



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of Rehabilitation**  
at Kauno Kolegija

**Expert panel:**

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Report language – English/Lithuania

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## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b>Physical Therapy (PT)</b>	<b>Occupational Therapy (OT)</b>
State code	6531GX038	6531GX038
Type of studies	Collegial	Collegial
Cycle of studies	First study cycle	First study cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time 3 years	Full-time 3 years
Credit volume	180 hours	180 hours
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences, qualification of a physiotherapist	Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences, qualification of an occupational therapist
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	At least secondary education	At least secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	29/08/2001	29/08/2001

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# CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS	4
1.2. EXPERT PANEL	4
1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION	5
1.4. BACKGROUND OF STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN HEI	5
<b>II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM	8
3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES	8
3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT	9
3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT	9
3.5. TEACHING STAFF	10
3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES	11
3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION	11
<b>IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>V. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VI. SUMMARY</b>	<b>14</b>

## 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 2nd December, 2022.

**Dr. Raija Kuisma (panel chairperson)** Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Principal Lecturer in Physiotherapy, Department of Physiotherapy, Finland  
**Dr. Marie-Antoinette Hubertine Minis**, HAN University of Allied Science, Faculty of Health, Behaviour and Society, The Netherlands,  
**Dr. Stephen Lungaro Mifsud**, University of Malta, Dean – Faculty of Health Sciences, Malta.  
**Mr Tomas Sinevičius, Všį Karoliniškių poliklinika**, Head of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, doctor, Lithuania  
**Mr Ömer Faruk Sönmez**, İzmir Demokrasi University, Bachelor of Dentistry, Turkey

## 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	
2.	
3.	

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

Kaunas University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) is a state multidisciplinary higher education institution established in 2000<sup>1</sup>. KUAS has the status of a public institution and grounds its performance on the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania; the strategic documents of the Lithuanian higher education; the requirements of the European Higher Education Area.

<sup>1</sup> Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, No. 1094, 01/09/2000.

KUAS is one of the largest higher education institutions in Lithuania, with a community of about 5,024 students, 800 employees, and 32,944 graduates. In KUAS, studies are implemented in 4 faculties (the Faculty of Business, the Faculty of Technologies, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Faculty of Arts and Education) in Kaunas.

KUAS actively cooperates with more than 260 foreign partners, 229 of them under the European Union Erasmus+ mobility programme (SER p. 5). KUAS is a member of the international associations and networks such as EURASHE (the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education), EAIE (the European Association for International Education), Businet (the International Association of Institutions of Business Studies), ICEIGATM (International Circle of Educational Institutes for Graphic Arts Technology and Management), EFRS (European Federation of Radiographer Societies), and ENPHE (European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education). The institution has extensive experience in international projects participating yearly in more than 20 international projects.

The previous external evaluation of the study programmes Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy was carried out in 2015. The programmes were given a positive evaluation. Recommendations given in 2015 were carried out as can be read in the present SER p. 18 and 19, 23 and 24, 32 and 33, 39, 45 and 50.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Rehabilitation* study field and *first cycle* at Kaunas College is given **positive** evaluation.

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

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>

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

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

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

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

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

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

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

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

*3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

##### a) Factual Situation

In Lithuania, as one of the fastest ageing countries in the EU, there is currently a large unmet need for rehabilitation services for the growing population of older people and increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases and injuries. The vision of inclusive education from 2024 in Lithuania, is to ensure that learners of all ages and abilities are provided with meaningful and quality educational opportunities in the local community. These facts indicate that the need for occupational therapists and physiotherapists in the community and mainstream schools will increase.

This highlights the demand for training competent rehabilitation professionals. The main goal of the studies in the field of Rehabilitation at the KUAS (SER p. 7) is to train professionals who, together with a team of rehabilitation professionals are able to provide a wide range of relevant and appropriate services based on a holistic approach, a system of knowledge, professional principles, and values independently or in collaboration in the context of rehabilitation and each professional scope of practice. The importance of teamwork in health care and rehabilitation is well justified and implemented internationally, and the SER p. 7 gives examples of the professions in the team and also presents the professional training of a wide variety of these professionals at the KUAS.

##### b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Based on societal development and the health care reform in Lithuania, it is evident that a team of rehabilitation professionals are needed in the future. Also, the elaboration of the rehabilitation team in the SER p. 7 and the international trend and recognised benefits of teamwork support the growing number of rehabilitation professionals.



