



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of LAW

at Kauno kolegija

Expert panel:

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3. **Dr. Donatas Murauskas**, *representative of social partners*;
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Report language – English

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Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Law
State code	6531KX008
Type of studies	Collegial
Cycle of studies	First study cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years)
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	At least secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	31/08/2001

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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 to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 3 October, 2023.

Dr. Archil Chochia (panel chairperson) *Senior Researcher, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia;*

Prof. Dr. Hans-Joachim Reinhard, *Professor at Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany;*

Dr. Donatas Murauskas, *Litigation Lawyer at „Ellex Valiūnas” Law firm, Lithuania;*

Ms. Raminta Sangavičiūtė, *Master student in the Criminal and business law programme at the Faculty of Law, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Composition of the Law Study Programme Committee
2.	Statistics on outgoing and incoming students

1.4. BACKGROUND OF LAW FIELD STUDIES AT KAUNO KOLEGIJA

Kauno kolegija is a state multidisciplinary higher education institution established in 2000 and located in Kaunas, Lithuania. It is one of country's largest higher education institutions with approximately 5000 students, 800 employees and 34338 graduates. The college is managed by the Director, sole governing body, while additional collegial governing bodies are Kauno kolegija Council (consisting of nine members) and Academic Council (consisting of 33 members). Kauno kolegija has four faculties (Faculty of Business, Faculty of Technologies, Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Arts and Education) in Kaunas and regional division in Taurage. The studies are conducted across 48 study programmes in 34 fields.

Law filed studies are implemented by the Faculty of Business, which has five departments (including the Department of Management and Law), offers 11 study programmes and has approximately 1510 students. The studies in the field of Law were launched in 2001 and currently has 114 students. In ranking the study fields among non-university institutions for the academic year 2021-2022, the study field of Law was ranked as 1st.

Kauno kolegija has an active cooperation with 274 foreign partners, including 238 within Erasmus+ Mobility Programme. The college is a member of several international associations and networks, regularly implements local and international projects and conducts research.

Kauno kolegija was evaluated by the international external committee and accredited in 2014 and 2022. Law study programme was externally evaluated in 2017 and received a positive, 3-year accreditation.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the Law study field 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	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	22

*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. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND CURRICULUM

Aims, learning outcomes, and curriculum are evaluated according to 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)

Factual situation

According to market surveys there is a big demand for qualified legal experts. Kauno kolegija intends to cope with this demand and wants to qualify students for employment in legal professions. These legal experts are needed in the private and public sector but may work in independent professions, too. The law enforcement sector (*e.g.*, police) requires civil servants with legal expertise.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The demand for legal experts is obviously high and experiences in the past show that most students get a job within a reasonable time. The 3 different internships required during the programme certainly help for networking in the labour market. Indeed, the expert panel wants to point out that there are similar programs in other Lithuanian HEI. Competition is high and Kauno kolegija should maintain its standards in order to remain attractive for students.

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

Factual situation

Kauno kolegija aims to achieve learning outcomes with creative and critical thinking and innovative and up-to-date tools. Lithuanian and international stakeholders are involved in various stages of the study process. They can give lectures, evaluate final theses or participate in research or joint projects. A close cooperation with social partners ensures both practical applicability and the coherence between theory and practice.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Close partnership with stakeholders surely helps students to find attractive jobs. It is also a support for students to find out professional preferences. The expert panel appreciates that European Union law is a compulsory part of the study plan with 5 credits. It is true that the study programme has its main focus on Lithuanian Law but meanwhile European Union Law has a strong impact on many areas of national law. This has raised the question whether European Union Law should be extended (*e.g.*, as an optional unit).

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

Legal requirements are complied.

Table No. 1 Study programme's in Law 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	180 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	150 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	30 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	32 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	10 ECTS
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	42%
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	58%

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

Factual situation

The programme aims at preparing students for the labour market by providing them with a core area of activities and key competences. It terminates with the acquisition of a Professional Bachelor's degree. 11 outcomes were set (SER, Annex 1). They shall ensure a successful training for legal professionals that are apt for the labour market. Students should participate in active training, case studies and discussions.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The intended outcomes seem reasonable and logic. The method to give active training, dealing with case studies and discuss topics is appropriate to prepare legal experts because these are skills that they will need in practice.

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

Factual situation

The courses are structured in a consistent way. After general study in the first semester topics become more complex. Students develop their practical skills in three different internships. Internship 3 is decisive for the selection of the topic for the final thesis.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The concept of the programme allows students a progressive development of their skills and competences. As a bonus, it also offers English as foreign language despite the fact that teaching language is Lithuanian.

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

Factual situation

Students have various options to personalize their study. They may set up an individual study plan and study only part-time. They may choose three elective courses and may find themselves an internship. It is also possible to contract a final thesis with a company but in the current period there were no contracts.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students have enough options to personalise their study plan. It should be ensured that they get adequate support if they want to study part-time only or have to interrupt their study because of pregnancy, health decline or other personal issues.

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

Factual situation

The topic for the final thesis may be proposed by academic staff, stakeholders and by students. Normally, the topic is announced 3 months before but for law students the announcement is 1 year before graduation. The topic must be related to Professional Internship 3 so students must anticipate/plan the direction of the final thesis before Professional Internship starts (SER p. 13). One supervisor must be from the academic staff and one practitioner must participate. The reviewers get the thesis at least 5 days before the Assessment Committee meets. At least one member should hold a Doctor of Juridical Science degree and the Chairperson should represent stakeholders.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The formal criteria for the final thesis are suitable. It was not quite obvious why law students get their topic one year before graduation whereas in other study fields it is a three-month period only. It is questionable why internship 3 is decisive for the topic of the final thesis. First, after two years of study not all students might have detected their preferences for a legal area. It was not clear for the expert panel how strict the link between internship 3 and topic for the final thesis is handled in the procedure. In any case, it should be possible and transparent for

students that they can also propose a topic that is not part of internship 3 but of scientific interest for them.

On the other hand, it is a good support for students if they can contract a final thesis with a company. Unfortunately, up to now this path has not been used.

