CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
DENTAL HYGIENE STUDY FIELD
AT KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Review team:

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2. ***Assistant Professor* Sandra Ribeiro Graça,** *member of academic community;*
3. **Bo Danielsen,** *member of academic community;*
4. **Prof. dr. Vytautė Pečiulienė,** *representative of social partners';*
5. **Meda Vaitonytė,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator -
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Report language – English

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Oral Hygiene	Dental Technology	Odontological Care
State code	6531GX034	6531GX043	6531GX035
Type of studies	College studies	College studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time - 3 (years)	Full-time - 3 (years)	Full-time - 3 (years)
Credit volume	180	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences qualification of an Oral Hygienist	Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences qualification of a Dental Technician*	Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences qualification of the Dental Assistant
Language of instruction	Lithuania	Lithuania	Lithuania
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	16/01/2004	21/09/2001	27/06/2002

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team at the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of 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 such study field is not accredited.

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

The study field **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

1.2. THE REVIEW TEAM

The review team was completed according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *25/11/2020.* The review visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool (Zoom).

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5. **Meda Vaitonytė,** student of Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon, 1st-year student of the Second Cycle Study Programme Psychology of Intercultural Relations, Portugal.

1.3. GENERAL

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	
2.	

1.4. BACKGROUND OF STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN HEI

Kaunas University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) is one of the largest public higher education institutions in Lithuania. The field of oral care is one of the eight field studies carried out at the health sciences group of the Faculty of Medicine. The study field has 3 study programs - Oral Hygiene (OH), Odontology Care (OC) and Dental Technology (DT). The two first programs (OH and OC) were implemented at KUAS in 2002. In 2017 DT program was assigned to the oral care field study. External evaluation was conducted in 2010 for OH and OC and in 2012 for DT. Both programs were accredited for 6 years. The 3 programs offer 3-year full-time, 180 ECTS, professional bachelor's degrees in Health Sciences. Besides Utena University of Applied Sciences, KUAS is the only institution providing the 3 study programmes.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Oral Care study field and **first cycle** at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences is given **positive** evaluation

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Study aims, outcomes and content	3
2.	Links between science (art) and study activities	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Studying, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and publicity	3
	Total:	**24**

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;
2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;
3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;
4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;
5 (exceptional) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

Study programmes' 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);

Oral diseases (dental caries, periodontal diseases and tooth loss) are among the most prevalent worldwide and the levels of these conditions in Lithuania are high compared to other European countries. These diseases are highly preventable and dependent on the adoption of healthy habits. Oral Care specialists play a major role in preventing oral diseases and promoting oral health at public health and individual level. The National Oral Health Programme 2016-2020 reinforce this cost-effective intervention. However, DH was only integrated into primary health care in 2019. The OH study programme aims and learning outcomes should emphasise this new role more in order to prepare the graduates for this challenging opportunity.

Revisions of study outcomes and plans are performed annually to fulfil the needs of the society and labour market based on feedback from twice yearly meetings with alumni, employers and stakeholders. Good communication and co-operation between them and KUAS was evident during the site virtual visit, but no examples were provided of changes actually made using this feedback.

Around 210 oral care specialists graduate annually from all of the higher education institutions according to the Lithuanian Dental Chamber. An assessment of the future workforce requirements for each study programme is required to prevent graduate unemployment.

Benchmarking with other international programmes, as stated in the Self Evaluation Report (SER), provides meaningful comparison, however, the programmes need to produce graduates with the competencies required for the local and national economy. This uniqueness is seen in the OH graduates who also perform part-time OC work, satisfying the needs of the labour market.

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 study field are clearly stated and matched to the learning outcomes (Annex 5 of SER) focusing on practical activities and the development of applied research typically at level 6 EFQ and coincide with the KUAS mission and strategy. The study aims and learning outcomes of the OC study field at KUAS are in line with the Description of the study filed of Dental Care (Order V-801-23/7/ 2015) and Lithuanian Medical Norms (MN 35:2019 (OH); MN 24:2017 (OC); MN 46:2018 (DT)) aiming to prepare dental care professionals who can work independently or integrated in teams.

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

The study field is based on legal requirements of higher education in Lithuania (Order No. V501, 9/04/2010; Order No. V-801, 23/07/2015; Order No. V-1012, 16/11/2016.). The scope of study field programmes is 180 ECTS, full-time, divided into 6 semesters with 30 ECTS each. Each study programme has different:

- Volume of study field credits: OH- 138 ECTS; OC- 135 ECTS; DT – 135 ECTS
- Volume of internships: OH - 42 ECTS; OC – 45 ECTS; DT – 36 ECTS
- Volume of practical training: OH- 40%; OC – 39%; DT – 48%.

All the study programmes have 38% independent study and 9 ECTS for the final thesis and examination.

The above figures demonstrate the compliance with the legal requirements of the study field for granting a Professional Bachelor's degree of Dental Care with at least 120 ECTS in the study field, a minimum of 30 ECTS of professional practical training, at least $^{1}/_{3^{rd}}$ of programme involving practical training, at least 30% of self-study and at least 9 ECTS for the final thesis and final examination. The duration, depth and scope of the study field are adequate to accomplish the aims and learning outcomes of the programme.

