



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD OF REHABILITATION
AT ŠIAULIŲ VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA

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Report language – English

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Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Physiotherapy</i>
State code	6531GX032
Type of studies	Health Sciences
Cycle of studies	1st Cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences, 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 9th 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, NO 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 FIELD STUDY AT ŠIAULIŲ VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA

Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija (ŠVK, College) is a state higher education institution, acting as a public institution carrying out first cycle college studies. ŠVK was established in 2002 after merging of post-secondary technical and medical schools. Studies are carried out by two academic units: the Faculty of Health Care and the Faculty of Business and Technologies. The Faculty of Health Care has three departments, one of which is the Department of Rehabilitation running one study programme – Physiotherapy. In 2021/22 the Physiotherapy programme hosted 56 students representing 19.2% of Health Sciences fields group. This is the lowest representation compared to Cosmetology (64 students, 22%), and Nursing & Midwifery (171 students, 58.8%).

The previous external assessment of the Physiotherapy Study Programme took place in 2015 and was given a positive evaluation.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Rehabilitation study field and *first cycle* at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija 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	5
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	5
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	5
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	5
	Total:	33

*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 Physiotherapy study programme at ŠVK is to train physiotherapists to work independently and/or in teams of professionals in aspects of treatment, prevention, and health promotion. The self-evaluation report highlights the programme response to international requirements as well as a reflection on global pandemics. Specifically on pg. 7 it is noted that unique features of the Programme were distinguished in the Clinical practices that are integrated into the subjects of the field, which are carried out in specialized institutions (e.g., Paediatric Physiotherapy Practice is integrated into Paediatric Physiotherapy subject. Students carry out practices in pre-primary, special education and early rehabilitation institutions); The specifics of the subjects intended for deepening in the field allow students of higher years to

deepen their knowledge and improve practical skills of manual methods (Soft Tissue Mobilization), to incorporate neurosensomotor integration into the rehabilitation process (Management of Sensory Methodologies, Motion Management) using multisensory equipment, to apply athletes' injury prevention and treatment methods (Sports Physiotherapy (integrated practice)).

The corroboration of fact is that the programme does conform to the needs of the society, at all levels.

The expert panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the rehabilitation study field and physiotherapy programme meet the national and international labour market needs.

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 ŠVK are to train physiotherapists in line with the College's mission and action strategy for the region and the country. The aim and intended learning outcomes of the programme are formulated considering the mission of the ŠVK to create personality developing experiences in the higher education area through multi-directional practical activities and future competence-oriented studies accessible to current and future professional activities leaders. Studies oriented to practical activities and future competencies are carried out, that contribute to knowledge creation and transfer, and as such the principle of lifelong learning is followed.

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

The expert panel concludes that the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes conform exceptionally well to the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI.

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 in respect of the distribution of ECTS across the programme.

Table No. 1 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	164
ECTS for studies specified by	No more than 120 ECTS	16

College or optional studies		
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	80
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	9
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	838 + 960 = 1798 (37.5%)
Contact hours	No less than 20% of learning	428 + 838 + 264 + 960 = 1620 (33.7%)

Corroboration of fact:

Internships:

Internships	hours	ECTS
General Physiotherapy	60	6
Physiotherapy (integrated)	60	6
Internal diseases and Geriatrics	120	10
Surgical, Orthopaedic & Traumatology	60	9
Neurology	60	9
Paediatrics	120	10
Pre-grad Practice	360	18
Sports Physiotherapy	60	6
Passive/Active Physiotherapy	60	6
	960	80
% of total:	20	44

	Hours involved						
	Th.	Prac.	Cons.	Self-study	Project	Internships	
Total hrs	428	838	264	2290	20	960	4800
%	<i>8.9</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>47.7</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>20.0</i>	100.0

	ECTS
Study field	66
College	16
Elective*	6
Internships	80
Thesis	9
Final Exam	3
	180

The expert panel concludes that the Physiotherapy study programme follows legal requirements and meets the expectations for a positive evaluation.

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 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*.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are described and linked to the physiotherapist competences. Methods of study and assessment are coherent.

The expert panel concludes that the aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the physiotherapy study programme are compatible and meet the expectations for a positive evaluation.

