CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of Design

at Kauno kolegija

Expert panel:

1. **Prof. Dr. José Teunissen (panel chairperson),** *academic;*
2. **Prof. Julia Kühne,** *academic;*
3. **Ms Ilona Gurjanova** *academic, representative of social partners;*
4. **Mr Saulius Valius,** *representative of social partners;*
5. **Ms Ignė Astrauskaitė,** *student representative.*

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	***Design***	***Image Design***
State code	6531PX019	6531PX021
Type of studies	Professional bachelor college studies	Professional bachelor college studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle studies	First cycle studies
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years)	Full-time (3 years)
Credit volume	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Arts	Professional Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian, Russian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	31 August 2001	12 July 2011

Title of the study programme	***Fashion Design***
State code	6531PX022
Type of studies	Professional bachelor college studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle studies
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3,5 years)
Credit volume	210
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	3 May 2010

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149.

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

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by HEI; 2) site visit of the expert panel to the HEI; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field, SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

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

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149. The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 26 April 2023.

1. **Prof. Dr. José Teunissen** (the Netherlands), panel chair, director of the Amsterdam Fashion Institute (part of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences), former Dean of the School of Design and Technology at London College of Fashion;
2. **Prof. Julia Kühne** (Germany), panel member – academic, professor at Mainz University of Applied Sciences, Head of the Competence Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning;
3. **Ms Ilona Gurjanova** (Estonia), panel member – academic, representative of social partners, design lecturer at Tartu Art College, President at Estonian Association of Designers;
4. **Mr Saulius Valius** (Lithuania), representative of social partners, artist, curator, art director at EKSPOBALTA Ltd.
5. **Ms Ignė Astrauskaitė** (Lithuania), student representative, third-year Professional Bachelor's student of study programme Interior Design at Vilnius College of Technologies and Design.

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of document
1.	Examples of final theses.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF DESIGN FIELD STUDIES AT KAUNO KOLEGIJA

Kauno kolegija (hereafter, the College or KAUKO) was established on 1 September 2000, after the binary higher education system, consisting of two types of higher education provided by colleges and universities, was introduced in Lithuania. Today Kauno kolegija is one of the largest higher educational institutions in Lithuania with 5,500 students, 800 employees, and 33,000 graduates (data of 2022 May). In 2011 and 2013, the College took 1st place in the rating of the best Lithuanian colleges.

KAUKO is a multi-profile state higher education institution training specialists in technology, informatics, engineering, medicine, humanities, social, art, education, business and public management, law, and agricultural sciences. There is a wide range of study programmes which makes in total 49. The following 6 study programmes are conducted by the Academy of Arts: Design (Design Study Field), Fashion Design (Design Study Field), Image Design (Design Study Field), Photography (Media Art Study Field), Artworks Conservation and Restoration (Artworks Restoration Study Field) and Glass, Ceramics, Leather and Textile Art (Fine Art Study Field). KAUKO has joined forces with students, academic staff, alumni, and social partners, uniting the variety and potential of different fields of activity and has formed a strong and distinctive organisational culture based on democratic personal and organisational values that have become the landmarks for the present and future activities.

KAUKO actively cooperates with more than 260 foreign partners, 229 of them under the European Union Erasmus+ mobility programme. It is a member of such international associations and networks as EURASHE (the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education), EAIE (the European Association for International Education), Businet (the International Association of Institutions of Business Studies), ICEIGATM (International Circle of Educational Institutes for Graphic Arts Technology and Management), EFRS (European Federation of Radiographer Societies), and ENPHE (European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education).

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The ***first cycle*** of ***Design*** study at Kauno kolegija is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	5
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	**30**

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.
2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.
3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.
4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;
5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of society and/or the labour market

The Design field study programmes are aiming to teach practical skills and training and theory and research, which are both highly relevant for the study field and today's industry demand. Due to the growth of Lithuania's business and creative industries, there is a growing demand for designers with a high level of professional training in industry demands, trade and services, promotion of arts education and culture, and activation of dissemination and international advertising.

When developing these programmes KAUKO took into account the digital transformation of the industries and committed seriously to introducing new IT tools into the study process enabling students to work after graduating in both international and local environments. It gives students an understanding how digitised development leads towards a personalised, fast and automated production. Also, the digital product can be shown to the client in early pre-production stage before moving into production. It is important to mention the special attention to innovative approaches in product development, such as sustainable design, circular economy, ZeroWaste, Cradle to Cradle and design thinking (SER, p. 8). These are strong innovative and relevant areas of studies where collaboration with interested companies opens up new opportunities for the development of new products and services with high added value. The College for all the study fields also offers *fundamentals of business, entrepreneurship and digital skills*, which prepare the students for the future market and eventually to start their own businesses. Overall, the implementation of these new societal challenges into the curricula is highlighted by the panel as a strong side of the College.

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

The mission of KAUKO, defined in the *KAUKO Strategy 2021-2025* focuses on the implementation of innovation-driven practice-oriented higher education studies and an expansion of applied research activities that are important for the development of society. This is executed via the key objectives: 1) to conduct practical and innovation-driven higher education studies; 2) to develop applied science and art activities focusing on the development of society at national and international levels; 3) to build a sustainable community that nurtures the culture of a learning organisation; 4) to increase the efficiency of KAUKO management and optimise its infrastructure. The vision established in the Design study field strategy is to implement study programmes of the European University of Applied Sciences focused on the

holistic education of the design professional, where creativity, knowledge and skills are supported by the external factors of global trends and technological progress (SER, p. 10). According to the panel, the mission and objectives of the KAUKO Strategy are clearly implemented in the Design field study programmes. In line with the strategy KAUKO provides training conditions for teaching staff, is innovating the resources and keeps them up to date, whilst endorsing a strong connection with artistic practice and science.

