CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of TOURISM AND LEISURE

at KLAIPĖDA STATE COLLEGE

Expert panel:

1. **Dr. Florian Aubke,** *(panel chairperson), member of academic community;*
2. **Associate prof. dr. Henri Kuokkanen,** *member of academic community;*
3. **Associate prof. dr. Rong Huang,** *member of academic community;*
4. **Associate prof. dr. Dalia Prakapienė,** *representative of social partners;*
5. *Ms. Skaistė Kairytė, students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – *Jūratė Čergelienė*

Report language – English

Vilnius
2022

Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	**Tourism Business**
State code	6531LX011
Type of studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle (undergraduate)
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3-year studies
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	30/08/2002

CONTENTS

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 was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was 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 remote site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on *May 9, 2022.*

1. **Dr. Florian Aubke,** *head of study programs „Tourism & Hospitality Management" at University of Applied Sciences of Management and Communication, FHWien (Austria);*
2. **Associate prof. dr. Henri Kuokkanen,** *academic vice dean at Paul Bocuse Institute (France);*
3. **Associate prof. dr. Rong Huang,** *professor at Plymouth University (United Kingdom);*
4. **Associate prof. dr. Dalia Prakapienė,** *professor at General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, tour leader and guide of "Novaturas", "Kelionių laikas" (Lithuania);*
5. **Ms. Skaistė Kairytė,** *first cycle student of Organisational Communication and Marketing at Šiauliai State College (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.	Plan of practical training & Methodical Instructions 2021
2.	Plan of practical training & Methodical Instructions 2022
3.	Student's practical training contract
4.	Studijų Komiteto Nuostatai
5.	Procedure for Coordination of Erasmus+ Mobility Programme
6.	Akademinės Tarybos Darbo Reglamentas
7.	Dėl fakulteto ir katedros nuostatų patvirtinimo

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

Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter – KVK, College) is a state-owned higher education institution. KVK offers college studies with a focus on professional practice and applied research. The institution is organized in three faculties - Technology, Health Science and Business – the latter being the largest faculty in student numbers. On 1 October 2021, the number of students enrolled at KVK was 2496: 786 in the Faculty of Business, 1038 in the Faculty of Health Sciences and 676 students at the Faculty of Technologies. The Tourism Business Study Programme (hereinafter – the Programme) under review is conducted by the Department of Business within the Faculty of Business. The Professional Bachelor in Tourism Business is a first-cycle programme comprising 180 ECTS with a 3-year duration delivered in full-time mode. The language of instruction is Lithuanian. The Programme was launched in 2002 and has been evaluated by SKVC in 2014. The Programme received a positive evaluation and has been unconditionally accredited for 6 years. During this evaluation, the expert panel commended the institution on several areas while providing recommendations for further development particularly in the professional practice

orientation and internationalization of the programme. These recommendations were taken into account in the evaluation and have been addressed in the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter - SER).

KVK aims at offering programmes with a high internationality level, focused research and high graduate employment rate (SER p. 4). During the reporting period, the number of state-funded students decreased continuously (15 in 2018, 11 in 2019 and 2 in 2020). For many years, non-state-funded applicants compensated for this drop (10 in 2018, 11 in 2019 and 16 in 2020). For 2021, admissions for the Tourism Business study programme were suspended.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Tourism and Leisure study field and first cycle at Klaipėda State College (KVK) 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	23

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

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

According to its SER, the aim of the Programme is to train modern tourism business experts for accommodation, travel and leisure, also information sectors, who are capable of rational use of the tourism and recreational resources, using the cognitive tools to analyse and assess tourism processes under changing market conditions, conducting research in the field, following applicable legislation and developing an innovative, insightful and socially-responsible tourism business. Learning outcomes are as listed in Table 1 (SER, pages 6-7).

To evaluate the aim and the learning outcomes of the Programme in relation to the needs of the society and the labour market, as shown in the SER (page 4), the Programme team considers European 2020 strategy priority of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and Lithuania 2030 National Progress Strategy, which emphasises that Lithuania is based on knowledge, entrepreneurship, flexibility, openness, creativity, the ability to create added value and social accountability, highlighting cooperation between business and university research centres and researchers, promoting socially-responsible business, while the economic development is based on a sustainable use of resources.

Moreover, the Programme is improved according to comments and constructive opinions of social partners, students and graduates, round table discussions, which take place on an annual basis as shown in Protocols of the Department of Business Administration (SER, page 7, footnote 14). It also considers opinions of management of companies, accepting students for internships, discussing suggestions and including them into the improvement of the study programme in relation to the surveys of opinion of employers on the readiness of the graduates and career monitoring survey results (SER, page 7, footnote 15). The opinion of the employer representatives on the readiness of the graduates for the labour market and research results are analysed at the Committee of the Study Programme (hereinafter – CSP) and meetings with lecturers. Such activities demonstrate the willingness of the Programme to improve based on the intelligence of the labour market.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In consideration of the aims and the learning outcomes of the Programme it is clear that they comply with Europe 2020 strategic priority and Lithuania 2030 National Progress Strategy Therefore, the Programme conforms to the needs of Lithuanian and wider European society.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the Programme have been established and improved based on the Regulations for Management and Business Administration Studies, and reviewed based on the Draft Description of the *Tourism and Leisure Study Field* with adherence to a range of regulations adopted by the Lithuanian government, under cooperation with social partners. These regulations include Regarding Approval of the Description of the National Qualifications Framework, Regarding the Approval of the Description of the General Requirements for the Implementation of Studies, Regarding the Approval of the Description of the Study Cycles.

Based on the available evidence, the review panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the Programme conform with the needs of the society and 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

(1) Factual situation

The KVK's mission is to train highly-qualified experts of tourism business, namely, to conduct high–quality higher education studies based on professional practice and applied research, experimental development, and to create conditions for lifelong learning (SER, page 11).

During the remote site visit, the review panel was informed that strategic priorities of KVK closely relate digitalisation to study process and curriculum. For instance, Table 1 the 9th learning outcome (SER, page 6) of *Using the possibilities provided by information technologies, systems and databases; using holiday and leisure planning and accommodation management software* complies with the KVK strategic priority of high-quality higher education studies that comply with technological advancement; Annex 1 reveals two modules 'Tourism Information System and media' and 'Geographic Information Systems' in the Study Plan are clear examples. This reflects changes in the labour market. The students need to know how to use and master different systems. Furthermore, sustainability has been addressed in research, and development of KVK.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

An analysis of the aims and learning outcomes of the Programme in the field of Tourism and Leisure studies as explained in the SER (page 6-7) and in the section 3.1.1 above indicates that they are in line with the KVK's mission.

In consideration of the learning outcomes listed in Table 1 ((SER, pages 6-7), the learning outcome of *Using the possibilities provided by information technologies, systems and databases; using holiday and leisure planning and accommodation management software* complies with the KVK strategic priority of high-quality higher education studies that comply with technological advancement. The learning outcome of *Appling tourism activity and tourism resources research methods, enhancing understanding of the environment of a tourism enterprise and its process* complies with the KVK strategic priority of the compliance of the applied research for the sustainable state/regional development. The learning outcome of

Performing team and group work tasks applying the principles of creativity and cooperation complies with the KVK strategic priority of sustainable development of the College.

