



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD OF REHABILITATION
AT PANEVĖŽIO KOLEGIJA

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Study Field Data

| | |
|--|---|
| Title of the study programme | <i>Physiotherapy</i> |
| State code | 6531GX021 |
| Type of studies | College Studies |
| Cycle of studies | 1st |
| Mode of study and duration (in years) | Full time, 3 years |
| Credit volume | 180 ECTS |
| Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification | Professional bachelor in health sciences, professional qualification of physiotherapist |
| Language of instruction | Lithuanian |
| Minimum education required | Secondary education |
| Registration date of the study programme | 30.08.2002 |

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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 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 8th November, 2022.

1. Dr. John Xerri de Caro (panel chairperson), Senior Lecturer within the Physiotherapy Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta (Malta);

2. Dr. Maija Kangasperko, Coordinator of English Degree Program in Physiotherapy at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (Finland);

3. Assistant professor Dr. Magdalena Hagner-Derengowska, vice rector for science, dean of physiotherapy faculty at Private University in Bydgoszcz, Poland;

4. Ms Aistė Pranskaitytė-Bielevičienė, Center for care and supervision, Director of nursing homes for the elderly and disabled;

5. Ms Karolina Limanovskaja, Fourth year student in the Genetics study program at Vilnius University.

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 REHABILITATION STUDY FIELD (Physiotherapy) at PANEVĒŽIO KOLEGIJA

The Panevėžio kolegija (PK, College) is a state higher education institution (public institution) established in 2002 and offers first-cycle college level (3 years) study programmes. The Panevėžio kolegija has three academic units – the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Technological Sciences. 20 accredited college study programs are distributed in 7 groups of study fields (health sciences, social sciences, engineering sciences, computer sciences, business and public management, law and education sciences). The Rehabilitation field studies fall under the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences with 6 study programmes including Physiotherapy as 1 of 5 health science fields (the others being General Practice Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Beauty Therapy and Emergency Medical Aid).

The previous external evaluation of the study programme was held in 2015 and received a positive evaluation (14/24) although the methodology was slightly different (6 areas of evaluation with a maximum score of 4 in each area).

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Rehabilitation study field and first cycle at Panevėžio kolegija is given a **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 | 3 |
| 4. | Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment | 3 |
| 5. | Teaching staff | 3 |
| 6. | Learning facilities and resources | 4 |
| 7. | Study quality management and public information | 4 |
| | Total: | 23 |

*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

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)

The aim of the Rehabilitation study field and Physiotherapy study programme at Panevėžio kolegija is to prepare a physiotherapist who can work independently and/or in teams of professionals. The self-evaluation report highlighted that a third of respondents to a survey by social partners on the compliance of the programme with changes in the labour market indicated certain lack in practical professional skills and abilities.

The corroboration of fact is that changes to the programme of studies were made to address the results of the survey and to ensure that the students were given the opportunity to engage with alternative subjects that were associated to the labour market needs, such as music therapy and dance therapy.

The expert panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the field of study and programme meet the needs of the Lithuanian labour market, and specifically appear to address the local context of the region.

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 aims of the Physiotherapy study programme at PK College are to train physiotherapists in line with the PK mission for the region and the country. According to the SER (pg. 6) the College provides students with modern competencies of economic and social value in a smart society, and competencies are developed by teachers/practitioners, delivering modules (subjects) of study field. In addition, students' practice in external institutions and have access to the direct activities of specialists, which allows them to integrate more readily into the labour market.

The corroboration of fact is that the programme is very much in line with the College strategy towards society in the region.

The expert panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the Physiotherapy study programme meet the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI, falling short of the international objectives.

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

The Table 1. below indicates the factual situation with respect to the distribution of ECTS across the programme. No evidence was provided with regards to signed attendance sheets for internships (clinical practice placements). Internships coded by PVP on the study plan include 'consultations' related to meetings between students and supervisors to discuss their placement.

