed learning outcomes, learning activities or assessment, and therefore it is difficult to judge whether those are aligned or compatible with physiotherapy programmes elsewhere. Professional physiotherapy subjects seem to be named in very general terms, e. g. General Physiotherapy, Physiotherapy and Physiotherapy for Therapeutic Patients. This may reflect the issue mentioned above that the programme curriculum is written by non-physiotherapy experts. This may require further reflection and actions in recruiting teachers for the programme, in order to maintain the professional standards and development of the whole profession.

The study and assessment methods may also need further analysis, so that they are following constructive alignment principles, rather than listing many possible methods in the documentation.

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

a) Factual Situation

Consistency of the study programme curriculum is substantiated in Table 1. SER p. 7 and the following text, which refer to the AC mission, programme aims and learning outcomes and also the growing difficulty and complexity of the study subject.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The SER document presents consistently the consistency of development of the students' competencies. e. g. p. 8. "The study plan of the P study programme and course programs are made so that a student is oriented towards a complex solution of a problem or task completion, i. e. looking at the analysed problem ...attention is directed towards development of student creativity as well as general and special competences."

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

a) Factual Situation

SER p. 10 states that students have the possibility to individualise their studies, and there are four optional study courses to select from and they can choose two of them to consolidate their knowledge area of interest. They may also change study courses with equivalent content from other HEI. Students are also invited to take opportunities as exchange students with Erasmus partners.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

For a new programme, the personalisation of study seems adequate, but it could perhaps be developed further by e. g. offering more elective/optional modules and also encouraging student mobility nationally and internationally. The variety of internships could also be expanded, once the programme is more established.

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

a) Factual Situation

Principles of final thesis preparation, committee formation and defence are described and they follow the Lithuanian regulations and practices.

Final theses can be commissioned by the social partners of the HEI, as indicated in the documentation and also during the visit.

The conformity of the content of the final theses to the field studies cannot be commented upon yet, since no final theses were provided for the review at this time.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Looking at the physiotherapy related research and publication of staff and students, there are several topics that belong to the physiotherapy domain. It may be beneficial to review and update the topics and the research approaches and methods, to better match the current trends and acute topics in physiotherapy and involve the physiotherapy lecturers more into the research in their own field.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The curriculum content is appropriate and comprehensive and corresponds to the similar programmes in Lithuania.

2. The international guidelines have been referred to and followed in e. g. wording of learning outcomes, which seem at the appropriate level of EQF6.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Wider understanding of rehabilitation and the specific role of physiotherapy in it needs strengthening.
2. The biggest concern in relation to the curriculum and professional development is that there are no full-time physiotherapy teachers. In most countries in Europe it is an essential requirement that the programme lead should be from the profession itself, so that the professionalism and the science and the theory of the profession can be developed.

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

a) Factual Situation

Based on the SER, teachers are actively involved in developmental activities to improve their professional qualifications via attendance of seminars, courses and training held by various local and foreign organisations. Many teachers have presented in conferences, appeared in media, and participated in activities organised by professional associations. The professional development activities of the teachers are listed in SER p. 13-15

SER Annex 2 lists the publications (52) of the teachers involved in the physiotherapy programme. There are a number of (11-13) publication titles that seem to be directly implying a physiotherapy relevant content. The professional background and therefore the approach to the published topics is not clarified.

In Annex 2, there are also topics in the plan of applied research that are relevant to the Physiotherapy field, e. g. "Prepare topical publications reflecting the newest achievements of science and technologies in physiotherapy study programme field and to publish them in

the international databases, periodic publications, publications of national and international conferences, media and reports in national and international events”.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The topics of the research activities are not attributed to academics with a physiotherapy background and the quality of the journals is not clarified either. The impact of the published research results on physiotherapy education and professional practice is not made explicit.