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

Table No. 1. *Design* study field compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor).*

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	DSP - 180 IDSP - 180 FDSP - 210
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	DSP - 135 IDSP - 141 FDSP - 186
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	DSP - 45 IDSP - 39 FDSP - 9
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	DSP - 30 IDSP - 30 FDSP - 30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	DSP - 15 IDSP - 12 FDSP - 15
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one-third of the programme	DSP - 43,1 IDSP - 37,8 FDSP - 40,3
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	DSP - 30,6% IDSP - 25,7% FDSP - 31,3%

Design field study programmes Design (hereafter, DSP), Fashion Design (hereafter, FDSP) and Image Design (hereafter, IDSP) are in accordance with the Law on higher education and research of the Republic of Lithuania. The structure of study programmes is in line with the European Higher Education Area's provisions and guidelines for quality assurance of studies and the requirements for first-cycle collegial studies laid down in the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, including the Description of the general study requirements for the full-time and

part-time study forms, and Description of the Design study field. Study programmes are conducted only in the full-time form of study. For the final thesis, 12-15 ECT are granted which is more than the legal prescription of 9 ECT, which underlines that at KAUKO, the (artistic) research part is taken seriously.

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

The aims and learning outcomes anticipated are clearly articulated in the study programmes covering the levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies achieved by following the courses specific to the field of study. On top of that, students are free to choose more specialised subjects in the same or another field of study (SER, p. 13). It is positive that the learning outcomes have been formulated for each SP and grouped under the relevant knowledge and application, into special skills, social skills, personal skills and research skills. Many of the course units are aimed at achieving multiple learning outcomes of several SPs rather than just one SP, which ensures that the learning outcomes are actually attained.

The principles of the Design field studies are to cultivate the individual creativity and skills of a student in his/her area of choice, acquiring the capacity to create material welfare and a place of employment, in response to the essence and rapid development of creative industries in Lithuania (SER, p. 7). For each study programme, the learning outcomes are clearly defined under the relevant knowledge and application, into special skills, social skills, personal skills and research skills (SER, p. 13). In order to be able to check if the learning outcomes are acquired, many of the course units aim to assess multiple learning outcomes of several study programmes rather than just one study programme. Teaching methods used in the study process are a mixture of passive and active and independent learning. The content of the programmes is determined by the growing demand for high-level professionals in the creative industry and business.

According to the panel, procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes are based on clearly formulated criteria that allow a reliable assessment of the level of knowledge, skills and practical abilities attained by the student during his/her studies.
The assessment of learning achievements may be peer-based (students' creative work, models, projects are presented and discussed in a review session, with peer assessment by a panel of lecturers, with the participation of the students) and diagnostic (examinations, assessments, testing, oral questioning, written questioning, etc.).

As a result of periodic surveys of social stakeholders, significant adjustments during the reporting period were made to DSP in order to optimise SP, avoid duplication of topics and respond to students' needs.

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

The aim of the Design programme is to train design professionals who are able to plan design activities, develop and implement design projects individually and in teams, organise professional activities and respond to the business environment, market trends and new technologies according to the principles of lifelong learning. The programme offers two specialisations: **Graphic Design and Interior/Furniture Design**. Students choose courses related to their chosen specialisation from the 2nd semester onwards, and professional placements are carried out in semesters 2-5, with the focus on the final thesis project in semester 6.

The aim of the **Image Design** study programme is to train image design specialists who are able to analyse and respond to market needs, design the client's image, create, implement and present an image project for a person/group of people and, taking into account the latest technological achievements, organise the image designer's activities in cooperation with specialists from other fields.

The aim of the **Fashion Design** study programme is to train fashion design specialists who are able to respond to market needs, design clothing collections individually and in teams, practically implement creative ideas for industrial and unique/individual production in the fashion industry, know the basic principles of fashion marketing, assess the business environment in the fashion industry and organise the activities of a fashion designer.

In the first year, all students study collegiate course units aimed at developing the student's worldview and general skills, and in subsequent years a block of field course units is provided to develop specialised skills in the chosen study program.

The internships are carried out in semesters 2 to 5, and in semester 6 the focus is on the preparation of the final thesis.

Based on the information provided in the SER, which was approved during the site visit, it is clear that the programme offers a coherent distribution of course units over the semesters, following a systematic and logical sequence, with no duplication of course units or topics. The size and location of the course units in the curricula are related to the expected learning outcomes of the programme and include the distribution of theoretical and practical classes and the student's independent workload. The emphasis is on practical classes and independent work, with the learning outcomes of each unit complementing each other.

Overall, it appears that the totality of the field study programme subjects/modules ensures a consistent development of students' competencies, with an emphasis on practical classes, independent work and the acquisition of competencies relevant to professional performance in the fields of study.

During the site visit and in discussions with all stakeholders, the very good structure of the programme with good basic education and individual opportunities for specialisation was confirmed. The College and the programmes have also established good structures to quickly

integrate new trends and technologies into the curriculum, thus providing students with a contemporary education that best prepares them for the innovation-driven world of work.

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

KAUKO offers several possibilities to personalise study programmes for its students. One such possibility is for students to be credited for partial studies in other Lithuanian higher education institutions or foreign higher education, or even other activities such as self-study after they are formally evaluated and meet the requirements. Students with special needs, illness and other circumstances are allowed to prepare a personal study plan. Finally, students can further adapt their study programme by choosing a language course according to their level during their first semester and a specialisation course during 4th semester. In general, the individualisation of the study programmes is sufficiently expanded and covers all aspects. However, according to provided feedback, more round-table discussions with students could be held regarding changing or adapting study subjects.

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

The degree studies are completed by the preparation and successful defence of the final thesis according to the following procedure: the student proposes a topic or chooses a topic from a list provided by lecturers, social stakeholders, sponsors (outsourced fina theses) which needs to be approved by the Dean of Faculty before the final internship starts. At least 14 working days prior to the start of the public defence, the final thesis is reviewed at the Academy of Arts to inspect whether all mandatory requirements have been fulfilled for public defence and to provide comments on shortcomings that need to be corrected.

