



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of TOURISM AND LEISURE

at Viešoji įstaiga Socialinių mokslų kolegija

Expert panel:

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2. Senior lecturer Kristina Henriksson, *academic*;
3. Senior lecturer Anders Johannes Justenlund, *academic*;
4. Mrs Zita Krūkonytė-Teryaeva, *representative of social partners*;
5. Mr Mantas Jonas Vilimas, *students' representative*.

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Evelina Keturakytė*

Report language – English

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Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	<i>Tourism and Recreation</i>
State code	6531LX061
Type of studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	The following minimum requirements shall be applied to persons, applying to the paid study places (SNF) in the SMK: 1. For persons who completed secondary education until and including 2017, the minimum requirement is at least secondary education. 2. Persons who completed secondary education in 2018, 2019 and 2020 must have passed at least 1 state maturity exam and have at least secondary education.
Registration date of the study programme	14 February 2012

** if there are **joint** / **two-fields** / **interdisciplinary** study programmes in the study field, please designate it in the foot-note*

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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 the 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) *site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution*; 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 (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 12 May, 2022. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Site Visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool (Zoom).

Associate professor dr. Detlev Remy, *Expert panel's Chair Person; Associate Professor & Deputy Cluster Director (Vice Dean DSB cluster Design and specialized Businesses) at Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore;*

Mrs Kristina Henriksson, *Senior Lecturer at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland;*

Mr Anders Johannes Justenlund, *Business Developer/Senior Lecturer at University College Northern Denmark; Director of Marketing, International Council on Hotel, Restaurant & Institutional Education (ICHRIE), Denmark; External Professor at Institute Paul Bocuse, Lyon France;*

Mrs Zita Krūkonytė-Teryaeva, *Representative of Social Partners; Human Resources Management Consultant at HR Hint Online, Lithuania;*

Mr Mantas Jonas Vilimas, *Student's Representative; Studies of Administration of Institutions and Companies at Kauno kolegija, Lithuania.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by 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.	A list of additional information asked for by the expert panel during the site visit
2.	Annex 1. Information about teaching staff at Klaipėda, Vilnius Branch and Kaunas Branch
3.	Annex 2. Code of Academic Ethics
4.	Annex 3. A Descriptor of the Order of Assessment of Learning Outcomes of the Public Institution SMK
5.	Annex 4. Regulations of the Appeals Commission of the SMK
6.	Annex 5. Study plan of part-time studies of the study programme Tourism and Recreation
7.	Annex 6. 2021-2022 study year Study Schedule
8.	Annex 7. Regulations of Professional Practice
9.	Annex 8. Form of Internship Agreement
10.	Annex 9. Form of Evaluation of Student's Activity at Professional Internship
11.	Annex 10. Form of Internship Report
12.	Annex 11. The Process of Organising an Internship
13.	3 Study subject descriptors: Tourism Resources and Geography; Customer Management; Trip Creation and Organisation.

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

Viešoji įstaiga Socialinių mokslų kolegija (hereafter referred to as the College, SMK) is a non-state higher education institution, operating since 1994. The headquarters of the College was established and operates in Klaipėda.

Since 1999 the College has had its branch in Vilnius and since 2018 – in Kaunas. Currently the SMK is the largest non-state higher education institution in Lithuania.

According to the data of 1 October 2021 the SMK has 4517 students from Lithuania and 61 international students. Since its establishment the College has had more than 9400 graduates.

The College implements 17 first cycle college study programmes in the groups of study fields of Computing, arts, Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Law, Business and Public Administration.

Two study programmes are implemented in the English language. In the study field of Tourism and Leisure one study programme is implemented – *Tourism and Recreation* (state code - 6531LX061) (hereafter referred to as study programme, TAR SP).

The TAR SP analysed in the Self-evaluation report is implemented in Klaipėda, Vilnius and Kaunas. In Klaipėda and Kaunas branches this study programme is implemented in the Lithuanian language, in the Vilnius branch – in both the Lithuanian and the English languages.

On the Order (No. SV6-7) of the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, *Tourism and Hotels* study programme (Tourism and Leisure study field) was

accredited on 14 February 2012. This study programme has been started to be implemented in the College (in Klaipėda and Vilnius) from September 2012.

In May 2016 Self-evaluation of this study programme was prepared and external assessment procedure was carried out. The study programme was positively assessed by experts (16 points in Vilnius), 15 points (in Klaipėda) out of 24 possible) and accredited for 3 years. It has to be noted that this programme has changed its name to "Tourism & Recreation".

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Tourism and Leisure study field and **first cycle** at Viešoji įstaiga Socialinių mokslų kolegija is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	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	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	29

*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)

(1) Factual situation

The previous study programme of Tourism and Hotels was transformed into the Tourism and Recreation (TAR) programme during 2017. In the following years (2017-2020), the programme developed its aims and learning outcomes. Furthermore, new courses were added. SMK strives to meet the needs of the field of tourism and recreation by providing education that trains skilled future employees. The TAR study programme provides education in both managerial and professional skills and knowledge which the society requires. The social partners who participated in SMK's qualitative research during COVID-19 pandemic find that the graduates can find employment as tour operators, travel agents, or, for example, hotel administrators. Furthermore, graduates can work as managers or in the field of recreation as event organisers. SMK offers education in the TAR study programme on geography, management, economics, professional ethics and etiquette, but also with new courses such as Cultural Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Health Tourism and Creation and Organisation of Wellness Services, Tourism and Recreation Technologies and Innovations, Leisure Organisation as well as Guide Practice. According to SMK, graduates of the TAR SP work as specialists in tourism information centres, travel agencies, hotels, SPA and wellness service centres, complexes organising leisure and recreation as well as other Lithuanian and foreign companies providing hospitality, tourism and recreation services. They also can become entrepreneurs. With this in mind, the TAR study programme fulfils the needs of society and the labour market.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The programme offers a variety of subjects to study as well as the option to become a guide. The foreign language course credits were increased from 5 to 6 ECTS, but one credit does not make a difference in reality to the learning or increasing the competence.