The requirements for the study field (Order No. V-801, 23/07/2015) to have at least 10% of the study field subjects taught by scientists and more than half of the study programme teachers having at least 3 years professional experience in their subject area have been met. Of the 27 teachers working more than 0.5 FTE, 4 of them are scientists (14.8%) and all of the teaching staff have more than 3 years of professional experience and have a pedagogical degree. Besides the 4 scientists, there was no mention in the SER regarding the academic and professional qualifications of the other teachers involved in the study field.

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

The aims of the programmes lead to the definition of a set of knowledge, skills and abilities that a graduate of the dental care study field must perform as a professional. These are in harmony with the regulations of higher education and professional standards in Lithuania. The learning outcomes (OH (10), DT (14), OC (11)) are concrete and clearly defined, and are divided into five domains: Knowledge Application, Research Abilities, Special Skills, Social Skills and Personal Abilities meeting the requirements for a Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences in Lithuania. However, competencies required to be able to adapt to the constantly changing environment and healthcare system, such as critical thinking, problem solving, self-evaluation and evidence-based practice were not directly perceived in the aims and learning outcomes.

Different methods for teaching/learning and assessment are determined by the learning outcomes to be achieved. Student-centred methods (group discussion, situation modelling, role play, internships in real workplaces, practice diaries, preparation of surveys or reports, individual and team projects, research activities) referred to by the teachers during the visit,

facilitate the link between theory and practice. Practical experiences and internships were very much appreciated by students. However, the correlation between the learning outcomes, the teaching/learning and assessment methods were not evident in either the SER or at the site visit. The students confirmed that the assessment criteria and requirements expected from them in order to fulfil the learning outcomes were made very clear to them. Constant feedback was confirmed by the teachers and students. According to the students, feedback is sufficient, timely and very helpful in providing guidance for improvement.

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

The scope of the studies is 180 ECTS, of which, general collegial subjects - 15 ECTS, study field - 135 ECTS (OC/ DT) and 138 ECTS (OH), deeper studies of the same study field - 21 ECTS (OC/DT) and 18 ECTS (OH) and freely electives courses 9 ECTS. The volume of work required for each subject is determined by the learning outcomes to be achieved. The student's workload is reviewed annually and was considered to be fair and balanced by the students.

Generally, study subjects are sequentially in order, which seems to provide a transition towards higher levels of knowledge, the acquisition of skills and achievement of the desired learning outcomes. Employers and stakeholders manifest that graduates have a good knowledge and scientific base, and that they can improve their practical skills when they start working.

Practical classes and internships start early in all of the study programmes. The total percentage of time directly related to professional competences is 56.1% in OH, 70.6% in OC and 86.3% in DT. In the OH and OC programmes, almost all of the clinical training took place during the practice placements outside the school. The graduates were very satisfied with their training and felt prepared to perform their profession roles when they entered the job market.

The expert panel have the following remarks with regards to the organisation of the study plans:

Oral Hygiene Programme – Dental radiology is taught in the 5th semester after the start of the Professional Internships (3rd and 4th semester). This subject should be taught earlier in the study plan due to its importance in the assessment of patient's needs.
The same applies to Periodontology and oral mucosal disease which is currently in the 6th semester. This subject is one of the most important subjects in the practice of OH.
Basics of public health (4th semester) and Prophylaxis of dental disease and epidemiology (3rd semester) should be before the 1st Professional Internship – teaching oral hygiene (II semester).
Clinical odontology and anaesthesia is currently in the 2nd semester, which is too early in the study plan. Special needs patient management and Professional ethics should be included in the study plan.

Odontological Care and Dental Technology - Areas requiring more in-depth teaching:
OC - Infection control and managing and organisational and administrative skills.
DT – Business, administration, legal and economics. These areas are offered very early in the study plan (2nd and 3rd semester) and should be reinforced.

These needs were also identified in the meeting with the graduates.

The implementation of the study programmes in the same place enables future oral care specialists to work together. Interprofessional education between the study field programmes was highlighted by students as being a very positive and enriching experience, however, it was not acknowledged in the SER and only vaguely mentioned in the meeting with the teachers. It seems to be driven more by teaching efficiency rather than a pedagogical advantage.

The final internships are taken outside KUAS in clinics, dental laboratories and other institutions. Despite the panel identifying the need for more opportunities for students to work with patients at the College training clinic, there are legal constraints that prohibit such practices. There is a plan to expand the clinical facilities in the near future. This will help to ensure the number of patients experiences or categorisation of patients according to difficulty level and oral health/disease status, ensuring more consistency in clinical practice procedures, assessment and feedback between students and provide opportunity to achieve the stated learning outcomes.

Independent work is more than 30% of the student workload. Students cited several resources used for self-study. It was not clear how this independent study is assessed and how it helps students to reflect on their own learning and progress. This would provide a greater level of autonomy and prepare them for lifelong learning.

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.

KUAS offers individualised study plans in certain special circumstances (e.g. special needs) and for students/listeners to equalise study differences (from prior studies/different HEI) higher than 18 ECTS. A free study schedule can also be offered to some students (having a child under 3 years of age, maternity leave, being disabled, chronically ill or last semester grade ≧8). During the evaluation period, 15 listeners and 5 students benefitted from an individual study plan. The way individual study schedules are structured to meet the learning outcomes (LO) was not described.

Students can also extend the period of assessment if they have a significant reason. During the evaluation period, 14 students benefitted from this measure.