Methodological instructions, timetables forms and other information on how to conduct research and write the final theses are provided on Moodle whilst the library organises training for students on how to find sources, how to properly do citations, and prevent plagiarism. Also, the student is obliged to sign a code of conduct that complies with the requirements of academic integrity and applied research ethics as defined in the KAUKO Code of Academic Ethics and the Description of the KAUKO plagiarism detection system. The student defends the final thesis for an assessment Committee consisting of 5 members, from which 3 are external and a chairperson is appointed by the faculty dean (SER, p. 16).

When summarising, what is mentioned above, it is necessary to emphasise, that topics and content of the final theses comply with the field of studies and as strong site also could be mentioned, that final theses consists of autonomously prepared theoretical and practical parts of the creative project, as well the volume of the DSF programmes is sufficient to achieve the intended learning outcomes and fully meets the requirements for first cycle collegial SP, so students final theses generally are in compliance with the requirements of the study field.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The relation between the intended and achieved learning outcomes is strong.
2. A mission and structure that easily adapts and implements new trends and technologies.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Not sufficient amount of round-table discussions with students regarding changing or adapting study subjects.

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

Applied Science and Art Activities (ASAA) are executed based on the mission of KAUKO with an action plan that provides quantitative and qualitative targets for research and artistic practice (SER, p. 18). The aim is to focus on societal challenges on (inter) national and regional levels. All study fields of KAUKO have research aligned with the discipline. The results of the last 3 years show 248 activities: 158 exhibitions, 159 publications and 53.000 EUR income (Annex 4). According to the panel, the results highlight that the policy, action plan and results are very adequate and effective.

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

Students and lecturers participate in the ASAA events such as seminars, conferences, and forums where relevant topics in art and design innovation are addressed. This is providing additional opportunities to gain a deeper insight into the current issues and innovations of the future professional field. These lecturers and workshops are provided by university researchers, design platform managers, professionals and design practitioners from Lithuania. The links between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology are very well connected.

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

Students' research skills are systematically developed from the first year onwards through all course units teaching students to collect data, analyse, formulate and present the outcomes. For the final thesis, the student is expected to develop a research plan with the parameters of the

research including independent analysis, followed by a public defence of the research. Students are encouraged to select research topics in the field of the expertise of the supervisor. Next, a connection with practice and errors in students' design projects are analysed, and the added value of the new product or service in the context of improving the quality of life is considered. The lecturer-researcher of the course unit and the research supervisor of the research are mentoring the final thesis process.

Students, lecturers and work supervisors of the Design field study programmes are encouraged to work together in analysing research problems, presenting their results at research conferences or preparing publications. In the period of 2019-2021, 27 student presentations were delivered (whereas in 2022, 45 presentations have already been prepared), 27 international conference report theses were published (45 in 2022), and 11 articles were published in reviewed periodic research publications (20 in 2022). Many creative projects are presented in various public spaces around the country. In 2019-2021, 43 national and 16 international exhibitions of students' works, 32 virtual exhibitions and 19 personal exhibitions were organised. Students constantly participate in design competitions, which are aimed at testing their abilities to link the theoretical knowledge acquired in the study course with practical application. Under the guidance of lecturers-practitioners, they regularly engage in outsourced activities. On top of that, 36 percent of final theses were outsourced, commissioned by organisations from which 17 per cent generated income. The aim of KAUKO is to increase the percentage by 5 per cent per year.

The panel concludes that the conditions for students to get involved in scientific or artistic research are excellent. It is systematically embedded into the curriculum and students are actively encouraged to take part in the research of lecturers and supervisors. The amount of outsourced final theses shows that students' access to research is high.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Every study field has research aligned.
2. Students learn research skills during all courses until the final thesis.
3. Substantial amount of publications and exhibitions with relevant research topics.
4. Collaboration among lecturers, supervisors and students in societal challenges.
5. Generating income with outsourced FT.

(2) Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified in this evaluation area.

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

Students' admission process, led by LAMA BPO (The Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for General Admission), is in accordance with principles of general admission to KAUKO rules (the Rules are approved by KAUKO Academic Council and are published on the website of KAUKO). Applicants are allowed to indicate their preferences (up to 9) in order of priority. The procedures around state funding, non-state funding places and the overall admission process are thorough, inclusive and in line with LAMA. The procedures around state funding, non-state funding places and the overall admission process are correct and in line with LAMA regulations.

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

Since 2021, KAUKO is accredited to approve academic recognition of the education and qualifications in higher education of prospective students with foreign qualifications in secondary education. In 2021, 34 persons applied to KAUKO for academic recognition.

Students of the field study programmes can apply to have the learning outcomes of previous studies attained by formal or non-formal (self-study) studies credited. The learning outcomes attained by formal studies are credited following the *Procedure for crediting learning achievements in KAUKO*. During the assessment of learning achievements, a decision is made whether the student's achievements correspond to the learning outcomes set for the programme desired. A maximum of 75 per cent of the study programme can be credited, except for the final thesis. Students who have received credits for other KAUKO courses, cannot be credited.

KAUKO's assessment and recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal and/or informal learning and self-study are executed following the *Description of the procedure for assessing and recognising the knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education and self-study as learning outcomes;* the procedure allows crediting competencies acquired through employment, training, participation in various organisations and groups, voluntary activities, in community service, in non-formal and/or informal education institutions or by self-improvement, self-study, and in any other way that the person is able to justify and demonstrate as being equivalent to the learning outcomes of the modules/course units (SER, p. 24). An Assessment Committee, appointed by the Order of the Director of KAUKO, approves the competencies acquired through non-formal/informal learning and self-study.