Although the expert panel would recommend adding more language classes and subsequently, a higher credit allocation due to the importance of the foreign languages in the tourism and leisure field, but also based on feedback from stakeholders at the site visit. The tourism industry is an international industry, relying on the exchange of customers and labour, and mastering one or more foreign languages is a must, thus, the expert team recommends adding more languages options over a longer period. Similarly, newer subjects such as data analytics and revenue management could be added to the curriculum to match the needs of the labour market. Although there is room for improvements, as outlined, the expert panel is satisfied with the aspects, as requested.

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

(1) Factual situation

The aim of the TAR SP is to prepare skilled specialists who can create and manage a tourism and recreation business independently, can develop innovative ideas, as well as plan, organize and implement new tourism and recreation activities. The specialists can create original products and services of tourism and recreation, act proactively and responsibly in both national and international markets, providing tourism and recreation services.

SMK has ten ambitious learning outcomes for the TAR SP, which include the following:

- Upon graduation, a student knows general financial and economic theories as well as those of management and social sciences.
- The graduate will also know how to apply these theories when working in the field of TAR.
- The graduate knows the different forms and types of TAR, as well as services and products in the field.
- The graduate is knowledgeable in the processes of accommodation and hospitality standards including how to establish and develop TAR business.
- The graduate can research the field of TAR business, market and company activity and can evaluate needs of suitable resources when developing the business.
- As a team member or individually, the graduate can generate customer-oriented services and products for TAR businesses while employing the various principles of hospitality, quality and entrepreneurship.
- The graduate can manage the sales of tourism and accommodation services and can suggest improvements and innovations for the businesses both nationally and internationally.
- The graduate can prepare and run TAR business projects.
- The graduate can employ various technologies when working on the processes of TAR activities to modernise the services.
- The graduate can work efficiently in a team and communicate using various models of internal, external and intercultural communication when working in the field of TAR.
- The graduate can employ professional ethical principles, sustainability and various legal and safety norms that regulate the TAR services.
- The graduate can assess one's professionalism with regard to actions, knowledge and experience both systematically and critically and can develop one's professionalism by studying.

SMK's mission "aims at opening and providing people with opportunities for lifelong learning, fostering their intellectual and creative potential, promoting self-development and self-education, preparing them for successful professional careers and a responsible, civic and decent life" (SER p. 7). SMK's mission "obliges to serve the society, providing it with a smart human capital, able to generate new knowledge and innovations and understanding a responsible obligation to contribute to the creation of the future of the advanced, sustainable and safe Europe." The TAR SP is linked to the mission, as the TAR SP's aim is also related to SMK strategy for 2021–2026 regarding the creation of a networked experiential learning ecosystem, a holistic society, and creating and implementing the ecosystem of knowledge and innovations, and an open lab of social interactions.

The learning outcomes form an entity of needed knowledge and skills. The study programme's name indicates and defines the area of expertise of the graduates both

nationally and internationally. The learning outcomes meet the needs of the labour market and by defining the professional qualification of the graduate guides the graduate into the job market.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The TAR SP has undergone modernisation during the past years, based on results from research carried out among social partners. It is commendable that the SP has been updated to meet the needs of the field just recently. The SP has ambitious learning objectives, but a modern curriculum with national and international activities can enable the learning objectives to be met. The SP meets the mission of the College as well as the strategy. The strategy for the next few years is embedded in the aims of the TAR SP.

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

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER (p. 9), the study units comprising the TAR SP form an entity that provides the students with the possibility to meet the learning objectives within the time reserved for the studies. The students are able to graduate with a professional Bachelor qualification degree in Business Management.

Table No. 1. Programme's compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of college level*

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180 or 210 or 240 ECTS	180
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	152
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	47
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	42
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	9
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	~ 33 % (1591 hours = 59 (+/-) credits)
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	~ 36 % (1733 hours = 64 (+/-) credits)

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The study programme seems adequately structured. Additional documents provided indicated that the College has academic policies in place for internships to ensure structures and academic integrity.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SP is designed so that the modern teaching and learning methods generate learning outcomes which are assessed in a way that allows the students to bear the responsibility of

learning outcomes. Study units are described so that the contents and learning outcomes as well as the teaching methods are compatible with each other (SER, p. 10).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the SER and the site visit, the expert panel can conclude that the teachers use modern methods of interactive teaching and learning to generate learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SP consists of 180 ECTS, with an average of about forty percent of contact sessions. The rest is reserved for independent study. Some of the contact sessions are dedicated to student counselling. The internship programme at each campus city covers 30–50 organisations and businesses, who engage students in various activities such as practices. Following the internship programme, agreements are signed with the businesses in question. Students are, thus, regularly in contact with the world of work, and by studying and working outside the College generate learning outcomes. The SP is planned so that each element of the programme supports the learning process and assessment procedures (SER pp. 11-13).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The study programme is carefully designed despite the small number of ECTS for the foreign languages studies, which should be among priorities in the field of tourism and leisure when considering the need of language skills in more than one language at work. Although there is room for improvements, as outlined, the expert panel is satisfied with the aspects.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (p. 14), students can select optional course units up to twelve ECTS. They can develop their skills and knowhow by selecting interdisciplinary studies. Appendix 7 to the SER lists course units that students can choose. The SER lists courses students could choose during 2018-2020: "Preparation of Presentations, Crises Management, Business English, the Russian Language, Global Career Management (in English), Crises Psychology etc." Students had also asked for some courses to develop skills in entrepreneurship and finances, which were offered as follows: "Personal Finance, Business Negotiations, Leadership, Management of Organization Reputation." Students can also specialise and become guides after studying specific courses and taking the exam.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is some flexibility for students to choose courses among the study offerings. It is useful for the students to also study business and finances, as the College has offered some optional courses in the topics.