Professional internships placements can be offered by KUAS or arranged by the students. The last modality was chosen by 100 students during the evaluation period. Voluntary internships can also be performed. It was not clear how the quality of internships is monitored or how voluntary internship contribute to achieving the learning outcomes.

A broad list of free elective courses, from all academic departments, can be chosen by students. Some of the most popular are “Peculiarities of Work of Oral Care Specialist with Patients of Special Needs”, “Oral and Dental Diseases”, “Individual and Professional Oral Hygiene”. However, these subjects are very important for all OH and OC students and should be compulsory, especially considering the rise in the numbers of elderly and disabled patients in the population.

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

In the study field, 6 ECTS are devoted to the preparation and defence of the final thesis. Student can propose a topic or be assigned one, 3 months before the defence. The thesis, combined with qualifying examination, summarise the general and special knowledge, and skills acquired by the students in order to meet the requirements set for the qualification of a professional bachelor. The list of topics for the last 3 years was provided in annex 2.

The qualifying board is composed of a minimum of 5 members (employers representative, teachers of specialised field, practitioners, stakeholders representative and researchers from other HEI). Plagiarism is checked using *Turnitin Text Matching Software*.

The time for preparation of the final thesis (1 semester) seems short in duration. The preparation should start in the 5th semester (e.g. using the subject Methodology of Applied Research to prepare the study research protocol).

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

Reinforce interprofessional education between the study programmes in the study field, especially with regards to clinical practice.

There is a need to make stakeholders and employers contribution to the study more visible to all parties involved in order to increase the importance of their participation in the study field.

Some rearrangements in study plan are suggested to facilitate more integration and application of knowledge between theoretical subjects and professional internships. (see 3.1.5.). Consider reviewing objectives and learning outcomes to better mirror the skills of evidence-based and patient-centered care, as well as, critical thinking, self-evaluation and lifelong learning.

Earlier approval of the final thesis topics would promote the incorporation of practical applications of applied research methods. Consider also the expansion of this subject to include biostatistics and basic research. This would contribute to the quality of final theses and increase the possibility of publishing.

More clearly define the assessment methods used for the student's independent work.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES

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

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

The science and art activities development under the KUAS strategic plan is aimed at providing solutions for an evolving society's needs and internationalisation. A programme to develop this plan and ensure that the study fields are supported by scientific research was approved at the end of 2019, as well as the quantitative and qualitative indicators, allocation

of financial and human resources needed. During the last 3 years the study field teachers published 29 scientific articles, 28 scientific reports and took part in 25 investigations. Some of this research activity was done in conjunction with external partners and mainly disseminated in Lithuanian publications. For dissemination of research and professional innovations, KUAS promotes scientific meetings where academics can publicise the results of their work.

The research projects developed at KUAS to improve public health, health promotion and quality of life, on professional environment and in education show the multi-dimensional nature of the research activity developed and their relevance to the study fields. However, more research group collaborations between study fields and with foreign partners is recommended.

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

Several examples are provided in the SER of how some study subjects reformulated their content on the basis of the research developed in the study field. Some methodology aids and teaching materials were also prepared. The research on professional environment and education promotes teacher's reflection on their own practices leading to the overall quality of the learning process and teacher's professional development. An international project on "Interprofessional co-operation of oral care specialists in a team and with health care specialists in other fields" with the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen, is ongoing to foster the development of teamwork skills in the study field students. This work resulted in the creation of an on-line international interdisciplinary module.

New technology has been introduced into the study field programmes resulting from the exposure of teachers to those technologies and from their research. Some examples of new technologies are provided in SER. These examples were also reported during the meetings with the students and teachers. The students reinforced the introduction to new technology during their training. Furthermore, both the stakeholders and employers stated that the students have improved their knowledge in the last few years. The graduates considered themselves to be well prepared and don't feel the need for further competences.

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

It was stated in the SER that only 10% of students participated in applied research. One of the reasons stated in the teachers meeting was the lack of motivation from students. According to teachers, the students are offered the possibility to engage but they are not interested. Most of the contracted research is developed by students as part of their final theses, allowing them to conduct applied research useful and related to their practice. During the evaluation period, 13 students from the study field presented their thesis results at the National Students Conference and 9 abstracts were published in a peer-reviewed e-publication for this conference. The participation of students in research agreements in the community also helped the students to develop research activities and integrate them in the final theses. KUAS also promotes a competition to further engage the most proactive students in research. No data was provided on how many students from the study field joined this project.

It was clear to the expert panel that students have the opportunity to actively develop research activities during the preparation of their final theses. Nevertheless, research activities should be promoted for them throughout the entire programme.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

More research group collaborations between study fields and with foreign partners is recommended.

Efforts should be developed to foster a culture of research in the study field. This would benefit both teachers and students.

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.

The Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools for General Admission (LAMA BPO) authorised by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania is responsible for the national general admission. KUAS admits students with at least secondary education to each study field by competition according to the entrance competitive score depending on the form of studies and method of financing. The competitive subjects to enter Oral Care study field are Biology, Chemistry or Mathematics, Lithuanian language and literature and any other subject besides the former.

A clear explanation of the criteria for awarding additional points for specified conditions was clearly explained in the SER. For DT candidates a "pass" in the manual ability test is required to enter the programme. KUAS administrative bodies regulate these procedures. Admissions information is available at KUAS, LAMA BPO and other websites, at the Students Admission Office, student fairs, publications and during the visits to general schools. The expert panel found the admission process to be clear, objective and easily accessible by the public.