Reviewers might get the thesis 5 days before the Assessment Committee meets. This is considered as a very short time to read intensively a thesis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Good preparation for the labour market.
2. Close cooperation between Kauno kolegija and practice.
3. Transparency on the intended outcomes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Strict link between internship 3 and topic of the final thesis.
2. No contracts with companies on thesis.
3. Underestimated role of European Union Law.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities are evaluated according to 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

Factual situation

Research activities are implemented in accordance with the strategic plan of the Kauno kolegija and annual Action Plans of the Department of Management and Law, and aim to offer solution on local, national and international level. Such research activities are planned with academic staff within their individual annual activity plans and amount to a minimum of 40% of FTE for the professors and minimum of 15% for the lecturers. Within the past three years, in the field of law Kauno kolegija has produced 31 scientific articles, 11 scientific reports, 27 applied research, 4 textbooks and methodological tools. Furthermore, contracted consultations were provided to the local partners.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Research activities and priorities in the field of law are well structured within different action and strategy plans, and they are clearly communicated to the academic personnel. Furthermore, the college has an incentive system to motivate academic staff, providing additional financial rewards based on the level of produced research output. It became evident

to the expert panel that the system is well-communicated and clearly understood by the academic personnel. Action plan for 2023-2025 applied science activities in the field of law provides clear division within research fields, allocated funds and anticipated results. However, plan lacks more details on what is considered as “high-level databases”. It is also unclear how would aiming at joint publications with foreign co-authors, contributes to the college’s aims, rather than focusing on clearly defined goals for raised international outreach. Participation in the international projects remains low.

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

Factual situation

The content renewal of the study programme in the field of law at Kauno kolegija is regular and reflected in the descriptions of the study modules. The latest developments, including the legislation, caselaw, research findings, etc. are integrated into the study programmes. Relevant topics are updated or added in the different areas covered by the programme, including civil law, criminal law, family law, European Union law, etc. Annual conferences organised by Kauno kolegija focus on different topics and contribute to strengthening the links between offered study programme and latest developments in science within fields covered by it.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is convinced that the college has a well-established mechanism to update the content of the courses offered within the study programme, having it structured, regular and clearly communicated to the teaching personnel seems to be producing desired results, based on the overview of the offered content, teachers’ and stakeholders’ feedback. It is evident that the research conducted by the academic personnel of the college, as well as the topics annual conferences focus on, are clearly and relevantly related to the topics covered by the offered curriculum. Besides content of the relevant courses, good example of the link between offered study programme and latest developments in science is the final theses defended by the students in the past three years at the Kauno kolegija. Furthermore, decent level of offered resources at the library, including database subscriptions, clearly contribute to keeping the content of the study programme up-to-date.

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

Factual situation

Kauno kolegija regularly organises student conferences and offers possibility for students to present and publish their research fundings, individually or together with another students, or with the teaching personnel. In the past three years, 16 peer-reviewed articles and 11 reports in the field of law have been published by the students. Furthermore, the college offers a possibility for students to be involved the research projects and applied research activities, including free legal counselling. Various opportunities in this regard are offered to the students via college’s Business Centre.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Expert panel found out that opportunities and conditions offered to the students are well-established and clearly communicated to the students. The students demonstrated relevant knowledge of given opportunities, however their involvement remains relatively low. Proposals “Development of students’ research/art abilities during Semesters” and “Summer Projects of Students’ Research”, submitted to the Lithuanian Research Council, are appropriate and positive initiative from the college and obtaining the funding should be prioritised, necessary resources allocated to achieve the goal.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Well-established and communicated incentive system to encourage academic personnel to produce high-level research output.
2. Increased number of publications.
3. Balance between practice and science in the study content and the academic personnel.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of international projects, as a coordinator or as a partner.
2. Number of high-level publications remains low (Scopus/WoS indexed journals).
3. Low level of students’ participation at the conferences and publications.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Factual situation

Students’ admission to the studies of the field of Law is carried out following the terms and conditions of students’ admission to collegial studies, following the principles of general admission, the Description of Ranking the Best, and the Rules of Students’ Admission to Kauno kolegija (approved by the Academic Council and available on the Kauno kolegija website). General admission is administered by the Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools for General Admission (LAMA BPO), authorized by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, at the national level through the LAMA BPO information system. The study programme of the field admits persons who have acquired at least secondary education. Admission of students is carried out to each study programme separately by competition according to the competitive entrance score depending on the mode of studies and method of funding. The rules of students’ admission to Kauno kolegija define the structure of the competitive score and the methodology of its calculation.

The requirements for the Law integrated study programme include the results of the state maturity exams of History (0,4 of the competitive score), Mathematics or Information Technology or Foreign Language (0,2 of the competitive score), other subject not coinciding with the first, second or fourth subject (0,2 of the competitive score), Lithuanian Language and Literature (0,2 of the competitive score).

The additional points for: at least grade 9 for the state school-leaving paper in the first or second subject; completed basic military training or compulsory initial military service; prizes for international Olympiads and competitions; prizes for national Olympiads and competitions; graduates of vocational training programmes in the same field of education with honours or graduates of vocational training programmes in the same field of education and having at least one year of work experience according to the acquired qualification; participation in international or national youth voluntary activities for at least 3 months, can be awarded to applicants. The rules of students' admission define the minimal competitive score of the entrant, which is at least 4.3 and meets the requirements set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania.

The information regarding the admission procedure, the calculation of the competitive score, acceptance of documents, and study programmes is provided on the Kauno kolegija's website, LAMA BPO, and other websites that provide information on studies, in various publications ("Kur stoti", etc.).

As it is noted in the SER, information regarding the admission procedure, selection and the organisation of studies is presented at study fairs, during visits to general education schools and other events, is provided at the Unit of Students' Admission, in faculties (e.g., during meetings/discussions with students, monitors of academic groups, and(or) members of the Students' Representative Council; by counselling students live and(or) online and providing information on the Internet).