According to the panel adequate procedures are in place to recognize and acknowledge foreign qualifications, partial and non-formal ways of learning.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

The Faculty takes several steps to ensure academic mobility for students. It has a Unit for International Relations responsible for organising student mobility. Students are allowed to participate in part-time studies, professional internships or graduate internships in foreign higher education institutions as part of Erasmus+ and Nordplus programmes. Another incentive used to encourage students to participate and make use of this opportunity outside of Erasmus+ and Nordplus is the additional scholarship offered by the Faculty. Unfortunately, statistics seem to indicate rather low interest in academic mobility which, according to the Faculty, could be caused by social commitments in students' personal lives or course inconsistencies at host institutions.

In summary, the College provides an excellent mobility offer, especially by providing additional 2-week mobility as a taster. During the visit, students have feedbacked that additional English courses could be helpful to gain more confidence in their language and presentation skills. Another way that would encourage students to participate in these programmes is a short-term exchange as it would be easier for students to leave for exchange from the financial and personal point of view.

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

KAUKO has a range of policies in place to provide students with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support information about which is available on the official website. There is also information about admission and study content, general information on how to receive scholarships, loans or accommodation, and information on career opportunities and internships are available.

Students are also introduced to their study goals and learning outcomes by their lecturers at the beginning of the course whilst the Faculty's library staff also organises personal consultation and courses about study-related topics. The International Coordinator informs the students about opportunities for foreign exchange programmes.

In summary, the College has a robust developed academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support system, where students have a close relationship with lecturers, can express their problems to them, and also have a psychologist for personal problems and a wide range of scholarships and other financial support that they can use.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

KAUKO aims to provide sufficient study information and student counselling. One of the steps taken to provide sufficient study information is the introductory week for first-year students when students are introduced to relevant documents, organisational structure, study programme information and multiple other topics. Study information is also available on the official website and on the Moodle virtual learning environment which can also be used to contact lecturers for counselling. Lecturers and other Faculty staff can also be contacted

through email. First-year students are also assigned to specialist mentors – lecturers and group elders that they can consult. The International Coordinator is responsible for information regarding opportunities to participate in foreign exchange programmes. The Faculty also regularly conducts surveys on the adequacy of the dissemination of information. Another thing to note is that students are invited to participate in a wide range of cultural, organisational, professional, academic and voluntary practical activities.

In summary, students receive all the necessary information from the teachers in the very first week of their studies, and they can follow it on the institution's website. Students are informed of news and important events via email. Students and teachers can also participate in various activities and competitions or go to study or do internships abroad.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Efforts to improve mobility through short-term mobility.
2. Mental support and a psychologist are in place.
3. Very good information and mentoring system for students.
4. Students are actively invited and participate in events, artistic activities, academic and professional activities.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Students' presentation skills and English language.

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

Based on the information provided, it appears that the Design field study programmes take into account the needs of the students and aim to help them achieve the intended learning outcomes. The programmes use a variety of teaching and learning methods, including reflective study methods, to promote the integration of existing and new knowledge and experience. The programmes also emphasise the development of social and personal competencies, as well as a balance between theory and practice.

The programmes have a system for assessing student achievements that is guided by principles of clarity, validity, objectivity, openness of assessment criteria, and mutual respect and confidentiality. The methods for assessing learning outcomes are determined by the lecturers

preparing the study course description, and the assessment strategy for the course unit is approved by the Study Field Committee. The expected outcomes are assessed using a ten-point system linked to the levels of achievement of the learning outcomes, and a variety of assessment methods are included in the study course descriptions. The established Moodle system is used to make the course objectives and learning outcomes transparent. Students can check at any time whether their performance is in line with the course objectives.

The programmes also provide students with opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous distance learning, and there are provisions for retaking examinations and defending projects.

Finally, students are required to prepare and present a final thesis that reflects their knowledge and skills in the field of fine arts, as well as their communication and personal skills.

Overall, it appears that the programmes take into account the needs of the students and provide them with a comprehensive and well-structured learning experience that aims to help them achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

KAUKO offers alternative means of completion and assessment for students with disabilities to ensure the intended aims of the study programme are achieved. The College also applies appropriate forms and methods for assessing learning achievements for students with special needs, taking into account their individual needs and possibilities. KAUKO continuously develops infrastructure and adapts software and tools for people with individual needs. Students with disabilities or learning difficulties can apply for individualised study conditions, which will be met to the extent possible, given the university's financial and human resources. In the evaluation period, four students in the Design field study programmes were assessed to have a 45 per cent or less working capacity. All students with special needs have successfully integrated into the learning environment without expressing a need for individualisation or special adaptations.

In discussions with various stakeholders, the open and friendly atmosphere has been praised as has the existence of an established person of trust to whom students can turn with their individual concerns and needs. Students are regularly informed of this person and how to contact them by email. Overall, KAUKO appears to be providing very good support for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.

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

As the panel witnessed, a variety of assessment methods are used to provide feedback on student achievement: oral and written; formal and non-formal. The methods for assessing

learning outcomes are determined by the lecturers developing the course unit, and the assessment strategy developed for the course unit is approved by the Study Field Committee.

During the first lecture of the course, students are introduced to the aims of the course unit and the expected outcomes, content, cumulative assessment system, and assessment criteria.

Within 5 working days, excluding the assessment date, the lecturer will announce the results of the evaluation based on the learning outcomes of the course. All students are given the opportunity to review the results of the assessment of their learning achievements, shortcomings, and errors of and comments in the assessed assignment or work. Finally, the lecturer publishes the course unit learning outcome (assessment) on the KAUKO Study Management System.

After the final assessment students are invited to express their opinion on the learning achievement assessment system (SER, p. 30). Based on the feedback on the assessment methods of the course and the assessment of the students' performance, the lecturer improves the study and assessment methods or assessment criteria of the course.