Some of the topics selected for physiotherapy research arguably do not seem to be related to the field of Physiotherapy, e. g. “Laser projection for the Aerofitotherapy, Sound and Image Laboratory of the Physiotherapy study programme”. The EET is concerned that this may be due to a lack of employed highly qualified physiotherapy educators, which may limit the profession specific growth of the degree programme and faculty. The evaluation and outcome of the planned research activities is not presented.

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

a) Factual Situation

It is stated that research accounts for 33% of the workload of an assistant professor and 10% for the lecturer.

In SER p. 16 refers to the students’ engagement via research training and thesis in the current research activities. The study plan annex 1, lists the generic names of the study subjects and p. 8-9 in the SER elaborates on the learning outcomes and content alignment and progression.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

As all levels of academic lecturers should be involved in student learning, programme development and research, it is recommended that the research workload of all University academics at all levels should be at 33%. A recommendation of a further 33% lecturing and 33% administration work directly related to programme development and student progression may be considered.

The current content of the programme does not reflect the latest developments or trends in physiotherapy science and practice. The students and also the physiotherapy teachers

referred to the practical skills that are taught in the programme are based on the experience and current clinical practice of the teachers. The theory and evidence was not coming through in the discussions, but the correction of right or wrong performance of the “techniques” was mentioned a few times. This is not perhaps the way of thinking in modern education and the physiotherapy field, where the professional knowledge is rapidly growing and changing with the fast-developing healthcare and rehabilitation.

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

a) Factual Situation

The link between science and study activities mainly involves teachers accessing R&D funds to update their research skills and opportunities. However, the SER document evidences efforts to involve students in a variety of activities that may have an impact on their academic and professional development, though numbers were not provided. For example, students were involved in the publication of serial articles, or that students were involved in a workgroup in 2021 to update skills in scientific paper writing.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Discussions emanating from the visit did not uncover how the students of physiotherapy benefitted from the activities mentioned, directly or indirectly. Identification of outcomes to be reached by the involvement of physiotherapy students organising or participating in activities would be useful to AC.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong attempt to involve AC in Regional, National and scientific activities that may enhance faculty development, especially through lecturer participation.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The professional backgrounds of authors and lecturers does not seem to be strongly related to the topic of the programme, in particular to the core physiotherapy content
2. The research activities did not show strong relation with physiotherapy curriculum subjects and science as a profession.

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

a) Factual Situation

Admission regulations and procedures are well outlined according to the national student admission system in Lithuania. More information about the admission regulations are also published on the website and the social media channels of AC. AC actively promotes the Physiotherapy study programme among the prospective students by study fairs, communicating with gymnasia, general education schools, vocational information centres, potential students and their parents.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The admission system seems transparent and fair. The process is functioning transparently and smoothly both for government funded and non-funded seats.

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

a) Factual Situation

The procedure for recognition of foreign qualifications is defined by the rules of procedures and the regulations. However so far, no student has applied for the recognition. On site visit, EET met a few students from the Physiotherapy programme who have had previous educational activities in other universities such as personal trainers, massage therapists, psychologists etc. such students should be encouraged to apply for recognition.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Even though AC is ready to implement recognition for prior learning activities, this has not happened as yet. In order to make the recognition process more transparent and smooth, a clear procedure should be implemented and made known and easily administered.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

a) Factual Situation

It is indicated in the SER p. 21 that during the introductory week to studies, students are introduced to the opportunities to participate in the Erasmus+ mobility programme. However, none of the students were involved in Erasmus+ in the last 3 years. There are listed bilateral agreements under Erasmus+ mostly for staff exchange, which also limits the number of the incoming students.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Erasmus+ programme offers a variety of opportunities for AC students to discover and learn and get new skills abroad. Promoting such projects in AC seems sufficient but further promotion and collaboration is needed to increase the activity by hosting students for not only studies but also for traineeships which might become possible by increasing international visibility of the school with higher education institutions across Europe.

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

a) Factual Situation

Academic Support: Students claim to be able to reach their lecturers very easily when they need any sort of help. Expert panel acknowledges that most of the lecturers are teaching part time and spend a limited time in the school which may reduce the accessibility of the academic staff. However, the students seemed satisfied with the lecturers providing constant academic support.