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

a) Factual Situation

KUAS vision and strategy emphasises the development of practice-oriented studies and the expansion of applied research activities that are important for the development of society. The KUAS Strategy is based on four strategic directions: 1) practical and innovation-based higher education studies; 2) applied science and art activities focused on the development of society at national and international levels; 3) a sustainable community that nurtures the culture of a learning organisation; 4) efficient management and optimised infrastructure.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The examples given in the Physiotherapy (PT) study program, manual therapies, are focused on medical diagnosis, based treatment. It is hard to justify how this reflects the wider field of rehabilitation in the context of current population trends, and the KUAS vision. Based on the recommendations of the evaluation of the Occupational therapy (OT) programme in 2015 a holistic biopsychosocial model (SER p. 18) was introduced. Collaboration between the two professions, including teachers, students and practitioners, is important, so that a more holistic approach to the rehabilitation as a whole, the vision of KUAS and also the concepts of the two professions could be integrated for the benefit of the future clients and other stakeholders.

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

**Table No. 3.1.3.1** Study programme's Occupational Therapy compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor)*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the OT Programme</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180 credits
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	153 credits
ECTS for studies specified by College or	No more than 120 ECTS	27 credits

optional studies		
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	42 credits
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	10 credits
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	42%
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	58 %

**Table 3.1.3.2.** Study programme's Physiotherapy compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes of College level (*professional bachelor*)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General* legal requirements</b>	<b>In the PT Programme</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180 credits
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	153 credits
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	27 credits
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	40 credits
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	10 credits
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	41%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	57 %

a) Factual Situation

SER p. 10 and 11 detail clearly the legal requirements and also calculated proportion of contact, practical and self-study hours. They are well justified and based on the ECTS agreements.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The two programmes OT and PT have very similar structure and distribution of ETCS and there seem to be very similar subjects in the study plan, which is expected. The proportion of the credits for studies assigned by KUAS or chosen by the student are appropriate giving the students tools for study and also future practice.

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

##### a) Factual Situation

The rationale of the learning outcomes, volume and complexity of the subject in relation to the credits are explained on p. 10, 11 and 12 in detail. Internships are arranged after theoretical studies to allow transfer of knowledge into practice. On p. 11 it is clearly stated that the curriculum design follows the principle of constructive alignment “Learning outcomes determine the content and structure of study programmes and the choice of teaching/learning and learning achievement assessment methods”, referring to a more detailed description in Annex 3 and 4.

##### b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The two programmes OT and PT have fairly similar structure as can be seen in Annex 1 and 2 of SER, and there seem to be very similar subjects in the study plan, which is expected. It would have been useful to see whether OT and PT studied any of those subjects together and what contribution each profession made to those subjects. This learning together from the beginning would be a good introduction to team work and further professional collaboration, and would help to achieve the learning outcomes of teamwork, communication and professionalism. However, the future plan of separating these study programmes seems to be against this structural design.

The statement that students must have learnt all theory before undertaking placement could be reconsidered, practice placements are the best opportunity to learn new things as well as put the learning into practice and motivate the learners.

Annex 3 and 4 introduces the aims of the programmes and related seven learning outcomes. However, it lists many subjects under each learning outcome, but no learning activities or assessments. It would be useful to have the breakdown of each subject area with pertinent LOs, activities and focused assessment tasks.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

The SER p. 12 states that the learning outcomes of separate course units complement each other, and the study process is organised so that the learning develops from a lower to a more complex level of knowledge. It also states that practical training and self-study are emphasised. Participation in local and national multidisciplinary projects that deepens and widens the learning is also elaborated in SER p. 12.

#### b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The SER document presents consistently the consistency of development of the students' competencies. Topics for deeper studies in the same field are studied in the 2<sup>nd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> semesters, which is presented in Tables 4, 5. A more detailed account of the progression of learning outcomes e. g. in terms of EQF levels, would help to make this more transparent.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

The OT and PT programmes offer students opportunities to individualise their studies by crediting coordinated and/or non-coordinated study content, i. e. the achievements of previous studies. KUAS may credit partial studies in a foreign higher education institution or learning achievements of partial studies in another Lithuanian HEI. There is a clear procedure for this activity SER p. 13 and 14. Also national and international projects have been developed to achieve greater interprofessional cooperation between the programmes of the study field of Rehabilitation and other study fields to provide more flexibility. There are also a good variety and number of elective courses for students to choose as stated in SER p. 16.