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 SER (pg. 12) reports that the study plan of the Programme has been prepared in accordance with the coherence, systematic and logical sequence of the study subjects. The study subjects place in the study plan is based on the intended learning outcomes, abilities, continuity of carried out activities, focusing on the aim of the Programme.

The study plan is presented as a sequential journey based on intended learning outcomes and abilities, which progress along a pedagogical continuum considering the transition of complexity in acquiring knowledge and skills. The study plan is presented in a coherent and logical manner. The basis of the programme meets the requirements for a profession competence-based curriculum that meets entry-to-practice level thresholds.

The expert panel concludes that the physiotherapy programme subjects/modules ensures consistent development of competences of students and meet the expectations for an exceptional evaluation.

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

The programme enables students to individualise their studies by choosing subjects according to their preferences. While developing general competencies, students can choose the study language (English, Russian or German), choose the subject of study (Communication Psychology in Rehabilitation or Health Psychology; Health Sociology or Practical Philosophy).

Students may individualise their studies by choosing subjects in the third, fourth and fifth terms that are made available from the list of freely elective subjects. Students may choose to participate in the ERASMUS+ programme with a maximum of 2 months practice in a foreign organisation. 15 ECTS are offered of which 9 ECTS correspond to practice based placements. Those students who participate in the ERASMUS+ programme normally go to Latvia.

The expert panel concludes that the opportunities for students to personalise the structure of their studies is varied and meets expectations for an exceptional evaluation.

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

Requirements for graduation papers, their preparation and defence are regulated by the Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija Description of Graduation Paper Development, Defence and Assessment Procedures for Faculty of Health Care Study Programmes (2020) (SER, pg. 13).

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 are logical and fair. Students may achieve a maximum of 10 points and the assessment average for the years 2019 – 2021 ranges between 7.7 and 8.4.

The expert panel concludes that the final theses comply fully with the rehabilitation field and 1st cycle requirements and meets the expectations for a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong prevalence of international contribution in the operation of the programme at all levels.
2. Continuous and active improvement of professional and pedagogical competences, including blended learning with peer-to-peer support.
3. Learning outcomes are well described and linked to the physiotherapist competences.
4. Nice variety of elective subjects, with a strong drive and encouragement for international participation.
5. The programme is very much in sync with the University's strategy towards society in the region.
6. Clinical internship programme well-structured and covers all aspects of physiotherapy practice in a transparent manner.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

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

Applied scientific research activities at ŠVK are carried out in accordance with the applied research fields approved by the Academic Council and in line with professional practice. Between 2018 and 2022 the department collectively published 21 papers in peer reviewed journals, had 23 presentations at conferences and participated in 9 3rd party research programmes.

The cooperation of the ŠVK with the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education enables opportunities for scientific cooperation with external partners. This is considered exceptional especially for the department to engage with peers in the same field of practice.

The expert panel concludes that the scientific activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research related to the physiotherapy is exceptional and meets the expectations for 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 SER (pg. 18) reports that the knowledge gathered by the academic staff when preparing scientific articles, participating in project activities, qualification improvement courses, seminars, conferences, and working in practical activities is integrated into the content of the subjects they teach. One third of the study field subjects are integrated with the practice, therefore students can apply the newly acquired subject knowledge in the practice of the respective subject. Specifically, for example, Virtual Reality (VR) is integrated in study of human anatomy and physiology. Integrated practice (physiotherapy) utilises the more modern applications of appliances and devices used in physiotherapy.

During the site visit it was possible to see and try out first-hand a number of hi-tech apparatuses used for the diagnostics, assessment and research background. It links perfectly with the cooperation with partners and the social environment.

The expert panel concludes that the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science and technology activities implemented by the HEI for the field of physiotherapy research is excellent and meets the expectations 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

Students engage in various forms of applied scientific research activities ranging from emerging in library resources, analysis of scientific publications, preparing course papers and graduation papers as well as participating in the publications at national and international levels. In fact, between 2018 and 2022, 8 students had their names listed on publications, and 53 students contributed to papers read at conferences. The self-evaluation report presented the prominence and involvement of teachers and students in the development of scientific activities.