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

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER (pp. 14-17), the student completes one's studies by writing a final thesis (9 ECTS): "The majority of students master study material good or very good – the average assessment of final theses is 8 (good).

- The averages of final theses in Klaipėda: AY 2018-2019 – 8.82 points; AY 2019-2020 – 7.73 points; AY 2020-2021 – 8 points.
- The averages of final theses in Vilnius Branch: AY 2018-2019 – 8.0 points; AY 2019-2020 – 8.14 points; AY 2020-2021 – 7.98 points. The averages of final thesis (in English): AY 2018-2019 – 7.33 points; AY 2019-2020 – 7.29 points; AY 2020-2021 – 7.33 points.
- The averages of final theses in Kaunas Branch: AY 2020-2021 – 8.5 points (in 2021 SMK Kaunas branch had the first graduates of TAR SP, therefore the data of the previous year's thesis defence are not provided).

These systematized assessments of final theses are analyzed and presented in the Reports on the Defence of Final Theses in Klaipėda and Vilnius in AY 2018 – 2021, in Kaunas Branch in AY 2020-2021.”

The College provided a list of final theses topics (Appendix 2), which provides evidence that final theses are aligned to the TAR study programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the information received (SER report and accompanying documents), the expert panel finds that the study programme supports the students' learning process throughout the studies with interactive learning opportunities and international study possibilities abroad. The final thesis is prepared with the supervision of a teacher, and the topics, as seen so far, are aligned with the aims of the study programme.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. *The study programme takes into consideration the broad field of Tourism and Leisure in its structure. The study programme is well outlined and aligns with legal requirements.*
2. *Students have the opportunity to solve real problems of tourism companies and gain real experience.*

(2) Weaknesses:

1. *Education in the field of Tourism and Leisure requires more learning and training in language skills than what is now offered at SMK.*
2. *Students would prefer to have more foreign languages options to choose from.*

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

(1) Factual situation

In the SER (pp. 18-20), it is stated that Senior management is setting the strategy for research activities at SMK. In consultation with teachers/active researchers groups of common interests have been formed in order to work together on joint research projects. It is further stated that this is within areas such as Digital Media, Health & Technology and Management, Culture and Arts Industries Management, Sustainable Growth Development etc. (p. 19). Research is stated as a very important area for SMK as an institution. Faculty of all branches of the college are presenting their work at local, regional, national and international conferences. All research activities are coordinated with the Head of Research Activities. Table 7 (p. 19)

sums up the R&D activities for the recreation areas, which mainly consist of training and event activities and 12 scientific publications that all together form the majority of R&D activity within the Tourism and Leisure studies. It is also noted in the SER that many of these publications are produced by faculty members who are also employed at other HE institutions in Lithuania. SMK also presents a framework for including the latest research and data from both international scientific databases, concurrent research done by the institution (in all branches), and empirical data and experiences from projects done with social partners, into the teaching/learning context during courses.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There are very good intentions in relation to developing a proactive R&D strategy at SMK. However, it is worth noting that a majority of scientific publications are published in the institution's own journals or similar journals from other institutions (or conference publication). SMK is not publishing in international tourism or hospitality journals and is not a member of any international organisation for tourism or hospitality research/education activities. Published research has mainly been presented at conferences with a main focus on general management, finance and/or technology. It is strongly recommended that SMK focus more on the tourism/hospitality field to gather proper research expertise within this area, further it is also suggested that SMK should focus on developing their full time employed staff into the area of R&D and not rely on part time faculty (this was evident during the site visit at the Vilnius branch) in relation to scientific publications. This should be seen as a recommendation for further improvement and not a negative comment related to the quality of part-time faculty members. For the moment it is a positive strategy to have part time faculty who are active researchers at other institutions and SMK is highly recommended to make use of these partly in-house competencies to educate and develop fulltime in house research active faculty members.

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

(1) Factual situation

On p. 20 in the SER the institution states that latest research topics are developed in close cooperation with social partners and their needs. This is related to doing practical and project tasks, conducting applied research and using subscribed databases (e.g. EBSCO). An example mentioned could be website design for tourism businesses. Furthermore the institutions invites external/guest lecturers on a regular basis.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

SMK is doing a wide variety of activities to link content of studies to the latest developments within Tourism and Leisure study field. These are mainly focused on the need of the local/regional industry and less on the international/global developments within the tourism/hospitality sector. There is a need to focus the development on current trends and tendencies that goes beyond website design. It is recommended that the institution focus more on areas of service/experience design/design thinking principle to help the students to understand current user/guest behaviour better. This can easily be implemented into the current activities at the institution. More focus on user behaviour rather than learning website design. SMK has the proper facilities for facilitation of design thinking processes.