Table No. 1. Physiotherapy study programme 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 for the study field | No less than 120 ECTS | 123 |
| ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies | No more than 120 ECTS | 6 |
| ECTS for internship | No less than 30 ECTS | 42 |
| ECTS for final thesis (project) | No less than 9 ECTS | 6 + 3 (final exam) |
| Practical training and other practice placements | No less than one third of the programme | 896 (internships) + 657 (class based) = 1553 (32.4%) |
| Contact hours | No less than 20 % of learning | 546 (theory) + 1553 (practice) + 258 (consultations) = 2357 (49.1%) |

The corroboration of fact:

| | Hours involved | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| | Th. | Prac. | Cons. | Self-study | |
| Term 1 | 138 | 141 | 40 | 481 | |
| Term 2 | 86 | 258 | 40 | 416 | |
| Term 3 | 122 | 158 | 40 | 480 | |
| Term 4 | 116 | 228 | 40 | 416 | |
| Term 5 | 84 | 292 | 40 | 384 | |
| Term 6 | 0 | 476 | 58 | 266 | |
| Total hours | 546 | 1553 | 258 | 2443 | 4800 |
| % | <i>11.4</i> | <i>32.4</i> | <i>5.4</i> | <i>50.9</i> | 100.0 |

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| | ECTS |
| Study field | 123 |
| College | 6 |
| Internships | 42 |
| Thesis | 6 |
| Final Exam | 3 |
| | 180 |

| Internships | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Introduction to specialty Practice | 120 |
| Physiotherapist activity Practice | 120 |
| Clinical Physiotherapy Practice | 180 |
| Final Practice | 476 |
| | 896 |

The expert panel concludes that the Physiotherapy study programme meets the national regulations for a 1st cycle degree programme at College level. For clinical practice internships, if the College wishes to facilitate the international mobility of graduates immediately after graduation, then the normal expectations would be of approximately 1000 hours and the areas of practice would need to be more clearly defined around, for e.g., internships devoted to musculoskeletal/orthopaedic practice, neurological practice, medical practice, older persons, and other areas. On the other hand, these additional hours may be fulfilled after graduation if graduates are employed locally. It would need to be made clear to the students that immediate recognition/registration to practice in a foreign European jurisdiction may require some additional hours.

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

The aim of the study programme is described and the description of the learning outcomes to the Bachelor level include 'Knowledge and Application', 'Research skills', 'Special abilities', 'Social abilities', and 'Personal abilities' that match the provision set out in the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Rehabilitation (2015), Chapter 3 Point 16*.

There is a good mix of teaching/learning methods that are used to deliver the courses which are appropriate for achieving the desired and intended learning outcomes. Assessment is based on a good mix of reports, presentations and examinations which is appropriate.

The expert panel concludes that the aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are compatible with the field and cycle study programmes.

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 course programme is described and presented in a logical manner as a modular course over 6 semesters, with two semesters each year. The study subjects cover general health subjects, as well as specific physiotherapy subjects that include internal medicine, geriatrics, traumatology, orthopaedics, neurology, women's health, and paediatrics. The foundations of the programme meet the requirements for a profession competence-based curriculum that meets entry-to-practice level thresholds.

The title of the module kinesiotaping is very modality oriented and does not describe the competence being immobilisation/taping techniques. Also, the title used for the subject area geriatrics does not conform to the now recognised universal title, i.e., older persons, and whilst this is perhaps best understood in Lithuania, and still understood internationally, it may be considered to change the title to 'older persons'.

The expert panel concludes that the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules ensure consistent development of the competences of the students.

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

Students can attend optional course subjects in the third and fourth terms that are made available from the list of Optional Electives of Panevėžys College.

9 ECTS are offered, of which 6 ECTS to study a foreign language, and 3 ECTS to study a physiotherapy specific subject. The total study hours for these optional course subjects are 240 hours of which 84 hours are contact hours (35%). A greater load is placed on studying a foreign language rather than physiotherapy specific subjects.

The expert panel concludes that the opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes are met.

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

The final thesis is organised according to the final examination order, the description of the procedure for preparation and defence at College and the description of the procedure for the prevention of plagiarism.

All students prepare and submit a final thesis in the 6th semester in fulfilment of the requirements to graduate. The student chooses the subject of the thesis themselves from a list of topics proposed to them. The criteria for the assessment of the final thesis is logical and fair and allows for a maximum of 10 points - with 7 points towards the content, 1 point towards the structure and language, and finally 2 points towards presentation quality.

The expert panel finds that the final theses comply fully with the requirements to graduate.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Changes to the programme of studies were made to address the results of the survey and to ensure that the students were given the opportunity to engage with alternative subjects.
2. The programme is very much in line with the College's strategy towards society in the Panevėžys region.
3. There is a good mix of teaching/learning methods that are used to deliver the courses which are appropriate for achieving the desired and intended learning outcomes. Assessment is based on a good mix of reports, presentations and examinations which is appropriate.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The total number of hours dedicated to clinical practices (896) is slightly short of the international norms (1000 hours).