This fact was verified by teachers, the social partners and other stakeholders during the site visit. This indicator is presented by the institution on an excellent level. Notwithstanding it was very evident that the programme leaders are very keen to keep developing this area.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities is excellent and consistent with their study cycle and merits a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The cooperation of the ŠVK with the European partners enables opportunities for scientific cooperation at all levels (academic staff and students).
2. Good number of published papers in the cited journals.
3. Students and teachers are involved in the research process and other scientific activities.

(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

Students are admitted to the study field through joint admission to state funded or state non-funded places, or through direct admission but only to state non-funded places. Joint admission is carried out through the system of the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for general admission. To apply for the study program students must complete their primary education and pass state exams. The competitive entrance score is calculated from the following state exam results: biology, chemistry/mathematics/information technologies/physics, Lithuanian language and a third subject which does not coincide with other mentioned subjects. Additional points may be awarded in accordance with the criteria set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Students that wish to apply to study must have an entrance competitive score that is equal or higher than 4.3 for both state-funded and non-funded places.

Between 2019 and 2021 the number of applicants has increased, and the number of signed agreements remains stable. Overall, the competitive score has been decreasing for both state-funded and non-funded places. The highest admission score for state-funded places has decreased from 9.03 in 2019 to 6.82 in 2021 whilst the lowest admission score stayed roughly the same (2019 – 5.61; 2021 – 5.06). Regarding the state non-funded places the admission scores have an identical tendency. The highest score decreased from 9.06 in 2019 to 5.85 in 2021. The lowest admission score for state non-funded places remains roughly the same at about 4.32 points. This tendency occurs due to the decreasing popularity of the study field and the decreasing demographic situation in Lithuania. To raise awareness about the study program the College is actively involved in public activities. Representatives from the institution visit schools and take part in higher education fairs as well as other activities related to higher education in Lithuania. The number of entrants between 2019 and 2021 fluctuated

minimally. In 2019 there were 18 applicants choosing physiotherapy as a first-choice priority, and 60 applicants in other priorities. In 2021 there were 24 applicants with a first-choice priority, and 64 other priority applicants. The number of signed agreements over the assessed period remained roughly the same at about 19 students total.

The Expert Panel concludes that the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process is very good and consistent with their study cycle and merits 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 accreditation of prior achieved learning outcomes is carried out in accordance with ŠUAS legal acts and the state presented legal acts. Between 2019 and 2021, two students had their requests for recognition of learning outcomes acquired in foreign institutions accepted; these accounted for 61 credits.

ŠVK provides the opportunity to recognise competences acquired by informal learning if students submit necessary documentation as proof of their achievements. Between 2019 and 2021 there were no applications to assess qualifications acquired by informal learning. Students noted that the ŠVK is very welcoming to accredit the learning outcomes that were acquired outside of their HEI.

The Expert Panel concludes that the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application merits a positive evaluation.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Academic mobility is strongly encouraged both for the staff and the students, with information on academic mobility presented to all at ŠVK. A contest for student selection towards participation in international mobility is held twice a year. The institution has cooperation agreements with around 150 partner higher education institutions. Between 2019 and 2021, six out-going students left for part-time studies and practice opportunities under the ERASMUS+ program. During the same period, 14 incoming students attended for partial studies and practice in the program.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected students' mobility greatly since no travel or exchange options were available; now as the pandemic regulations have been removed, students as well as teachers are being encouraged to take part in the foreign exchange. Students remarked that the main barrier to participation was the minimum time of 8 weeks, since many of them have families or work, therefore the length of time was too long for them to be away. They would like to have opportunities to participate in foreign exchange programs that were of a shorter duration.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students are good and merits 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

ŠVK provides various forms of student support. The students' support system takes up financial, social, psychological, and academic forms of support. Students are free to modify their study program and schedule so that it fits their needs, whilst being guided by the College staff. Social and study scholarships are also awarded to students. Students who study in state funded places and excel in their studies may receive a scholarship for their high achievements. At the same time students may receive additional social scholarships or loans to pay for their studies. Students also receive necessary allowances for their studies, psychological and personal support. The number of students within the RFSP who received financial support increased from 23 students in 2019 to 32 students in 2022.

The atmosphere in ŠVK is very welcoming. Students are happy with the support options that are provided to them and note that teachers and the administrative staff are always keen on helping them.