#### b) Judgement/indicator

Interprofessional national and international collaboration between the two programmes happens mainly through projects. This is to be commended, but it would be recommended that the students could study together earlier in the programme to offer flexibility

throughout the courses. This would engage more students in continuing professional collaboration which would then benefit the clinical practice and multidisciplinary team work.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

The learning outcomes for the thesis are clearly presented SER p. 16. The topics can be proposed by students, academic staff, stakeholders, customers (contracted thesis) and others. The process of thesis development and completion follows a set procedure, which follows the national and also KUAS guidelines and regulations. It is a positive trend that the number of contracted thesis is increasing table 7 SER p. 17, which may give the thesis a more practical use.

#### b) Judgement/indicator

Thesis topics are announced three months before graduation, which seems rather a short time to complete a practical and meaningful outcome. A small group project work leading to a thesis might be an opportunity to create more robust results that have an impact for the student, the profession and society. The thesis teaching team is advised to look into this.

The thesis topics also seem rather traditional, quantitative empirical work (in PT programme), which in such a short time may not provide a meaningful outcome, but in itself may serve the purpose of practising research methodology, though in a narrow scope. A wider scope and selection of thesis topics, research approaches and also practical developmental projects might yield a better and more impactful outcome for final year work.

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

1. The SER documentation demonstrates a strong pedagogical understanding of the team, which is not always evident in written curricula. This was also demonstrated in the discussion with the teaching team, indicating that on top of the subject mastery, pedagogy is an important skill of the teaching staff. The terminology of the curriculum development, constructive alignment and structure of the curriculum are expressed clearly in the document.

2. The curriculum content is appropriate and comprehensive demonstrating the maturity and the continuing development of the programme.
3. The influence of the national and international guidelines in the programme development is evident and gives the programme and its graduates a good standing in Lithuania and Europe.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The course outlines are missing, and therefore it is difficult to judge how the strong curriculum framework is put into practice.
2. Collaboration between the two programmes in providing education seems limited, but for the benefits of the clients, the students and the profession collaboration is recommended early on in the studies.
3. The introduction in the SER refers strongly to the changes and challenges of population structure in Lithuania and also the change in the educational system for inclusiveness in schools. However, the learning outcomes and the study subjects do not clearly emphasise or highlight those areas of rehabilitation. This could be explored further.

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

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

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

**a) Factual Situation**

KUAS is guided by the “Policy of Studies and Applied Research in KUAS” and by the “KUAS Applied Research/Art Activity Programme”. Implementation outcomes included publications in journals and delivery in seminars. These activities included the active participation of the students. The research action plan of KUAS for 2022-2024 aim to address issues of assessment of biopsychosocial functions, the effectiveness of complex rehabilitation, the specifics of the work of rehabilitation specialists and the needs for them.

The outcome of the thesis is incorporated in the study programmes p. 21, e. g., assessment of cognitive function in the topic of geriatric patients. The cooperation with external partners is also demonstrated on p. 22.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel compliments the staff for the scientific productivity and the output and the integration of the scientific work in their curricula.

More could be done on the internationalisation of the research projects and similar activities.

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

a) Factual Situation

The SER documents provide information on how the undergraduate programmes are influenced by the evidence base of PT and OT. Lecturers are also sensitive to the needs of the immediate society and market forces, and this is seen in the titles of the research projects and seminars.

Lecturers are involved in national and international networks related directly to PT and OT.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel recognises that KUAS has done well in this sector. However, it is apparent that OT needs investment in practice labs and equipment

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

a) Factual Situation

The SER documents various initiatives that encourage the participation of students, e. g. "Ideas in Practice" and "Researchers Nights". These are detailed on SER p 23 and 24.

Students have the opportunity to present their undergraduate research findings at scientific conferences.

Students in PT have access to modern equipment for educational and training purposes.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is satisfied that students have access to opportunities to improve their skills both within the University and internationally.

Funded international collaborative research that also involves students would be the next step forward.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Use of modern technology in the education and training of students, linked to research.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Articles published in international journals with an impact factor are rare.

