



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**STUDY FIELD of LAW**

at Panevėžio kolegija

**Expert panel:**

1. Prof. dr. Achim Albrecht (panel chairperson), *academic*;
2. Prof. dr. Petra Foubert, *academic*;
3. Dr. Konstantinos Dimarellis, *academic*;
4. Ms Kristina Cipkuvienė, *representative of social partners*.

**Evaluation coordinator – Ms Miglė Palujanskaitė**

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## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b>Law</b>
State code	6531KX005
Type of studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 3 years Part-time, 4 years
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Law
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	2012-08-03

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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 *19th October, 2023*.

**Prof. dr. Achim Albrecht (panel chairperson)**, *Professor of European and International Business Law, University of Westphalia, Germany*;

**Prof. dr. Petra Foubert**, *Dean, Faculty of Law, Hasselt University, Belgium*;

**Dr. Konstantinos Dimarellis**, *Assistant Professor, Department of Law, Nicosia University School of Law, Cyprus*;

**Ms Kristina Cipkuvienė**, *Managing Associate at UAB “Teisės riba”, 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.	Performance Strategy and Strategic Performance Plan for 2021-2026

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF LAW FIELD STUDIES AT PANEVĖŽIO KOLEGIJA

The College/University of Applied Sciences is a state higher education institution of the Republic of Lithuania. The institution conducts first cycle college study programmes, awarding professional bachelor's degrees and develops applied scientific research. The College works with full autonomy.

The institution has 3 academic units: The Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Technological Sciences. In December 2021, 20 accredited study programmes were registered with the Register of Studies. Altogether there are 7 groups of Study Fields, among them 'Law', administered at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The College collaborates with international academic partners in different sectors of teaching and research.

The law study programme was implemented in 2012, at first with part-time students only. Full-time students have been added at a later stage. The last programme assessment took place on the 27th of April 2016. The Law Study Programme was accredited on the 30th of September 2016 for three years.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of the *Law* study field at Panevėžio 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	2
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	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	<b>Total:</b>	20

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

*3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

##### *Factual situation*

The aim of the Law study programme at PANKO is to train legal specialists with creative and critical thinking, familiar with the Lithuanian legal system and having knowledge of international law, who are able to solve legal problems and work independently, constantly improving in various areas of legal activity (SER p. 5). The programme intends to deliver graduates who can take up functions in various areas of legal activity. This intention inspired learning objectives for a universal and widely applicable programme focused on employment opportunities that do not require a university degree (SER p. 6). Two modules (specialisations) are offered: (1) Pre-trial process and (2) Preparation and management of legal documents.

The programme responds to the needs of society as described in the Lithuanian progress strategy 'Lithuania 2030' which singled out the law as one of the most important instruments of society's functioning and state management (SER p. 5). The programme starts out from the assumption that both in the region and in the country there is and there will continue to be a high demand for employees with a college law degree. Reference is made to data from the Center for Strategic Analysis of the Government (STRATA) and the State Audit Office. There is a demand in traditional legal institutions (e.g. courts, notary offices, law firms, probation offices), yet recent professional transformations have increased this demand (e.g. data protection officers, compliance officers, anti-corruption specialists) (SER p. 6).

##### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The Law study programme is offered as an all-round programme that caters for the needs of today's and tomorrow's labour market (both regional and national). There is a strong conviction amongst all stakeholders that the Law study programme is future-proof and able to match a high demand for graduates with a professional bachelor's degree in law (e.g. in the local police stations). This programme is perceived to educate agile professional bachelors in law who are ready to take on new challenges (corruption, data management, public procurement, etc.).

From the above perspective it is somewhat surprising that student enrolment is quite modest (56 students, as of December 31, 2021, SER p. 5) and that one year after graduation maximum 75% of graduates are employed 'according to the acquired specialty' (SER p. 26, data available for 2018, 2019, 2020). It is recommended to invest in finding the reasons for this paradox. During the meeting with the social partners it was advanced that young people are more

interested in job opportunities in the private sector, notwithstanding the fact that the Law study programme explicitly claims to cater for the public as well as the private sector (e.g. offices of notaries, companies, etc.).