Financial Support: There are various categories of scholarship for AC students to benefit from. Rules of procedure are defined and the scholarships are allocated based on a fair and transparent criteria to the disadvantaged students.

Social Support: It is mentioned in the SER p. 23, that students can have access to sports areas of the university. AC is attracting students by organising social, cultural, sports activities. Data about the participation in these activities is missing.

Psychological Support: AC has an agreement with a certified EuroPsy clinical and health psychologist, therapist of cognitive and behavioural psychotherapy whom students can

approach for psychological help. In discussion with the students, it became clear that students are aware of this service, and found it easily accessible and meeting their needs.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Academic Support: Academic support is left to the motivation of the lecturers, there are no regulations that might define the roles and responsibilities of academic staff for counselling students. Academic physiotherapy staff are physically in the AC for a limited time. It would be beneficial, if a more transparent, systematic and regulated system of academic support for each student was adopted and this made explicit in all the documentation.

Financial Support: There is strong financial support from AC to its students in need.

Social Support: To further improve the social support and cultural needs for students, students' opinions and suggestions should be sought. Alytus is a small town with perhaps limited social attractions. AC could be actively creating and promoting social and sporting activities in the AC, town and region to improve student life.

Psychological support: The mental health services should be promoted more visibly and also be offered online for easier access.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

a) Factual situation

Introductory week events are organised in the first week of studies where students get to meet AC administration, group tutors, lecturers, centre leaders and other stakeholders. They are provided information about the schedules, rules and regulations, study programme, learning outcomes, facilities, learning methods, assessment criteria, mobility projects, etc.

Academic consultation groups are organised by the The Department of Health Sciences and Technologies in which students have a chance to learn about learning outcomes, methods, the teaching/learning assessment system, reference literature and information sources for independent learning, adapted lecture notes, tasks of independent work and exercises, presents self-assessment questions and tests.

A career website is available, where students can find career planning advice, curriculum vitae and cover letter guidelines, the latest job advertisements and information on the labour market situation, vacancies, career opportunities and other useful advice. The interactive

career management information system (CMIS) provides support in the field of student career counselling.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

It is very impressive that the staff in AC are very welcoming to the students to address their needs and expectations. However, a clear and transparent procedure and protocol defining the roles and responsibilities of the different parties in the management and practice of student support should be established, so that it does not rely on the goodwill and availability of staff members.

Expert panel acknowledges that there is a good amount of study information available online and students may refer to this information whenever they need. During the site visit, students however seemed not to be aware of the online information resources and how to reach them. Expert panel also observed a lack of awareness about the final thesis project among students; there should be more introductory information sessions for the purpose, scope and expected results of the final thesis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Sufficient activities for public information and promotion for the potential students.
2. Sufficient academic, career and professional support for the students by the motivated staff and teachers.
3. Significant amount of financial support for helping the students who need it.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The formal recognition of prior learning is not clearly documented. Information to students with other qualifications and educational background need further clarification and clear procedures, to enable them to apply this recognition easily and appropriately.
2. International capacity for collaborations and Erasmus+ mobility is not sufficient. Internationalisation policy should be clarified, new partnerships, Erasmus+ projects and agreements sought and memberships of international and European physiotherapy and rehabilitation networks to be established.

3. A systematic approach to social, cultural, sports and community activities is not evident in the documentation. This should be established based on the analysis of students' needs in collaboration with the Alytus communities. This could also help to retain the graduates in the region
4. The quality assurance in organisation of student support services is not evident in the documentation. There should be documentation and clear procedures defining the roles and responsibilities of the staff and the management in student support services.
5. Low level of awareness of online information for studies among students. Online study information should be made more accessible and visible.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

a) Factual Situation

The SER documents a list of several valid approaches to teaching and learning, linking physiotherapy theories to real-life situations. The philosophical approach is reported to be lifelong learning.