The number of applicants to study programmes was disclosed in the SER. From 6452 total applicants to the study field 29.6% were 1st priority in general and 38% for the DT programme. DH is the most popular programme accounting for 62.8% of all applicants. The number of applicants have decreased by about 50% for both DH and OC programmes, but DT had a 3 fold increase in 2020, as compared to the previous three years. The number of students admitted to the programmes remained relatively stable during the evaluation period. Between 2017-2020 this number was 379. From these 45.6% were non-stated funds. OH had the least number of non-stated fund students and OC the highest. These figures and the information gathered at the virtual visit confirm the popularity of the study field, especially the DT programme. The decrease in the numbers of DH and OC candidates, particularly OC, must be analysed further to understand the reasons for this trend and to take actions to increase the numbers in the short-term, especially considering the high demand for these professionals in the labour market.

The lowest, highest and average admission scores were presented. Since there was a different calculation score for school leaving examinations during the evaluation period it became

difficult to analyse tendencies. Nevertheless, in the last 2 years average competitive scores of all the programmes in the study field remained higher than 7. The minimum competitive score set by KUAS was 4.3 in 2020. The difference of competitive scores between state-funded (SF) and non-state funded (NSF) are similar except for OC programme in 2020, where the average mean was 2 points lower for NSF. The higher quality of the candidates can level up the overall quality of the study field as well as bringing more motivated students. The popularity of the programme was confirmed in the panel meetings with the students, faculty and stakeholders.

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 recognition of foreign academic qualifications is the responsibility of the Study Quality Assessment Centre (SKVC). KUAS started consultations for trying to achieve the possibility to recognise foreign qualifications. Recognition of learning outcomes in KUAS can be granted for partial studies, previous studies, non-formal, informal and self-study. In these cases, recognition can be achieved for a maximum of 75% of the volume of studies, except for final thesis and qualifying examination. During the evaluation period a total of 73 students received recognition for these forms of study. However, it was not mentioned how many required this recognition and only 5 course units didn't meet the formal requirements for accreditation. It would be of interest to analyse the academic performance of such candidates (e.g. in final thesis and/or qualifying examination).

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

KUAS offers opportunities for student academic mobility for part of their studies or internships (pre and post-graduate) under Erasmus+, Norplus and bilateral agreements. Publicity of mobility programmes is provided on the KUAS website, intranet, social network, at Erasmus+ info days and semester meetings with International co-ordinator. Experiences from mobility participants are disseminated in KUAS website and e-magazine. Candidates are selected by internal procedures and the selection board is appointed by the Dean. Socially disadvantaged students have access to additional funding.

During the panel meeting, the students reported that the Erasmus Office provided very useful information and support, and students who had undertaken an international exchange found it to be a very valuable experience. It was suggested that students who did not enrol could ask teachers about their experiences of other countries in order to help motivate these students. An important issue raised during the meeting with the SER development group was the difficulty in matching the curricula/subjects with other international programmes, as a consequence students often have to retake some study subjects after returning from exchanges. To overcome this, they are searching for higher education institutions abroad where the curricula is very similar to KUAS. Teachers also said that most of the agreements are for studies not for internships and both conditions do not contribute to higher internationalisation. During the evaluation period the study field received 2 foreign students for 3-months study. There were no incoming students for full-time studies. External reasons for these low numbers were pointed out at the SER group meeting: small, not attractive country.

A 5 ECTS module about Health promotion of families, in English, developed in partnership with Savonia University of Applied Sciences, implemented in 2018-2019, was mentioned during the meetings as a way to improve English language and internationalisation. These experiences with other international programmes can help enrich the study field, giving it more visibility among partners and help improve the international experiences of students.

From 2017 to 2020, 42 students from the study field engaged in international studies of at least 15 ECTS and 3 in postgraduate internships. OC and DT students engaged more in mobility compared to the DH students. The students met by the panel were unable to say why they didn't engage with the exchange programmes. The student representative at the SER development group meeting reinforced the importance of teachers in encouraging and supporting students to undertake exchanges.

It is clear to the expert panel that there are good opportunities for student mobility. However, measures should be taken to attract more foreign students. Despite the good policy and support for international exchanges provided by KUAS, there is a need to accredit all studies done abroad.

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.

An introductory week is provided to students entering for the first time at KUAS. During this week they are acquainted with the legal and administrative structure of the university, study programme requirements and organisation, financial support provided, scholarships and grants, library resources and Moodle. Tutor teachers and student mentors are assigned to them. Camps and group monitors are organised by Students' Representation Council in order to provide opportunities for better student integration at KUAS. Study field students account for 12.5% of this council.

Study field students meet regularly with the head of the department, administrative staff and the international co-ordinator. Annual round table meetings with representatives for each academic group take place to discuss possible adjustments to study plan and counselling needs.
The Library and Information Resource Centre have developed seminars which help students to use their resources. The Careers Centre help students to develop general competencies, career planning, entrepreneurship and continuity of studies. In addition, it organises lectures by various stakeholders and visits by companies.