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

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 SER reports that the PK organizes a yearly international scientific conference that aims to bring together scientists and researchers from across a wide range of subjects and that attracts participants from more than 20 institutions. Between 2019 and 2021 lecturers from the physiotherapy programme participated and presented at several international conferences and published articles in scientific journals. The number of publications reported are 24 (2019), 16 (2020) and 23 (2021).

During the site visit the opportunity of clinical and practical collaboration for research with social partners as well as with national and international partners was explained, and this included the involvement of students in the research fields. The experience and involvement of the students and academic staff in the research field is sufficient.

The expert panel concludes that the scientific activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research related to the physiotherapy study programme is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The content of the physiotherapy programme is reported to be constantly reviewed and updated to include the latest developments in the field as well as to meet the changing demands of the labour market.

The PK has equipment that serves the purposes for diagnosis and investigations that may be used in research. Funds are available for the purchase of new equipment. The plans for scientific activities in the science field related to physiotherapy are provided and their financial viability as presented by the Institution is clear.

The expert panel concludes that the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology is sufficient for a positive evaluation.

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

The PK aims to strengthen the link between science and studies by helping students to acquire unique knowledge and skills, and by involving teachers in the research activity with students to create a unique and rich educational environment. Students are encouraged to prepare potential research projects and to implement their research projects in small-scale research and write their report. In addition, students are taught to look for sources of research funding, to participate in external research activities together with external partners. In a 2021 survey, 75% of students noted that teachers encouraged students to write scientific articles, participate in scientific conferences, whilst teachers and students collaborated in applied research.

It was noted that an association of students interested in research was created at the College whose function was geared towards developing this field at College. The pandemic situation decreased the opportunity for students to attend the conferences and workshops.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities are consistent with their study cycle.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Great involvement of students in scientific activities particularly through the research group.
2. Applied research is carried out in cooperation with external partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

The College executes the admission of students into the rehabilitation study field programmes through the system of the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for general admission. The admission is structured in accordance with general state requirements and Panevėžys College legal acts. All the admission criteria are published on the College's website.

To apply for the study program students must finish secondary education and pass their state exams. The competitive score for admission is calculated by assessing the grades from: biology exam, chemistry, mathematics or IT exam, Lithuanian language exam and any other non-related subject exam. The minimum competitive score for entering the study programme is 4.3 which matches the state recommended admission score. The PK actively promotes the programme by attending higher education study fairs, visits regional education schools, and publishes information about their study programs online. The number of applicants for this study program has been decreasing over the years. In 2019 there were 20 first choice applicants for state funded study places and 10 first choice applicants for state non-funded places. In 2021 this number dropped to 13 and 6 respectively. The number of applicants according to remaining priorities have decreased by half in the period from 2019 to 2021. The number of signed agreements has also been decreasing. For state funded study places in 2019 – 7 students, in 2021 – 6 students. For state non-funded places in 2019 – 20 students to 9 students in 2021. The admission scores however have increased in the last 3 years. In 2019 the average admission score was 4.5 whereas in 2021 the average admission score reached 6.22.

The decrease in admitted students is explained by the general demographic situation in the country. The population in Lithuania has been steadily decreasing over the years and there are less and less applicants each upcoming year. The admission score has risen due to the study reforms made in 2019 which stated that only people who have an average admission score over 4.3 may be admitted to study in higher education institutions. Since Panevėžys College follows state regulations this affects the number of admitted students.

The expert panel concludes that the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process are sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

The outcomes of previously acquired learning outcomes are evaluated and recognized according to PK legal acts. Accessibility, transparency, and objectivity, assimilation and flexibility are taken into consideration when evaluating competences acquired outside of HEI. Students must present necessary documentations and the qualification accreditation will be taken into place. These requirements are not applied for the ERASMUS+ program because the study field programs are already coordinated with foreign institutions for exchange to take place.

During the period under the assessment 27 students applied for previously acquired competence recognition. All the presented requests were granted. Students commented that this system is providing opportunities for academic flexibility so that people can modify the study program to their liking.

The expert panel concludes that the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Panevežys College provides students with information on international mobility and encourages them to take part in ERASMUS+ exchange programs at the start of each semester by sending reminder letters to their university assigned e-mail boxes. The institution has partnership agreements with 24 higher education partners where students are encouraged to take part in international mobility. Between 2019 and 2021 the number of students leaving for part-time studies or international practice has been decreasing. In 2019 – 4 students, in 2020 – 2 students, numbers on 2021 period are not provided. This may be the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that students choose to integrate into the Lithuanian labor market as soon as the opportunity arises which obstructs the ability to take part in foreign exchange programmes.