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

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

As soon as students enter the study program, they are presented with information about their study field. Information is provided to students through various manners by teachers, curators, via the Dean's Office, and administrative staff. Students are introduced with the study system and the support options available to them. At the beginning of the study year incoming students are offered a presentation of the Programme' study base, which is carried out by third year students to make the integration process easier. Various communication channels are used to inform students about the recent changes in the study program or other relevant information. Academic consultations take place in accordance with the provided timetables which are published on the College's website. After consultations students must fill-out surveys regarding the service that they got. The responses are overwhelmingly positive coming from the students.

The Expert Panel concludes that the study information and student counselling is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Excellent academic flexibility.
2. A well-established student support system.
3. Foreign student integration.

(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 evaluation report, the study process in the Physiotherapy study programme at ŠVK is organised in semesters according to the study plan. Students can choose to study individually or on an individual study schedule. During the period under review, only one student applied for permission to study on an individual study schedule. The main methods of study organisation are: contact work (lectures, seminars, consultations, assessments, evaluations, etc.) remote work, practical methods (assignments, practical tasks, analysis of situations, demonstration of practical skills, commenting, creative task, simulation tasks); creative methods (logical reasoning, search, construction, observation, work with scientific literature, statistical calculations) and others. The forms and methods of teaching/learning applied to the subjects are in compliance with the essential provisions of student-centred studies and enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. During the on-site evaluation, the experts were impressed by the teachers' enthusiasm. Teachers are open to innovation and the teaching methods used in the study programme are based on international practices. The studies are flexible and are organised in a hybrid format. Students' practical work is carried out using virtual reality, enabling them to study a variety of subjects in a 3-D environment. The institution has acquired a number of innovative devices which are used not only for student learning but also to engage students in research. The institution takes care of the psychological health of students by providing relaxation areas and a multisensory room.

The Expert Panel conclude that the enthusiastic teaching staff, the involvement of students in research activities and the good atmosphere of the institution allow the institution to achieve excellent results. 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 is evident and merits a positive evaluation.

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

According to the evaluation report, ŠVK takes into account individual abilities of people with special needs (visual, hearing, mobility, emotional and other disabilities). The way tasks are carried out is adapted in the study process, e.g. by increasing the font size, speaking at a slower pace, or extending the assessment time. Several students with disabilities were studying during the evaluation period. One student with a visual impairment is currently studying. The on-site evaluation noted that the environment is accessible and there is a lift. One particular student has a visual impairment. The individual abilities and special needs of the students are taken into account, and the ways in which the tasks are carried out are adapted in the study process, for example, the font size is enlarged, the student uses a magnifying glass.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are met and merits 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

Based on the evaluation report, the learning outcomes assessment data are discussed at department and Dean's meetings and presented in faculty reports. Interim assessments are discussed at departmental meetings in the middle of each semester, and students who are not on time or who miss classes are invited to attend meetings in order to discuss the reasons for this. Students' progress is assessed throughout the learning process. During the on-site evaluation lecturers reported that student drop-out from the PT programme often occurs in the final year of studies because students do not prepare their final thesis on time, although lecturers make every effort to encourage and support their students. Delays result in failure to assess the theoretical and methodological part of the thesis in time, and this in turn results in a loss of the opportunity to carry out further practical research and a delaying of the final thesis defence. According to the lecturers, students can go back the following year and complete their thesis. Feedback is ensured by writing notes on students' work and during individual consultations with lecturers.

Experts noted that feedback on the evaluation of students' achievements provided an opportunity for continuous learning in the collaborative learning process and for identifying perspectives for improving the learning process.

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 very good and merits a positive evaluation.

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

According to the evaluation report, the career monitoring of ŠVK graduates is based on the interactive data of the Career Management System, the information system, the Employment Service and the Government Strategic Analysis Centre. During the evaluation period, the average number of graduates of the PT programme who were employed was 73%. This indicates a good employability rate. The College maintains contacts with the graduates of the PT programme, organising regular meetings to assess their satisfaction with the PT programme, to find out their opinion on the quality of their studies, and to find out what general and professional skills they lack in order to find a place in the labour market.

According to the lecturers, there is no register to evaluate the number of graduates employed in foreign countries, so it is not possible to give a fully accurate picture of employment outcomes.

The expert panel concludes that the evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in physiotherapy is very good and merits a positive evaluation.