Based on the available evidence and the remote site visit, the review panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the Programme conform with the mission and strategic priorities of the KVK.

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

(1) Factual situation

The objective of the Programme was formulated based on the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, which complies with the descriptions of the levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning and first cycle study descriptions of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (Dublin Descriptors).

The outcome of the learning focuses on the competence levels, established in the Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation). The SER indicates that the Programme is developed in relation to the sixth level in the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the sixth level in the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

The Programme is categorised as a college study. Hence in consideration of the General Requirements for the Implementation of Studies, the college level legal requirements instead of university level legal requirements are consulted to assess the Programme.

Table 1. Legal requirements

Legal requirements	The Programme study plan (SER; Annex 1)
The scope of a first-cycle programme may be 180, 210 or 240 study credits	180 credits
No less than 120 credits shall be allocated to accomplish study results of a Field (including internship and preparation of a final thesis);	138 credits

Total scope of the planned internship shall be - no less than 30 credits - **for college level studies**, practical training should make up at least one-third of the programme volume (in hours)	47 credits 2392 hrs /4800hrs
A final thesis (project) or a final thesis (project) with final exams (in cases established in field descriptors) shall be given: no less than 9 credits – for college level studies;	9 credits
The scope of one year of full-time studies constitutes 60 credits but shall be no less than 45 credits, and is considered the main form of organisation of studies;	60 credit per year and three years in total for 180 credits

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

An analysis of the module titles listed in Annex 1 and the additional information provided by KVK indicates that the content of the Programme in the *field of Tourism and Leisure studies* complies with legal requirements in regard to a Professional Bachelor degree. Study subject descriptions for the Programme have been prepared based on the general requirements for the implementation of the studies and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The content complies with scientific advancement and labour market needs.

An analysis of the programme intended learning outcomes listed in Table 1 ((SER, page 6-7), *"Knowledge of the meaning of recreation and leisure, historical development, tourism structure, the basic philosophical theories and concepts of tourism and leisure organising business"*, *"Understanding the variety of the forms of tourism services business organisation, the essence of hospitality, economic categories and developments"* and *"Knowledge of the principles of tourism marketing and analysis of the opportunities for communication and logistics in the tourism industry"* are directly related to knowledge requirements. However, these statements are not grouped in one section. Furthermore, they only indicate what to know but do not clearly emphasise they should be based on the newest scientific evidence as required as the first study cycle for Professional bachelor's degrees. Therefore, the review panel **recommends** that the Programme team reconsiders the above-mentioned knowledge and understanding statements to ensure they are logically grouped and clearly articulated on the basis of the newest scientific evidence.

As indicated in the SER, the study load at KVK consists of lectures, practical assignments, study subject consultations and individual work. Annex 1 presents the study load of the Programme. It has 180 credits and 4800 learning hours. This means that one credit equals 26.7 hour of studying. The meeting with the staff who prepared the SER reveals that contact hours include lectures, practical classes and seminars, and consulting hours. The number of hours of independent and in-class studies is regulated by the KVK Study Regulation. An analysis of Annex 1 reveals that the total three types of learning hours for the associated modules amount to 2392hours which means 49.8% of the learning hours are contact hours. Furthermore, total individual work hours for the Programme are 2403 hours which constitutes 50.2% of the total hours of studying.

In consideration of the above analysis, the review panel concludes that the Programme complies with the relevant legal requirements. However, the development of some intended learning outcomes in relation to knowledge and understanding is suboptimal as they are unclearly developed which might potentially mislead the students to the correct level of their study.

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 relation between the Programme and learning outcome, most commonly used learning methods and assessments methods, is provided in the Annex 2. Table 3 in the SER reveals the connection between the outcome of the Programme and the study subject outcome. Each Programme learning outcomes are addressed in several subjects at different semesters. Six study module descriptions (i.e Cognitive Practical Training in an Enterprise, Cultural Heritage and Creative Tourism, Final Practical Training, Geographic Information Systems, Organising of Tourism Business, Professional Practice in a Business Enterprise) are also supplied to illustrate how different modules are organised and delivered.

Annex 2 also provides details how each learning outcome is assessed with different nature of assessment methods. A range of assessment methods, such as student presentation evaluation and delivery, preparation of practice reports, case analysis, problem questions, tests, conversation, short answer questions, is adopted to assess the students' performance. The included assessment methods are suitable to assess the related learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Programme outcomes focus on the development of students' creativity, independence, general, special and professional competencies. Annex 2 provides details how different teaching methods are utilised to support the students to achieve different learning outcomes. A review of Annex 2 reveals that most commonly-used learning methods for the Programme are teamwork, group work, debates, brainstorming, concept map, project work, creating maps with software, creating virtual tours, field trips, case analysis, lectures by representatives of tourism business, social partners. In consideration of the related learning outcomes, these

teaching/learning methods for each learning outcome are suitable to disseminate different theories and principles, develop related skills and required competences.

An analysis of six study module descriptions provided in the additional information indicates that the learning outcomes of these modules clearly link with different programme learning outcomes. The relationship between the learning outcomes of the modules and the Programme intended learning outcomes is clearly explained in each module description. Study methods and assessment methods for these six modules are included. The indicative study methods are suitable for the module contents. Different assessment activities (e.g. Practice report and presentation, participation in the discussion, individual work and its defence, control work, exam, team practical work and its presentation, etc) are explained in relation to the module learning outcomes. The cumulative assessment (final mark) of the study subject (module) is clearly explained in all the module descriptions.

Based on the available evidence, the review panel concludes that the aims of the Programme are compatible with the learning outcomes of the programme and the associated modules, indicated study methods and assessment methods are compatible with the Programme intended 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 Programme has a range of modules. Annex 1 provides the detail of distribution of modules at different semesters. Study subjects that cover the development of the worldview and general knowledge which are directly related to the content of the regulated field, are taught during the first and second semesters as shown in Annex 1. These include arts and social sciences modules which provide knowledge on skills for the chosen profession. Study subjects that develop professional competencies are introduced in the second semester and continued throughout further semesters. At the beginning of the third semester, the plan of the Programme includes study subjects that deepen vocational knowledge and skills.

The study plan of the Programme contains study subject segments, arranged in a logical sequence, based on their interrelations: presented in a way to maintain the relation between study subjects, study subject result and the outcome of the study programme, e.g. *Tourism Information Systems and Media – Travelling and International Tourism Geography – Geographic Information Systems – Organizing of Trips; Basics of Economics – Basics of Management – Travel Agent Activity – Hospitality Business and Logistics; Accounting and Finance – Organising of Tourism Business; Tourism Marketing and Market Research – Accommodation Services Management – Organising of Catering Services; History of Lithuanian Culture – Cultural Heritage and Creative Tourism – Organizing of Trips – Methodology of Preparation and Conducting of Tours* (see Annex No. 1).