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

(1) Factual situation

SER p. 21 stated clearly how students are involved in the institution's R&D activities and highlights the course "Social Research Methodology" that forms the foundation for conducting field research in relation to final theses, assistance in writing academic articles participating in scientific student conferences and implementing business outsourced projects from industry to SMK. Concretely, the students learn how to write literature reviews, contextually correct choice of scientific methods according to the chosen methodological perspective.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

SMK have created great initiatives in relation to getting students involved in R&D activities. It is recommended to continue the good work being done within this field. Furthermore it is recommended that the conferences students participate in have a more keen focus on tourism/hospitality rather than more generic perspectives within business, management and technology. This can be achieved if SMK becomes a member of international hospitality/tourism networks. Doing this will also increase the quality of the study programme content in the study field of Tourism and Leisure.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

- 1. Clear framework for the inclusion of the latest scientific research, data, and practical experiences from social projects and industry partnership during classes.*
- 2. Good collaboration between part-time/full time faculty members at all three branches.*
- 3. Fine partnerships with industry in relation to projects.*

(2) Weaknesses:

- 1. Not all research is context-related to the tourism/hospitality field.*

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

(1) Factual situation

Students can access and learn more about all the requirements, selection procedures, etc. that are being used to choose candidates for the *Tourism and Recreation* programme by clicking on a link on the SMK College website that takes them to the LAMA BPO website. Without regard to colour, gender, or other factors, all applicants are admitted after meeting the established requirements. The selection process for the study programme is organised by College in accordance with the standards established by the legislation of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education. The study programme is promoted in a variety of methods, including through social media advertising and coverage in the yearly publication "*Kur stoti?*" ("*Where to enter?*") etc.

Since SMK is an independent higher education institution, admission is only permitted in locations not supported by the government. Each year, about 90 students are accepted into

this programme of study. There are the most applicants at Vilnius Faculty. With an average of 6 foreign students accepted each year, this study programme is also structured in English.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

All three campuses in Klaipėda, Kaunas and Vilnius have the study programme in Lithuanian language, and the Vilnius campus offers the programme both in English and Lithuanian languages.

The expert panel was informed during the site visit that if an applicant has not sufficient points in the entrance selection, the College can also interview the applicant on the applicant's motivation.

Since admission is handled through the LAMA BPO system, the admissions expert panel feels that the application and selection procedure for this study programme is fair and open.

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

(1) Factual situation

The College recognizes study subjects and credits for non-formally or formally acquired competencies. Recognition of study subjects and credits is carried out on the basis of orders of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. The College also has well-established internal rules on how these competencies are recognized and how the whole process works. According to the SER (p. 28), only one student applied for recognition of the assessment of non-formal and informal learning competencies over a 3-year period, and about 20 students are credited with competencies acquired at other universities each year.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

According to the SER (p.29), the College had one student "who used the recognition of evaluation of the competences gained in an informal and self-directed way." The expert panel is satisfied with the procedures as outlined in the SER report; the higher education institution ensures transparent reading of other compositions / qualifications, as all documents with this process are posted on the College's website. However, the expert panel thinks that the study programme could offer more introductory courses, to gain interest and admission, as only a small percentage of students apply for this process compared to the entire College.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

The SER (p. 29) states that all information about opportunities to study or do an internship abroad is available both on the College's website and to the individual. Students can go abroad to study or do an internship through the ERASMUS programme. The College has a designated coordinator who coordinates the subject and other nuances with foreign higher education institutions. Students are encouraged to go abroad to study, so 20 students left during the 3-year period to study and practice, and in 2020 and 2021, the number of people leaving fell due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The College also organizes ERASMUS weeks, in which students interact with foreign students, and students who do not have the opportunity to leave are given the opportunity to listen to lectures by foreign teachers. Finally, there is an optional module that is taught in English and one of its aims is to encourage students to go abroad to study.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

During the site visit, the expert panel learned that students have utilised the opportunity to go abroad on Erasmus+, and even more would have wished to have had the chance but the pandemic made it impossible for them. However, during the pandemic the College offered online lectures from abroad to provide international experience.

Students are really actively encouraged to go to study or do an internship abroad. However, the number of students leaving has fallen over the three-year period, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the College is expected to step up its mobility in the coming years.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER (pp. 30-31) explains in detail about how the College takes care of all aspects of the support they provide to students. The College strives to maintain a stable number of students and to increase study accessibility, the College provides a versatile academic, social, financial, psychological and personal support. The support provided to students is characterised by consistency, taking into account the needs of students and socialisation processes (...) The College students are also provided with psychological support. If necessary the College students have possibilities to consult the lecturers teaching psychology."

For example, one of the support measures is the award of prizes or compensation for studies for exceptional learning. Psychological lectures are also organized for students to encourage students to talk about problems, and so on. These ways of encouraging are effective because they increase the motivation to strive and encourage students to talk about difficulties.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found that the College is providing support to students, and students confirmed this at the site visit. Although there might be a conflict of interest if a psychology teacher of the College provides psychological support to students.

The expert panel thinks the student is receiving effective and diversified support. The College seeks to assist struggling students as well as to motivate students who perform well even more.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

According to SER (p. 31), the most important and relevant information for students is available on the e-learning website. The HeyApp app, which will be available to both prospective and current students, is also being developed to introduce the curriculum. Counseling is also an integral part of students, so there is a special time for counseling. The College also has key KPIs in place that help assess the quality of study in terms of student feedback, for which they use quantitative surveys.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found that there is sufficient information for students, and the information is disseminated in a variety of ways - media, meetings, etc. although the expert panel could not find any statistics that do reflect the views of students. In conclusion, the experts panel believes that the information about the studies for the students is really enough, as all the information is available online and the students are additionally counseled.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

- 1. The College offers international exchange programmes and international internships to the students.*
- 2. Strong and comprehensive support for students*
- 3. Detailed information about studies and studied subjects is provided*

(2) Weaknesses:

- 1. Teachers of psychology should not be consulting students with psychological problems at all.*

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (p. 33), the teaching and learning is designed and practised at the College so that it focuses on the needs of the students, enabling students to practice in contact sessions. Learning is strengthened by supporting it with studying and then practising in class. The report lengthily explains how interactive methods and approaches are employed in the learning processes at the College. E-learning supports the learning process by providing materials online. Teachers act as facilitators of the learning process.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

On the virtual site visit of SMK – the College advocated a manifesto of the very well managed stakeholders (meetings once per 6 months, students are invited and has schedules to meet and discuss various issues on study programmes and personal issues).