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

According to the evaluation report, the implementation of the Academic Integrity, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Policy in ŠVK is established by the College's statute. Faculty and departmental specialists, academic group tutors and lecturers explain the legal provisions to students and provide advice. The Code of Academic Ethics sets out the cases of academic dishonesty in which a lecturer must take a substantive response and report to the Academic Ethics Committee.

During the on-site evaluation, the expert team noted that the policy of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination is implemented in Šiauliai College with a high level of attention to it. The policy is clear and well described. No cases of breaches of the Code of Academic Conduct for Students were detected during the evaluation period.

The expert panel concludes that the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination is excellent and merits 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

According to the evaluation report, the procedure for submitting and examining appeals and complaints at ŠVK is regulated in the Student Appeal Rules. They define a clear and objective procedure for this. The procedures for appeals and complaints are detailed and clearly set out. During the period under review, no appeals or complaints were received from students of the Programme.

The expert panel concludes that the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies of physiotherapy is excellent and merits a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Lecturers' enthusiasm, a unified team of lecturers
2. Anticipation of the shortcomings of the study program and the ability to apply innovation in the teaching process.
3. Individual abilities of people with special needs are well taken care of.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

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

The study programme is provided by staff meeting legal requirements. The total number of teachers in the study programme is 16, out of them 10 has physiotherapy background. All the programme teachers have more than 3 years of practical experience in the subjects that they teach. Teachers' qualifications and fields of scientific interest are in line with the content of the subjects they teach and facilitate the achievement of the aims of the programme and the intended learning outcomes of studies. Teachers are offered the opportunities to carry out scientific activities, to go on internships and conferences to develop their competencies in the field of teaching and different areas of physiotherapy. New technology is taken as a part of education in various ways like VR and multisensory study room. The Programme has the rotation of teachers to ensure teachers' interchangeability and the diversity of teaching methods in the study process.

The expert panel was happy to hear that they are members of the Lithuanian Physiotherapy Association which is a member of World Physiotherapy.

Interdisciplinarity is not yet in a self-evident role in teaching which it should be. Interdisciplinarity combined to the studies offers students a good and safe opportunity to practice and learn their skills and competencies for working in a real interprofessional environment.

The expert panel concludes that the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, and professional) of teaching staff within the physiotherapy study programme is adequate 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 ŠVK and the Department develop internationalization activities (ŠVK Internationalization Development Plan 2021–2027, 2021) to promote various forms of international mobility. The existing international cooperation agreements of the Programme are with 12 countries and 29 partner institutions. In addition, they are members of the international European network (ENPHE).

The recommendations of the previous report have been considered and internationalization activities have been developed. Based on those the development of the competencies needed in the international cooperation is taken into the consideration in annual planning of the department. In SER it is reported that the aims of the academic exchange of the outgoing field teachers are related to the development of the Programme internationality and to create conditions looking at the studied discipline from a new perspective.

The number of outgoing teachers is higher than the number of incoming ones. This might cause the imbalance in teaching load. Based on SER in 2022, 3 teachers were selected to participate in the Erasmus+ mobility programme (Portugal, Turkey, Latvia), 5 mobility are planned now. In 2022 there was 1 incoming teacher, from Latvia. The benefits of international exchange in the development of programme and teaching have been understood and implemented to teaching and learning. As well as the need to strengthen the foreign language skills.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility are very good and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The SER (Pg. 35) reports that to ensure that the study teachers have the necessary competences, qualifications and experience, the College implements the staff competences development and training system described in the Quality Manual' Human Resources Management procedure (2020).

The teachers are encouraged and supported to participate the international mobility projects and seminars. During the meeting with the teaching staff, the interviewees informed that the teachers could participate in an exchange as often as they wish. Teaching staff was satisfied with the English courses which are held in the College and supported by the College. Programme teachers speak English at a level not lower than B2.

Based on SER the need to develop competences of a teacher in the College is planned annually considering the activity plans, the teacher's tenure workload plans and the teacher's expressed desire to develop competences by discussing the teacher's career expectations and motivation. The interviewees were happy with the possibilities to continuously improve their pedagogical and professional competencies.

The expert panel concludes that the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff are excellent and merits a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Continuous and active improvement of professional and pedagogical competences and international cooperation.
2. New technology is combined to teaching and learning.