Professional internship in the Programme takes place in different stages as explained in the SER. At the first stage, through *Introductory Practice in Tourism Industry, Cognitive Practical Training at an Enterprise,* the students are introduced to tourism service suppliers and

organisations at actual companies of the social partners. During the second stage, via *Internship of Tourist Services Management Programmes* and attending *Internship in Simulation Enterprise* and working on practical training enterprises *Pamarys* and *Kopija*, simulating the operations of actual companies, the students deepen their knowledge by simulating tourism business management. At the third stage, via *Professional Practice at a Business Enterprise,* the students have internships at companies. During the sixth semester students have their *Final Practical Training* at a company and prepare their *Graduation Paper*. All theory and practical skills, acquired during the studies and consolidated during the *Final Practical Training* must comply with the topic of the student's graduation paper.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In consideration of the above internship arrangements within the Programme, it is clear that the internships with the Programme are progressive and expanding practical training to the students to gain industry insights and develop their professional skills. However, the meeting with alumni, employers and social partners reveals that the employers and social partners who have internship students from KVK emphasise that current 3-month internship with the organisations is insufficient and a 6-month internship will be better for students to learn and develop different professional skills which will benefit the students to secure a better employment with the organisations after graduation. A longer internship will also support the employers/social partners to deal with their labour demand and subsequently they will be more willing to invest and train internship students. Therefore, the review panel **recommends** that the Programme reconsiders its internship options and extend its students' final internship training with the social partners and employers.

The Programme contains a consistently integrated *Guide Training Programme*, which enables the students to obtain the professional qualification of a guide. The logic sequence of the study subjects ensures the necessary knowledge and the development of skills and abilities. Overall, the scope of the Programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes at Professional Bachelor level. The content and methods of the subjects are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and professional competencies. All course descriptions mention "individual cumulative assessment" procedures which is a sign that assessment is student centred and well related to the content and delivery of the subjects.

Considering the available evidence and the remote site visit, the review panel concludes that different modules within the Programme do ensure consistent development of different competences of its students as indicated in the Table 1. However, further consideration of the design of different internships is necessary to address concerns of the employers and social partners and better support its students' future career.

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

At KVK, the students are provided with different opportunities to individualise their studies through different initiatives:

(a) During the second year of their studies, as they can pick their optional study subjects (hereinafter – OSS), which includes all optional study subjects from all departments, placed on Moodle. OSS provides students with new knowledge, develop their general skills, shape their personality and are used for developing general knowledge.

(b) Students can also be granted the ability to study on a free schedule, based on the KVK Study Regulations. The College offers an opportunity for the interested persons (auditing students) to study based on a personalised study programme, consisting of individual study subjects/modules from the College's study programmes.

The meeting with the staff who are responsible for preparing the SER reveals that the free-schedule option is regulated. The students need to discuss the matter with relevant lecturers to ensure they will achieve relevant programme intended learning outcomes and different study regulations before their requests are approved. However, the meeting with the students of the KVK reveals that the students are unclear of this free-schedule option due to their non-involvement and lack of knowledge of free schedule study. However, one student did provide an example of her friend's request for a free-schedule option during the placement period.

(c) Other opportunities of transferring achievements (e.g., academic mobility of students through Erasmus+ activities) are also provided to the students. The meeting with the students indicates that they were fully aware of different academic mobility activities, and they were also aware of application procedures. As a whole, the students seemed to enjoy the academic mobility opportunities if they undertook them.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

An analysis of Annex 1 Study Plan reveals that optional modules for the Programme have only six credits in total. Compared with the total credits of the Programme, the weight of the optional modules is small. Furthermore, they are only scheduled in semester three and four of the Programme, the timing of these optional modules is constrained. Moreover, the contents of optional modules as shown in section 1.2.4.1 of the SER (page 12) focus on development of general knowledge instead of subject specific knowledge which might be more useful for the students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject related knowledge and develop industry related skills to prepare their work in the industry. The meeting with the alumni reveals that they wished they could have more foreign language sessions and industry related IT skills for their optional choices instead of general knowledge.

In consideration of the available evidence and the visit, the review panel agrees that the Programme at the KVK does include different opportunities for its students to personalise the

structure of the Programme according to their personal learning needs and the intended learning outcomes. However, the review panel **recommends** that the Programme team reconsiders the optional modules in relation to their size, contents and delivery time. In consideration of comments regarding the free-schedule option from the staff and the students necessary to publicise the free-schedule option among the students to improve their awareness and involvement if this is required.

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

(1) Factual situation

The Programme is completed by writing a graduation paper (hereinafter – GP, final thesis) and its evaluation which is worth 9 credits. This is consistent with the first cycle and field requirements. The purpose of the GP as stated in section 1.2.5.1 of the SER (page 12) is to let the student prove that he or she has achieved the purpose and the outcomes of the study programme by reflectively and critically analysing, integrating and applying theoretical, practical, experiential, and empirical information. Therefore, the graduation papers of the Programme in the *field of Tourism and Leisure studies* reflect the outcome of the first cycle studies, related with the ability to conduct research.

The qualification commission (hereinafter – the QC) at KVK consists of at least 3 people: employer representatives, one of whom is appointed as the chair; researchers from other universities; KVK lecturers (at least one lecturer, responsible for the implementation of the study programme). Furthermore, reviewers must have a master's or an equivalent degree and practical work experience in the field of the topic of the reviewed paper. Therefore, the QC composition and related qualification specification comply with the requirements of the Tourism and Leisure Field Studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

A review of List of Final Thesis (Annex 3) and Examples of Final Thesis provided by KVK indicate that selected topics are in relation to the tourism and hospitality industry, hence, GP topics comply with the field of the studies. Furthermore, the chosen topics of these GPs reveal that many GPs chose case studies from the tourism and hospitality industry in the region. According to the SER (page 13), social partners of the Programme outsource graduate papers, related to their company's activity, its improvement or aiming to introduce new products, innovations, etc. to the market. The amount of outsourced GP in 2019 was 31 per cent, in 2020 – 37.5 per cent, in 2021 – 55 per cent. As shown in Annex 6, main social partners of the Programme are tourism and hospitality organisations (private and public). In consideration of this available evidence, the review panel **commends** that the GPs produced by the students from KVK bring positive impacts to the development of the industry in the region. In consideration of the quality of the examples of Final Thesis, they are consistent with specification set by the *Tourism and Leisure Study Field.*

Based on the available evidence and the graduation paper samples, the review panel concludes that the GPs (final theses) do comply with the field of Tourism and Leisure Study Field and the first cycle requirements.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Progressive and expanding practical professional training (47 ECTS) ensures students to gain industry insights and develop their professional skills.

2. Graduate papers demonstrate a clear close work with the region and associated industry which generate positive impacts to the development of the region and the industry.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Learning outcomes which are associated with knowledge and understanding are unclearly developed which might mislead the students to achieve the required level.

2. The design of optional modules is suboptimal in relation to their associated credit sizes, module contents and delivery time.

3. Although the Programme offers the free-schedule option, the students' awareness of this option to personalise their study is limited.

4. The length of the final internship is insufficient for the students to learn and develop professional industry skills which benefit the students for their career. It does not incentivise the employers and social partners to invest in internship students.