Business simulations at SMK are based as a part of Economics subject for Tourism and Leisure students and that gives proper efficiency of Tourism business organisation at the real market. “Fidelio” programme is used as a software in business simulation and could be replaced with some more relevant software used in international Tourism companies.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (p. 34), the College can through their decision-making process make it possible for students with special needs and those of socially vulnerable groups to be part of the studies and activities in full. Disabled or those with temporary illness are allowed to individualise their studies. The College strives to make the study environment and material to meet the needs of students. Also, the College is part of the State Studies Foundation Project *Increasing study accessibility* which focuses on accessibility of higher education for students with special needs. The College provides support for students with equipment at the College for various physical disabilities.

Moreover, the SER (p. 35) outlines that activities foreseen under the project *“Increasing study accessibility”* aim at creating an accessible study environment, which would encourage persons with special needs to seek higher education. In the framework of this project, training on *“The concept of disability based on human rights and higher education”* was organised for the staff of the country’s higher education institutions, working with the disabled students. Six staff members and lecturers of the SMK also participated in the training. The College “has all the conditions for the studies of students with mobility, hearing or visual disabilities. In AY 2018 – 2021 there were the following numbers of such students in this Study Programme: in Klaipėda – 1, in Vilnius Branch – 2, in Kaunas Branch – none. The SMK provides with conditions, ensuring possibilities of studies for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs” (p. 35).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel learned that the College provides support for physically vulnerable students as well as those with social vulnerabilities. However, the support specifically meant for students with learning disabilities and difficulties including mental problems is not specified in the SER report. In another section of the SER, it was mentioned that a teacher of psychology can provide psychological consultation or support to students which might create an issue of conflict of interest.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (pp. 35-36), students’ participation and performance on tests and examinations are monitored systematically throughout the academic year several times by teachers to prevent student dropouts, to find performance indicators to improve the study process and study motivation. Students receive feedback which is part of the study progress monitoring. SMK gives students feedback to be utilised for self-assessment. The monitoring process includes the feedback as well. The systematic monitoring process helps to develop the study quality.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel noted that the scores of the students at the three campuses increase year by year. This is an interesting development, and should be monitored closely to avoid any case of grade inflation. The expert panel recommends establishing a procedure to monitor students’ progress year-to-year to allow for consistency and coherence in assessing students’ performance at the programme level.

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

(1) Factual situation

The College implements a Programme of Graduate Career Monitoring (approved in the 30-06-2021 meeting of the Academic Board, Minutes No. 2), which provides feedback on graduate employability and career, forms guidelines for improving study programmes or preparing new study programmes, and helps improve study quality. Graduates are provided with the services of self-awareness as well as awareness of career opportunities, career evaluation and planning, job search. The provision of these services is coordinated by the Head of Partnerships.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

SER data shows, and students and social partners confirmed during the site visit, a very high rate of employability in the Tourism sector. On the site visit the expert panel learnt that employers were positive about student preparation for the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (pp. 39-40), the College's Code of Academic Ethics was updated "to consolidate academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination as an essential norm of study process and to form universally accepted provisions of academic ethics, tolerance and non-discrimination laying them out in one document, which is made public and presented to students during introductory lectures."

The report explains that the principles of academic ethics correlate with the quality assurance of the study system. All kinds of cheating in tests or plagiarism, rewarding academic services or falsifying results are serious violations of academic integrity. The SER states that "All the final theses, placed in ELABa repository of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library, are checked on Electronic Matching Verification System EPAS (ESAS). Principles of academic ethics are followed during assessment of learning outcomes, which is based on the principles of objectivity, honesty and fairness." The College also uses the text matching verification system OXSICO. All SMK staff can use the system. Furthermore, during the period of carrying out analyses, the Commission of Academic Ethics discovered one "violation of the Code of Academic Ethics" of a community member of the College. This led to disciplinary sanctions on those employees who had "violated the Code of Academic Ethics." Students and staff are informed of the ethics and policies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found the College to have procedures in place to ensure academic integrity. Nevertheless, the policy on plagiarism would need to be revised to reflect the academic integrity of the College.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (pp. 40-41), the College has a formal procedure to deal with appeals and complaints. The Provisions of the Public Institution SMK Commission of Appeals sets the procedure. Accordingly, an appeal or complaint "can be filed on procedural violations during exams," or the final assessment of a study unit or the process of defending the final thesis, and any violation of the admission process. During the years 2018-2021, one TAR SP student filed a complaint on an evaluation of a study unit, which ended in a negative result. The SER concludes that the TAR SP monitors the careers and employment of graduates in a systematic manner. The College employs "the policy of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination" while also "the procedures of filing and analyzing appeals and complaints on the study process are followed."