(2) Weaknesses:

None.

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

Theoretical and practical workshops are conducted at the faculty. 3 theory teaching, 6 practical work classrooms and 2 specialized classrooms (functional diagnostics laboratory, multi-sensory room) are planned for the implementation of the Programme.

Renewal of resources has been carried out. All rooms are equipped with furniture for study rooms, computers, multimedia video projectors, wireless internet, and other technical means. Theory lectures are held in rooms with approximately 30 workplaces. When the need arises, a large room (approx. 60 workplaces) is used. Physiotherapeutic tools for the development of students' practical skills are constantly and systematically expanded and updated. One room is equipped with a functional laboratory, where equipment and devices are designed to evaluate the physical and functional condition of a person as well as devices for physiotherapy (magnetotherapy, electrotherapy, light therapy, shock wave therapy, etc.) and virtual reality glasses/equipment. Multisensory room is equipped to enable e.g., teaching physiotherapy in mental health and children with special needs. Students learn to test, evaluate, and analyse the obtained data, while applying and integrating it into the physiotherapy programmes, developing course papers as well as graduation papers in the Functional Diagnostics Laboratory. Modern spaces are created in the Library and Self-study Centre and are adaptable for both independent and group work. Physiotherapy equipment have been acquired for carrying out applied research and practical workshops.

The expert panel concludes that the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational, and financial resources of physiotherapy studies is very good to ensure an effective learning process and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The Programme Infrastructure Improvement Plan is being developed with intent to acquire tools and equipment for a period of 3 years. The plan is adjusted when the needs arise, considering the innovations of the rehabilitation market and the new methods and methodologies applied in the physiotherapist's professional activities. Each year, on the initiative of the field teachers, by a joint decision of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty, a budget for updating the study resources of the Programme is formed in accordance with the planned need and priorities.

The expert panel concludes that the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the physiotherapy studies is very good and merits a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The facilities and resources are adequate for programme studies.
2. Ongoing renewal of resources is carried out.

(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 SER (pg. 40) reports that the quality assurance for studies at ŠVK is based on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). An internal quality management system is implemented and certified for three years to manage the quality assurance processes. The updating of study programmes and continued monitoring of the study programmes is regulated by the Description of Study Programme Development, Assessment and Update Procedure (2020).

The internal self-evaluation system appears to work well, but there is need to formalise the manner in which the social partners contribute to the quality management system by documenting their advice and action taken. This is being recommended following the conversation with social partners presented during site visit.

The expert panel concludes that the internal quality assurance system of the physiotherapy programme is effective and meets the expectations for a positive evaluation.

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

There is influence of students and the social partners in the process of the quality assurance, with all the goals and the feedback being considered in the program changes. ŠVK management bodies are composed of representatives of all parties who are involved in the programme's implementation processes. Following 2021 the composition of the Programme Committee was updated by the Dean's order to include 3 teachers, 1 student, 1 social partner and 1 administration representative.

During the site visit the stakeholders confirmed that all the feedback was considered in the evaluation to improve goals and to fulfil final outcomes according to the best quality management process.

The expert panel concludes that the involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance is effective and meets the expectations for a positive evaluation.

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

Data on teachers' qualifications, scientific, project, expert and consultation activities are continuously collected by the Department. Data is also collected and analysed on student admittance and retention rates, graduate outcomes, relevance and practical applicability of

graduation paper topics, and career monitoring of graduates. Feedback is also collected from students from a variety of sources including surveys. Findings are discussed with students who submit proposals, and influence decisions on the improvement of the quality of studies. Information on changes in the programme, its assessment and results are made public via several avenues including at the meetings of the Department, the Faculty Council, on the ŠVK website and at organised discussions.

There is sufficient information published on the website of the institution about all the action that was taken for the improvement process for fulfilling all the outcomes and the feedback during the quality management evaluation process.

The expert panel concludes that the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes is excellent and meets the expectations for 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

Students and other stakeholders' opinions are taken into consideration. The feedback data is collected from surveys and personal comments. It was reported in the self-evaluation and also confirmed during the site visit that this process involves the partners in the quality management process.

The institution demonstrated the importance it gave to the feedback from its social partners and students in influencing changes in the program, and that the actions are taken in a timely manner.