The number of the first priority applicants during the evaluated period was 50, 39, 50, 63 with the remaining priorities consisting of 267, 190, 214, 252. Out of these numbers the agreements to non-state funded places were signed: 40 in 2019, 34 in 2020, 36 in 2021, 38 in 2022.

The data reveal an increase in the number of applications to the study programme of Law from 2021. In 2022, the number of applicants to the SPL by all priorities increased by around 18 per cent and by 1st priority by around 26 per cent compared to 2021. From 2020 onwards, the general admission was organised in 2 phases, whereas in 2019, it was organised in 3 phases. It can be assumed that the changes in the terms and conditions of organising admission may have impacted the decrease in the total number of applications in 2020 compared to the previous year. The number of students who have chosen the study programme of Law and signed study agreements remained similar during the period under assessment.

The total number of admitted students remains steady with slight fluctuations. During the analysed period, the lowest admission score remained quite steady, whereas the highest admission score increased from 7.61 in 2019 to 8.24 in 2022.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The college follows the national guidelines and procedures for student admission that are clear and well outlined. The requirements for the admission score are also in line with the national regulations and the goals of the study programme and pose no specific issues to the applicants. The information is available on the Kauno kolegija website.

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

Factual situation

Until 2021, the academic recognition of secondary and higher education acquired abroad (except for scientific degrees) was performed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). Since 2021, Kauno kolegija has been granted the right to carry out academic recognition of prospective students' education and qualifications related to higher education obtained under the educational programmes of foreign countries and international organisations. During the period under assessment, 110 persons applied for academic recognition of foreign qualifications, from whom 100 persons had their foreign secondary education recognised in Kauno kolegija. No SPL students applied for recognition of secondary education obtained abroad during the period under assessment.

The students of the study field of Law can submit applications to have their learning outcomes of previous studies achieved in a formal or non-formal (informal) way credited. The learning outcomes achieved in a formal way are credited following the Procedure for crediting learning achievements in Kauno kolegija. In Kauno kolegija, the learning achievements obtained following the aligned in the agreement (in the case of partial studies) and(or) non-aligned study content (including achievements of previous studies) may be recognised. During the assessment of learning achievements, a decision is made whether the learner's achievements correspond to the learning outcomes set for the desired programme. A maximum of 75 per cent of the volume of the study programme to be studied can be credited, except for the persons who have the learning achievements of the courses/modules previously studied at Kauno kolegija credited. It should be noted that final theses cannot be credited.

During the period under assessment, 15 students applied regarding crediting study achievements acquired under aligned/non-aligned study content. All the study courses that met the formal requirements were credited. 4 students who returned from partial studies/internships under Erasmus+ had the courses studied and positively assessed credited. Study achievements acquired under non-aligned study content were also credited to students (11 in total) having evaluated their previous learning achievements acquired in other higher education institutions. In the last three years, 8 students have been admitted to a higher course or semester based on their previous achievements in Kauno kolegija and their crediting.

The assessment and recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and(or) informal learning and self-study at Kauno kolegija is carried out following the *Description of the procedure for assessing and recognising competencies acquired in non-formal*

education and self-study as learning outcomes in Kauno kolegija, which allows for crediting competencies acquired at work, during in-service training, participating in the activities of various organisations and groups, volunteering, doing work that benefits the community, studying in institutions that implement non-formal education, developing competencies individually by self-study and other ways. The person has to substantiate and prove that those competencies are equivalent to the learning outcomes of the courses studied. The decision on crediting learning outcomes is made by an Assessment Board established by order of the Director. The knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning and self-education may be recognized and credited as learning outcomes at a maximum of 75 per cent of the volume of the study programme to be studied. During the period under assessment, there was no need for assessing and recognising informal and non-formal learning achievements of the SFL students.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The college follows the procedures, both set by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as the ones set by the college. The procedures are well outlined, and the criteria are clear.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Factual situation

Academic mobility in Kauno kolegija is organised by the Unit for International Relations. Besides, each faculty has a Coordinator of International Activities, who, together with the Dean of the Faculty and the heads of departments, plans students' mobility flows, organises meetings with students, selects candidates, manages documentation, and receives incoming international students.

Information on the opportunities to participate in mobility programmes is available on the Kauno kolegija website and social networks. Besides, briefings are organised (e.g., Erasmus + Info Days, where students share their impressions from Erasmus+ studies/internships and participate in quizzes and lotteries). Mobility experiences are also shared on the Kauno kolegija's website, social networks and during various other events organised by the faculty. The Faculty International Coordinator periodically gives students detailed presentations. The representatives of international agencies (Algoos, Jobtrust, Amber Jobs) contribute to and participate in these activities.

The selection of students to participate in mobility programmes is carried out by the faculty twice a year following clear and publicly available criteria.

During the period under assessment, 2 SFL students studied Erasmus+ partial study programmes (at Anadolu University, Turkey). It is evident that the number of students coming from other foreign higher education institutions to the SPL is also low. In the last three years, only 4 students arrived (e.g., from Ukraine (National Transport University), Turkey (Anadolu University), and Spain (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria)). The data suggest that the mobility rates of the SFL students are insufficient. Notably, there was no student mobility during the

pandemic period (2020), which can be attributed to the suspension of international activities during the pandemic.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The students appear to have enough opportunities for mobility, yet they are not as active as it would be beneficial to the college, the programme and the students themselves. Exceptionally low numbers of students choose to go abroad. It seems that the college is not capable of attracting its students to go study, to participate in projects, activities or do internships abroad, as well as college struggles to attract incoming students.

While there is enough information reaching the students about the exchange opportunities, the evaluation visit revealed that students have difficulty for long-term exchanges due to their everyday responsibilities and job. More effort should be put in promoting not only possibilities to study abroad, since the majority of the students are already working, but also to participate in short-term projects, activities, internships etc.

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

Factual situation

The academic support includes consultations and information on study issues; support for international mobility; services of the Library and Information Resource Centre; Career and Language Centre services. The non-academic assistance includes financial support, accommodation, sports and leisure services; meeting students'/unclassified students' individual needs; and psychological support (in Lithuanian, English and Russian).