Incentive scholarships for high academic achievements were awarded to 12% of the study field students and no one-off grants were provided during the evaluation period. One student, with a disability of less than 45 per cent of working capacity, benefitted from a State Study Fund for a targeted benefit, financial assistance and a social scholarship. It was not specified in the SER what adaptations or additional support was provided to this student. Financial support is available to students. Psychological support is provided by specialised counselling and by several help lines, as well as various cultural, sports and voluntary activities are available to the students.

Financial, social, psychological and personal support for the Oral Care field students at KUAS seem appropriate, sufficient and effective. Discussions between the academic community members and surveys corroborated this.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling.

Several means of information are available to students: webpages, Moodle, Introduction week student mentors, tutor mentors, Students' Representation Council, Library and the Information Resource Centre. During the visit the expert panel confirmed with the students the sufficiency of the study information and counselling.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:
No recommendations

3.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

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

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

The teaching process is organised according to the study plan. Subjects are organised to support students with the expected learning outcomes being organised in a logical fashion starting with more general subjects and then proceeding to subjects related to professional care. When starting a subject, students are presented with the subject syllabus comprising the goals, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, organisation of self-study and consultations. A variety of teaching and assessment methods are used support active learning and to help them achieve the learning outcomes. Practical activities start in the 1st year and they are developed throughout the programmes. Independent self-study accounts for almost 40% of the student work. The respective methods of assessment for each subject are made clear to the students, as stated in the visit meeting, and depend on the type of subject. According to students feedback is constant, timely and immediate after each practical assignment. The teachers seemed very committed to providing the students with a high quality learning experience. If a student fails one subject, they can repeat it once for free in the same semester and up to 3 times in the next semester. Students with a justifiable reason can have a free schedule, take a study break, academic leave or have a different period of examination.

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

Attending an individual/free schedule and particular arrangements for practical training can be offered to students with special needs. Financial incentives are provided to socially vulnerable students. Also, for disadvantaged students financial support for studying abroad is provided. One student with special needs was enrolled in the study field during the evaluation period. No mention was made in the SER of any adaptations, despite the statement that the department possess methodological aids to support these students. It is the panel opinion that the department of Oral Care and KUAS provides sufficient support for socially vulnerable and special needs students.

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.

KUAS has a system to monitor student's progress using cumulative assessment. This system helps students to self-assess their progress and achievement of the learning outcomes. Furthermore, this system allows teachers to identify students having difficulties and provide support. A thorough semester evaluation (evaluation averages, student dropouts, academic debts) is performed and reflected upon in the department and study field committee. Annually the study field committee makes the final evaluation of indicators, final thesis results and dropout analysis and presents study programme improvement proposals. This process was well detailed during the teachers meeting. The engagement of teachers in providing feedback to students, especially in practical work, was reinforced by the teachers and students at the meetings with the expert panel. Nevertheless, it was not clear to the panel how teachers improve their competences in giving feedback.

3.4.4. Evaluation of the feedback provided to students in the course of the studies to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress.

As stated by the teachers and students, feedback is given frequently both individually and on a group basis. Feedback is provided by teachers and placed on Moodle. Teachers reinforce the strengths, weakness and ways for students to improve, particularly in practical activities. In theoretical subjects, teachers encourage discussion and advise students on further study. At the panel meeting with the students, they acknowledged that the feedback they receive is useful, allowing them to see their progress and ways to improve. Students also provide feedback to their peers. This practice can enhance the student's familiarity of the assessment criteria and develop their evaluative skills. It seems evident to the panel that KUAS has a well-developed feedback culture. However, feedback needs to be constructive, factual, fair and objective if it is intended to monitor and create improvement.

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

Data from graduate's employability and career tracking comes from the Lithuanian Employment Services, MOSTA (from July 2019 Government Strategic Analysis Center STRATA) and surveys conducted by the department of Oral Care (6 months after graduation) and the KUAS Quality Management Division (12 months after graduation). Data shows that 12 months after graduation, during the 3-year period, about 80% of the study field graduates are working in their field of studies and about 9% are pursuing further studies. During the meeting with the graduates, no difficulties in finding jobs were reported with many being employed where they had their internship placements. The readiness of graduates to perform their roles was confirmed by the stakeholders and employers. They reported the graduates to be knowledgeable and well trained, and their practical skills improve once they have gained more experience. When interviewed by the panel, the DT graduates expressed the need for more business administration skills and the OC graduates for more management and organisational skills and infection control skills. No additional skills were identified by DH graduates. Yet, in the SER it was mentioned that graduates perceive that communication and

entrepreneurial skills need to be improved. Some graduates expressed their will to pursue postgraduate studies.

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

KUAS Code of Academic Ethics establishes the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination and the procedures to implement these policies seem adequate. During the period of evaluation, no breaches of these principles were found. *KUAS Law on Equal Opportunities* and *KUAS Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* ensures the principle of non-discrimination. Harassment or discrimination can be reported by students with full confidentiality. It was not clear to the expert panel how these policies are disseminated to the students.

3.4.7. 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.

KUAS Procedure for Assessing Learning Achievements addresses the procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints. Over the last 3 years no appeals or complaints were registered. The expert panel found the procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies to be fair and clear.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:
No recommendations

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching 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.