The cumulative assessment system based on active and consistent monitoring of students' study progress ensures the continuous accumulation of information on students' learning progress and achievements and assists students in assessing their level of achievement and reflecting on their learning outcomes. Such an assessment system assists the lecturer in identifying the students' learning potential, identifying issues and gaps, differentiating and individualising activities, selecting further study content and methods, and providing support and guidance appropriate to students' needs (SER, p. 30).

The system of monitoring the study progress and feedback is in accordance with the aims. Due to the fact that there are small groups, the personal and informal feedback from the teachers is very effective.

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

KAUKO analysis of graduate employability is carried out annually. The Faculty receives data from the Lithuanian Employment Service on the registration of their graduates. They also analyse data from the Government Centre for Strategic Analysis (STRATA) on the employment of graduates 12 months after graduation, and the career-monitoring tool SAIKU on the employment rates of graduates at 6, 12 and 36 months after graduation. Next, KAUKO also undertakes alumni surveys to evaluate graduates' employability and professional growth. The presented employability rates are difficult to evaluate due to high self-employment levels. In summary, reflecting on feedback provided by the students, they feel well prepared for the labour market after their studies. Some of them start their own businesses.

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

KAUKO holds a detailed *Code of Academic Ethics* outlining the principles of transparency of the study and research processes, academic integrity, equality, non-discrimination, justice, and protection of intellectual property. Each member of the KAUKO community (staff and students) has to comply with the rules on plagiarism, cheating, falsification of data, falsification of study assignments (mid-term reports, self-study work, examinations, projects), use of outside help, submission of someone else's study assignment. Therefore, KAUKO has a plagiarism detection system in place. The lecturer and supervisors are responsible for the detection and prevention of plagiarism in the assignment and assessment of written works. The written study assignments are checked with the text-matching software Turnitin in the Moodle environment. It is compulsory to check all KAUKO students' final theses with Turnitin tool in the Moodle environment. Cases of plagiarism are recorded in the College's Plagiarism Register and reports are submitted to KAUKO Ethics Committee for review. Every year KAUKO Library staff organises workshops for students "I Find. I Write. I Cite." The Ethics Committee deals with reports concerning violations of the Code of Academic Ethics.

KAUKO aims to ensure the smooth application of the principle of equal opportunities, the implementation of the provisions of the Law on Equal Opportunities and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men by adopting internal documents of the institution on equal opportunities and non-discrimination. No cases of violation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination have been identified and investigated in the context of the Design field study programmes. During the visit, the panel learned that KAUKO offers students a safe and inclusive environment with academic integrity, transparency and support (including psychological) is in place for students with special needs

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

The *Procedure for assessing learning achievement at KAUKO* outlines the procedures for handling appeals. Students are allowed to appeal within 3 working days from the date of publication of the final result. This is a written appeal to the Dean, explaining the grounds for disagreeing with the final assessment of the study course. A special Committee appointed by the Dean of the Faculty replies within 15 working days after the submission of the appeal. The Committee might reject the appeal or accept the appeal by proposing a different final grade. The panel might also decide to allow the student to retake/take the examination/assessment. After the decision, the student is informed by the Appeals Committee. Next, students are allowed to lodge appeals to the Director of KAUKO against procedural violations of the final thesis defence within 3 working days from the date of the public defence. The Director shall adopt a decision on the validity of the appeal within 2 working days. No appeals shall be considered in relation to the assessment of the final thesis. According to the panel, KAUKO has a fair, clear and consistent system for submitting and examining the appeals and complaints regarding the study process.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Clear and consistent system for submission and examining the appeals and complaints regarding the study process.
2. Very good support for students with special needs.
3. Monitoring student study progress and organising feedback.

(2) Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified in this evaluation area.

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

The Design study field at KAUKO employs 58 lecturers, 79% of whom have worked for the university for at least 0.5 FTE and 3 years. 17 of the lecturers teach one subject each, while 41 belong exclusively to the Department of Art and 23 have at least 3 years of teaching experience. The average teaching experience of lecturers in the Department of Art is 20 years, and they all have practical work experience. There are 3 associate professors, 52 lecturers, and 3 assistants employed. The ratio of lecturers to students is optimal, and the number of academic staff is sufficient to achieve the learning outcomes. KAUKO has improved the study plan and content of courses by adding new courses, recruiting specialist lecturers, and updating course content.

Based on the information provided, it appears that the number, qualification, and competence of teaching staff within the Design field study programmes is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes.

The ratio of lecturers to students is also stated to be optimal, and the number of academic staff is sufficient for the achievement of learning outcomes. Furthermore, there have been positive changes in the composition of academic staff over time, with the addition of PhDs, professional practitioners, and specialists of study courses.
Overall, the information provided suggests that the programmes have qualified and competent teaching staff that is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff's academic mobility

Based on the information provided, it appears that the conditions for ensuring the teaching staff's academic mobility at KAUKO are quite good. The College has active mobility programmes, and lecturers are invited to participate in mobility activities at least four times a year. The selection criteria are clear and publicly announced, and there is a process for

appealing decisions. Even during the pandemic, virtual mobility opportunities were provided, which are recognised as completed qualification activities for the purposes of lecturer certification.

Moreover, KAUKO has a well-defined procedure for organising the mobility of staff under international exchange programmes, which includes admission, preparation of paperwork, accommodation, information, and organisation of visits of foreign lecturers and staff members. The College also actively participates in international mobility programmes and hosts foreign lecturers who share their professional experience and best practices.

Overall, the College appears to have a robust system in place to support the academic mobility of its teaching staff, which is essential for professional development, international cooperation, and the advancement of the university's mission.

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

KAUKO focuses on developing its lecturers' competencies through a variety of in-service training programmes, including an introductory programme for new lecturers. The university's heads and HR service are responsible for planning and implementing staff development activities. KAUKO also encourages lecturers to suggest relevant topics for training and conducts surveys to assess training needs. In-service training programmes cover a range of topics and are regularly reviewed and improved based on feedback from participants. KAUKO also provides English courses and seminars on topics ranging from professional development to leisure activities. Competence development activities can be funded by KAUKO, EU Structural Funds, or personal funds.