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

KVK encourages faculty members to undertake research and in the past three years, the number of research projects, measured using the stage of the project, has increased from four to five, as indicated in Table 4 of the SER. While research projects are summarized in a clear manner in the report with further detail provided in the appendix, the presentation of publications relies on the narrative and the separate table of lecturer information. In 2019 and in 2020 there were 5 and 6 publications respectively reported by the College, while the 2021 number is not given (page 16 of the SER). Based on the examples, 3 of these were in publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, using these two indices as a benchmark for high quality publication. This is not to imply that the other publications would not be of adequate level, but the style of reporting makes their evaluation harder. Publication activities

appear relatively steady and the pipeline of research projects should guarantee continued future publication.

The total number of conferences that faculty joined is not evident in the report, but the tourism related examples include Dr. E. Spiriajevas 'Spatial Changes of Social-economic and Cultural Landscape in the Curonian Lagoon Region of Lithuania' (Immanuel Kant University, Kaliningrad) and Dr. G. Šakytė-Statnickė, L. Budrytė-Ausiejienė 'Issues of Communication between Different Generations at Tourism Organisations. Education focused examples include Dr. R. Kinderis 'The Research Methodology of the Business Model Complementarity and the Factors that Determine It in the Inbound Tourism" (ISMA University, Riga,) and G. Statnickė 'The Relationship between Work Engagement of Different Generations and Mobile Learning' (Mendel University in Brno, Brno, Czech Republic). Most of the conferences are national, but international conferences in European countries, and one in Japan, are given. Detailed numbers of conference presentations and scientific articles could not be found in the SER.

Research is formulated around research groups. Faculty members are rewarded for research and there is an opportunity to receive research funding from social partners. Annual and 5-year appraisals exist, but the details on how different types of publication are valued in these evaluations are not provided. In this respect as well, the research activities of the institution appear satisfactory.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

While the number of publications seems adequate, the manner in which the information is presented makes evaluation of the level of publications difficult. Presenting article and conference publications also as a table would make the information clearer. This presentation should also consider whether journals are ranked in international rankings and conferences undertake peer review before accepting submissions. Currently, these details are missing. Adding a follow-up of such aspects should link with further development of the incentive system for faculty related to research. Such development should incorporate level of publication (journal – national/international/ranked etc.) systematically so that higher level publication clearly leads to more merit, and that publication volume alone does not constitute a performance criterion.

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

(1) Factual situation

Multiple examples of how the research projects feed into the curriculum are presented in section 2.1.1.3. These include the content from a virtual bicycle tour study and experiential location planning study feeding into several of the first and second year study subjects (SER, page 17). Furthermore, courses "Methodology of Applied Research" and "Tourism Marketing and Market Research" integrate material from a study named "Visitor Satisfaction with the Infrastructure of the Lithuanian Maritime Museum." Therefore, these projects appear to contribute to students' learning in a fruitful manner. The institution has rich connections with

the local tourism industry, and these connections are visible in joint or commissioned research between the social partners and the institution. This cross-pollination further benefits the content of the Programme.

To maintain the link between latest scientific developments and the content of the Programme in an international sense, the institution invites international lecturers. In 2020, prof. Isaak Rami gave a guest lecture in the College, and in 2021 prof. Stanislav Ivanov. Both are internationally highly recognized and well-published authors in their respective fields.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The strong link between the social partners and the institution is a definite strength of the Programme that not only reinforces the content of the curriculum but also supports the facts that the content of studies consists of latest developments in science, in the case of the College, studies undertaken by its faculty. Discussions during the remote site visit support the quality of this link. Social partners appeared very open in their interest toward research collaboration with the institution. Even more importantly, their appraisal of the results and their usefulness was clear.

The evidence mentioned some research focusing on the scholarship of teaching and learning (for example, Kavolius: "'Student Assignment Trade Prevention to Promote Academic Integrity" and Stonienė: "'Improving the Efficiency of Entrepreneurship Development at Practice Enterprises with the Application of Integrated Subject Teaching and Blended Learning Method", but during the site visit such scholarship was not immediately evident when asked. While industry research obviously plays a focal role, improvement in pedagogy through applied research could also be a worthwhile avenue to explore.

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

Students have multiple ways of engaging in research during their Programme. The main way is the final thesis, for which they have support in the form of a library and its scientific databases and research seminars. KVK has also invested in some research equipment, most importantly the virtual reality environment/ devices originally used for the virtual bike tour research discussed earlier. Courses include listings of required or recommended readings to introduce students to academic reading.

Students have an opportunity to present their findings in student conferences and as publications. During the period from 2019 to 2021, 10%, 3.3% and 13%, respectively, of the students in the Programme delivered presentations in conferences. In 2021, one of those presentations was given at an international conference in Japan as an online participant. During the same period, 10%, 5% and 8% of the students, respectively, published their finding in academic publications. Furthermore, there is a Student Research Society that aims to foster research on their own or conducted jointly with faculty. This society undertook a

project called "Study of the Relation between Libraries and the Society" in 2019, commissioned by Klaipėda Ieva Simonaitytė Public Library.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The breadth of support activities is satisfactory and consists of multiple different aspects, creating a broad range of support. Students name conferences, mentoring support, library resources and course readings during the remote site visit, supporting their role in the institution. They generally seemed well acquainted with the library systems. It is important that the students are exposed also to international academic readings from leading journals / authors in their field.

While the Student Research Society seems like a valuable initiative, its recognition among the student body seemed missing, as no member of the group in the session was aware of its existence. This could obviously be a coincidence, but suggests that more communication about the society is needed, independent of whether students join its activities.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Social partner relationships and joint research projects with these partners strengthen the link between study content and the latest developments in science by driving in-house research toward topics that a current in the industry.

2. Support for faculty to undertake research activities creates an environment favourable for research and overcomes this key obstacle often experienced by institutions.

 (2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of clear reporting of publications and their levels, with the appraisal system also, consequently, not (apparently) incorporating the level of publication as a criterion.

2. Lack of research in scholarship of teaching and learning.

3. While satisfactory support for students' research exists, not all of its components seem clear to the student body.

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

The process of student admission to KVK is centralized and therefore complies with regulations for the admission to institutions of higher education (Order NO. V1-051; Order No. V1-194 and Rules for student admissions to KVK for 2021, Order No. V1-136). In the reporting period 2018-2020, the first priority choices remained stable, yet the number of state-funded places decreased continuously (15 in 2018, 11 in 2019 and 2 in 2020). Admission of non-state-funded students compensates the drop only partially (10 in 2018, 11 in 2019 and 16 in 2020), resulting in decreasing intake numbers from 2018 to 2020 and a suspension of admissions for 2021.

KVK undertakes some promotional activities (e.g. study fairs, gymnasium events, open door days and promotion in magazines) and the number of the first priority applications suggests a stable base demand for the Programme. During the remote site visit, the College representatives named the pandemic and the geopolitical situation as current challenges for student recruitment. The institution maintains close relationships with employers and organizes roundtables to discuss Programme matters. Employers report that demand for specialists remains high in the region.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The process of student admission follows the legal requirements. KVK's experience with fluctuations in demand for tourism management programmes is a common issue with comparable programmes. Management and faculty undertake a broad range of marketing and communication activities and maintain close relationships with employers. In light of the drop in numbers over the past years and challenging environmental factors, KVK is well advised to develop a recruitment strategy for their Programme.