In a total of 58 teachers involved in the study field, 27 of them are permanent with at least 0.5 FTE and at least 3 years of experience (3-49 years of pedagogical experience). From these 4 (14.8%) have a PhD. All 27 teachers have a pedagogical degree. The professional background of teachers was not provided. During the last 5 years, 78 major work publications were reported, all in Lithuanian language. Eight teachers didn't report any publications. Workload of teachers varied from 0.5 to 1.5 FTE. (Annex 3). Higher level courses and professional internships are supervised by lecturers-practitioners and specialists - practitioners (oral hygienists, assistant dentists, dental technicians, dentists) with 3-30 years of professional experience. These practitioners accounted for between 40% to 72% of the academic staff in the evaluation period. This number varies accordingly to the numbers of students and have increased slightly in the past year. Having lecturer-practitioners brings several advantages to the study field, which was recognised in the SER and was reinforced in several meetings during the visit.

Eighty students are admitted to the study field each year. The teacher/student ratios depend on the type of subject taught: theoretical classes 1:30-60 and practical activities 1:12. In 2019-2020 the total teacher/student ratio for the study field subjects was 1:4 and for the supervision of the final theses was 1:4-5.

New academic staff are hired by competition. An introductory training (2 months) is provided, including a 40-h course in "Planning and organising teaching in KUAS". A minimum competence course (14h) in pedagogical/andragogical is also provided to those not having a qualification in education.

The composition of the academic staff complies with the legal requirements. The pedagogical and professional experience of the academic staff is appropriate to implement the programme and achieve the learning outcomes. A finer analysis of the academic staff/student ratio is advised to make sure that adequate support is provided to students during the practical subjects. It was not explicit in the SER how many academic staff from each different specialised area are involved in the teaching process.

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 mobility of teachers is considered to be an integral part of the teacher's professional development. At KUAS the International Relations Unit and the faculty co-ordinator of international activities are responsible for managing this. The selection of teachers for mobility is regulated by the *Description of the Procedure for Organizing Mobility of KUAS Staff Under International Exchange Programmes*. Mobility activity is accounted for in the academic workload and certification processes. Information about mobility is available on the KUAS website. Academic mobility is financed by the Erasmus+ programme, by the faculty of medicine and by other sources of funding. During the evaluation period 16 lecturers participated in mobility and 10 teachers visited KUAS.

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

At KUAS several opportunities are provided to the teaching staff to improve competences. In-service training is provided to teachers on a voluntary basis. Numerous courses in pedagogical training, learning and assessment methods and methodological tools were provided during the evaluation period. More recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic, training to improve IT competences was covered. These facts were stated in the expert panel meetings with the Senior management, teachers and with the representatives of the HEI regarding the Learning facilities and resources. The teachers also pointed out the support given by senior management with regards to the improvement of their competences. During the evaluation period, lecturers engaged in in-service training in professional competences (79%), didactic competences (59%), scientific research competences (42%) and in foreign languages (53%). In the same period, 5 lecturers improved their university level qualifications.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

To improve the scientific qualification of teachers.

To continue to foster strategic teacher professional development.

To promote greater academic mobility of teachers.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

The Oral Care study field is a department of the Faculty of Medicine. Classes take place on 3 different campuses. The premises for the field include 6 classrooms with at least 30 seats each; 24 laboratory rooms for practical classes of which 7 are devoted specifically to the Oral Care field. This includes 1 Odontology Care and Gypsum Laboratory (1 dental chair), 2 Simulation laboratories with 20 workplaces (10 dental chairs), 4 dental technology laboratories (40 working places) and a Sterilisation laboratory. The dental technology laboratories are new and very well equipped, with 3D technology and CAD/CAM. Simulation laboratory for pre-clinical and clinical training are well equipped with phantom heads and dental equipment. There are plans for expanding the clinical premises but only for one dental chair. The user registration for the dental business management system SERVE" has been developed. Every year planning takes place to ensure that the renewal of material and equipment, including new technology, takes into account the changes in the programme content and professional activities. There was no requirement to make any adaptions to the premises to cater for any disabled students, despite there being a student with special needs who has less than 45% working capacity.

Professional internships are done outside KUAS premises where students can continue their studies under real working conditions. There are 20 internship mentors in the oral care field. Internship can be arranged by KUAS or by the students, and can take place abroad. To ensure the quality of internships, new mentors are trained at KUAS and a student questionnaire is completed 2-3 days before the end of the internships. The panel couldn't find a clear policy for the calibration of mentors or the standards expected during internships with regards to the: number of patients seen; categorisation of patients according to difficulty level and oral health/disease status; clinical practice procedures; consistency and fairness of assessment and feedback.

KUAS Library and Information Resource Centre provide conditions for students to work and study. The library has 254 workstations, of which 37 are computerised. It is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Resources can be found using the modern library software, Library catalogue, Virtual Library and the interactive map. The library possesses 32,000 printed titles and over 170,000 electronic books and about 16,000 scientific journals from 16 international subscribed databases, as well as over 3,000 Lithuanian e-textbooks. With regards to the oral care field, there are 3 printed periodicals available (1 in Lithuanian and 2 in a foreign language). The library offers traditional and distance training and consultations, YouTube educational videos, Moodle and an academic literacy course. When purchasing books or subscribing to databases, the needs of the study programmes and the KUAS community are considered.

During the visit it was evident to the expert panel that students were very satisfied with the conditions provided for them to achieve the learning outcomes. It is the panel's opinion that the study field possesses the physical, informational and financial resources suitable for achieving the anticipated learning outcomes.