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

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

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

a) Factual Situation

The requirements for admission to the study field programmes, the procedure for awarding additional points are described and they are shared publicly. KUAS follows and analyses the number of applicants: first priority and remaining priorities; number of signed agreements (to state funded and non-state funded places). Results of admission to the programmes are presented and the analysis on how the tendencies to enrol in PT and OT programmes change over the last 3 years.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis



It is understandable that KUAS cannot put policies in practice due to following the national admission system and there might be legal limitations, but it is highly recommended to provide more information about the study programmes and the school itself to the potential candidate students in order to prevent the drop-out rates and enhance the student profile. There can be more information events for the potential students.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

The learning outcomes achieved in a formal way are credited following the *Procedure for crediting learning achievements in KUAS*. The assessment and recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and (or) informal learning and self-study are carried out following the *Procedure for assessing and recognising the knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education and self-study as learning outcomes*, which makes it possible to have personal competences acquired at work, while studying non-formal programmes in courses, seminars, during internships or self-study recognised.

#### b) Judgement/indicator analysis

There has been no information provided about the students who have their prior learning activities recognised by KUAS over the last 3 years. Even though the regulations and the procedures are defined, the implementation can be challenging. The implementation of these regulations might be reconsidered for preventing the credit loss for the students.

It is not easy to document the non-formal learning activities as KUAS is asking in order to recognise these prior learning activities, so KUAS should diversify the methods for non-formal recognition.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

Erasmus+ programme is very popular in KUAS among not only students but also staff members. KUAS provides many opportunities for academic mobility with various institutions around Europe. Besides the Erasmus+ traineeships and studies, there are

opportunities for students to participate in Erasmus+ strategic partnership projects. The numbers showed an increase since the effects of the pandemic stopped and KUAS is expanding the network for these opportunities.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

KUAS is a good example for academic mobility in terms of the quality and quantity. There is a good level of participation based on equality and diversity. KUAS is recommended to ensure this success is sustainable.

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

a) Factual Situation

Academic Support: KUAS owns a system of support for students, including a range of measures. All students in the field can get academic, and non-academic support provided in KUAS. Academic support includes student admissions and integration, academic counselling and information, the Library and Information Resource Centre services, career services, support for international students, services provided by Language and Business Centres. The services are provided also through a special web page.

Financial Support: Over the previous three years, from the total number of students in the academic group, 10 percent of the students of the study field of Rehabilitation were awarded incentive scholarships. There is also the possibility of getting awarded for exceptional learning achievements, research outcomes, and personal strides.

Social Support: There are social, cultural and sports activities of the KUAS that are run by respective students, however there is no information on how OT and PT study programmes encourage social, cultural and sports activities.

Psychological and Personal Support: Students have access to a psychologist who provides psychological help and support services. There are also other networks for mental health support for students.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

Academic Support: Even though the practice of Academic support is functioning well, it is recommended for KUAS to put academic support in a systematic order by appointing each student an academic consultant among lecturers. If all of the students have their individual mentor assigned by the management, it will be sustainable and effective to follow up on the academic support services. Academic mentors shall provide a report about the support activities that they have continued to the management. OT students may need extra career support because of the reason that OT profession is still progressing and getting differentiated from PT in Lithuanian context. Academic mentors also should get training on how to deliver those services.

Financial Support: It is observed that students are less likely to be aware of the scholarship opportunities and the percentage of students with financial aid remains low in the last 3 years. It is recommended to have more students benefit from the financial support to get their disadvantages removed.

Social Support: Students should be asked to provide feedback about their social, cultural and sports needs so that the social support can be improved accordingly. KUAS should embrace the mission to improve student life by creating more activities and supporting students for their own student clubs and social activities. In the SER page 30 *“The department of Rehabilitation has a tradition...Also profession dedicated events are held to celebrate the International Day of Physiotherapy.”* It is not clear for EET why the international day of Occupational Therapy October 27th is not mentioned nor celebrated.

Psychological and Personal Support: Students seem to have had positive experience with the mental health services available in KUAS.

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

#### a) Factual Situation

During the *Introductory Week*, first-year students get acquainted with legal documents governing the study process, such as KUAS structure; faculty structure; the procedures of organising studies; study schedule; the procedure for organising examination sessions; internal rules; regulation on awarding scholarships; the Library and access to its services; the structure, volume and study plan of the study programme, learning achievement

assessment system; compulsory and freely elective courses; possibilities of getting loans and social grants. Information about studies is also provided online and on notice boards.

b) Judgement/indicator analysis

It is very impressive that the staff in KUAS are very welcoming to the students for their needs and expectations, however it is recommended to make a risk assessment about the student support services being dependent on the wishes of the study responsible staff. In more clear words; there is supposed to be a roles and responsibilities policy for the staff that are responsible for the student support in which the support services are defined and roles are distributed. By doing so, KUAS will set a systematic approach not depending on any personal motivation.