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 procedure for recognition of formal and non-formal qualifications is detailed in the "KVK credit transfer procedure". Recognition of non-formal qualifications has not yet occurred at KVK. In contrast, credit transfers for formal education (primarily via Erasmus+) remained stable over the reporting period in total numbers (14 in 2018, 13 in 2019 and 15 in 2020).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedure for recognition of prior learning and credit transfers is transparent and communicated well to current students. The fact that recognition of non-formal qualifications have not yet occurred could suggest that a potential target group for KVK has not yet been considered.

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

(1) Factual situation

KVK is continuously increasing their network of international partners and the rising student mobility numbers pre-pandemic indicate success at the internationalisation efforts. Table 9 of the SER (page 24) details the number of students choosing part-time studies or internships at higher education institutions or companies outside of Lithuania. The documentation available for evaluation did not provide details on the nature and number of higher education partners within the Erasmus+ framework.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The increase in student mobility during the reporting period and KVK's initiatives to increase network partners and to attract international students through Erasmus+ are in line with the vision of providing programmes with high levels of internationality. Increased student mobility shows International mobility (outgoing and incoming) may be further supported by establishing a dedicated "mobility window" in the curriculum and by increasing the number of courses taught in English.

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 process of student admissions to the College is centralised, based on the procedure for organising general admissions of the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter – LAHEI OGA46), documents. Student admissions requirements were published on the website (www.kvk.lt). The SER states that KVK students receive academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. It is stated that the highest possible quality and purposefulness of the provided assistance to students is ensured. Students are given the opportunity to communicate with relevant individuals by providing them with the necessary assistance through meetings, calls, and other means (page 23).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The support provided is relevant to the students' community. There is no distinction between groups of students and the help that is provided is divided evenly and purposefully. All information is possible to find on the website (www.kvk.lt).

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER analysis, it is shown that students receive important and relevant information in a timely manner. Feedback is supported. Surveys are conducted to find out the quality and reliability of the information provided and to ensure that students receive everything on time. Students are given the opportunity to send a request to faculty or other College bodies on a variety of aspects or issues.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KVK provides an opportunity for students to send a request, which is actively used. Important and relevant information is sent to students in a timely manner, but it is advisable to improve this communication on certain aspects of student life, such as grade adjustment, involvement in research, and so on. Students receive letters, but their important information is not emphasised.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Provides and ensures quality support for students.

2. International mobility opportunities (outgoing) are being expanded continuously.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Student intake numbers have been decreasing since 2018.

2. International mobility opportunities (incoming) are low.

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

The institution has a defined assessment system (based on the document "KVK Procedure for the Evaluation of Learning Outcome", No. SV1-05) which is detailed in the description of each subject according to the KVK Procedure for the Evaluation of Learning Outcome (No. SV1-06). According to the document and the SER (page 27) there is a clear planning and organisation of the study process, which includes individual assignments to be conducted throughout the

semester, their delivery terms, evaluation, criteria for the assessment of individual assignments, and their impact on the final evaluation.

The variety of study and assessment methods used is monitored and aligned with the set of learning outcomes (based on Annex 2). The report and the discussion with the students confirmed that the variety of methods used in the Programme allows the achievement of the set objectives. Distinctive teaching methods include live interaction with social partners or real situations/case studies (e.g., situational analysis, case study, tours and excursions, situational modelling, etc.).

According to the students' satisfaction survey on the quality of the study process 2020 (SER, p. 26), one of the areas for improvement was the development of critical thinking. During the meetings, it was found that this is being improved through the wording of assignments and the selection of appropriate assessment methods (problem-based assignment, problem questions, decision-making in role play situations, etc.). Assessment takes place in different forms: tests of open- and closed-ended questions, solution to practical problems, practical works and its presentation, etc. Written final exams or differentiated credit tests are the most widely used evaluation methods. During remote site visit, discussions with students showed that students are satisfied with the quality of the studies and the variety of study and assessment methods. Discussions with social partners on evaluation issues have revealed that they are satisfied with the theoretical knowledge of students in their internships but there is a lack of professional skills. However, according to the social partners, this shortcoming is acquired through internships.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KVK has developed and uses documents that govern the assessment system. The formalised assessment system and the choice of assessment methods in line with the objectives of the Programme suggest that the assessment is clear and understandable to students and that the variety of methods used achieves the objectives.

To address the problem of developing students' critical thinking skills, Programme designers could address the problem not only by introducing teaching and assessment methods but also by integrating a separate subject or a specialised block of topics into the Programme.

Taking into account the comments of the social partners, it is recommended to further emphasise the development of professional skills through study methods and the involvement of the social partners themselves, not only in the implementation of internship, but also in the educational process.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER states that so far there has been no demand for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs at KVK. The institution claims that it has considered decisions on conditions that ensure access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. The College has prepared measures such as individualisation of the studies ('Description of the procedure for individualisation of the study process for students/unclassified students, students with special needs of Klaipėda State University of Applied Sciences', Order No V1-059 of the Director of Klaipėda State University of Applied Sciences of 28 April 2022), ensuring financial support, adapting the environment of the studies (participated in the project 'Ensuring Accessibility of Studies for Students with Special Needs'), creating consultation opportunities and adapting the content and methods of the studies (based on SER, page 27).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Despite the fact that so far there has been no demand for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs at KVK, factual information shows that measures are expected and approved for such cases. It is presumed that promoting this information might have an impact on attracting students with disabilities to study at KVK.

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

The College conducts a systematic monitoring of the progress of the students that involves all participants in the study process. KVK uses two main platforms to monitor the progress of the students and give feedback to the students. Moodle is commonly used for hosting all teaching materials and assignments, marking assignments, and providing feedback. Furthermore, from 2018, students' interim and final assessments are recorded in the Learning Management System (EDINA). Students have individual logins to the systems, which ensures data availability and confidentiality.

The College implements feedback at several levels every semester: first-year student orientation summary, a study of the student satisfaction with the study program quality (second- and third-year students), study subject, professional training internship surveys (at the end of each semester), and learning mobility survey.

The discussions with the students highlighted a close relationship and support between the students and the lecturers. It should be stressed that in the case of students' dropping grades or non-attendance at lectures, individual conversations with students are organised in order to clarify the reasons and provide the necessary support. It is an advantage that the appointment and role of group curators improves communication between the different

levels of management: between students, the head of the Department of Business Administration, and the associate dean of the Faculty of Business. Curators make it easier for students to solve problems. In addition, the students highlighted the continuous support from the lecturers through the possibility of consultation.

Students indicated that feedback on assignments is given verbally or in the Moodle environment, and midterm and final grades are given in EDINA. However, during the remote site visit with students, it was found that although feedback from lecturers is provided, the quality and completeness of the feedback depends on the lecturers (some of them are very thorough, with the possibility of additional questions and consultations, while others are superficial).

Students also have the opportunity to express their opinion on the quality of the subjects at the end of each course by completing a questionnaire. Lecturers stressed the importance of such feedback from students, stating that it helps them to improve their teaching: e.g., to assess how engaging the chosen methods are, what helps students to acquire the material better, etc.

2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress is carried out using two platforms Moodle and EDINA. The role of group tutors, who act as a link between the student and the College staff also contribute strongly to this process.

It is positive that the feedback instruments developed for both students and lecturers each semester allow for a high-quality feedback collection and improvement of the Programme and process.