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

The material and equipment requirements for each programme are evaluated and planned annually in order to meet the needs of the teachers and students. An average of €40,000 per year is allocated for the purchase of materials and tools required for practical training. There is a plan to develop a clinical campus. This would be very convenient for students who currently have to move between different campuses. This clinical campus would allow closer collaboration between the students on the different programmes. KUAS also has ambitions to provide different training courses and postgraduate training, but currently has insufficient space and staff (dentists and practitioners) to do this. Another identified challenge was how to allocate the budget for this project.

The integration of new technology into the study programmes was also mentioned during the visit. However, not many examples were provided on what new technology is needed for the study field.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:
No recommendations

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY

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.

KUAS has an internal quality assurance system in place specified in the *KUAS Quality Manual,* consistent with European and Lithuanian regulations, and with various KUAS internal documents, mentioned in the SER. This system includes the management of the quality assurance system; the responsibility of various KUAS divisions and individual employees for quality assurance, and the participation of stakeholders in the implementation of measures for the monitoring and improvement of study programmes. The system covers all levels of implementation of studies in the field. The management levels of the study field are the KUAS Directorate, KUAS Academic Council, Dean's Office of the Faculty, the Department and the Study Field Committee. It is stated in the SER, that self-assessment is based on the collection, systematisation, and analysis of reasonable and reliable data. Assessment methods include questionnaires, analysis of documents, monitoring and discussing lectures.

The periodicity of such collection is:
Students Surveys: first-year students on the motives for choosing studies and on their adaptation to KUAS (once a year); students assessment of the quality of the subjects (twice a year); senior students on the quality of studies at the institutional level (once a year).

Graduate surveys: no periodicity reported (elsewhere in the SER -6 months and 12 months after graduation); Academic staff assess the quality of studies: once a year; Feedback from employers evaluate the theoretical and practical training of specialists: no periodicity reported.
Meetings and round-table discussions with all stakeholders involved are also organised. Qualifying board for the final theses and examination reports are also provided.
Annually, academic staff are monitored regarding pedagogical, applied science, expert, consulting and methodological performance.
Data gathered for quality assurance is discussed at all levels of management: These discussions take place at the Department (once a month), at the Study Field Committee (at least twice a year) at the Dean's Office (at least once a month). Once a year the Department, the Faculty, and KUAS develop a performance report and an action plan to address study quality. Department semester meetings analyse the performance of students towards earning achievements, expectations, professional internships and the usefulness of stakeholder's participation in the study process.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies.

Study subjects are assessed by students at the end of each semester. Information gathered includes the quality of the content and teaching of study courses, methodological materials, planning and volume of student workload, planning and volume of self-study, and the benefits of consultations. This information is gathered anonymously by survey (since 2020 using the study management system) or by reflection delivered to the subject lecturer. During the evaluation period around 25-30% of students in the Oral Care study field participated in student surveys. During the meeting with the students they reported that many students do not respond to surveys due to of lack of time because of work, they don´t value them and forgetfulness. E-mail reminders was suggested as a possible solution. It was stated at the alumni, stakeholders and employers meeting that there is very good collaboration with the Department, but they were unsure if this resulted in any changes to the study field programmes. Student surveys reported that they were pleased with the renovation of the classrooms and purchase of new equipment. It was not apparent to the panel how the data provided by stakeholders was used for planning and upgrading the resources needed.

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

Several systems are used to collect information: data on lectures performance on the Activity Planning Information System; data on students learning achievements on the Study Management System; data on Performance indicators on the Documentation catalogue *Kontora*. Data related to the implementation of the studies are found in the resolutions of the Dean; Department and Study Committee. It is stated in the SER that the KUAS website disseminates data collected for quality assurance. The expert panel couldn't find such data in the website.

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.

The results of surveys between 2018-2020 indicated that students were satisfied with the oral care field, in particular, positive areas included the link between theory and practice, situation/case study, group work, practical training in a real work environment and discussion. Study load was found appropriate except for the senior and working students. The same trend was found by the expert panel during the meeting with the students. Major draw backs mentioned in the student surveys were related to teaching methods. Students were satisfied with the library but not with leisure areas, although this latter point was not mentioned by students during the meeting with the panel. No results were presented from the graduate surveys or from the stakeholders.

The academic staff and students completed a survey about the recent move to distance learning. Teachers reported higher workload and factors related to students: low involvement in lectures, reluctance to connect to video and difficulty in assuring academic integrity. Students rated distance learning to be 7.53 points out of 10. Positive points were: more assistance with lectures. Major drawbacks were technical IT difficulties and teacher's difficulty in managing IT, increased study load and self-study; short deadlines and assurance of academic integrity. A platform to assist and train staff, as well as additional information for students, was developed to address some of the issues raised.

During the visit, the expert panel clearly identified that both the students and teachers were concerned about the unsuitability of distance learning for developing practical skills. Practical work now takes place in small groups in order to conform with the Covid-19 regulations. If distance learning is to continue in the future, more attention should be paid to the issues highlighted by teachers and students, in order to adapt practical work to help the students gain the required practical training.

Recommendations for this evaluation area:

To develop a more systematic process of quality management and assurance.

Systematically implement collection of data from stakeholders, employers and internship mentors.