During the Introductory Week, first-year students get acquainted with the relevant documents, such as the Kauno kolegija organisational structure; the procedure for organising studies; the study schedule; the procedure for organising examination sessions; internal rules; the regulation on awarding scholarships; the Library resources and access to its services; the structure and volume of the study programme, its study plan, and learning achievement assessment system; compulsory and freely elective courses; possibilities of getting loans and social grants. Information about studies is also provided online, on noticeboards. The VLE Moodle stores the documents regulating studies, timetables, and methodological materials of study courses. First-year students are provided with special assistance. They have tutors, a lecturer and a senior student, and Student Memos are handed out.

During the first lecturers, the academic staff familiarise students with the description of the course, its aim, learning outcomes, study and assessment methods, study content, organisation of self-study, consultations, cumulative assessment system, and assessment criteria. The academic staff consult students on the issues related to the course unit taught while preparing for interim and final assessments and writing self-study, final and other papers. Consultations are provided at the time specified in the timetable and considering students' needs. The academic staff also advise students remotely using the VLE Moodle and(or) email.

Students who cannot consistently attend lectures due to illness or other personal justifiable reasons are provided with the possibility of attending lectures according to a free schedule and studying on an individual one. They can be granted a study break or academic leave, and their academic accountings can be brought forward or postponed.

The Kauno kolegija Library staff organise individual consultations and practical training for students on using information sources in the study and research papers, literature analysis, rules and possibilities of citing sources, plagiarism prevention. In response to the feedback from students and the academic staff, individual training courses on “Searching for information sources”, “Literature analysis and citation of sources”, etc., were launched on a larger scale in 2021.

The staff of the Career Centre also provide individual counselling to students on the issues of career planning/management, entrepreneurship, and continuity of studies. 3 group consultations on career planning/management issues are organised annually with about 90 participants. Training in general competencies on a variety of topics is provided, such as job interview simulation “Hot Chair”, “Completion of CV”, “Cover Letters and Job Interview”, “Public Speaking”, “Alternative Career”, “Formation of a Social Circle”, “Basics of Business Start-up”, “Intercultural Communication”, “Teamwork”, “Leadership”, “Management of Non-Profit Organisations”, “Negotiations”, “Business Simulation”, “Social Networks and Possibilities of Their Use”, etc.

From 2020, the students of the Faculty of Business, including those studying the field of Law, can improve their English (at Level C1) and Russian (at Levels A1/A2, B1) free of charge.

Kauno kolegija students are provided with free of charge confidential psychological counselling from a professional psychologist. These consultations are provided remotely, via the most convenient channel for the student, in Lithuanian, English, and Russian. Psychological support services at the national level are also available (the Kauno kolegija’s website provides information on where to seek urgent help).

Students are provided with financial support. Depending on learning achievements, Kauno kolegija students are awarded incentive scholarships. One-off grants may be awarded for exceptional learning achievements, research outcomes, and personal strides. The State Study Fund awards social grants and study scholarships and provides financial assistance to students with disabilities. Financially disadvantaged students, those whose working capacity is 45 per cent or less or the level of disability is severe or moderate (which has been determined following legal acts), and who have been granted state care may apply for a social grant. Students can also use the possibility of taking a state or state-sponsored loan to pay for tuition, living expenses, or partial studies. 74 applications from the SFL students for loans were submitted between 2020 and 2022.

60 students were awarded incentive scholarships for the best academic performance. During the period under assessment, 55 students received one-off grants in the cases provided for in the Kauno kolegija *Regulation on Scholarships* (e.g., for promoting the name of Kauno kolegija, outstanding professional abilities demonstrated in international projects, scientific

conferences, and competitions; the results achieved in applied science activities; organising and hosting events; social activities and(or) good performance of the duties of the group monitor, etc.).

The State Study Fund administers social grants. According to the information provided by the Fund, over the past three years, 31 students received social grants in the amount of 6.5 basic social allowances. The Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour provides financial support to students with disabilities by granting special needs allowances and, for those studying in non-state funded placements, partial reimbursement of tuition fees for each semester. However, during the last three years, no students of the study programme of Law with severe or moderate disabilities or the incapacity of 45 per cent or less applied for such an allowance nor submitted the documents.

The students who study in the placements not funded by the state and have financial problems can pay the tuition fee in instalments following the procedure established in Kauno kolegija.

Students are accommodated in 4 dormitories, with an average of 1,200 inhabitants. Orphans get a 40 per cent discount on dormitory fees.

A new position, Students' Support Coordinator, was established in the Unit for Studies. To implement the strategic goals, it is planned to further develop and improve the Kauno kolegija system of students' support and mentoring; provide one-stop-shop principle-based information dissemination to the Kauno kolegija students; coordinate the integration of students with individual needs into the study process and organise activities and training for students to promote the public spirit and active learning.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The students appear to be well taken care of. The academic, social, financial, and personal support is sufficient, and meets the needs of students. It is clear that students, teachers and other staff members have very close relationships with each other. Students feel heard, understood, respected and valued. The evaluation visit also revealed that the students are well informed about the types of support available to them, as well as know whom to ask for additional information. It is important to note that free psychological help is offered to the students, which is an admirable form of support for the students of Kauno kolegija. College pays special attention to students' needs. The creation of the Students' Support Coordinator is also commendable, as it allows to overlook the available support and its effectiveness, as well as provides clarity to students seeking for different types of support – everything is in one place.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

Factual situation

To ensure the successful adaptation of first-year students to the academic and social environment, academic group tutors (a lecturer and a senior student) are appointed to advise students on academic issues and help them find answers to questions about their

studies, extracurricular activities, etc. Timely academic and other support is systematically provided to newly admitted students. In the first weeks of studies, introductory meetings are organised with the faculty administration and members of the Students' Representative Council, who help first-year students integrate into the Kauno kolegija community and invite them to join its activities. Also, the services of the Kauno kolegija Library and the Information Resource Centre are introduced. Meetings of the Dean and the Vice-Dean with first-year academic groups and the Head of the Department with first-year and senior students at mid-term and(or) at the end of a semester are organised. These meetings allow students to tell what information they lack or what counselling they need.