Practising clinicians from nearby health establishments are invited to deliver specific lectures or seminars based on their expertise.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is satisfied that AC provides an array of teaching and learning approaches. It is commendable that local clinicians are involved in the teaching process. However, the latter may be a situation where AC is dependent on them due to a lack of highly qualified physiotherapy educators. Feedback from the students on the quality of the teaching and assessment was positive.

There is the very apparent support of local employers, including the mayor who was present for one of the interview sessions and spoke positively of AC and the employment prospects of their graduates.

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

a) Factual Situation

AC has participated in training on accessibility and disability issues. They produced a guideline on the adaptation of studies to individual needs. AC has a designated person to support people with special needs, enabling students to individualise their study process.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The training of staff and the establishment of support services for students is welcome. It is not clear if this service has been utilised at the date of the SER.

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

a) Factual Situation

The SER documents an acceptable standard procedure for monitoring and evaluating student performance and progression.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The feedback procedure, including feedforward is not provided in the documentation. A visible process would help the students to recognise and utilise the feedback to improve their performance.

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

a) Factual Situation

The SER indirectly reports on quality measures to optimise employability of its graduates, e.g., the direct communication and collaboration with employers and clinics in the region.

AC employs a career specialist who monitors the employment of its graduates using the Career Management Information System.

Surveys targeting graduate's employers and alumni are planned.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

At the time of the compilation of the SER, students had not graduated yet, making this section difficult to evaluate. However, the expert panel is satisfied that the AC has a system in place that may be used to tweak the relevance of their degree programmes.

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

a) Factual Situation

Section 4 of the SER documents procedures and policies that summatively reinforces the academic integrity of the College, Lectureship and student body, e. g. the Code of Academic Ethics and the AC Study Regulations.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is satisfied that the above procedures are in place. It would welcome some detail of the procedures.

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

a) Factual Situation

AC organises roundtable discussions with students periodically. as a part of the evaluation and feedback process and complaints regarding the study.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

There were no complaints or appeals lodged to enable the expert panel to judge the efficacy of the procedures.

The expert panel would welcome a clearer description of the procedure for complaints and appeals to ensure the rights of the student or lecturer.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Given the young age of the Physiotherapy undergraduate programme, AC has regulations and procedures in place to help maintain and improve quality.
2. Evident support by the clinical and employer community, including political support from the region.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Details on how feedback procedures to students on their performance are implemented and how that feedback is fed back to the design/content of the programme are not transparent in the SER document.
2. The high proportion of occasional lecturers and the lack of highly qualified Physiotherapy full-time lecturers may fragment the study design of the programme and impact the quality of the course

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

a) Factual information

The study programme is provided by a staff cohort meeting the legal requirements. The exact number of qualified physiotherapy teachers is not stated separately. Based on the overview in Annex 4, twenty teachers are involved in the programme, five of them hold a doctoral degree and 15 master's degree. Teachers with doctoral degrees teach 20 % of the volume of the study that corresponds to the requirements of the Execution of General Studies and the requirements of the Description of the Rehabilitation study field. The majority of the teaching staff, 96%, have no less than 3 years of practical experience. One teacher with a doctoral degree, who is teaching management and entrepreneurship, has a full-time contract. Six teachers, two of them physiotherapists, have approximately a 50%

appointment. All those teachers have a large amount of years' experience in teaching. The other teachers, most PT practitioners with a Master degree, are employed for a few hours and have built pedagogical experience during the last three years of existence of this physiotherapy programme. Research interests are provided and two to three publications, some without dates are listed.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The number of teaching staff seems adequate for a small programme of Physiotherapy study. However, the expert panel is rather concerned about the lack of full-time teachers with professional physiotherapy background. In most countries in Europe it is a fundamental requirement, or at least practice, that a well-qualified teacher from the programmes' professional background, in this case physiotherapy, preferably with doctoral degree, leads the course. Majority of the professional courses are normally also developed and taught by full time physiotherapy teachers. This is of utmost importance in order to develop the course, the theory and science of the profession and elevate the status of the professions and the graduates. It is observed elsewhere and also it became evident during the visit, that without a profession specific teaching staff and leadership, the role and scope of physiotherapy in the practice environment is not fully explored and utilised. The expert panel strongly recommends that this issue is addressed as an urgent measure, to provide the already well administered programme a strong base for development in the future.