In order to improve the quality of feedback from lecturers to students, it would be useful to define the indicators of feedback more clearly to help identify the completeness and depth of the comments provided.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER, KVK monitors the employability of graduates employment and career obtaining data from the Employment Service, Government Strategic Analysis Centre, State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Education Management Information System and by conducting graduate surveys via the Career Management Information System (CMIS). Statistics show that in 2018-2020 approximately 75% of graduates of the Programme are employed in the market in their specialty. According to the administration in the last year an average 5 out of 10 graduates have been employed in their field of specialisation. This is a high indicator given the specificities of the Lithuanian tourism market. The administration also indicated and students confirmed that they have access to career counselling. The College has a Career Centre, which provides career

counselling and regular job offers on the College's website, and has developed and implemented a "Student Career Management Services Model".

During the remote site visit the Alumni consider that the knowledge and skills they have acquired at the College are largely relevant to the needs of the labour market, which has allowed them to integrate easily into the market. Their studies at the College met their expectations.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The College carries out a systematic assessment of graduates' employability and monitors their careers in the field of study. The College's Career Centre provides career counselling for the students.

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

(1) Factual situation

The principles and measures of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are provided in the KVK Code of Academic Ethics and the KVK Procedure for Evaluation of the Learning Outcomes. Staff and students state that there is no record of any cases of violation of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination in the Programme. To ensure academic integrity, students in the final stage of studies upload their graduate papers to the eLABa system of the Lithuanian Academic Library. In the site visit, teachers revealed that the text matching tool integrated into the Moodle environment is additionally used to avoid plagiarism.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

KVK has a formal system in place to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination policies.

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

The procedure for appeals and complaints regarding the study process is regulated (Procedure for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints approved by Protocol resolution No. SV1-03 of 30 April 2020), and a relevant document is published on the College's website. The report states that no appeals have been filed in the past three years.

However, it can be stated that in the remote site visit discussion, the students were not aware of this possibility: they could neither name the procedure nor identify where this document could be found. They explained that any issues that arise (including grade changes) could be resolved with the lecturers individually.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The College has a procedure for appeals and complaints, but students are not familiar with it. Therefore, closer communication between the administration and students on this issue is recommended.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Formalised and clear assessment system.

2. The variety of study and assessment methods identified is consistent with the learning outcomes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Students are not familiar with the procedure for appeals and complaints in the study process.

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

Annex 5 "List of teaching staff" and the SER indicate that there are 21 teaching staff working in the field of Tourism and Leisure Studies at KVK, whose workload is 4FTE (full time equivalent, hereinafter – FTE). There are 15 students per one FTE, the number in 2019 was 15 (60 students), in 2020 – 15 students (57 students), in 2021 – 26 students.

All 21 lecturers who involve teaching the subjects of the Programme have a master's degree or an equivalent level of education. Specifically, in 2020-2021, the number of lecturers, working on the Programme was 21 (4 FTE), including 7 doctors (1.1 FTE), which constitutes 27.5 per cent and complies with the general requirements for the study programme:

1) Distribution according to pedagogical and academic degree: 5 percent (1 lecturer) assistants, 71 per cent (15 lecturers) lecturers, 24 per cent (5 lecturers) associate professors, 33 per cent (7 lecturers) doctors;

2) Practical work experience in the field of the taught study subject ranges from 5 to 38 years, practical work average – 11 years. The lecturers, working on the Programme include a range

of tourism industry practitioners such as tour guides, a head of an accommodation company, a head of an event company, and individual business owners.

3)14 (67 per cent) out of 21 lecturers have been working at the College for more than three years, The workload of the teaching staff varies from 0.06 to 1.02 full time equivalent (FTE), and 16 (76%) out of them have at least 0.5 of the FTE.

Regarding their English capability, the lowest level of English language proficiency for lecturers teaching foreign students is B2. Lecturers teaching their courses in English constitute 70 per cent.

Among 21 teaching staff, 14 of them have been working at the College for more than three years. Pedagogical experience of the teaching staff ranges from 2 to 38 years, with the average of 19 years.

Table 2. Content of the Tourism Business study programme

Requirements	Study plan	Requirements for study programmes, offered by universities of applied sciences
The proportion of lecturers teaching study subjects in the field of study with at least 3 years of practical experience in the field	95.2 %	At least 50 %
The proportion of researchers, teaching in the field of tourism and recreation (%)	27.5 %	At least 10 % of the study subjects

The students for the Programme are also taught by practitioners from Lithuanian and foreign business companies in the last few years as indicated in the SER, for instance, Kurzemes Tourism Association, Park Inn by Radisson Central Tallinn and social partners. Besides that, Programme students were taught by very experienced visiting lecturers such as Prof. Isaak Rami (Breda University of Applied Sciences, Holland) and Stanislav Ivanov (Varna University of Management, Bulgaria).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on Methodology for Evaluating the Real Resources of an Institution of Higher Education (the Order No. V-1170), in consideration of the number of students enrolled in the Tourism and Leisure field studies in the last three years (2019-2021), the number of lecturers is sufficient to teach the number of students within the Programme.

Therefore, in consideration of the available evidence, the review panel concludes that the number of the lecturer of the Programme, their experience of pedagogical and practical work,

and qualifications are sufficient to achieve learning outcomes and comply with the requirements, established in the legislation. The professional qualifications of the lecturers comply with the study subjects they teach.

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

The College is a member of Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), which ensures high-quality Erasmus activities. KVK has signed Erasmus cooperation agreements with many foreign universities. Lecturers and students can take part at Erasmus+ and go study at universities in Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Greece, Portugal, Italy, France, Turkey, Denmark, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, etc. as indicated in the SER. Academic staff is invited to participate at the Erasmus + programme at least twice a year, followed by screenings. Mobility participants receive grants to cover their travel and living expenses and staff members on placement are paid an average salary. The mobility of lecturers in the field of Tourism and Leisure studies is ensured in accordance with the general rules and conditions of KVK. All lecturers have equal opportunities for academic mobility and all tender winners have an opportunity to go abroad with a grant for an entire mobility period.

Table 13 of the SER provides details of distribution of outgoing and incoming lecturer mobility visits in the Programme since 2018. Each year more than 10 Programme lecturers went abroad, and 7 and more incoming lecturers. Various events, organised at KVK (e.g. two international weeks every year) attract foreign representatives (e.g. 116 lecturers from abroad in 2019), providing KVK lecturers with an opportunity to talk and discuss possible exchange options, and also coordinate their mobility.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The teaching staff shared their experience of academic mobility from their applications to their experience in different partners and impacts on their teaching research during the meeting of the visit. What is shared by the teaching staff is consistent with the support the KVK offers, impacts they made to their teaching practice and improvement of research capabilities stated in section 5.2.1.2 of the SER.