The expert panel suggest that the study programme considers utilising the SKVC questionnaire as this would ensure the fulfilment of the requirements of the HEI, furthermore, it would also allow benchmarking with other similar programmes in Lithuania.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed recommendations are intended to help KUAS to direct greater attention to some areas in its commitment to continuous improvement of the study field.

1. *Promote more interprofessional education among the different programmes in the study area and among other areas of the Faculty of Medicine. This would promote teamwork, collaborative practice, leadership skills and provide more opportunities for students to give and receive feedback (peer assessment).*

2. *Clarify the protocols for the internships/placements with regards to the minimum standards of patient treatment to ensure similar experiences for all students (categorisation of patients according to difficulty level and oral health/disease status), as well as ensuring consistency in assessment and feedback..*

3. *More clearly define assessment methods used for independent student's work..*

4. *Continue to foster strategic teacher professional development.*

5. *Focus on development of wider skills such as communication, reflective practice (self-evaluation), entrepreneurship, public health, business and administration, management and organisation, which will help the student's transition into practice and promote life-long learning.*

6. *Continue the development of applied research activities, including developing more international collaborations, increasing the number of oral care field staff who hold PhDs and further increasing student involvement in applied research throughout the curriculum.*

7. *Take further measures to improve student and staff language skills, particularly in English, to help promote academic mobility and provide the opportunity to attract foreign students through the development of programmes taught in English.*

8. *Develop a more systematic process of quality management and assurance to further enhance the quality improvement of the study field. It is important that the Quality Division centralise to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the system. This would include the systematic collection of data from stakeholders, employers, internship mentors and improve the data on graduate career progression.*

9. *Consider utilising the SKVC questionnaire to help ensure the fulfilment of the requirements of the HEI and aid benchmarking with other similar programmes in Lithuania.*

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each study field evaluation area at KUAS

The aims and learning outcomes of the study field correspond to those expected in higher education in Lithuania and approved Lithuanian Medical Norms. The aims of the study field are clearly stated and matched to the learning outcomes focusing on practical activities and the development of applied research. The duration, depth and scope of the study field are adequate to accomplish the aim and learning outcomes of the programme. The subjects are aligned to provide a transition from theoretical knowledge to more practical activities. Nevertheless, some changes are recommended to better integrate some subjects in the curriculum to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes. The volume of the practical component is adequate and practical activities start early in the study field programmes. The involvement of specialist practitioners in the study field greatly benefit the development of the professional identity in students and enhance the quality of the study field. However,

there is a need to establish minimal standards for professional internships in terms of the number of patients, complexity and type of patients to ensure balance between different student practical experiences. Also, calibration of specialists-practitioners will ensure a more consistent assessment between students. The study field presents conditions to raise interprofessional education, however, these have yet to be fully explored.

Efforts have been made to improve the scientific level of the programme. Research agenda of the study field aims at improving public health, health promotion and quality of life, professional environment and education, which illustrate the dimensions of the scientific knowledge needed to develop the study field. There is still a need to improve the academic qualifications of teaching staff and engage students more actively in applied research throughout the curriculum. Additionally, there is also a need to increase the visibility of the research produced at an international level.

Admission of the students is organised in accordance with the regulations and are clearly defined. The number of candidates that apply to the study field is high as well as the entry grades, which ensures better prepared students in the study field. Opportunities for student mobility exist and an increasing number of students are participating, yet there is a need to explore solutions to attract foreign students. Despite the good policy and support for international exchange provided by KUAS, there is a need to promote a way to accredit all studies done abroad. Financial, social, psychological and personal support for the Oral Care Field students at KUAS is appropriate, sufficient and effective.

Teaching and assessment methods support the opportunity for students to be active participants in the learning process. The methods of assessment of each subject are clear for the students, and feedback is constant and timely. There is still a need to explore how students apply feedback to aid their learning progress (feeding forwards) and to promote more self-assessment and peer assessment in the study field. Teachers seemed very committed to student's achievements. A free schedule is offered in specified circumstances and sufficient support for socially vulnerable and special needs students is provided.

Graduate employment rate is good and no difficulties in finding jobs were reported, as well as readiness to enter the labour market. A longer follow up period of graduate employment is recommended.

The composition of the academic staff complies with the legal requirements. The study field is run by engaged and committed teachers that strive for high student achievement. Teachers are qualified in their study areas and prepared to meet the requirements of the Programme, although the scientific qualifications needs to be augmented, particularly for those involved in the professional courses related to the study field.

The study field possesses the physical, informational, and financial resources suitable for achieving the anticipated learning outcomes. These resources are updated and renewed according to the needs and possibilities. Integration of new technology was made particularly in DT programme. More opportunity is needed for students to work with patients at KUAS. This will be facilitated with the planned clinical campus.

A quality management policy is in place. Responsibilities for the decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the study field are clearly allocated. However, it seemed to be a very

dispersed process within several hierarchal levels and having different information systems does not facilitate the process. Participation of stakeholders and graduates in the study field is ensured, but their benefit in terms of quality development remains unclear.

Expert panel: ,

1. **Dr. Kevin John Davey (team leader)** *member of academic community;*
2. ***Assistant Professor*** **Sandra Ribeiro Graça,** *member of academic community;*
3. **Bo Danielsen,** *member of academic community;*
4. **Prof. dr. Vytautė Pečiulienė,** *representative of social partners';*
3. **Meda Vaitonytė,** *students' representative.*