During the period between 2019 – 2021 3 students came to do internships at Panevežys College and students came to study full-time. However, the PK currently has students from Ukraine coming to study full-time which is not mentioned in the report. The study course has been adapted for language for students to be integrated into the study process.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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.

The students support system is currently being updated to minimize high dropout rates. All necessary information for students is uploaded to the College's website and is sent to students e-mail boxes. Each admitted study group is assigned a tutor from the College so that the quality of the integration process is assured and so that students receive all the necessary information about the College and the study process. The College provides the opportunity for students to have individual study plans so that they can balance work and study, with opportunities for academic leave. Students who are admitted to state-funded places and excel in their studies are eligible to receive a scholarship. Scholarships and financial aid for students is provided in accordance with state regulations. During the analyzed period, 7 scholarships were awarded in 2019 for physiotherapy programme students. In 2020 8 students were awarded and in 2021 – 12 students. The College also provides psychological support for students if they require it.

The expert panel concludes that the suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the physiotherapy students is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

Upon entering the College students receive information leaflets with information about the faculty, important contacts, map of the building, services, etc. During the first semester of the study program freshmen take the course on introduction to studies where the information about the study field and the institution is broadened.

To minimize dropout rates the College has implemented a mentorship program where students from higher grades take part in coaching the newly admitted students so that the transition from school to College is easier. This measure was effective since in 2021 there were no drop out from the study program.

The expert panel concludes that the study information and student counselling is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Academic flexibility is applied at the College, e.g. The College provides the opportunity for students to have individual study plans so that they can balance work and study, with opportunities for academic leave.
2. Implemented mentorship system for first-year students.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

According to the self-evaluation report, studies at Panevėžys College are carried out in the form of full-time studies in semesters. The duration of a semester is 20 weeks, of which 1-4 weeks are devoted to the examination session. Most of the students' contact with the lecturer is face-to-face, only during the pandemic period did distance learning take place, except for practical classes.

The teaching process is organised through virtual classrooms, lectures, seminars and video streaming. The main methods of study that contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes are lectures, discussions, observation, demonstration of practical skills, performance of procedures, case and situational analysis, pair and group work, practical, writing, searching for and summarising relevant information, reading books and articles, and preparing and presenting reports. The College uses Moodle, a virtual learning environment, which provides learning materials, practical, self-study, revision tasks, tests, coursework/project assignments and methodological guidance.

The assessment of learning outcomes is publicly available on the College's website. The assessment system for student progress is clear, public and suitable for evaluating the learning outcomes of studies. Students' independent work is allowed and organised by considering the number of students, place of performance, type of activity and didactic goals. Graduates of the PT program who have obtained a professional bachelor's degree and completed additional studies or fulfilled other requirements set by the higher education institution, have the right to enrol in second-level master's studies according to the procedure established by the higher education institution.

During the evaluation at the College, the experts noticed that the flexibility of the learning process, the possibility to combine work and studies, the flexibility of the lecture time in adapting to the needs of the students were evaluated very positively by the students. Also, during the evaluation, the experts missed the application of international guidelines in the learning process, which would be important for the training of future physiotherapists and good learning results.

The expert panel concludes that the teaching and learning process that enables to consider the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

The College provides opportunities for students with special needs or socially vulnerable groups to study. The aim is to consider the individual needs of students with disabilities, to listen and understand them, as well as to enable them to participate directly in the learning process. Counselling for students with special needs is available via the Center for Studies, Careers and Professions. The study process is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of a disabled person. The College participates in the State Study Fund project "Increasing access to studies" to improve and adapt the informational and physical environment. The College purchased a stationary lift and two mobile stair lifts for students with mobility disabilities, several computer desks and chairs adapted for them. For visually impaired students, the College provides the opportunity to read Braille, there are two image magnifiers. Disabled students at college are eligible for support. Information about support for disabled students is public.

Two students with disabilities had started studies within the physiotherapy programme but unfortunately did not complete it. Lecturers reported that they lack some skills in working with disabled students.

The expert panel concludes that conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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 progress of students is systematically monitored in the College and the outcomes of the monitoring are applied to ensure successful learning during studies. The outcomes of the semester are discussed two times a year. Student feedback is sought at the completion of the module (subject) via a mandatory survey of about satisfaction with studies in general, about satisfaction with the subject studied, about problems they encountered.