Based on the available evidence and comments from the teaching staff, the review panel concludes that the conditions for ensuring the teaching staffs' academic mobility at the KVK are clearly explained to the staff and the teaching staff have enjoyed and benefited from the mobility programmes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The lecturer qualification improvement is regulated by the Procedure for KVK Staff Qualification Improvement. KVK complies with the Guidelines for the Development of Competencies of Lecturers in Higher Education Institutions, which determine the strategic directions for the development of competencies of lecturers in higher education institutions, also the activities/procedures for the planning, organising and implementing competence development. The qualification improvement funds, allocated by the College, may be used to finance staff qualification improvement: orientation/introductory/adaptation programmes for new staff; the use of IT software and virtual learning/teaching environments; foreign language courses; trainings of general competencies, necessary for pedagogical or research and administrative work; seminars, national and international conferences (funding participation fees); guest lecturer seminars for improving study programmes; covering trip costs to particularly important international events, congresses, symposiums, conferences; professional development events.

The Department Qualification Development Plan is compiled every year, based on the academic interests, study subjects of the lecturers, and priorities of the College. Individual lecturer decisions on which competencies should be improved and what methods should be employed, are determined by their academic interests, goals, defined during the annual conversation with the head of the department, and decisions of the committee of the study programme (e.g. regarding updates and changes of the study subject content). Lecturers include the planned training and the necessary funds into their annual activity plans. During the meeting with the teaching staff, they readily shared a range of examples (e.g., technical development, new software training, skills training etc.) which they received from KVK in relation to develop their pedagogical, subject and research competences. They were satisfied with KVK's support. The lecturers, working on the Programme, systematically keep improving their competencies which demonstrated in the Department Qualification Development Plan 2018-2021. In the period of 2019-2020, the lecturers working on the Programme have improved their research competencies for 1143 hours, pedagogical competencies – 1507 hours, subject competencies (tourism business) – 2043 as revealed in the SER (page 34).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In consideration of annual reports of the Faculty of Business for 2018 to 2020 which approved by KVK Deputy Director for Studies and Research, during the period in question, all Programme lecturers improved their qualifications by taking part at international/national qualification improvement events, working on their foreign language knowledge, remote teaching competencies, leading work groups or taking part at various work groups, improving their learning, general and subject competencies. Furthermore, in 2019-2021, the lecturers took part at internships, based on the internship plan, coordinated with the receiving organisation, at Lithuanian tourism organisations and foreign organisations. This enables the lecturers to update their practical work experience, improve qualifications, particularly in terms of conveying the internship-related knowledge and abilities to the students. Therefore,

the review team **commends** that KVK's implementation of teaching staff development for research, pedagogical and subject competencies is systematic and well-managed.

As indicated in the SER and the meeting with the people responsible for the SER, KVK is interested in improving the English skills of its lecturers and thus offers partial funding for their English language qualification improvement courses. Annex 5 includes three most significant works during the last five years of all the lecturers. It is very clear that most of the lecturers (all except one) are highly research active in that they contribute to applied research projects, conference presentations, outsourced studies and publications. However, a review of Annex 5 reveals that even though the staff have reasonable English skills, they generated a very limited number of academic research papers which were published in relevant tourism and hospitality international journals. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that KVK should not only focus on improving the staff's English skills for teaching but also supporting and guiding the staff to publish in internationally recognisable tourism and hospitality journals.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KVK's implementation of teaching staff development for research, pedagogical and subject competencies is systematic and well-managed.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Although the staff have strong applied research activities and outsourced research, relevant academic research publications are limited.

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

The learning infrastructure, used by the Programme students, includes learning facilities, assembly halls, open outdoor spaces and dormitories. The classroom space in both buildings ranges from 14 to 109 workplaces. Table 14 (page 35) in the SER presents the number of the premises and work places, used for the studies, 2021. Working conditions and the environment at the libraries and reading rooms are sufficient. The library consists of the Centre for Independent Studies and 6 reading rooms. The library has a total of 283 work places, 145 of which have a computer places. The College has an internet system/platform,

where everyone can find information. Students have access to all the resources provided and required by the College (page 35).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students use a variety of tools provided by the College. College community use these tools for learning, billing, scientific works and research. The technical equipment, used at the College, and its variety is sufficient and enough for the purposes of the Programme (page 36). The Programme includes six professional trainings, equivalent to 47 ECTS (Introductory Practice in Tourism Industry, Cognitive Practical Training at an Enterprise, Internship of Tourist Services Management Programmes, Internship in Simulation Enterprise, Professional Practice at a Business Enterprise, Final Practical Training) (page 36). Training is underway for both students and teachers. All information and certain pitches are provided in the system. The College shall also ensure the inclusion of proposals from the social partners regarding the resources provided.

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

(1) Factual situation

The resources available to the College are actively used and utilised. The demand for long-term and short-term assets, needed for the field of Tourism and lLisure studies is established by discussing this with lecturers, teaching study subjects of the field, based on the student needs and depreciation of the long-term tangible assets. New resources available to the College community are being sought. A priority list of procurements is drawn up (page 38). The College community is being asked and actively consulted on the appropriate use of resources.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Management and staff meetings and consultations are held to ensure a quality study process and the use of available resources.

Both students and faculty can submit proposals for new tools. The use and application of tools in a variety of ways is also encouraged. KVK encouraged lecturer and student involvement into applied research thus creating conditions for cooperation between business, students and lecturers with the goal to create new products (page 39).

The College administration takes into account the compiled list and updates the existing and available learning resources accordingly.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Provides quality resources.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Publicising and presenting information about updated resources to the College community.

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

The internal quality assurance system is ensured through various levels: the lectures, the Committee of the Programme, the head of the Department of Business Administration, the Dean of the Faculty, and the Academic Council (the latter includes representatives of students and social partners).

The roles of all the groups involved in the internal quality assurance system are clear and regulated (based on "Regarding the approval of the provisions of the faculty and the department" (Order No. V1-111), "Provisions of the Committee of the Study Programme Regulations" (No. SV1-09), Rules of Procedure of the Academic Council (No. SV1-03) and KVK Quality Manual). However, during the discussion with the lecturers, it was noticed that although the lecturers were well aware of how the quality assurance process works, they could not identify the specific indicators by which the success and progress of the quality of studies are measured. This is an area that could be improved through training or discussions on quality indicators in the study process.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The internal quality assurance system is clear and is ensured through various levels. An area of improvement is the identification and knowledge of indicators that identify the quality and progress of studies.

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

(1) Factual situation

The involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance process is under systematic development, including constant reviews and supplementations to the 'University's Strategic Partner Management and Development (2013-2021)' document. Students are involved in the quality assurance process through feedback questionnaires, individual interviews with tutors, and a student satisfaction survey (based on Table 15 in the SER). According to the SER, KVK organises round table discussions with social partners of the Programme every year, organises individual meetings with social partners, invites to participate in graduation paper defence and conducts employer surveys every two years.

Discussions with social partners confirmed that they participate in round table discussions, host students during internships, and some are involved in common projects (Annex 6). Discussions in remote site-visit revealed that alumni involvement in internal quality assurance is limited. A more effective involvement of alumni in this process would improve the quality of studies by comparing the experience gained in the college and the skills needed in the tourism labour market.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance is a systematic and regulated process. More effective involvement of alumni in the process of study development would help to improve the organisation of studies based on the alumni's experience of study and integration into the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

Information about the Programme is available on the KVK and AIKOS websites. It contains the main data on the study programme. The KVK website also contains the "Annual Activity Reports" and "Annual Financial Reports" as well as the main documents related to the studies (https://www.kvk.lt/en/for-students/study-documents/).