During studies, students can contact a responsible member of the administrative staff, the group tutor or the lecturer in a way convenient for them to clarify relevant issues or solve the problems encountered. During periodic meetings of the faculty administration and academic group monitors, timely and relevant information on studies is provided; options for suspending studies or changing the study mode/programme are presented; problems related to studies, or their organisation are discussed; proposals for improving the study quality are considered, etc.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The introduction to the college, the faculty, and the study programme before the start of the studies is sufficient. The students also seem to be happy with the available student counselling and the guidance provided by teachers and staff members. The students receive adequate introduction to their studies at the college, as well as to their study programmes. As the studies progress, the students are able to consult with their teachers and other responsible staff on a variety of issues.

Overall, the students seem to be well guided in the study process, both in the beginning of their studies, as well as further along the way.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Free psychological help for the students in need.
2. The establishment of the Students' Support Coordinator that gathers the provided support to students in one place and allows for its growth.
3. Close relationships between students, teachers and staff members.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. International mobility of outgoing students, inability to attract incoming students.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment are 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

Factual situation

The study programme “Law” is implemented in a full-time mode and include contact and self-study hours. Contact activities (theoretical and practical classes, consultations) accounts for 42 per cent of a student’s workload (SER, p. 28).

Teaching staff includes a variety of methods (e. g. lecture, discussion, research, simulation, problem-solving, brainstorming, individual and group activities, comprehension of the study materials, reflection, analysis and synthesis of information, case study) (SER, p. 28).

A professional internship is an important part of the studies: Students develop their practical skills during 32-credit professional internships (SER, p. 10). According to SER, the link between the chosen specialisation, the final professional internship, and the final thesis is maintained (SER, p. 11).

During the Panel's meetings with teaching staff and students, it became evident that the study program prioritizes the development of practical skills that are directly relevant to the demands of the job market. The teaching staff actively encourages students to participate in tasks that enhance their practical skills, such as completing forms that are used in practice by law-enforcement authorities. This hands-on approach to learning effectively bridges the gap between theory and real-world application. The social partners affirmed the high demand for graduates from the HEI, expressing their interest in having students apply for internships, which are often expected to lead to regular positions within their organizations.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The HEI clearly prioritizes alignment with market needs, emphasizing the cultivation of practical skills essential in the legal industry. Most of the teaching staff consists of active practitioners in various legal fields, spanning roles in law enforcement, courts, customs offices, bailiffs, and in-house legal positions, contributing valuable real-world expertise to the academic environment.

The Panel is gratified to note that the HEI's administration has articulated a clear vision for the graduates of their study program – aiming to produce mid-level lawyers with the potential for further academic advancement. The feedback from social partners during the Panel meetings underscores a genuine demand for legal professionals with such qualifications in the field.

The HEI's commitment to fostering scientific engagement among students is evident, with active encouragement for students to co-author research. The institution's legal clinic, where

students, in collaboration with teaching staff, offer consultations to the Kaunas community, provides practical training for students in handling real-world situations. To further enhance the program, there may be an opportunity to emphasize and expand the practical application of English language skills during the study program.

The HEI's comprehensive approach to stakeholder involvement, coupled with the close connection between the administration, teaching staff, and social partners, streamlines market-oriented adjustments to the program. This collaboration extends beyond the classroom, as students actively participate in extracurricular activities organized by social partners, promoting both institutional awareness and potential future job prospects. The existence of a functioning career centre within the HEI is also a significant asset, offering additional support to students in their career development.

The strong examples of collaboration between social partners and the HEI administration, such as the involvement of a private entity representative in suggesting a thesis topic, underscores the institution's adaptability and responsiveness to market dynamics. These partnerships can further flourish by creating more structured and ongoing channels for industry involvement, facilitating an exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise.

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

Factual situation

The programme includes measures for developing a system of students' individual study needs and implementing teaching/learning activities that respond to students' different needs (i. e. the HEI approved the Description of the procedure for personalising the study process considering the individual needs of a student/unclassified student arising from disability and (or) learning difficulties) (SER, p. 29). The infrastructure of the Academic Campus is accessible to people with disabilities (SER, p. 39).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The HEI demonstrates a commendable commitment to meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups and students with special requirements. Both the staff and administration exhibit a high level of responsiveness and flexibility in catering to these needs.

During the site visit, the teaching staff showcased instances of an individualized approach employed for students with special needs. Moreover, the HEI is well-prepared to establish individualized study plans in accordance with existing regulations, ensuring that every student's unique needs are adequately addressed. This institutional commitment to inclusivity and adaptability represents a promising foundation, and further investments in accessibility and support services could enhance the overall learning experience for 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

Factual situation

The SER includes explanation of study monitoring system. The HEI has developed and applies the system of assessing students' achievements (SER, p. 29). Various forms of feedback are used to provide learners with the opportunity to self-assess their learning outcomes through reflection (SER, p. 29).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The HEI offers comprehensive information through Moodle, and the administration is generally accommodating to students' needs. Although the primary emphasis in monitoring study results is placed on the final assessment, students receive valuable feedback on their assignments, reports, and self-study papers submitted via the VLE Moodle. This feedback, accessible to the students, allows them to understand the rationale behind their evaluations and learn from their mistakes. The comments and recommendations provided also serve as guidance for improving their future assignments or papers.

Moreover, the HEI has implemented a rigorous final supervision process before the thesis defence, which includes an additional assessment by the Department. This stringent evaluation process ensures that only high-quality theses are defended, maintaining the academic standards of the institution.

The program is designed to provide students with practical skills relevant to a career as a mid-level lawyer or administrator. Students develop essential skills in writing, analysis, and basic legal knowledge, which are complemented by internships that offer hands-on experience in the field. This combination of academic and practical training equips students with a strong foundation for assessing their own progress in their studies.