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel believes that the College seems to have a functioning system in place for appeals and complaints.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. *Stakeholders management and its involvement into studies quality development is well organised. Feedback from a variety of stakeholders such as industry partners supports this.*
2. *Academic procedures are clearly outlined, and cover all relevant areas of academic integrity.*

(2) Weaknesses:

1. *Foreign internships should be more encouraged.*

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 41), teachers are employed according to their qualifications, degrees, pedagogical, and/or practical experience. The report provides the current ratio between the number of teaching staff of the field subjects and the number of students studying. The *Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies* (Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016) state that more than half of the teachers of the study programme shall have at least 3 years of practical work experience in the field of the subject they teach. In the first cycle study programme Tourism and Recreation of SMK, at least 50 percent of the scope of subjects in tourism studies are taught by researchers with a PhD that are conducting research in the relevant field of study. The TAR SP staff conforms to the general requirements for the first cycle college study programmes (see Table No. 2).

According to the SER report (p. 45), the TAR SP in Klaipėda is implemented by 24 lecturers; The TAR SP in Vilnius is implemented by 26 lecturers, and The TAR SP in Kaunas is implemented by 23 lecturers.

According to the SER report (p. 46), the data (SER table 24) show that the number of lecturers-practitioners, teaching course units in the field, has slightly changed. The turnover of lecturers during the period of the Programme implementation was insignificant and it doesn't influence the implementation of the Study Programme. The Expert panel did not found any contradicting evidence, and teachers have been very appreciative of the programme.

It has to be noted though that the SER report does not specify procedures or planning in case of replacements or retirements.

Table No. 2. *Tourism and Leisure* field lecturers compliance with the general requirements for the first cycle studies of college level

Requirement stated in Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies	In the study programmes of the first cycle of college level
No less than 10 % of the first cycle of college level of study field subjects' volume must be taught by scientists or recognized artists	90%
More than a half of staff of college level study field should have no less than 3 years practical experience matching to the subjects they teach	90 %

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The faculty(teacher)-student ratio seems to be adequate though the expert panel has requested further information regarding the employment status, here full time vs. part time faculty, to understand the faculty/teacher allocation within the three branch campuses. The expert panel learned that the branch campus Klaipeda has 24 faculty/teacher, with a faculty-student ratio in 2020-2021 of 1.27, the branch campus Vilnius has 26 faculty/teacher, with a faculty-student ratio in 2020-2021 of 7.95 and the branch campus Kaunas deploys 23 faculty/teacher, with a faculty-student ratio in 2020-2021 of 2.23. Based on the online site visit, and the subsequent session with the teachers, the teachers appear competent, qualified, and very engaged. The expert panel believes that the teachers are well aligned to the program, and the requested qualifications, ratios are well in line with the regulations.

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)

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 43), the College states that promotion of internationality is one of the strategic goals of the SMK. To increase staff mobility, the mechanisms of supporting, promoting and acknowledgement are foreseen, which are also included in ECHE (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education). The College has 94 international cooperation contracts with higher education institutions – partners in 28 European countries (of which 10 partners implement tourism studies). In AY 2018 – 2021 TAR SP lecturers have implemented 15 teaching and learning visits. In AY 2018 – 2021 TAR SP students had lectures given by 28 lecturers, who came from partner higher education institutions in 7 foreign countries: Belarus, the Czech Republic, China, Slovenia, Taiwan, Turkey, Spain.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the SER report and the online site visit, with intense discussions with the teachers, the expert panel believes that teachers at the College are actively encouraged and participating in the various exchange programmes, hence, academic mobility is given.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 44), the College lecturers are provided with possibilities to systematically develop different competencies. Development of the qualification of the College lecturers consists of participation in competitions, seminars, conferences, internships, taking over the experience of other Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions, doctoral studies, etc.

At the beginning of a new academic year the SMK Head of Academic Activity analyzes the demand for lecturer competences, by asking lecturers to present their competence demand. Then, based on the Competence demand the activities of competence development of lecturers are organized and coordinated, responding to lifelong learning provisions. Three groups of competences are developed in the training of lecturer competencies: teaching/learning, research, general (digital, leadership, intercultural), which are distinguished in 19 June 2020 Order No. V-936 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Guidelines for Improving Competencies of the Lecturers of Higher Education Institutions".

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the online session with teachers, the expert panel believes that the teachers receive sufficient support to improve their competences in the areas of teaching, research and general. Subsequently, the expert panel is satisfied with this aspect.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

- 1. Teachers are very enthusiastic, competent in their domain of expertise and proactive.*
- 2. Teachers have been praised by the different stakeholders such as students for their commitment and engagement.*
- 3. Within the site visit, teachers have been very forthcoming and extremely engaged.*
- 4. Teachers are very happy with the work environment, both fulltime and parttime.*

(2) Weaknesses: The expert panel could not report any weaknesses.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 46), the SMK established in Klaipėda has a branch in Vilnius and Kaunas. During the 26 years of activity it has created a modern study base with the latest teaching tools, developed infrastructure, and library funds are constantly supplemented.

The SER report (p. 51) states that adaptations of the SMK physical environment in all the cities enables persons with different disabilities to be independent, to move without assistance and any obstacles inside the premises and in their external areas, to use the objects in the surroundings. Mostly the SMK premises are adapted to persons with movement and

hearing disability. Based on the site visit, the expert panel believes that the College is providing the equipment needed.

The new building in Klaipėda (Liepų str. 83) has equipped 8 conference classrooms (250 places), a library, 6 laboratories of study fields of health sciences, recreation zones. The building in Nemuno str. 2 (Klaipėda) has equipped 4 computer labs (one of them, APPLE), which have 76 computerized workplaces, student representation office and recreation zones. Studies in Vilnius Branch are implemented in a modern, exceptional architecture and design building opened in September 2014. It has many open spaces for communication, independent learning, events, self-expression, recreation. This building makes assumptions for increasing learning availability, creating a variety of learning forms, methods and possibilities for expanding the spectrum of learning services and opening possibilities for different age groups, for making possibilities of learning continuity and developing study internationality.