The expert panel acknowledges that there is a good amount of study information available online and students may refer to this information whenever they need. During the site visit, students seemed to be aware of the online information resources and how to reach them. Expert panel also observed a lack of awareness about the final thesis project among students; there should be more introductory information sessions for the purpose, scope and expected results of the final thesis.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Extensive opportunities for academic mobility.
2. Described procedures for recognition of prior learning.
3. Dynamic student support in terms of academic, social, personal.
4. Sufficient information available online for studies.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Limited promoting KUAS among potential students, more activities should be planned in order to enhance the student profile.
2. Low level of awareness on the recognition procedures among students, this should be disseminated more widely.
3. Academic support dependent on the motivation of the lecturers, lack of procedure in place to identify roles and responsibilities of different players
4. Low number of students benefiting from financial support.

5. Limited social, cultural and sports activities are offered.

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

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

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

- a) Factual situation

The intended learning outcomes of the study programmes are clear and robust.

There seems to be many opportunities to learn together, do together and learn the skills and the knowledge from each other.

- b) Judgement/indicator analyses

The expert panel suggests using those opportunities to integrate the curriculum, working together with two different professions in the classroom and in the field. It appears that students of both study programmes' were doing the same things separately in the school and in the practice. In order to teach them to put the client/patient in the centre it would be advisable to learn teamwork and other professions contributions by learning together.

Graduates of the study programmes of the field of Rehabilitation can continue Master studies in Lithuania (p. 32). The expert panel would like to propose to add opportunities abroad. Master studies are provided in several institutions in Europe.

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

- a) Factual situation

The SER documents guidelines that support socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs in their studies by e. g., offering individual study plans, social grants, and adapted facilities, p. 35.

b) Judgement/indicator analyses

The expert panel welcomes the approach to individualise the study programme to the needs of the vulnerable individual. There is no mention of similar support to students who have mental health issues.

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

a) Factual situation

The SER details robust procedures and regulations that assist academic and administrative staff to monitor student progress with KUAS study management system p. 36. This includes involvement of the KUAS Unit for Study and the Study Field Committee.

The feedback mechanism includes mention of the effect feedback has on the improvement of the course and its assessment.

b) Judgement/indicator analyses

KUAS has a robust system of monitoring student progress and implementing change as a result of regulated feedback mechanisms.

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

a) Factual situation

The SER describes the analysis procedure of employment data of KUAS graduates using government data. KUAS uses the Career Management Information System, the SAIKU tool and surveys annually. The latest details include encouraging results in rising trends of employment.

b) Judgement/indicator analyses

KUAS has a robust method of evaluating employability of its graduates in the field of Rehabilitation. There is some deficit of information coming from government bodies. The expert panel is pleased that graduates have formed the Association KUAS Alumni Club. It is a sign of professional and academic evolution as a direct consequence of the KUAS journey.

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

#### a) Factual situation

KUAS has a Code of Academic Ethics, a plagiarism detection system. It has procedures to ensure staff and students are aware of the systems and related regulations, such as the KUAS Study Procedure.

KUAS follows national laws to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Complaints are addressed by ad hoc committees of experts.

#### b) Judgement/indicator analyses

The expert panel is satisfied that robust procedures are in place to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

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

#### a) Factual situation

As quoted from the SER p. 37: *“The Procedure for assessing learning achievements at KUAS establishes the procedure for handling appeals. Within 3 working days from the announcement of the results of a course unit (excluding the day of the announcement), the students can appeal to the Dean of the Faculty regarding the non-compliance of the assessment of learning achievements with the criteria previously defined in the course description.”*

#### b) Judgement/indicator analyses

As understood from the SER that p. 37: *“The requests are examined by an Appeal Committee of 5 persons formed by the Dean of the Faculty no later than in 15 working days from its registration, which makes one of the following decisions: to reject the appeal; satisfy the appeal and verify another final evaluation; satisfy the appeal and allow re/taking the examination or another final assessment. The student is informed of the decision of the Appeal Committee.”* which shows that the mentioned process is transparent and clear.

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

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

1. Good and increasing employability rate.
2. Robust structures to evaluate student performance and constructive feedback mechanisms.