Based on the information, the part time physiotherapy teaching staff turnover is considered to ensure an adequate provision of the programme content especially in the various aspects of expertise that are needed for Physiotherapy education. To ensure that the teaching is up-to-date and responds to the current and especially future practices, teacher exchange and collaboration nationally and internationally, e. g. by ERASMUS+ mobility should be encouraged. This may only be feasible with the full-time physiotherapy teachers.

To ensure constancy of the full-time physiotherapy teaching staff, a clear career progress, continuing professional development programme and promotion criteria for Physiotherapy teachers in the study programme should be developed and made transparent. This would attract highly qualified physiotherapy teachers, and ensure that the Physiotherapy study programme is based on national and international, current and future development of the profession, not only current practice locally. It would also allow Physiotherapy teaching staff

to deepen their knowledge and skills in pedagogy, research and evidence-based physiotherapy practice and development.

The critical mass of staff is able to ensure the teaching of general and foundation subjects such as anatomy, physiology, psychology, pathology and management. This seems to be adequate with the current establishment of the non-physiotherapy teaching staff.

The presentations and publications of teachers during this period are listed in SER p. 16 and in Annex 2. These are commendable as such, but a further development on the new trends of physiotherapy research would be strengthened with a full-time physiotherapy teaching staff.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

a) Factual situation

There was collaboration with international partners around different projects, where staff had opportunities for exchange.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Supervision of practical training of students (field work/internship) is executed by 33 teachers who have Master's degree in the Rehabilitation study field. Clarification and assurance in the documentation is needed to demonstrate that the supervision and the learning experiences in the practice placements adequately address the specific physiotherapy competencies.

In the SER p. 33 possibilities for academic mobility are extensively explained for AC UAS as a whole. Not clear how many Physiotherapy teachers actually were involved in outgoing academic mobility.

Membership of international professional associations such as the European Network in Physiotherapy for Higher Education (ENPHE) and the World Physiotherapy (WPT) is strongly recommended to feed and exchange knowledge in the specific field taught. This would be most beneficial for the new and small developing programme.

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

a) Factual situation

The Teacher Qualification Improvement Division of AC invites the novice teachers to take courses of didactics and educational development.

Teachers provide a comprehensive self-analysis every year. This means that the qualifications and the number of the teaching staff meets the legal requirements and is adequate to ensure achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Possibilities for additional education of teacher competencies are promising and based on the needs of self-analysis.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is concerned how physiotherapy teachers with a small number of teaching hours in the study programme are able to develop their didactical skills as well as keep abreast with the fast-developing professional knowledge and skills. As we heard, the experienced physiotherapists are very busy in clinical practice in rehabilitation, which appears to be their main interest and employment. Full time or more substantial employment at the AC might allow these staff to engage more in the development of pedagogical knowledge and experience. All stakeholders emphasise the value and comfort of a small programme, but this might hinder the growth and development of the profession. It might be beneficial for the development of the programme and to fulfil the need of the society, however, to increase the number of students to be able to create a more solid programme with a programme leader with physiotherapy professional qualification and doctoral degree.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Academic personnel formed for implementation of the Physiotherapy study programme is steady, motivated, oriented towards the trends and goals of the study programme.
2. Possibilities for academic mobility are extensively explained for AC UAS as a whole, providing opportunities both to the teachers and the students.
3. Virtual training for academics provided by world known physiotherapy educators Dr. Tatz and Dr. Bulsys from abroad.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Qualification and number of teachers seem adequate to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Composition of the staff however, is not in balance, lacking a profession specific programme leader. Many Physiotherapy teachers with a very small contribution makes it difficult to develop pedagogical skills. This may establish a practice of a master-apprentice type outdated education model, instead of providing students with a solid theoretical evidence based professional bachelor degree education.
2. The concept and job description of rehabilitation fieldwork supervisors. Their professional background and training to be supervisors should be clarified and developed.
3. The involvement of physiotherapy teachers in academic mobility and activities with international partners should be clarified and encouraged to develop professional content and context of the Physiotherapy study programme.
4. The collaboration nationally with more established Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation study fields and the membership of international professional associations such as the European Network in Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE) and the World Physiotherapy (WPT) is strongly recommended to feed and exchange knowledge in the specific field