During on-site visits, alumni have confirmed that the basic legal knowledge acquired through the program serves as a great starting point for making more individualized career development choices. This reaffirms the program's effectiveness in preparing students for their future career paths.

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

Factual situation

Graduates' employment is analysed to assess the demand for trained specialists and the program's relevance in the study field (SER, p. 30).

Based on the available data, it can be observed that approximately 55 percent of the respondents secured employment within six months after graduation, with the proportion of graduates working in their field of specialization ranging from 33.33 percent in 2021 to 52.63 percent in 2022 (SER, p. 31).

One year after graduation, the Career Centre, in collaboration with the Quality Management Unit, conducts an institutional survey of all graduates to evaluate their professional readiness and their integration into the labour market (SER, p. 31).

Members of the Alumni Club share their professional experiences regarding career and employment opportunities, the development of professional activities, and provide valuable professional guidance (SER, p. 31).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The information about graduates' employment is tracked. The HEI surveys graduates' employment status. However, more comprehensive surveys could be conducted to understand the dynamics of employment and to explain reasons of graduates' non-employment.

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

Factual situation

All members of the HEI, including students, undertake to comply with the provisions of the HEI Code of Academic Ethics and not tolerate its violations (SER, p. 31).

Study papers are checked by the text-matching tool Turnitin in the Moodle environment. The theses can be defended publicly only if no text overlaps can be interpreted as plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism are registered in the plagiarism register and submitted to the Ethics Committee for consideration. The SER indicates examples of how institutional framework on academic integrity functioned in cases of plagiarism (SER, p. 31).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The relationship and communication at the HEI are characterized by informality, and this informality brings evident benefits to students as it conveys the staff's willingness and readiness to assist them. Nonetheless, this informal approach to communication may pose challenges when it comes to the effective implementation of impartial academic ethics procedures.

During the on-site visit, students identified curators, who are HEI staff members they would reach out to in cases involving potential breaches of academic ethics. In light of this, it becomes apparent that students may need to be better informed about the existence of formal and impartial internal procedures designed to safeguard academic integrity.

To address this concern, it is recommended to provide students with more comprehensive information about the workings of the Academic Ethics Committee, ensuring that they are aware of the formal procedures available to uphold academic ethics and integrity. This would help strike a balance between the informal and formal aspects of communication and support within the institution.

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

Factual situation

The procedures and conditions for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints are regulated by the internal regulation (SER, p. 32). SER includes information about one complaint that was received from the students about the quality of teaching and the violation of the study procedures of a lecturer. Having assessed the reasonableness of the complaint and the students' feedback during a survey, the lecturer no longer works in the HEI (SER, p. 32).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

When students were visited on-site, they demonstrated a fundamental grasp of appeal procedures and their awareness of the practical aspects of a successful appeal. It's evident that the HEI places a strong emphasis on the appeal process, having refined it following the last assessment of the institution's study programs.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Learning process takes into account labour market needs and provides necessary skills.
2. The HEI understands its goals in the market and fulfils them.
3. Strong connections with social partners.
4. Exceptionally clear focus on regional labour demands.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. More comprehensive analysis of graduates' employment could be useful.
2. Limited students' knowledge about procedures related to academic integrity.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff are evaluated according to 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

Factual situation

Since the last evaluation the number of teaching staff has increased and has remained stable. The turnover rate is negligible and the average age is 44 years meaning that the majority of staff will stay. A high percentage has long teaching experience. The ratio of 7 students per lecturer fulfils the minimum requirements. 87 percent of the study programme are taught by practitioners. Academic staff with permanent contracts is certified every 5 years. In response of the need for distance learning staff participated actively in training courses.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The low turn-over rate is very positive since it guarantees a constant and continuous teaching. The ratio of 7 students per lecturer is the minimum level and should be improved. It is

appreciated that academic staff is certified every 5 years. If done properly, this procedure can ensure quality. The average age of teaching staff seems to be quite homogenous. Despite the low average age and the staff's teaching experience the college should permanently look for new staff. Otherwise, there is a danger of routine and the missing of new methods and ideas. A critical point is that the vast majority of teaching staff is practitioners. The expert panel estimates their practical experience. Nevertheless, it is an academic law study programme which should comprise a good part of scientifically taught courses.

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)

Factual situation

Kauno kolegija supports teachers to make use of mobility. There is a transparent process for selection of participants. Due to limited possibilities of physical mobility worldwide the staff could participate in international exchange programmes virtually. Participation in such a virtual programme is recognised as qualification requirement in the certification process. In 2022, 56 percent of academic staff participated in mobility (SER p. 35).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The implemented virtual exchange program is a good opportunity to meet colleges from abroad or prepare joint publications and projects. It is a good opportunity to have contact where travelling is too strenuous or costly. But virtual meetings are only an additional tool that cannot replace face-to-face meetings. The college should encourage and support staff to attend conferences and other events in person. It should avoid replacing face-to-face participation by virtual exchange only for financial reasons. Although more than half of staff participated in mobility the remaining rest should also have incentives and motivation to make use of mobility choices.

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

Factual situation

Kauno kolegija offers in-service staff training for improving competences in online teaching, in language skills or in didactic issues. The College allocates annually a considerable amount of money to cover the costs of fees, training courses and service training.

Academic staff may devote two paid working days for training. However, Table 17 (SER, p. 35) shows that a relatively low percentage of staff takes advantage of in-service training.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Kauno kolegija makes big efforts for staff-training. Unfortunately, the take-up rate is not satisfying and should improve. For staff with permanent contract a steering measure is the

certification process when participation in training courses is part of the assessment. For other staff it should be considered to make some training unit mandatory.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Low turnover rate guarantees continuous teaching
2. Regular certification of academic staff guarantees quality assessment
3. Support for in-service training and mobility

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Danger of routine when staff stays too long
2. Ratio between teachers and students should not remain on the minimum level
3. High percentage of practitioners in teaching staff
4. Low take-up rate of staff for in-service training

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Factual situation

Learning facilities are refurbished, equipped with modern IT equipment and wireless internet connection. rooms have digital projectors, a screen, a lecturer's computer, audio speakers, whiteboards, and video cameras for hybrid teaching (SER, p. 38).