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

1. Teamwork between students and staff of the two Rehabilitation programmes, OT and PT at undergraduate level.

## **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

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

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

#### a) Factual situation

The teacher-student ratio, as well as scientific, didactic and professional competences of the teaching staff are good. SER p. 39 explains the importance of teachers' practical experience to ensure the coherence of the theory and practice. At the KUAS all the teachers are at work in dual jobs. SER p.41 states that studies in the field of RE are implemented by 31 members of the academic staff. 13 (31 per cent) of them are full-time employees of KUAS and 30 percent of the SPFRE academic staff work under long-term agreements with KUAS. All the academic staff have a master's degree; 9 of them (29 per cent) are Doctors of Sciences and 2 lecturers are currently PhD students. 19 (61.3 per cent) work in the position of a lecturer; 3 (9.7 per cent) work in the position of associate professors, and 9 (29 per cent) are assistants. 19 (61.3 per cent) members of the academic staff teach the courses of the study field. They work in KUAS on the basis of at least 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 24 of them (77 per cent) have at least 3 years of pedagogical experience and 16 (52 per cent) have been teaching for more than 10 years. The RE lecturers (29 percent of them) who have studied in PhD programmes have successfully defended their dissertations, share their research experience with students, involve first-year students in research activities, and emphasise



science-based practice. In addition, most of the lecturers work in public and private health, care, treatment, and rehabilitation institutions.

Lecturers-practitioners work in the SPFRE as well. 22 (71 per cent) of lecturers-practitioners have at least 5 years of experience and 12 (39 per cent) have more than 10 years of practical experience in the study field they teach. The transfer of lecturers' practical experience to the study process ensures the coherence of the theory and practice of the studies in the field, as well as science and studies, i.e., the accomplishment of the "knowledge triangle" (integration of studies, applied research, and business world). During the period under assessment, 91 percent of lecturers-practitioners work in the SPFRE. Their contribution to the study process is significant while introducing new technologies in the teaching process, applying new teaching technologies in practice, presenting exceptional clinical situations, mastering new technologies, introducing internship placements to students, offering jobs to future specialists, mentoring students during professional internships.

#### b) Judgement/Indicator analyse

The study programmes of OT and PT are led by a person with a medical background. However, to develop the profession specific theory, science and practice, in most European relevant programmes, it is a requirement to have a professional from the same field to lead the qualifying programmes. This person should have recognised professional, scientific, preferably doctorate and practical qualifications and experience. This would help the profession to be recognised better in the region, country and internationally and also strengthen the image and attractiveness of the applicants.

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

#### a) Factual situation

Annex 9 gives a good overview of the volume of academic mobility, in spite of the current world situation. KUAS academic staff have every opportunity to participate in various mobility programmes. SER page 41 and 42 states that mobility activities are managed by KUAS Unit for International Relations and the coordinator of international activities in the Faculty. The selection of the members of the academic and administrative staff for visits to

foreign HIE or business enterprises to teach, participate in training, or do internships under Erasmus+ and Nordplus exchange programmes is performed following the general requirements established in the *Description of the procedure for organising mobility of KUAS staff under international exchange programmes*<sup>2</sup>, which also defines the issues of mobility funding and accounting for the participation in mobility activities. Participation in mobility activities is acknowledged during the certification of the academic staff. 29 teachers did go abroad in 2022. In former years the outgoing and incoming mobility varied.

b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

Mobility is mainly focused on international exchange. National exchange might be considered as well.

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

a) Factual situation

SER p. 43 states that KUAS has established R&D funding mechanisms which enable the department of RE to provide additional funds for the professional development of teachers.

b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

Teachers of the study programmes of the field of Rehabilitation can increase professional knowledge by choosing opportunities abroad. Master studies are provided in several institutions in Europe.

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

***(1) Strengths:***

1. The collaboration with foreign partners (e. g., Tartu Health Care College, Estonia; West Attica, Greece) in pursuing a possibility to perform research promises a positive impact.
2. Membership of ENOTHE has created awareness of the value to exchange knowledge within the international OT community.

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<sup>2</sup> Approved by Order of KUAS Director No. 1-403, 31/10/2019 (new addition No. 1-403, 13/11/2020).

3. KUAS has established R&D funding mechanisms which enable the department of RE to provide additional funds for the professional development of teachers.
4. It is promising that KUAS considers participation in mobility programmes an integral part of work. Staff can include their visits in their annual plans of non-teaching hours.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The expert panel would like to see that PT and OT programmes in KUAS had their own profession leading the education so that the programme coordinators would be occupational therapist and physiotherapist respectively, preferably with a doctoral degree. This would facilitate a more profession specific theory, science and practice.