Special attention is paid to first-year students, who participate in a survey about adjustment to higher education after the end of the first semester. Information, counselling and other services are provided taking into account the needs of students. Each academic group is assigned a tutor, who ensures the dissemination of information between students and academic staff.

Feedback on intermediate module (subject) study results is provided to groups of students or individually to each student. Methods for providing individual feedback are chosen by mutual agreement between the teacher and the student. Moodle is used for remote feedback.

The evaluation found insufficient focus on monitoring students' progress to identify their learning potential, identify problems and weaknesses, individualize their work, help them select further content and methods, and provide support and guidance adapted to students' needs. Student progress and feedback should be strengthened by including the forms of discussions and proposals, as it is an integral part of the study process, useful not only for the professional development of students and teachers, but also for improving the quality of studies.

The expert panel concludes that the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress is sufficient to merit a positive evaluation.

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

The College provides career management services in the form of lectures and consultations. Students are advised by Study Center staff, career and profession trained lecturers. There is also a Career Management information system that allows students to manage their personal careers and use the virtual career library, and the College can track students' careers in this way. According to the report, graduates of the PT program successfully enter the labour market immediately after graduation and are still working a year after graduation. The number of graduates working according to the acquired specialty after one year is 57%. in 2018 of program graduates, 67 percent in 2019 program graduates and 73 percent in 2020 program graduates. The employment data of PT program graduates correlates with the demand data for PT program graduates, the need for workers in Lithuania in 2018-2022, provided by the Center for Strategic Analysis of the Government. The survey of employers' opinions about graduates' professional preparation and acquired education (2020/2021) showed that employers have a rather positive assessment of the knowledge, practical skills

and general competences of graduates of the PT program in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Suitability The suitability of the theoretical professional knowledge acquired by the graduates was emphasized by 84.62 percent and sufficiency of practical professional skills and abilities - 69.23 percent. The survey of graduates of the PT program on the compliance of acquired competences with the needs of the labour market, conducted in 2021-2022, showed that most graduates (73.33%) met their expectations. Having established themselves in the labour market, 93.33 percent surveyed graduates had sufficient professional knowledge acquired during their studies, and 86.66 percent had practical professional skills and abilities. The goal of the college's strategy is to fully help graduates integrate into the labour market, so much attention is paid to student entrepreneurship education. Students of the program successfully participate in entrepreneurship competitions.

Based on this data, a relatively high rate of graduate employability is observed. The Expert Panel concludes that employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the physiotherapy is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

Plagiarism prevention procedures are in place. The Academic Integrity and Non-Discrimination Policy is clearly stated. Equal opportunities are guaranteed to all persons. However, the examples to support this were shortcoming, and it was not clear whether there were cases of academic failure and discrimination during the evaluation period.

The Expert Panel concludes that the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

The Self-Evaluation Report states that students have the possibility to appeal. However, it is not possible to assess whether appeals were made during the assessment period, as this information is not provided.

The expert panel concludes that the appeals procedure is not sufficiently clear and lacks further clarification as this information is not provided.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Employers' opinions about graduates' professional preparation is very positive towards the knowledge, practical skills and general competences of graduates of the PT program that meets the needs of the labour market.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The evaluation found insufficient focus on monitoring students' progress to identify their learning potential, identify problems and weaknesses, individualize their work, help them

select further content and methods, and provide support and guidance adapted to students' needs.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

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

Permanent teaching staff of the field subjects at the HEI (at least half-time position and at least 3 years at the evaluated HEI) is provided, indicating the pedagogical and/or scientific degree, the pedagogical work experience, the research interests (listing 3 major works over the last 5 years), the practical work experience in the subject field, the subjects taught, and the current workload at the HEI. The dynamics of teaching staff turnover in the field is described (how the replacement of retired teaching staff and the education of young teaching staff are ensured). The dynamics of lecturers-practitioners who have been teaching the field subjects for the last 3 years are good.

The physiotherapy study programme is delivered by staff meeting all legal requirements. From the total number of teachers (19) only 8 teachers have physiotherapy qualification, which is 42%. Those interviewees who had physiotherapy qualification were not members in Lithuanian physiotherapy association. The main criterion for the recruitment of physiotherapy teachers has been their education, competence, and practical work experience in the field of taught subjects, which allows to achieve the intended study outcomes. Teachers are employed in a transparent manner; the College organizes the competition to the required position. This is clearly informed in the documents.