### *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*

The aim of the Law study programme is in line with PANKO's mission to organise higher education studies based on scientific knowledge and practical abilities, providing students with modern competences having added value in a smart society, to gather the region's potential for the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning and the development of applied science activities (SER p. 6).

The programme is also in line with PANKO's strategy for 2021-2026, which focuses on increasing the college's competitive advantage and impact on the development of both the region and the country through innovative and high-quality studies and applied science activities. This strategy is based on one of the main values of the College's activity, i.e. responsibility to society, aligned with the principles and regulations of the European higher education area.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Close-knit collaboration with groups of the local community, business and government representatives, one of PANKO's main objectives, was the common thread in the expert panel's meetings with the stakeholders. The SER highlights close cooperation with the Panevezys District Police Chief's Commissariat, where joint efforts create conditions for police officers to continue their studies, the need for which is reportedly great in the Panevezys region (SER p. 6-7). Many of the graduates and social partners the expert panel could speak with, were indeed police officers, and many students advanced that the police are their desired employer.

The two modules/ specialisations are custom-made for the region and the programme is offered in either full-time or part-time mode, depending on the needs of the students.

Although PANKO's mission and strategy put more emphasis on the region than on internationalisation, the Law study programme's management and teachers appeared to be well aware of the importance of internationalisation and they have worked hard to improve the programme from that perspective, as was requested by the previous external evaluation panel. As one member of the SER-group put it nicely: 'If we cater for regional needs, we cater for national needs, and that is catering for European needs.' Teachers, students and social partners, they were all imbued with the importance of being open towards the world, yet they all agreed that there still is room for improvement.

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



### *Factual situation*

The Law study programme at PANKO is a study programme of 180 ECTS, offered either full-time (3 years, 60 ECTS per year) or part-time (4 years, 45 ECTS per year) (SER p. 4&8). It has existed since 2012 and leads up to a professional bachelor's degree in law.

In line with the Law on Higher Education and Research (30 April 2009), the programme is a first cycle programme offered by a college/ institute of higher education and prepares for professional activities. Its scope in ECTS is within the ranges required by the Minister's Order of 30 December 2016 (V-1168), arts. 9 and 21, and of 13 October 2020 (V-1557), Art. 7 and 8, as represented in the table below.

At PANKO 1 ECTS corresponds to 26.7 hours of student work (SER p. 8).

**Table No. 1** Study programme's *Law* compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor)*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>General legal requirements</b>	<b>In the Programmes</b>
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	162 ECTS (including thesis and internships)
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	36 ECTS (electives, specialisations and general college courses)
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	35 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	40%
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	No info available
Individual learning/independent work	No less than 30 % of learning	60%

### *Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The Law study programme is compliant with the relevant Lithuanian legal requirements for a first-cycle programme in law at college level.

The modules/specialisations take up 18 ECTS of the programme, which is only 10% of the total amount of ECTS.

#### *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 Law study programme's learning outcomes are aligned with the description of the learning outcomes of the first study cycle as laid down, in general terms, in the Minister's Order of 16 November 2016 (V-1012), and involve (1) knowledge and its application, (2) research skills, (3) special skills, (4) social skills and (5) personal skills.

Annex 1 (SER) shows how the programme's learning outcomes that are connected with the above mentioned five general categories and that translate the special learning outcomes for first cycle college studies in law (Minister's Order of 13 October 2020 (V-1557)) into the learning outcomes of the Law study programme and further on into the different study subjects.

The following learning outcomes, classified under 'knowledge and its application' are not mentioned in Annex 1 (SER):

- 20.1.1. the graduates are familiar with the fundamentals of the theory and history of law;
- 20.1.4. the graduates are familiar with the fundamentals of lawyer's professional ethics;
- 20.1.6. the graduates have basic knowledge of the second professional language;
- 20.1.7. the graduates have basic knowledge of some social sciences and humanities and are able to apply it.

However, with regard to 20.1.1., it should be noted that Annex 2 (SER) does mention, as part of the Module 'Law Paradigm', the (compulsory) study subjects of Law Theory and Law History, during the first semester of the programme.