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

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

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

a) Factual situation

The resources in the library, e-resources, rooms and skills labs are good.

Students are supervised in their placements by placement mentors who have completed a course organised by the Faculty of Medicine. All mentors are specialists in their field (OT and PT).

b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

The facilities and equipment seem adequate for the study population and they are upgraded frequently. They support the current trend of on-line learning and the laboratories have good space and adequate equipment for practical training. The classrooms, practice rooms, library, and even a large gym with a climbing wall meet all the needs of today's learning and practical skills development. The equipment is up-to-date, relevant to clinical and scientific work and sufficient for both OT and PT students. These are supplemented by training in the practice placements in different institutions.

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

#### a) Factual situation

The College has sufficient practical facilities for practical work and research (e. g. ENMG, reaction speed measurement, muscle contraction recording, etc.).

Students have an excellent choice of practice bases in the city's clinical hospitals, hospitals in other districts and rehabilitation centres. The involvement of private medical, rehabilitation and nursing institutions in the study process is very important. At the same time, they ensure that graduates have an optimistic future in the labour market.

The interaction with students, lecturers, social partners and mentors of the practice bases creates a real picture of mutual cooperation and respect for each other.

#### b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

Today students do not have access to all the services of the College in one building, but the plans for extension are in place. In the near future it is planned that everything will be concentrated in one building, which will be built specifically for the modern training of rehabilitation team professionals (OT and PT).

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

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

1. Plans to integrate four sites into one to reduce the need for mobility across the city of Kaunas and create more space for the skills labs.
2. New updated OT and PT theory literature has been purchased. This literature is in line with the theory development of Occupational Therapy in the world.
3. The OT and PT skills labs are well equipped with the latest evidence, knowledge and technology for the teaching and learning of more specialised occupational therapy skills in some areas of practice such as hand therapy and splinting, assistive technologies, cognitive assessment and rehabilitation methods as well as vocational rehabilitation.
4. Students' supervision is well organised and monitored and the collaboration of the placement mentors and teaching staff is working well. Placement mentors

continually improve their mentoring skills by attending relevant courses organised by the Faculty of Medicine.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Not identified

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

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

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

- a) Factual situation

The provisions for improving performance are based on the European Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education. The quality assurance system covers all levels of study and has approved governing documents. These documents are posted on the College's website and are easily accessible to all. The Rehabilitation Studies Committee is active and is responsible for quality indicators, analyses the opinions of stakeholders, prepares improvement plans and submits proposals to the Academic Board for approval. This ensures a continuous and systematic process of improving the quality of studies, which also reflects the changing needs of the labour market.

- b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

The quality assurance system covers all levels of study and is recorded and available in approved governing documents.

The Rehabilitation Studies Committee is responsible for quality indicators, takes into account the opinions of stakeholders and proposes improvement plans for submission to the Academic Board for approval. This process was documented well and is transparent.

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

- a) Factual situation

The quality of studies is ensured by the principle of continuous feedback between students and social partners. A systematic survey of students, graduates, lecturers, employers, meetings and discussions are organised. The social partners are involved in the defence of the theses. The results of the feedback are published on the website.

b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

The continuous feedback from students and partners on the quality of study process is well documented and transparent and publicised on the KUAS website.

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

a) Factual situation

The data extraction covers a wide range of information on faculty and students, work with foreign partners, participation in local and foreign conferences, seminars, workshops, and cooperation with other higher education institutions in the country or abroad. Information is provided on the qualifications of teachers, cooperation between teachers and students, their participation in scientific activities, the achievement of practical skills, the reasons for student attrition, the themes of final theses and their practical applicability. Since 2017, roundtable discussions involving stakeholders have been held.

b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

The evaluation system chosen ensures the collection, systematisation and analysis of reliable data. It is presented in a clear and uncomplicated manner and helps to collect, analyse and make suggestions for improving the quality of studies.

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

a) Factual situation

After the course, students are surveyed twice a year about the quality of the course and the data is stored electronically (study management system). Student turnout is not very high at 30-45%. The student representation is contacted and asked to encourage students to

participate in the surveys, and there are regular meetings between the administration and students, lecturers, practice supervisors and graduates.