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

- a) Factual situation

Throughout the visit to the laboratories, classrooms, library, the clinical city hospital and the rehabilitation and sports facility, the impression was that the equipment available is sufficient to train physiotherapy professionals and to develop practical skills.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel observed that most of the places for practice are scattered around the city at a considerable distance from each other. This makes it difficult and time consuming for students to travel between the sites. Some excessive use of expensive equipment was also observed (e. g. first aid room, light and sound equipment, use of 3D systems), which seem to have little or no direct impact on development physiotherapy specific skills. The expert panel observed that there is a lack of common assessment and exercise equipment that are used in most physiotherapy programmes, e. g. isometric, isokinetic assessment, EMG, etc.

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

a) Factual situation

Visiting AC, expert panel was positively surprised by the cooperation between the politicians of the city of Alytus, the administration of the college and the administration of the city hospital. It seems that there is a strategic approach to supplying the city with young professionals, taking into account the future development of the city.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel recommends that the College's own facilities should be expanded to develop students' physiotherapy practice and research skills i. e., more physiotherapy specific equipment, e. g. simulators, small equipment to practise motor skills, a fully-equipped physiotherapy room that meets all the requirements. It appears that a great emphasis is now placed on the use of massage and physical agents, which is only a small part and disappearing trend of a physiotherapist's work, as modern rehabilitation focuses on clients own activity, education, prevention and active healing processes.

As the mayor of Alytus said, the college should be an institution that attracts and keeps young people in Alytus, hence to fulfil this mission, it is of utmost importance to offer a programme that is current, innovative and forward looking to educate future proof rehabilitation professionals.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Good cooperation between Alytus city politicians, the college administration and the city hospital administration. It seems that there is a strategic approach to supplying the city with young professionals, taking into account the future development of the city.
2. The equipment available is sufficient to train physiotherapy professionals and to develop practical skills.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. A lack of special assessment and special exercise equipment, that are used in most Physiotherapy programmes, e. g. isometric, isokinetic assessment, EMG, etc.
2. A great emphasis is now placed on the use of massage and physical agents, when a modern rehabilitation focuses on clients' own activity, education, prevention and active healing processes.

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

a) Factual situation

From the information provided in the study quality management self-analysis, the expert panel is satisfied with the QA system and process, which is summarised on page 46 table 14.

A robust study quality administration system has been created, which also includes representatives of the administration, teachers, students and employers.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

It is difficult to say how the system works due to the short history of the study programme's existence. It is understandable that not enough data has been accumulated yet about the effective management of the quality of studies.

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

a) Factual situation

In the analysis of the quality management of studies, it was observed that on the [website](#), e. g. freshmen survey, where did they find out about studies, the majority (over 50%) of students referred to the college website and recommended it by friends, teachers, classmates.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

A very small number of students referred to the immediate, active publicity company of the college, based on receiving information from, e. g., events, science fairs etc. Expert panel notes the low participation of 20% of respondents. The information from students' feedback is presented in a generalised way, for all students of the AC. There is no feedback analysis in the evaluation of the Physiotherapy students on the Physiotherapy programme, neither on the quality of the studies and teaching, nor on the competence of the lecturers, or on the assessment of the practice facilities.

The activities of the AC Student Representative Office seem to be insufficient, as the survey data indicate that only one third of the respondents indicated that there is enough information about the activities of the Student Representative Office.

There is insufficient data in the self-assessment on graduates working in the Physiotherapy programme. This information is not available on the website or in the self-assessment.