The information in the SER states that the development of the competencies of KAUKO lecturers is carried out on the basis of the Guidelines for the development of competencies of lecturers of higher education institutions and the Procedure for in-service training of KAUKO employees, which provide conditions for employees to acquire relevant competences and create a culture of cooperation and learning. Heads of Units/Divisions, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Service Units and the Human Resources Service are responsible for planning and implementing staff competencies development.

The needs for the development of the competencies of KAUKO teaching staff are identified and prioritised based on data from self-assessment reports, activities' performance assessments, and in light of the aims and objectives of KAUKO and its academic units/divisions. Lecturers are encouraged to participate in competency development events relevant to their study course area.

The KAUKO Human Resources Service organises in-service training for KAUKO lecturers and other staff in accordance with the Plan of events for the development of the competencies of KAUKO staff, which is approved annually. The plan is published in the document catalogue, and

information on each competency development event is made public by email, on the intranet, and on information screens.
During the period of 2019-2021, in-service training was provided to KAUKO staff based on various non-formal education programmes, and the topics of in-service training are also selected in line with today's current issues. The KAUKO lecturers conduct their own seminars both for external participants and for KAUKO staff. The staff members may express their own interest in attending a competency development event outside the KAUKO (business trip).

In summary, teaching staff are permanently encouraged to develop their competencies through various opportunities, such as annual introductory training for new lecturers, participation in competency development events relevant to their study course area, and in-service training provided based on various non-formal education programmes, which are updated according to the current issues. The KAUKO Human Resources Service and Heads of Units/Divisions, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Service Units, and the Human Resources Service are responsible for planning and implementing staff competencies development. Staff members are encouraged to participate in competency development events, and they may express their interest in attending a competency development event outside the KAUKO.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A robust system in place to support academic mobility.
2. Competent staff with research qualifications.
3. Ongoing support for staff to develop their competencies.

(2) Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified in this evaluation area.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

The Faculty offers the Design field various rooms equipped with modern IT equipment, including auditoriums, classrooms, and the library. Specialised computer software is available, and specialised classrooms for sewing, fabric design, photography, makeup, and hairdressing are also provided. Students have access to the technical resources of other study programmes, such as the Photography study programme and the modern equipment of Glass, Ceramics, Leather, and Textile Art study programmes. The Moodle virtual learning environment and 2 LieDM video conferencing tools are used for e-learning and distance learning. Material

resources for studies are based on the needs expressed by lecturers and students and on the assessment of labour market demands on future professionals. KAUKO continuously improves the adaptation of study and working environments for people with individual needs, and the State Studies Foundation provides software and tools for students with disabilities.

The study programmes appear to have adequate physical, informational, and financial resources to ensure an effective learning process. The programmes use modern IT equipment in classrooms, auditoriums, and specialised computer classrooms, which are equipped with digital projectors, screens, lecturer's computers, audio speakers, and whiteboards. The auditoriums have interactive whiteboards and specialised computer software is available in specialised auditoriums. The programmes also provide specialised classrooms for sewing and fabric design, a photography studio, a make-up classroom, and a hairdressing classroom, which allow students to develop their practical skills.

Google G Suite for Education tools are also used for interactive lectures. The programmes provide students with a range of software, including Microsoft Office 2019 Professional, Autodesk Autocad 2022, Adobe Creative Cloud, and Archicad 25, among others, to support their learning. Wide-format photo printers, a 3D printer, Mutoh Drafstation textile printer, and a multifunctional printer are also available for students to use under supervision. During the visit it was discussed that remote access to software would be beneficial for students.

The Faculty has adapted its study and working environments for people with individual needs, including persons with disabilities. Lifts have been installed, restrooms have been adapted, and parking spaces have been marked with a special sign. The Library is equipped with software and tools for students with disabilities, such as the Victor Reader E-Book Player and the Freedom Scientific Image Magnifier for persons with visual impairments, and the Bellman Audio Domino Digital Encrypted Intercom FM System for persons with hearing impairments (SER, p. 38). The library also has a working place containing a desk with adjustable height and an ergonomic chair for students with reduced mobility.

Overall, the physical, informational, and financial resources of the Design programmes are adequate and suitable for an effective learning process. Although the library is not in the same location as the Department of Design, there is a functioning system with interlibrary loan and online ordering. This means that students can access the very well-equipped library despite the physical distance. In conversation with the students, they expressed the wish for a cafeteria or another possibility to meet informally in the building. It is understandable that this is difficult to implement due to the lack of space. Nevertheless, the panel would like to suggest creating a place where students can meet and have something to eat or drink. This not only has social aspects but also promotes interdisciplinary exchange among students, which is essential in the field of Design.

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

The planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies described in the SER are quite thorough and systematic. The resources are updated annually in a planned manner to keep pace with changes in the content of studies and the use of new technologies in professional activities. The demand for material resources is discussed and approved at meetings of the Academy of Arts (henceforth, AA) and the Faculty's Dean's Office, and the necessary publications are ordered. The study process is provided with the necessary means, materials, equipment, and specialised computer software to ensure the quality of studies.

The upgrading of resources is evident in the planned purchase of Fashion Design software in the course of 2023. Also, the renovation of the temporary M.K. Čiurlionis Art Gallery, which is a part of the Faculty (27 A. Mackevičiaus str.), with project funds is being carried out to provide additional auditoriums to meet the needs of the Design field studies.