Vilnius Branch building (Kalvarijų str. 137E) has 39 classrooms with 1423 places for studies. 3 classrooms are for streaming lectures (540 places), 6 computer classrooms (114 places), including one – APPLE classroom; 14 classrooms are for lectures, practical activities (481 places), 7 classrooms are for seminars, practical activities, groups project works with mobile furniture (148 places); 2 classrooms for meetings or presentations (36 places). Also the following are equipped: dance studio (18 places), video creation studio (8 work places), student representation, open access point, leisure/recreation zones, café/canteen, internet zone with computers for public usage, etc.

In September 2018 the SMK Kaunas Branch was opened in Kaunas (Vilties str. 2). The present premises in Kaunas Branch have 13 classrooms with 680 places for studies. 6 classrooms, accommodating 500 students, are for streaming lectures. 3 classrooms, accommodating 110 students are for seminars. 2 computer classrooms for 54 students. The premises have a room for conference meetings, a leisure zone, and an open access point.

The SER report did not outline specifically any data for practice outside the classrooms, apart from (p. 51) that during outgoing lectures students have possibilities to use the infrastructure of social partners as well. The expert panel however, believes that the College provides sufficient support for practice outside the classrooms based on observations and decision with various stakeholders such as students, alumni and industry partner.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the online site visit, the expert panel has seen modern facilities in Vilnius and Klaipėda, with lots of space for teaching and learning. The Kaunas facilities could not be seen inside due to disruptions of the power supply in the city. The learning facilities seem to be very adequate, sufficient and well equipped.

The expert panel has also observed students in the classrooms, and on campus, in Vilnius, which is a good sign of normality after the lengthy covid crisis.

The expert panel learned that since two years, final theses are only produced in a digital version, and are made available online to students in the library. The libraries seen in Vilnius and Klaipėda are well stocked, with textbooks in English and Lithuanian language, covering the main areas of the Tourism and Recreation study programme.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 48), the College ensures the sufficiency of resources necessary for studies and other activities of the College and their conformity to the legal, qualitative and technical requirements. Ensuring and improving study quality, increasing the number of students, the College constantly invests funds in the development of premises and equipment for studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the online visit, and the discussion with management, the expert panel believes that the College is committed to providing the upgrading of resources as needed. It has to be mentioned that the learning facilities are up-to-date, so that no immediate action in terms of upgrades are required. Provisions though might be needed in the case of adequate touristic business simulation software solutions.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

- 1. Very modern, spacious and adequate teaching and learning facilities.*
- 2. The library seems to be well stocked and equipped.*

(2) Weaknesses:

- 1. More need for the provision of tourism business simulation software solutions.*

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 49), the Study Quality Assurance System in the College is based on the involvement of the entire academic community in the processes of quality assessment, assurance and monitoring.

The College “has established and implements Quality Assurance System, which defines the goals of quality policy, the main processes and procedures. It includes organization of quality assurance system, the link between teaching and scientific applied research, responsibility of various divisions of the College and separate employees for quality assurance, involvement of students and other social stakeholders when implementing the measures of quality assurance, monitoring and improvement”. Quality assurance system in the College is created and improved taking into account the European guidelines and recommendations for assuring quality in higher education..

“The main principles that are based on when making decisions in the College are efficiency, collegiality and constructiveness. Decision making procedure, delegation of responsibilities are described in the College Statute, Quality Guide, Rules on the Order of Work, Study Regulation and other internal legal acts, regulating implementation and monitoring of the processes of the College activity. Quality Guide of the College detail liabilities of the

management, empowerments, relations and responsibilities when making and carrying out decisions and monitoring their efficiency”.

The College has an active Student Representation. Its delegated representatives are actively involved in the College Management and Quality Assurance processes, solve problems that arise and represent the interests of students. Currently the Student Representation includes 4 TAR SP students.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel analysed that the College has a fair and adequate internal quality management system in place, as it ensures the involvement of all stakeholders in the evaluation process and is based on EU guidelines.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 52), the social stakeholders of the College (students, lecturers, social partners, Alumni) are also actively involved in the study quality assurance and its improvement by participating in the processes of decision making and management, in the College. Representatives of students, lecturers, social partners and Alumni are involved in the groups of the College Board, Study Programme Committee, which prepared self-evaluation of study programme in the field of Tourism and Leisure.

The Opinions of all social stakeholders are important for monitoring and improving study programme in the field of Tourism and Leisure implemented in the College.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Aiming at efficient measuring of the quality of study process and its constant development the College constantly and systematically involves the following social stakeholders which bring the coherent and relevant understanding of the tourism business insights. Hence, the expert panel is satisfied with this aspect.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 53), the opinion of all social stakeholders is important for the monitoring and improvement of the study programmes implemented in the College. Students and lecturers, as well as social partners are involved in the internal evaluation of the efficiency of study quality assurance.

As it was written in the Subsection “Evaluation of the efficiency of involvement of social stakeholders (students and other parties of interest) in the internal quality assurance” meetings with students are implemented several times a semester. The information obtained during the meetings is used in the changes of the study process. The results of these meetings are discussed with students during meetings and announced in the E-learning environment. The study programme in the field of Tourism and Leisure applies therefore good practice in terms of information on studies and their evaluations.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel believes that this area is also very well organised. The expert panel learned during the online site visit, that the College organises meetings with students, teachers and employers on a regular basis, and processes are continuously improved according to their recommendations. Some minor concerns are that not all parts of teaching and administration staff are aware of all relevant information, as observed at the site visit.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p. 54), students' opinions on the quality of studies at the College are consistently and regularly collected by students of all study programmes, including TAR SP.