For e-learning and distance studies, the virtual learning environment Moodle is used. Zoom, Safe Exam Browser, and Google G Suite for Education (Google Meet, Google Chat, Google Drive, Google Calendar) are used for remote lectures and video conferences (SER, p. 38).

The renewal of material resources is planned in advance. The HEI provides precise amounts of money dedicated student resources per year (SER, p. 39).

The Library collections contain about 101,500 copies of printed publications of 33,000 titles, including 1,060 titles in the study field of Law (SER, p. 39).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel highlighted the exceptionally well-developed and impeccably maintained student facilities, including the library, which not only boasts high standards of upkeep but is also

aesthetically pleasing and welcoming. During the on-site visit, students specifically noted their appreciation for the well-preserved facilities, describing them as both "professional and cosy."

The library is fully equipped with all essential elements, offering a diverse range of foundational books necessary for both students and teaching staff, along with the inclusion of new volumes spanning various areas of law. The reading rooms are thoughtfully designed to be inviting and convenient for users.

Additionally, the HEI provides a children's room with professional caretakers available for teaching and administration staff, while students are also encouraged to utilize this service temporarily when needed.

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

Factual situation

The resourcing of studies and development is directly linked to the financial capacity. The use of resources is governed by the documents approved by resolutions of the HEI Council, which considers and approves the budget (SER, p. 40).

Every year, Departments discuss the needs for scientific literature, textbooks, methodological resources and other publications and their suitability for the studies. Those needs are submitted to the library, which ensures the acquisition of the required publications (SER, p. 40).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

There is evidence in the SER of a planning and upgrading of resources. The HEI indicates precise amounts of money needed for further subscriptions and acquisition of library resources (SER, p. 40). On average, over €120,000 are allocated annually to renew the material resources at the Faculty of Business (SER, p. 41).

The HEI places a commendable emphasis on ensuring financial sustainability, which is a highly favourable aspect of its operations. However, it becomes evident that the institution lacks comprehensive long-term planning when it comes to developing material infrastructure and setting institutional goals in this area, such as the formulation of a long-term strategic plan for the enhancement of facilities and resources. Establishing such a plan would not only reduce dependency on the Director's annual financial decisions but also require the Director to align their actions with the long-term needs and objectives of the institution.

It is advisable for the HEI to prioritize the development of a long-term strategic plan that encompasses infrastructure improvements and resource development. This plan should be guided by the institution's overarching mission and goals, providing a clear roadmap for sustainable growth and enhancement.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The teaching and learning premises are modern and well-renovated.
2. The environment is inviting, convenient for both studies and leisure.
3. Efforts are made to create equal study opportunities for people with special needs.

(2) Weaknesses:

N/A

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity are evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Factual situation

Internal quality assurance system of the studies is described in the Quality Manual of the college, is based on Quality Assurance Policy of the college and covers all levels of study implementation. Quality assurance strategy is based on the provisions from Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Kauno kolegija Statute, the Kauno kolegija Policy of study and applied science and art activities, the Kauno kolegija Policy of human resources. Separate aspects of the quality assurance are regulated by the relevant documents (*e.g.*, Kauno kolegija Study Procedure; Description of the procedure for preparation, evaluation and approval of intended study programmes; the Description of the procedure for the assessment and improvement of the quality of ongoing study programmes; the Regulation on the certification of a study course/module; the Procedure for crediting learning achievements in Kauno kolegija, etc.). The mentioned documents are made available via university document management system Kontora and the document catalogue. The distribution of the decision-making is based on the general structure of the Kauno kolegija and therefore follows overall institutional, faculty and department levels, accordingly. The college has established Study Field Committees, including in the field of law. Study Field Committees meet regularly, analyses quality indicators and initiates amendments in the study programme, in accordance to the established procedure for assessing and improving the quality of ongoing study programmes (SER, p. 42).

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Kauno kolegija has a well-established, regulated and implemented internal quality assurance system of the studies, which is also sufficiently communicated to the academic personnel and different stakeholders, as became evident to the expert panel. The quality assurance system follows the clear logic, and the decision-making is designed accordingly, based on the relevant documented procedure. Furthermore, Academic Ethics Committee of the university contributes to the quality assurance. Having each faculty represented in the committee and a student, provides adequate distribution of power and focus. However, functions of the Academic Ethics Committee and ways to approach it are not well communicated to the students. For the quality

of the final theses, 3-stage pre-defence system has been established, which appeared to be well-communicated to the students. However, currently, the students are allowed to have outside supervisors even when there is no co-supervisor from the university personnel. At least one co-supervisor of the final thesis should be from the university personnel, which will help to ensure that the quality is in accordance with the university strategy. College library provides various trainings for academic personnel, as well as for the students (*e.g.*, seminar “I found, I write, I cite”) to ensure high quality, however expert panel is convinced more should be done to promote these and encourage personnel and students to participate.

In general, the internal quality assurance system has been indicated as a strength in the previous external evaluation of law field of study at Kauno kolegija and it has been evident for the current expert panel that the college is devoted to maintaining high-level and functioning evaluation system.

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

Factual situation

Kauno kolegija has an established procedure for managing feedback from various stakeholders (SER, p. 44). Data from the students, alumni and social partners is regularly collected (including opinions, suggestions, employment, etc.), analysed and necessary amendments implemented. Kauno kolegija has a strong focus on cooperation with the stakeholders, providing room and recourses for productive communication. Kauno kolegija association Alumni Club has been established to ensure close cooperation with the alumni of the college. Social partners have been providing various internship opportunities for the students, as well as suggestions topics for the final theses and given chance to participate at the thesis defences.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It is evident that Kauno kolegija has a very strong cooperation, based on regular communication, with the different stakeholders. Representatives of the stakeholders that met with the expert panel have demonstrated high-level of involvement and the motivation to cooperate with the department of law. Several successful examples of such cooperation have been demonstrated, including implementation of the student feedback, alumni feedback, involvement of the social partners in study process (internship, final thesis topic suggestions, final these defences, etc.). Changes to the academic personnel have been implemented as a result of the feedback received from the students concerning concrete courses, it is important that the students were made aware of the changes and therefore understand the importance of provided feedback. Several representatives of the social partners have highlighted the sufficient level of alumni and high number of employees among them, which is important in motivating these partners to contribute to the study programme, as well as motivation for the students and practical support for the alumni on the labour market.