Graduate surveys carried out between 2020 and 2021 indicate that the most valued skills are practical skills. At the same time, they indicated that they would like to see more examples of real work and for lecturers to improve their didactic knowledge.

As a result of the evaluation of the surveys, it is envisaged to carry out site inspections of the internship sites and to consider extending the library hours.

#### b) Judgement/Indicator analyses

Student participation in study quality assessment surveys is quite low, and steps should be taken to encourage students to participate more actively in surveys.

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

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

1. The quality assurance system is clearly and transparently presented and covers all levels of study and has approved governing documents. This provides a solid base and easily accessible data and documentation to evaluate the quality of the programmes by each stakeholder for their needs
2. The continuous feedback system and its process and follow up between students and social partners is transparent and can be easily followed up by each stakeholder group.
3. The data extraction is clear and uncomplicated, covering a wide range of information on faculty and students, work with foreign partners, participation in local and foreign conferences, seminars, workshops, and cooperation with other higher education institutions in the country or abroad.

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

1. Students indicated that they would like to see more examples of real work and for lecturers to improve their didactic knowledge.
2. Student participation in study quality assessment surveys is quite low, and steps should be taken to encourage students to participate more actively in surveys.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The collaboration and integration in the curriculum and the learning activities of the OT and PT students and staff, to ensure, that the rehabilitation workforce work together to the benefits of their clients, society and also the profession</li> <li>2. Review and revise the foci of the programmes, so that they truly reflect the current trends in the Lithuanian society and government policies and the international professional trends, e.g. ageing population, community engagement.</li> <li>3. Collaboration at the KUAS, and with national and international rehabilitation professionals and organisation could be strengthened at all levels.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain efforts to continually ensure that undergraduate programmes are linked to evolving scientific evidence.</li> <li>2. Increase efforts to secure funded international collaborative research, to include student participation.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More activities could be offered in order to enhance the student profile.</li> <li>2. Awareness on the recognition of prior learning procedures among students should be more disseminated.</li> <li>3. There should be documentation about defining the roles and responsibilities of the staff and the management in student support services.</li> <li>4. Low number of students benefiting from financial support, this should be reviewed and increased.</li> <li>5. More social, cultural and sports activities should be offered, e. g. international days of OT and PT could be celebrated.</li> </ol>
Teaching and learning, student performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is recommended that teamwork during studies and the KUAS as well as during internships between OT and PT are facilitated e. g. with simulation and critical case analysis.</li> </ol>



and graduate employment	
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There seems to be a lack of interprofessional communication between teachers of Lithuanian institutions of higher education implementing study programmes in the same study field. The collaboration at national level could be strengthened.</li> <li>2. The expert panel would recommend that physiotherapy programmes and occupational therapy programmes in Lithuania had their own profession leading the education so that the programme coordinators would be occupational therapist and physiotherapist respectively, preferably with a doctoral degree. This would facilitate a more profession specific theory, science and practice and thereby elevate the status and attractiveness of the professions.</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue improving the and updating the profession specific learning facilities, EBP assessments and training/treatment</li> </ol>
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student participation in study quality assessment surveys should be encouraged and systematic process on implementing their recommendation should be made visible.</li> </ol>

## V. SUMMARY

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

*The International expert panel thanks the KUAS for hosting the visit and their hospitality during the visit. The expert panel was impressed with the smooth organisation, the lively and engaging participation of all the different teams and also with the achievements of and continuing development of the well-established rehabilitation field programmes.*

The curriculum and subjects are comprehensive and cover the areas required by local, national, European and international regulatory bodies. The teaching learning facilities are adequate and updated to follow the general standard in Europe and support the provision of the curriculum. The equipment and spaces are clean and in good order and compliment and help to offer a comprehensive curriculum and learning for the students, and a supportive environment for the teaching and learning.

The teaching staff is of high standard academically and professionally and keeps up their professional and pedagogic skills with continuing study and international exchanges.

The students were satisfied with their teaching and the facilities and also seem to be able to acquire jobs after graduation. They enjoyed the supportive atmosphere and communication with the teachers in both programmes and the alumni kept in touch with the school.

The other stakeholders and the social partners provided a strong support in practice placements, thesis supervision and offering jobs for the graduates.

What could be improved:

The interprofessional teaching, research and working in the faculty and also with other similar programmes nationwide could be improved by offering studies together for the two programmes from the start and engaging staff and students in the national collaboration and communication with other rehabilitation field programmes.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Raija Kuisma

(signature)