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

a) Factual situation

The aggregated results of the surveys are published on the [AC website](#), e. g. Results of the survey on the satisfaction of third year students with their studies at Alytus College: feedback and close cooperation between students and lecturers, between students and the administration, is important to ensure the quality of the study process. Therefore, students were asked whether Alytus College provides opportunities to give and receive feedback. As many as 51.1% answered that they agree, 33.3% partially agree and only 8.9% disagree.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The information is presented in a general way for all specialities and it is difficult to assess the quality of the Physiotherapy study programme and the quality of its teaching or practice facilities.

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

a) Factual situation

The SER mentions on p. 30 that a survey of third-year Physiotherapy study programme students is conducted and it shows the students' positive view about their training. It summarises the results briefly.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The evaluation of the students' feedback is presented very briefly, and no actual data nor questions is found in the documentation. Therefore, it is not possible to judge this process, and it is recommended that it is made more transparent and administered regularly according to a required protocol.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A robust study quality administration system has been created, which also includes representatives of the administration, teachers, students and employers.
2. The summary of the results of the student survey presents a positive view of the programme.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. It is difficult to say how the study quality management and public information system works due to the short history of the study programme's existence. It is understandable that not enough data has been accumulated yet about the effective management of the quality of studies.

2. The information from students' feedback is presented in a generalised way, for all students of the AC. There is no feedback analysis in the evaluation of the Physiotherapy students on the Physiotherapy programme, neither on the quality of the studies and teaching, nor on the competence of the lecturers, or on the assessment of the practice facilities.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

| Evaluation Area | Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle) |
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| Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The competencies, learning outcomes and especially the learning activities and assessment should be clearly aligned, and presented so that it is evident that learning activities and the assessment tasks really match the learning outcomes of the courses. This could be presented for each course/module in a succinct table format. 2. To ensure that the programme remains relevant and up-to-date to fulfil the needs in the region and the country and keeps up with the international trends, a full-time position for a physiotherapy lecturer/associate professor with relevant doctoral degree as the programme lead should be established. 3. One of the learning outcomes of the Physiotherapy programme is that the graduates will be able to work in a rehabilitation team with colleagues and specialists of other fields. This may be difficult to achieve, since AC mission and strategy does not currently include the training of other rehabilitation professionals. It is therefore recommended that in the current situation students are offered opportunities to learn with other rehabilitation professionals in the clinical practice until such time, when new programmes in the rehabilitation field are developed in AC. |
| Links between science (art) and studies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When providing publications and (inter)national activities and mobility, the references should be presented in a traceable transparent manner. 2. The impact of the staff research activities on the Physiotherapy academic programme, development of practical skills and students learning and also thesis topics should be made transparent. |

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| | <p>3. Assignments, task and research projects should be closely related to the theoretical and evidence base related directly to the science and evidence-base of Physiotherapy.</p> |
| <p>Student admission and support</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information to students with prior qualifications and educational background need further clarification and clear approval procedures, to enable them to apply this recognition easily and appropriately. 2. Internationalisation policy should be clarified, new partnerships, Erasmus+ projects and agreements and memberships of international and European physiotherapy and rehabilitation networks to be established. 3. A systematic approach to social, cultural, sports and community activities is not evident in the documentation. This should be established by students' needs assessment in collaboration with the Alytus communities. This could also help to retain the graduates in the region 4. Mental health support should be more visible and online support should be made available. 5. The quality assurance in organisation of student support services is not evident in the documentation. There should be documentation and clear procedures defining the roles and responsibilities of the staff and the management in student support services. 6. Online study information should be made more accessible and visible. |
| <p>Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Given the young age of the undergraduate programme, a clearer description of the procedures for protecting socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs is recommended. This would allow EET to ensure that evaluation of this area is fruitful. 2. A clearer description of the feedback mechanism to students on their performance is crucial, such as time windows and procedure to challenge grades. |