The collection of the opinion of students takes place in several stages: during qualitative meetings and through quantitative surveys. Based on the results of quantitative surveys of students it can be stated that students of the TAR SP programme are satisfied with the implemented studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found that quality assurance at SMK from the students point of view is managed well. Moreover, at the interview with the experts panel, students were quite positive about the teaching staff, subjects in curriculum and even about the business simulations at the SMK College.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. *Quality management is monitored by all involved stakeholders.*

(2) Weaknesses:

1. *Communication plan and execution on quality assurance part in the SMK College strategy could be done better. Not all parts of the teaching or administration staff know key points.*

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Based on the online site visit, the expert panel found that the teachers and students of the College are exceptionally engaged, enthusiastic and a real asset to the College.

Furthermore, the College has very modern and well equipped teaching and learning facilities at its branch campuses in Klaipėda, Kaunas and Vilnius, setting the standards.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that more language studies should be offered. If there are not enough students to form a group, the College could offer “open university courses” with other colleges in more languages and further studies in those languages already offered.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that students and staff specialise in tourism and leisure research more and less in generic subjects. The College should join an international network for Hospitality/Tourism research/education.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More international experiences should be offered for students, for example, by joint online teaching with foreign HEIs that could provide international experiences to students who cannot go abroad for exchange; not only lectures but shared courses.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students could do more research on travel business issues in the tourism of Lithuania and abroad. Foreign internships should be encouraged too.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teaching staff is enthusiastic, competent and engaged; the only recommendation therefore, to support more language training.
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the College provides very modern and adequate teaching and learning facilities, it is recommended to provide tourism-related business simulation software solutions to allow students to gain business practice.
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study quality management strategy and SMK general development strategy could be communicated more widely among the teaching staff and other stakeholders.

*If the study field is going to be given negative evaluation (non-accreditation) instead of RECOMMENDATIONS main **arguments for negative evaluation** (non-accreditation) must be provided together with a **list of “must do” actions** in order to assure that students admitted before study field’s non-accreditation will gain knowledge and skills at least on minimum level.

VI. SUMMARY

In the following, a summary of comments regarding the *Tourism and Recreation* study programme (hereafter referred to as the programme) in the field of Tourism and Leisure implemented at Viešoji įstaiga Socialinių mokslų kolegija (hereafter referred to as the College, SMK) with branch campuses in Klaipėda, Kaunas and Vilnius, is given.

The process of evaluation follows the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) system for the evaluation of study fields and is based on the Self-Assessment Report provided by the College and the assessment agreed upon by the expert panel during its online visit on the premises and following discussions.

The programme is offered in full-time and part-time modes. The programme prepares graduates for careers in the tourism and leisure field.

The expert panel formed the opinion that the College places quite good attention to newer developments and trends in the tourism and recreation industry, which in fact, may attract more prospective students to join the programme.

The learning outcomes of the *Tourism and Recreation* study programme are quite well developed, and demonstrate the College's willingness to adapt to new technologies and developments.

The curriculum of the *Tourism and Recreation* study programme meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and the requirements of the labour market.

Though more attention should be placed on two areas, languages, and internships, especially in terms of structure, length and assessments.

The staff members of the College are very engaged, enthusiastic and meet all the legal requirements for their appointments as teachers.

The learning facilities at campuses in Klaipėda, Kaunas and Vilnius are very modern, spacious, and adequate.

The library facilities at the three branch campuses seem to be well equipped with modern textbooks. Furthermore, the expert panel learned that the library team records the usage of electronic databases, both students and teachers, which is very beneficial for future investment decision-making for library resources, as well as identifying research efforts of faculty and students.

The students' admissions requirements are in line with the requirements and regulations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania

The expert panel wishes to thank the College for their preparation of the SER report and for taking their time to attend the online visit sessions.

Based on the evaluation, the expert panel advises to focus on:

- To offer more language options such as Spanish among others.
- To review the internship practice in terms of structure, length, and assessment components.
- To focus more on areas of service/experience design/design thinking principle to help the students to understand current user/guest behaviour better. This can easily be implemented into the current activities at the institution.
- To focus on publishing in international tourism or hospitality journals.

- To focus more on the tourism/hospitality field to gather proper research expertise within this area, further it is also suggested that SMK should focus on developing their full time employed staff into the area of R&D and not rely on part time faculty in relation to scientific publications.
- To encourage and support faculty/teachers in all campuses to improve their language skills.
- It is recommended that the College organise not only distance lectures led by foreign lecturers, but also the College to cooperate with universities in other countries and organise courses with them. It is also recommended to organise smaller international studies, projects with other universities, thus attracting more students who would like to test themselves in studies abroad.
- To monitor the increase in scores of the students at the three campuses year by year. This is an interesting development, and should be monitored closely to avoid any case of grade inflation.
- To establish a procedure to monitor students progress year-to-year to allow for consistency and coherence in assessing students' performance at the programme level.
- To involve the social partners and employers more in terms of topic selection for the final theses, as per request from these stakeholders.
- To invest in the provision of touristic business simulation software solutions.
- To offer, in cooperation with international partners, students activities and projects abroad for a shorter period of time than with the ERASMUS program
- To share the College's vision and strategies among its stakeholders; the expert panel found that several stakeholders have not been aware of it.
- To have policies in place avoiding any possible conflict of interest if a psychology teacher of the College provides psychological support to students.

Signature of expert panel chairperson

Associate professor Detlev Remy