The ratio of the number of teachers of the study field modules (subjects) to the number of studying students is 0.3, which number is enough to ensure the needed quality of studies. Subgroups of 8–12 students are formed for practical classes. Small groups of students give teachers the opportunity to pay more attention to each student and organize the study process more efficiently.

Based on the given information multi-disciplinary/interdisciplinary teaching is not integrated in teaching where it naturally fits. Furthermore, a holistic health-care education on physiotherapy could be integrated to studies. Currently these are not a natural element in teaching.

The expert panel concludes that the number, qualification, and competence of teaching staff within a physiotherapy study programme is sufficient in order to achieve the learning outcomes and merits a positive evaluation.

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)

The importance of the international cooperation and academic mobility is taken into consideration, and teachers are encouraged to participate in international mobility. Seven of rehabilitation study field teachers (i.e., 38.9%) participated in an international exchange, unfortunately there were no incoming teachers.

Hesitation in using a foreign language affects participation activity, therefore development of foreign language competencies should be encouraged among staff members. During the interview the participants preferred to communicate in the Lithuanian language with an interpreter rather than using English. The staff's English language competence needs to be strengthened to enable versatile international cooperation.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility is sufficient to merit a positive evaluation.

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

Improving the competencies of teachers is considered as one of the priorities of the College's strategic activities. This was reported in the SER. This was corroborated through the teachers' participation in international mobility projects, practical internships, seminars, courses and other training events. The results of teacher professional improvement are evaluated every five years. Therefore, the staff members should be encouraged towards the international cooperation.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff is sufficient to merit a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A strong and sufficiently stable team of teachers has been formed. The composition of the lecturers and their qualification matches with the requirements of legal acts.
2. Teachers are encouraged systematically to improve didactic and professional competencies.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Only 42% of the academic staff within the physiotherapy study programme have a physiotherapy qualification.
2. Multi-disciplinary/interdisciplinary teaching is not integrated in teaching.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

Based on the information provided in the SER (page 24) the study premises meet the requirements of fire, hygiene and health safety, as well as the requirements of the governing normative acts are suitable for use. These are regularly maintained. There are also training

laboratories and classrooms, equipment, teaching/learning tools and demonstration equipment, methodological and other teaching/learning materials available in classrooms, laboratories, library; the reading rooms have internet access, computer hardware and software. To ensure the quality of teaching/learning, teaching equipment is constantly updated and teaching rooms are repaired. There are rest areas for students.

The College has 448 computers; all of them have access to the Internet. EDUROAM wireless internet connection is available throughout the dormitory and throughout the College, and students can use their own computers for study purposes.

In order for students with special needs to be able to study at the College, an infrastructure of information and physical environment are installed and adapted for them.

The library is amassed according to the fields of studies and research of the College, considering the needs of the academic community and the change of study programmes. On 1st January (2022) the library fund consisted of 68050 physical units 44818 titles various documents. Every year this fund is supplemented with new printed publications in Lithuanian and English. The library subscribes to online periodicals.

The means and equipment used for the field studies, including the software, is adequate for the current number of students and suitable to achieve the learning outcomes.

The adaptation of the premises, facilities and equipment used for the field studies to persons with special needs is good. Data is provided on the arrangements for work placements outside the HEI used for the implementation of the studies. The number, relevance, recency and suitability for the study field of the teaching materials at the HEI's library and reading rooms are given. Information on available access to electronic publications is provided. The process of planning and upgrading the resources needed to carry out the field studies is described in the light of changing student and teaching staffs' needs. A plan for the improvement (if necessary) of the infrastructure required for the studies is provided and its financial viability is presented in a clear manner.

The locations for study are considered adequate in terms of size and number. Students can use the premises individually for their independent work, e.g., in library there is a possibility for individual and small group work. Some of the facilities are located far from each other. During the site visit these premises were seen and it was noted that to achieve the desired quality in learning outcomes and teaching, the College should invest heavily in resources, especially in new equipment in teaching electrotherapy and technology like robotics, VR glasses, gaming. This is needed in teaching because its use is increasingly important in physiotherapy.

The expert panel concludes that the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process is sufficient to merit a positive evaluation.

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

In order to maintain the good technical and aesthetic condition of the physical infrastructure, to ensure high-quality academic conditions for students and staff that meet the requirements of social standards, ergonomics and hygiene norms, the College invests in the renewal and modernization of physical infrastructure. Workshops for practical classes are constantly provided with the necessary tools and infection control materials.

The process of planning and upgrading the resources needed to carry out the field studies is described in the light of changing student and teaching staffs' needs. A plan for the improvement (if necessary) of the infrastructure required for the studies is provided and its financial viability is presented.