The SER states (page 43) that 'information about the internal assessment results of the study field is first provided to the lecturers and administration, discussed at the meetings of the Study Programme Committee, the Department, the Faculty Community and the Academic Council. The results are presented to students and social partners at meetings, seminars, conferences, meetings of graduate paper qualification commissions, study programme committee, self-analysis, and study programme renewal working group meetings'.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The analysis of the KVK website shows that the main information related to the quality of studies, the evaluation and implementation of the study programme, and the main research results are published and publicly available. It is a fact that the publicly available studies are generalised and do not reflect much on the specific Programme. Therefore, the possibility of publicising the results of specific study programmes should be considered in this perspective.

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

For the evaluation of the opinion of the field students about the quality of the studies, the KVK uses three questionnaires: Survey of students satisfaction (at the unit level of study subject, at the end of the semester, twice a year), Research of students satisfaction with the quality of the study (at the program level, yearly) and Adaptation survey of first-year students (yearly) (Table 5 in SER). The results obtained were presented to the students in organised meetings.

During the meeting with the experts, the students confirmed their satisfaction with their studies, highlighted the professionalism of the lecturers, and the support of the group curators (77 percent of the students gave highest scores). Despite the fact that the discussion and the survey of the student satisfaction with the study quality described in the SER (page 42) showed high students satisfaction with studies and the use of teaching and learning methods in the learning process, it is necessary to note that there is a low level of student engagement in completing study subjects questionnaires: in the spring semester of 2021 - 20% and in the autumn semester of 2021 - 39% of the Programme students participated in the survey (based on 'Survey of students' satisfaction with the study of the study subject' https://www.kvk.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Studentu-nuomone-apie-dalyko-studijas-2021-m.-RUDENS-sem.-viesinimui.pdf).

Furthermore, it should be stressed that the information received during the remote site-visit shows that students receive information about changes in the study programme in a fragmented and irregular way. This is related to both the subject and the quality changes in the study program.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The KVK systematically uses the survey instruments to assess students' opinions and experiences at both the study subject unit level and the program level. The survey of students' satisfaction has shown a high level of student satisfaction with their studies. However, given the low participation of students in the surveys, it is recommended to motivate students and involve them more in providing feedback, as the low number of students taking part in the survey may not reflect the real situation.

In the analysis of the identified weakness in the provision of feedback, it is recommended to strengthen and formalise the provision of feedback to students (both in terms of subject and program quality).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The internal quality assurance system is clear and involves all participants of the study process.

2. The main documents that regulate the quality of the studies are available on the KVK website.

3. High level of student satisfaction with the studies.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The lecturers were unable to identify the indicators used to measure study progress.

2. Fragmented (insufficient) participation of alumni in the assessment process of the quality of the studies.

3. Low student involvement in completing feedback questionnaires.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

N/A

V. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	• Reconsider the knowledge and understanding of learning outcome statements to ensure they are logically grouped and clearly articulated on the basis of the newest scientific evidence. • Reconsider the design of its optional modules: (a) expand current credit size of the optional modules to give its students more choices; (b) pay more attention to subject specific modules (e.g., extra foreign language sessions, industry related IT skills etc.) instead of general knowledge modules; (c) reconsider the delivery time of the optional modules and include them throughout three. • Publicise widely the free-schedule option among the students to improve their awareness and involvement if this is required so that its students can develop better personalised learning experience. • Reconsider its internship options and extend its students' final internship training with the social partners and employers.
Links between science (art) and studies	• Develop the system of research appraisal further in a direction where different levels of publication are recognized differently according to the challenge such publication poses for faculty, instead of merely focusing on publication volume that evaluates conference presentations, book chapters, and journal articles in national and international journals similarly. This will allow faculty to focus on the types of publication that they wish to aim for and recognize, where appropriate, quality over quantity. • Incorporate research and publication in the scholarship of teaching and learning in faculty appraisal. This will allow for continuous development of learning practices in today's environment where learning has undergone a significant transformation as a result of COVID-19.

Student admission and support	● Develop a marketing and recruitment strategy for KVK programmes to counteract the decline in student demand. This might also include a thorough analysis of existent demand and market potential. ● Support services are developed well, yet KVK should reconsider the communication of these to students and stakeholders to ensure general knowledge of these offerings.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	● Emphasise the development of professional skills through study methods and the involvement of the social partners themselves, not only in the implementation of internship, but also in the educational process. ● In order to improve the quality of feedback from lecturers to students, it would be useful to define the indicators of feedback more clearly to help identify the completeness and depth of the comments provided. ● The students are not familiar with the procedure for appeals and complaints. Therefore, closer communication between the administration and students on this issue is recommended.
Teaching staff	● KVK should not only focus on improving the staff's English skills for teaching but also supporting and guiding the staff to publish in internationally recognisable tourism and hospitality journals.
Learning facilities and resources	● Whilst the teaching and learning facilities and resources are generally sufficient and supportive of the learning process, it is recommended to include social partners in the future planning and development of the resources.
Study quality management and public information	● Familiarise teachers with indicators to help identify the quality and progress of studies. ● Consider the possibility and modalities of making publicly available not only general, but also programme-specific results related to the quality of studies, the evaluation and implementation of the program of study. ● More effective involvement of alumni in the process of study development would help to improve the organisation of

| | studies based on the alumni's experience of study and integration into the labour market. |
| | ● Strengthen and formalise the provision of feedback to the students (both in terms of subject and program quality). |

*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

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field of Tourism and Leisure at Klaipėda State College:

The first-cycle programme *Tourism Business* is a well-functioning, well-managed programme that corresponds to local needs and acts as a centre for research and development of recreation and tourism in the Klaipėda Region. The aims and learning outcomes of the Programme are aligned to the level 6 of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, but could be better specified to meet the Level 6 standards of the EQF. At the same time, the Programme content meets the demands of working life and labour market. Programme aims, learning outcomes and methods/assessments are generally well aligned.

The Programme's curriculum design is suitable for the planned outcomes and appreciated by stakeholders. The study process is clear and efficient, and involved parties (students, teachers, social partners) are satisfied with the scope and depth that it provides. The curriculum includes applied as well as general knowledge modules, an extension of the internship could be considered to satisfy the needs of the social partners and strengthen the employability of graduates.

The campus, premises, technical facilities and library services support the students in their studies and research projects. The department's teaching and research activities, including amount and quality of their publications, the number of conferences and trainings/exchanges attended etc., is now on high level and is oftentimes conducted in collaboration with social partners. Better publicity of these results may strengthen KVKs reputation.

In light of low recruitment numbers, the Programme management is well advised to devise appropriate strategies to countersteer this development. Potential was noted in the inclusion of social partners in curriculum design and closer collaboration with alumni.

The teaching staff is not only sufficient in number and qualification for the delivery of the Programme, but is also an asset for the organisation. KVK is commended for its faculty and staff development programs, whereas the implementation of support and incentive mechanisms for research output might enhance performance in the research field beyond student research.

The recommendations provided in this report will hopefully contribute to developing the Programme further in its important role within the tourism industry in the Klaipėda region.

Expert panel signatures:

Dr. Florian Aubke, (panel chairperson), member of academic community