Therefore, the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies in the text is well-organised and aims to provide adequate, sufficient, and accessible resources to students while ensuring the quality of studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Planning and upgrading of resources are adequate and up to date.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. No canteen.
2. More digital software implemented with remote access

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

The internal quality assurance system is based on a policy written in the *KAUKO quality manual* and the *KAUKO Strategy* and covers all levels of ongoing studies of the Design field, which are governed by special documents. The implementation and monitoring of studies are published on an electronic document management system. The internal quality assurance system includes the organisation of the quality assurance system, responsibility for quality assurance of various divisions of KAUKO and of individual employees, and the involvement of social stakeholders in the implementation of the measures for monitoring and improvement of study programmes. In order to ensure a continuous and systematic process of improving the quality of studies in response to changing labour market demands there are meetings every six months. At the end of the academic year, lecturers report on the implementation of their performance

plans in an annual self-assessment report. During the meetings, the changes to the ongoing study programmes are discussed at the Faculty's Dean's Office and implemented if they are seen as relevant. The internal quality assurance model works in a cycle of improvement through a selection of measures such as annual *self-assessment* and *comparability*; based on public accountability on all levels and mobilising the KAUKO community for targeted and high-quality implementation of the aims and objectives of KAUKO (SER, p. 43). The results of the self-assessment contribute to highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement of the field of study and plan the improvement of the quality of the field of study for each study year.

Strategic provisions for the improvement of the quality of KAUKO activities are based on the European Higher Education Area's provisions on quality assurance of studies, the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, KAUKO Statute, KAUKO policy of studies and applied science and art activity and KAUKO policy of human resources. According to the panel, the quality assurance system is very well organised and monitored. The improvement of quality and compliance with the labour market is guaranteed through the evaluation process and implementation.

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

The quality of studies is guaranteed by continuous feedback from students and social stakeholders via periodic surveys of students and meetings with stakeholders. Students are confident that the aims are clearly defined, the assessment criteria are clear and objective whilst the materials and learning resources help them to acquire new knowledge and skills. The relationships between lecturers and students are respectful, the students receive feedback from lecturers, and the atmosphere is open and quite informal.

Periodic surveys, meetings and discussions are also held with graduates and employers. At the meetings, alumni suggested providing more internships to enhance the students' work experience and more lectures on developing creativity and training. Future employers emphasised that students having the right attitude is essential. Social partners are giving periodic feedback about the needs of the labour market and their comments about the internship and cooperation projects with students and graduates. A database of social partners is in the making. The very well-functioning feedback loop and a close relationship with stakeholders illustrate the effectiveness of KAUKO's internal quality assurance system, which impressed the panel. For the future it could be beneficial to involve the social partners in the development process of the SER.

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

KAUKO is collecting a wide range of data to analyse for the implementation and improvement of the Design study field, which includes mobility of lecturers and students, project activities in foreign institutions, participation in Lithuanian and international conferences, seminars,

practical training, data on lecturers' and students' science and art activities, expert and consulting activities, the level of achievement of the outcomes of study courses and professional internships, the reasons for students' drop-out, the results of students' enrolment and completion of studies, the topics of the final theses, the graduates' employment, the activities of alumni (SER, p. 44). Qualitative indicators are based on the following criteria: the quality of the study programmes (study courses), feedback from students, social partners, and employers, quality of graduate training, etc.

The data are analysed and periodically presented at the meetings of the AA (once a month), the Design Study Field Committee (at least twice a year) and the Dean's Office (at least once a month). Once a year performance reports and action plans are compiled for the AA, the Faculty, and KAUKO. The results of students' learning outcomes for each semester, students' expectations, the implementation of professional internships, and the benefits of the social partners' participation in the study process are analysed at the AA meetings. Afterwards, the collected data are made publicly available in the KAUKO document catalogue and some data are published on the website. The panel was impressed by the wide range of data that are collected and reviewed by the KAUKO leading to a PDCA cycle of continuous improvement.

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

KAUKO holds surveys twice a year (after each course). This is an online anonymous survey evaluating the quality of the teaching of each study course. In case of questions, the Head of the AA initiates a meeting with the academic group, and, if required, the Head of Studies and/or the Dean of the Faculty, and Study Programme Coordinator are invited to the meetings. The results of all surveys are discussed at the Faculty and the AA meetings and decisions are made to improve the quality of studies. The stakeholders/students are informed about the decisions made and their implementation (student groups or individuals personally are informed on the e-page "You said it, we did it." According to the panel, this is an excellent system where students notice their voice is heard.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. KAUKO has an effective internal quality assurance system in place, especially 'you said we did it' feedback loop, PDCA cycle is excellent

(2) Weaknesses:

1. No direct involvement of social stakeholders in creating the self-evaluation paper.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

The links between Arts and Science are excellent. Students' research skills are systematically developed from the first year onwards through all course units until the final theses, which is very good and exceptional. They are taught to collect data, analyse, formulate and present the outcomes. Every study field has research aligned and there is a focus on societal challenges where lecturers, supervisors and students work together. It is amazing that 36 percent of final theses were outsourced, commissioned by organisations from which 17 per cent generated income. The ambition of KAUKO to increase the percentage by 5 per cent per year is greatly appreciated by the panel that is impressed by the excellent conditions for students to get involved in scientific or artistic research and the way it is systematically embedded into the curriculum.

The way teaching staff is permanently encouraged and supported to develop their competencies via a robust HR system to participate in competency development events, mobility and research is excellent.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	1. More round-table discussions with students could be held regarding changing or adapting study subjects.
Links between science (art) and studies	1. The panel recommends to continuously strive for high-level research and construct solid foundations for future applied Master's programmes.
Student admission and support	1. More attention to English language and presentation skills.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	1. It is recommended to try to generate more accurate data on employment rate and self-employment via surveys or an active alumni policy where KAUKO can stay in touch with them
Teaching staff	1. Continue with supporting staff to execute relevant research, to build international relations/partners in order to become a renowned and recognized institute
Learning facilities and resources	1. It is recommended to establish a dedicated social place for students for their informal gatherings with some access to food, for example, vending machine food service. 2. Remote access to digital software
Study quality management and public information	1. More involvement of students in the surveys 2. No direct involvement of social stakeholders in creating the self-evaluation paper. 3. Increase the availability of internships to enrich students' practical skills and organise lectures focused on fostering creativity.