The College is investing in the renewal and modernization of physical infrastructure. Workshops for practical classes are constantly provided with the necessary tools and infection control materials. The College has a plan made and introduced for modernization. Though financial resources limit the rational acquisition of planned material resources. The College looks for opportunities to participate EU funded projects to purchase additional equipment and tools in laboratories.

Information about the books in the library can be seen in the library's electronic catalogue, which is freely available, as well as in the College virtual library. Students and faculty members can access the resources through the Virtual Learning Environment using the VPN service installed at the College. Library resources meet the needs of students and teachers.

The expert panel concludes that the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies is sufficient to merit a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Library resources meet the needs of students and teachers.
2. Classrooms are equipped with a variety of equipment and tools.
3. The College is investing in the renewal and modernization of physical infrastructure.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

The basis of the quality assurance system is determined according to the College's strategic documents and in accordance with the EHEA quality assurance regulations and guidelines. An Academic Board approves the internal study quality assurance system and inspects its implementation and approves the study programmes on an annual basis.

The process and the documentation are clear and transparent. The chain of the physiotherapy programme starts at the faculty and the physiotherapy study programme committee who

submit the proposals to the Dean for the initiation of new study programmes, carries out the quality supervision, improvement and monitoring of the study field, and provides information for the presentation of the programme on the College's website.

The College regularly audits the annual program, including those directly related to the quality of studies. In 2019 an emphasis was placed on the assessment of study result, admission of students, and internationalization of studies; in 2020 procedure for the organizing of distance learning; and in 2021 the management of study field programs, including the management of research and applied research. The audit serves to identify inconsistencies and suggests opportunities for improvement. The study quality processes need to be more robust, with data analysis from systematic research that involves all of the stakeholders including students, lecturers, administration, graduates, employers, and social partners.

The expert panel concludes that the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

PK actively seeks the feedback of students and other social partners. Students are represented across a wide variety of the College's governing bodies as well as study programme committee and ad hoc working groups. The participation of social partners in the management of the programme is ensured through the organization of student internships, proposals towards the final thesis, and participation in evaluation of learning outcomes and student internships.

To ensure continued feedback from the stakeholders, annual surveys are conducted in accordance with an approved quality research/survey plan.

Students and teachers provide opinions and observations towards the amelioration of the course.

The expert panel concludes that the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

The quantitative and qualitative data and information related to ensuring and improving the quality of studies is published on the College's website. The outcomes of the quality assurance are reported regularly to the institution from the academic community during meetings. Information that may be scoped on the website includes data on the study programmes objectives and learning outcomes, qualifications and career opportunities, admission

requirements, programme assessment and reports, outcomes of student surveys and feedback for students. The latter is based on the survey results and indicates to the students how their proposals were considered and areas for improvement were identified.

The expert panel concludes that the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

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

Student surveys at the College are conducted using the survey system and the periodicity established in the survey procedure. Results from the 2020 and 2021 surveys report that the main concern for the students was to increase the number of practical classes. This was corroborated by the students during the on-site visit.

Students also confirmed that the infrastructure was adequate and met their needs. Whilst information about the study exchange programmes was public, students confirmed that they did not understand clearly how the selections were made. In response to this, specific meetings were organised to clarify and explain the student exchange opportunities.

The expert panel concludes that the opinion of the physiotherapy students about the quality of the studies at the HEI is sufficient to meet a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. College creates good conditions for ensuring the qualitative and quantitative evaluation and monitoring of feedback.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Core definition: Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

| Evaluation Area | Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle) |
|--|--|
| Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase the total number of clinical practice (internship) to 1000 hours. b) Revisit the titles of the study modules that are mode oriented e.g., kinesiotaping, and modify them to describe the competence e.g., immobilisation/taping techniques. |
| Links between science (art) and studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote more collaboration in research with social partners, on a national and international level. |
| Student admission and support | - |
| Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Train the lecturers to address socially vulnerable groups of students. b) Add a focus on monitoring students' progress to identify their learning potential, problems, and weaknesses, to individualize their work, help them select further content and methods, and provide support and guidance adapted to students' needs. c) Explore the local labour market to ensure that students are employable in the context of their qualifications. |
| Teaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To meet international standards, the expectation is most of the teaching staff would be physiotherapists. The external panel recommends increasing the number of teachers with physiotherapy background up to at least 60%. b) Physiotherapist teachers should be encouraged to be members of the Lithuanian physiotherapy association as this would add value to the programme by means of sharing and collaboration on a national level. c) Integrate interdisciplinary teaching practices within the study programme. d) Promote teachers to use the English language if the College wishes to be internationally associated. |
| Learning facilities and resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Invest in modern equipment and technology resources to be combined with research, teaching and learning, especially in in electrotherapy and innovative technology like robotics, VR and gaming. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Study quality management and public information | - |
|---|---|