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| | <p>3. For a regional college, it can be considered to evaluate the physiotherapy needs of the population and industry initiatives (such as the probable construction of care residences) to attract more human and physical resources to the AC physiotherapy programme</p> |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The expert panel recommends redistributing the composition of the teaching staff. It is strongly recommended that a full-time physiotherapy lecturer/associate professor with doctoral degree is employed to lead the program. This would ensure the continuing development of the programme, the profession and also consolidate the programme's place at the AC and the region. 2. Also, the core physiotherapy teaching staff should have more permanent employment in order to develop their pedagogic and research skills to benefit the programme. |
| <p>Learning facilities and resources</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The expert team observed that most of the places for practice are scattered around the city at a considerable distance from each other. This makes it difficult and time consuming for students to travel between the sites. This situation should be evaluated and managed in the way that students' learning and work load is managed in the best possible manner. 2. Some excessive use of seemingly irrelevant and expensive equipment in physiotherapy programme was also observed (e.g. first aid room, light and sound equipment, use of 3D systems). It is recommended to put emphasis on developing the AC's own facilities to develop students' physiotherapy practice skills. 3. It appears that a great emphasis is currently placed on the use of massage and physical agents, which is only a small part and disappearing trend of a physiotherapist's work, as a modern rehabilitation focuses on clients' own activity, education, prevention and active healing processes. It is recommended to review and update the curriculum in this respect to align more |

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| | <p>on the recommendations of the European and International guidelines and take advantage of evidence-based practice.</p> <p>4. As the mayor of Alytus said, the college should be an institution that attracts and keeps young people in Alytus, hence to fulfil this mission, it is of utmost importance to offer a programme that is current, innovative and forward looking and therefore the curriculum content should be reviewed and also the employment of a professional course leader will advance this aspect.</p> |
| <p>Study quality management and public information</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The information from students' feedback on the Physiotherapy study programme should be analysed and presented separately to give a clear picture of what the physiotherapy students think about the programme. Only this information allows a focused plan for improvement. 2. The activities of the AC Student Representative Office seem to be insufficient. A clear and transparent report or protocol should be available. 3. There is insufficient data in the self-assessment on graduates working in the physiotherapy programme. This information is not available on the website or in the self-assessment. |

V. SUMMARY

Note: In this EER document the expert team considers the issues under “weaknesses” as areas for improvement throughout the documentation.

The International expert panel thanks the Alytus college for hosting the visit and their hospitality during the visit. The expert panel was impressed with the smooth organisation, the lively and engaging participation of all the different teams and also with the achievements so far by the new programme.

The Physiotherapy study programme at the Alytus College is a new one and the first cohort of students have just graduated. The AC has an ambitious vision to develop the programme and the wider allied health professional and rehabilitation area in the near future. Based on the rapid development of the Physiotherapy programme, there is no doubt that the AC will succeed in the future development.

The SER documentation was in main areas clear, systematic and succinct, and with the further visit to the college and facilities and discussions with all the stakeholders, gave a good insight into the programme. The expert panel is confident that with further development, not only in the Physiotherapy programme but also in the planned other allied health and rehabilitation programmes, the AC will become a respected institute in the health and rehabilitation field.

The organisation, management, quality assurance and documentation are of good standard, which demonstrate that the current staff is experienced in these matters.

The main weakness of the programme is that it lacks a professional physiotherapy lead and a strong core teaching team of physiotherapy educators. The weaknesses of the programme are mainly related to this, i. e. the development of physiotherapy specific theory, science, knowledge, skills and professionalism. The somewhat generic practical teaching facilities and also the coordination of the clinical practice placements could be developed further with a strong professional physiotherapy lead, who would have experience and understanding of the current and future needs and trends of local, national and international physiotherapy profession. This would also help to facilitate communication and collaboration with professionals locally, nationally and internationally, opening up avenues for teachers' development as well as students' internationalisation, for the benefit of the region's

rehabilitation needs. These developments will ensure that the rehabilitation in the region will be up-to-date and help the population in their needs.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Raija Kuisma

(signature)