VI. SUMMARY

KAUKO's mission is to focus on the implementation of innovation-driven practice-oriented higher education studies and an expansion of applied research activities that are important for the development of society. This is informed by the fact that there is a growing demand for designers with a high level of professional training in industry demands, trade and services, knowledge of innovation, digitalisation and sustainability within Lithuania's business and creative industries and internationally. The panel commends the College for implementing these new societal challenges into the curriculum.

The structure of Design study programmes is in line with the European Higher Education Area's provisions and guidelines for quality assurance of studies and the requirements for first-cycle collegial studies. During the site visit and in discussions with all stakeholders, the structure of the programmes with good basic education and open for individual choices was perceived as excellent and well-functioning, able to quickly integrate new trends and technologies into an innovation-driven curriculum. In general, the individualisation of the study programmes is worked out in detail and covers all aspects such as illness or financial conditions. The evaluation and development of the final thesis, with 12 ECT, fully meets the requirements of the field direction and cycle and there is very good professional guidance in developing and executing the research for the final thesis.

Applied Science and Art Activities (ASAA) are executed based on the mission of KAUKO with an action plan that provides quantitative and qualitative targets for research and artistic practice with a focus on societal challenges on (inter) national and regional levels. The fact that all study fields have research aligned to the discipline as well as the content and amount of research outputs show that KAUKO is very serious and effective in executing and aligning research to the study programmes where students, lecturers and supervisors are encouraged to work together on relevant topics in art and design innovation. Students' research skills are systematically developed from the first year onward concluding with the final thesis. The student is encouraged to explore socially relevant topics, aligned with one's own practice and related to the field of expertise of the supervisor to maximise the relevance of the research of the final thesis, which is excellent. The panel is impressed by the amount of research output, its level and relevance and the strong connection between research and the study programmes. The fact that 36 percent of final theses are outsourced, shows that KAUKO's research ambition is high as well as the students' access to research.

Mobility and international relations are very important for KAUKO. A special Unit for International Relations is dedicated to student mobility, accommodating them to participate in internships, Erasmus+ exchange, Nordplus programmes and short-term mobility taster of two weeks. According to the panel, this is a great and important offer and therefore it is a pity that the uptake of student mobility is relatively low. The panel understands this is caused by social commitments in students' personal lives, however, additional English language courses and presentation skills might be helpful to generate more self-confidence. An increase in short-term

exchange programme offerings might be helpful for those students who lack the funding and time for a longer exchange programme.

KAUKO has a robust developed academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support system, where students have a close relationship with lecturers, can express their problems to them, and also have a psychologist for personal problems and a wide range of scholarships and other financial support that they can use. Also, KAUNAS provides excellent study information and student counselling through an introduction week, the website, the Moodle learning environment, and specialist mentors. Finally, the panel noticed students are actively invited to participate in a wide range of cultural, organisational, professional, academic and voluntary practical activities, which is unique.

The study programmes provide a comprehensive and well-structured learning experience with a variety of relevant teaching and learning methods, including reflective study methods that support the students in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Especially bridging theory and practice, the integration of existing and new knowledge and experience is excellent as well as the focus on social and personal competencies. KAUKO also offers very good support for socially vulnerable groups.

The system of monitoring study progress and guidance via a cumulative assessment system based on active and consistent monitoring of students' study progress, identifying issues and gaps, differentiating and individualising activities is very well structured and very well-functioning, which was noticed by the panel.

KAUKO's analysis of graduate employability is carried out annually and, reflecting on feedback provided by the students, they feel well prepared for the labour market or self-employment after their studies. KAUKO holds a detailed *Code of Academic Ethics* outlining the principles of transparency of the study and research processes, academic integrity, equality, non-discrimination, justice, and protection of intellectual property. The panel learned that KAUKO offers students a safe and inclusive environment with academic integrity, transparency and (psychological) support in place for students with special needs. According to the panel, KAUKO has a fair, clear and consistent system for submitting and examining the appeals and complaints regarding the study process.

The number, qualification, and competence of teaching staff within the Design field are adequate for achieving the learning outcomes. The panel also noticed that KAUKO has a robust mobility system in place to support its teaching staff, recognising it is essential for professional development, international cooperation, and executing the university's mission.

The physical, informational, and financial resources of the Department of Design are adequate and suitable for an effective learning process. The studios have impressive facilities with up-to-date digital tools. The Design programmes are based in a beautiful historic building with an annex further down the road, which has its limits in efficiency, some facilities such as a cantine are not available and students have to travel. The very well-equipped library, for example, is on

the main campus, and a system with interlibrary loan and online ordering is in place to make it more accessible and convenient for students. The planning and upgrading of resources is well-organised and aims to provide adequate, sufficient, up-to-date and accessible resources to students while ensuring the quality of studies.

KAUKO collects a wide range of data to analyse for the implementation and improvement of the Design programmes. KAUKO's internal quality assurance model works in a PDCA cycle of improvement through a selection of measures such as annual *self-assessment* and *benchmark*. KAUKO's quality assurance system is very elaborate, well-organised and monitored. The improvement of quality and compliance with the labour market is guaranteed through a solid evaluation process with stakeholders and graduates via periodic surveys. The very well-functioning feedback loop with stakeholders illustrates the effectiveness of KAUKO's internal quality assurance system. Students are also actively involved in evaluating the course and teacher through surveys. Their input is discussed and wherever it improves the quality of study, changes in the course content or assessment are followed up. According to the panel, the College ensures that students' voices are heard.

Expert panel chairperson signature:
Prof. Dr. José Teunissen