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

Factual situation

Information is regularly collected from the different stakeholders and communicated in established manner. Kauno kolegija has an easy-to-navigate and well-structured website, with relevant study-related information publicly available in both, Lithuanian and English languages. Published information includes study programme descriptions, admission information, procedures, different college bodies, career, and internship opportunities, as well as results of the various surveys, evaluations, and reports.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Kauno kolegija has well-established system to collect and communicate the information. The website of the college is sufficiently informative. All groups which expert panel met have demonstrated a good knowledge of college-related issues, as well as channels to obtain and communicate the information. "You said we did" is a section published on the college's website and shared also directly with the stakeholders, where results of the received feedback and how this feedback has been taken into account is provided. This tool appears to be working very well, judging on the awareness of the met stakeholders.

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

Factual situation

Student surveys are the primary tool to collect opinion of the field students at Kauno kolegija. Surveys collecting feedback on the quality of teaching are conducted twice a year, after every study semester. Additional, however, surveys are conducted to collect more general information, as first-year students are asked to give additional feedback on their motives to choose given study programme, details of their adaptation and expectations, while second-year students are asked how satisfied they are with their studies, and finally, third-year students are asked to assess the quality of their entire studies. Alumni surveys are conducted six months, one year and two years after their graduation, with the primary aim to collect information on their employability and readiness on labour market. Furthermore, feedback is collected via different meetings, such as round tables, Alumni Club, etc.

Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the survey results provided, there is a sharp drop in first year students satisfaction with their studies and that of last year's students (SER, pp 45-46). Such deviation is also linked to the hesitation of the students to give participate in the surveys, according to the college and so talks and discussion with the students are used. Even though highly important, direct talks and discussion cannot be a substitute to the anonymous surveys, but only a useful additional to those. Therefore, the college administration should find ways to motivate students to participate in the surveys and base its analysis on feedback received from both, surveys and direct communication.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Internal quality assurance system of the studies.
2. The level of engagement of various stakeholders.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Information on the functions, procedure and mechanism to approach Kauno kolegija Academic Ethics Committee is not well distributed.
2. Certain seminars provided by the library are not sufficiently promoted amongst the students.
3. Students are not very active in participating in the surveys.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict link between internship 3 and topic of the final thesis should be dissolved or even cancelled. • Encourage students and companies to contract on final thesis in order to increase numbers. • Give European Union Law more importance in the study programme.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make more clear classification on defining high level publications, based on the concrete databases where a journal is indexed, publisher of the books. • The strategy to encourage students to participate in the conferences should be reviewed, linked to scholarship schemes.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the conditions of mobility for students to make sure they meet the students' needs. Promote more short-term mobility possibilities for students.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve surveys on graduates' employment status, making them more systematic. • To put efforts to increase knowledge of students about formal internal procedures at the HEI.
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff should be periodically recruited to avoid routine in teaching and take advantage of new concepts and ideas. • Ratio between teachers and students should not remain on the minimum level only but improve. • High percentage of practitioners in teaching staff is seen as critical for an academic and scientific study programme. • Low take-up rate of staff for in-service training should improve.
Learning facilities and resources	N/A
Study management quality and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one supervisor of the final thesis should be from the university personnel. • Encourage academic staff to pay more attention to online academic profiles, to regularly update those and participate in the seminars provided by the library to help with such activities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider making participation in the anonymous student surveys compulsory, in order to be able to register the course next semester.
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V. SUMMARY

This External Evaluation Report has been composed by the expert panel based on the detailed analysis of Self Evaluation Report and additional materials provided by Kauno kolegija, as well as based on the observation and interviews conducted during the panel's site-visit. The expert panel would like to thank Kauno kolegija for their efforts in providing all necessary information and engaging in honest and open discussions during the site-visit.

The design and the content of the study programme at Kauno kolegija contribute significantly to students' networking and employability. While the main focus is on Lithuanian Law, the inclusion of European Union Law as a compulsory part is appreciated. The method of active training through case studies aligns well with practical legal skills development. However, there are concerns about the strict link between the third internship and the final thesis topic, as students may not have clearly identified preferences after two years. The college demonstrates well-structured research activities with clear plans, though there are areas, such as defining "high-level databases," needing more elaboration. The incentive system for academic staff and the focus on aligning courses with the latest developments in science are commendable. However, participation in international projects remains low, and more detailed goals for increased international outreach are needed. While students have various opportunities for personalizing their study plans, more support for part-time study or interruptions due to personal reasons is necessary. Efforts to enhance students' research and art abilities are positive, but there's a need to increase student participation. Kauno kolegija is praised for its student support system, including psychological help, but efforts should be made to promote student mobility and project engagement. Furthermore, formal procedures for academic ethics need clearer communication to students.

The Law programme at Kauno kolegija prioritizes practical skills and boasts a teaching staff primarily composed of active legal practitioners. The administration's vision for producing specific type of the lawyers aligns with market demands. Stakeholder involvement is comprehensive, with a functioning career centre and collaborations extending beyond the classroom. The college's facilities, especially the library, are very well established, for their aesthetics and functionality. The internal quality assurance system is also clear, functioning and appropriate, with well-suited procedures and effective communication. Stakeholder involvement is strong, with positive feedback loops and practical examples of cooperation leading to beneficial changes in the programme.

In conclusion, while Kauno kolegija exhibits several strengths, while addressing the highlighted recommendations will contribute to further improvement and sustained success in delivering a high-quality legal education.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Dr. Archil Chochia

(signature)