The Expert Panel concludes that the opinion of the physiotherapy students about the quality of the studies at the HEI is excellent and meets the expectations for a positive evaluation.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is a strong influence of students and the social partners in the process of the quality assurance.
2. Action to improve the program is done in a timely manner.

(2) Weaknesses:

None

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

The expert panel wishes to highlight the following as examples of excellence:

1. The physiotherapy programme subjects/modules ensures consistent development of competences of students. The study plan is presented as a sequential journey based on intended learning outcomes and abilities, which progress along a pedagogical continuum considering the transition of complexity in acquiring knowledge and skills. The study plan is presented in a coherent and logical manner. The basis of the programme meets the requirements for a profession competence-based curriculum that meets entry-to-practice level thresholds.
2. The conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities is excellent and consistent with their study cycle. Students engage in various forms of applied scientific research activities ranging from emerging in library resources, analysis of scientific publications, preparing course papers and graduation papers as well as participating in the publications at national and international levels. In fact, between 2018 and 2022, 8 students had their names listed on publications, and 53 students contributed to papers read at conferences.
3. The enthusiastic teaching staff, the involvement of students in research activities and the good atmosphere of the institution allow the institution to achieve excellent results. 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 is very evident.
4. The number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, and professional) of teaching staff within the physiotherapy study programme is notable. That 10 from 16 teachers on the programme have a physiotherapy background is remarkable. All the programme teachers have more than 3 years of practical experience in the subjects that they teach. The Programme has the rotation of teachers to ensure teachers' interchangeability and the diversity of teaching methods in the study process. The expert panel was happy to note that they are members of the Lithuanian Physiotherapy Association which is a member of World Physiotherapy.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	a) Open ERASMUS+ opportunities further.
Links between science (art) and studies	-
Student admission and support	a) Actively consider alternative arrangements of international exchanges beyond the strict minimum duration imposed by the ERASMUS+ programme to facilitate mobility for those students constrained by family/work commitments.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	a) Create a register to keep record and evaluate the number of graduates employed in foreign countries.
Teaching staff	a) Interdisciplinary teaching practices should be integrated as a part of the study programme. b) Promote international collaboration (in any form) across a wider group of teachers.
Learning facilities and resources	-
Study quality management and public information	a) Formalise the manner in which the social partners contribute to the quality management system by documenting their advice and actions taken.

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 Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija, leading to a Professional bachelor's in health sciences, professional qualification of Physiotherapist, including the self-evaluation report. An onsite, in-person visit was held on the 9th of 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 Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija. The preparation of the self-evaluation report was important and helpful. The expert panel extends congratulations for preparing such an excellent report and site visit. It has made our job to evaluate the study field very easy.

The overarching impression we get is very positive, and this is based on the feedback we have heard from all those involved in the meetings, including the program leaders, staff/teachers, students, alumni, and social partners. We add our collective appreciation that staff took the opportunity to discuss in the English language.

The aim of the Physiotherapy study programme at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija is to train physiotherapists to work independently and/or in teams of professionals in aspects of treatment, prevention, and health promotion. The general impression 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 finds that the programme conforms to the general needs and expectations of society, both in a local context and beyond, and that there is a strong link to society. The approach to teaching and learning as an institution has been noted with satisfaction. The attention to the needs of students and teachers alike is commendable. However, we caution to be careful, and not to let down your guard. Keep on aiming to reach higher levels and diverse levels, so that you remain competent, and modern. We are living in a fast-evolving world and your program must continue to evolve to meet the current and future needs.

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 that we wish to highlight:

- Strong prevalence of international contribution in the operation of the programme at all levels.
- Continuous and active improvement of professional and pedagogical competences, including blended learning with peer-to-peer support.
- Learning outcomes are well described and linked to the physiotherapist competences.
- Nice variety of elective subjects, with a strong drive and encouragement for international participation.
- High-tech equipment.
- Involvement of students and teachers in the research process.
- Good academic flexibility.
- A well-established student support system.
- Foreign student integration.
- Lecturers' enthusiasm, a unified team of lecturers.
- Anticipation of the shortcomings of the study program and the ability to apply innovation in the teaching process.
- Action following feedback from social partners and students to influence changes in the program is done in a timely manner.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Dr. John Xerri de Caro