VI. SUMMARY

The expert panel reviewed all the documents submitted as part the evaluation process of the Rehabilitation Study Field, Physiotherapy Study Programme, 1st cycle of studies (3 years) at Panevėžio kolegija, leading to a Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences, professional qualification of Physiotherapist, including the self-evaluation report. An onsite, in-person visit was held on the 8th November 2022. The members of the panel were immensely grateful for the warm welcome, and for the openness and honesty of all the participants, and for addressing all the questions.

The task of the expert panel was to read the papers submitted, especially the Self Evaluation Report, and to connect the evidence, to get a better understanding of the work that is done within the Physiotherapy study programme at the Panevėžio kolegija. The preparation of the self-evaluation report was important and helpful.

The aim of the Physiotherapy field and study cycle at Panevėžio kolegija is to train professionals who can provide independent services, or services provided in collaboration within a team of rehabilitation professionals, that would reflect the state of the art in the field of physiotherapy. The general impression of the study programme is overall positive and is based on the feedback received from all those involved in the meetings, including the program leaders, staff/teachers, students, alumni, and social partners. The expert panel was collectively disappointed that despite being capable of speaking and conversing in English, attendees to the meeting chose not to speak in English.

The expert panel finds that the program conforms to the general needs and expectations of society, especially in the region of Panevezys, and that there is a strong link to society. The programme should however also aim to reach higher and diverse levels, so that it becomes more attractive – for foreign students to join the program and for its students to seek wider opportunities. We are living in a fast-evolving world and hence the program must continue to evolve to meet the current and future needs.

The study aims, outcome and content of the Physiotherapy study programme meet the needs of the Lithuanian labour market, and specifically appear to address the local context of the region. The general direction of the Physiotherapy study programme does not necessarily meet the international benchmarks and therefore puts the graduates wishing to partake in international mobility immediately after graduation at a disadvantage. The learning outcomes are not written in a manner that is universally understood, and this places the graduates at a disadvantage when seeking the recognition of their qualifications in a foreign jurisdiction.

The link between studies and science on a research level was seriously hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and this is understandable. The expert panel was pleased to register a commitment by the programme leaders to make headway in the coming years on this aspect and it should be for a future external team to evaluate.

Student admission and support processes demonstrate academic flexibility with implemented and well-established support systems for the students. International mobility amongst physiotherapy students is very low.

The flexibility of the learning process, the possibility to balance work and studies, and the flexibility of lecture times to adapt to students' needs have been very positively assessed by students. However some lecturers' did report that they lacked skills in dealing with vulnerable groups and this must be addressed in line with equality, diversity and inclusion actions. Guidance documents on this exist via World Physiotherapy and the institution is advised to seek this information.

The teaching staff levels are adequate however only half of the academic members in the programme have a physiotherapy education background. These teachers are not members of the national physiotherapy association which would be beneficial for national and international exposure.

The facilities and learning resources for theoretical lectures are adequate.

The procedures for quality management are implemented, and the conditions created to ensure evaluation by including stakeholders actively is noted.

This final report reflects the findings of the expert panel and offer recommendations to continue evolving. This is fundamental. Quality assurance as a process is irrelevant without quality enhancement, at all stages. Quality assurance demands that a system of recognised procedures to establish standards, as well as means of reaching these standards, be in place. But not taking deliberate action to continually improve education programs, and practices, would render quality assurance an orphan. This is important especially in the context of the recommendations that are made, and that need to be addressed in a timely manner.

These are a few of the key strengths, and areas for improvement that we wish to highlight:

Strengths of the program:

1. A strong sense of comradery amongst staff.
2. Good conditions for academic flexibility.
3. The programme is very much in line with the College's strategy towards society in the Panevežys region.
4. Teachers are systematically encouraged to improve and develop their didactic professional competences.
5. Very good quality and quantity evaluation systems for feedback.
6. Good employability outcomes.

Areas for development:

1. To pursue more international cooperation including teacher exchanges.
2. Interdisciplinary education should be integrated more formally.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Dr. John Xerri de Caro