With regard to 20.1.4., reference can be made to the Module on 'Law Enforcement Institutions' that contains a (compulsory) study subject on 'Professional Ethics of a Lawyer'.

With regard to 20.1.6., it should be highlighted that the Module 'Development of General Competences' lists the (compulsory) study subject of a 'Professional Foreign Language' during the second semester of the programme. Students can choose which foreign language they want to study.

With regard to 20.1.7., reference can be made to the Module 'Law Communication' which contains the (compulsory) study subjects on Psychology of Law and Human Resources Management, and to the Module 'Development of General Competences' which lists the (compulsory) study subject of 'Safe work and civil safety'. On the basis of the names of the study

subjects the expert panel assumes that they relate to social sciences and humanities and their application (in a legal context)..

Learning outcomes are reached in various ways. PANKO's Study regulations (available online, last update 2022) explicitly provide (Art. 9) that the following teaching/learning methods are used in the implementation of the study programmes: contact work (theoretical lectures, practicums, consultations, distance studies), internships and students' independent work. These three methods are clearly defined in the Study Regulations. Contact work is mostly direct contact, yet since the pandemic also online contact is used (SER p. 23).

Along the same line the SER (p. 9) refers to the following methods that are specified in the subject descriptions: lectures, seminars, practicals, discussions, analysis of legal acts, analysis of court practice, brainstorming, analysis of cases and situations (problem solving), independent work (search and analysis of information, reflection, activity analysis, data analysis), monitoring and discussion of legal processes, educational, simulation games, drafting documents, working in groups, etc.

PANKO's Study Regulations (Art. 2.16) define that assessment should be cumulative, implying that assessment of the learning outcomes of a subject should consist of intermediate assessments and an exam or an independent work (project) received during the whole semester.

Along the same line the SER (p. 23) indicates that the final grade consists of the sum of the grades of intermediate assessments (seminars, colloquiums, laboratory, independent, practical, control, coursework, etc.) and the grades of the exam or project, multiplied by the relevant weighting factors. The weighted coefficient of the exam or project evaluation is at least 0,5 (evaluation coefficients may change depending on the specificities of the subject). Exams are written and/or oral. Students acquire the right to take the exam if they have completed all the intermediate assessments during the semester.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The expert panel believes that the Law study programme's learning outcomes (Annex 1) comply with the special learning outcomes for first cycle college studies in law (Minister's Order of 13 October 2020 (V-1557)), although 4 learning outcomes, classified under 'knowledge and its application', are not mentioned *expressis verbis* in Annex 1 (SER). That should be remedied.. It is advised, therefore, to adapt Annex 1 so as to visually reflect the connection between the 4 lacking learning outcomes and the programme's study subjects.

Although Annex 1 pairs to each of the Law study programme's learning outcomes a number of study subjects, the SER and its annexes contain only limited information on the teaching/learning methods that are used in every subject, nor on the related assessment methods. The expert panel had no access to the Moodle platform in order to check whether the content of the subjects as well as their teaching/learning and assessment methods are sufficient to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

However, students did not voice any complaints in this respect and stressed that they have excellent teachers who are very approachable (among other things by telephone, e-mail and during consultations). Teachers stressed that they use a variety of didactical methods. Every year training courses in didactical methods are offered.

Notwithstanding the above, a better overview at management level of the used teaching/ learning and assessment methods for each subject is advisable. From that perspective, Annex 2 contains very useful yet incomplete information.

It is laudable that a policy on online/remote teaching is on its way, in consultation with the students. Teachers feel that there is a need to define a minimum number of face-to-face contact hours.

### *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 Law study programme consists of general college study courses (6,7%), study field courses (90%) and elective courses (3,3%). The programme is built logically and in such a way as to reach a gradual transfer of (theoretical) knowledge and (practical/professional) skills acquired in the first semesters to the subsequent stages of the Law study programme (SER p. 10-11).

The module Development of General Competences is taught in the first semester. Also, general competences are reportedly cultivated and developed throughout the study process. Law courses are arranged sequentially. At the start (first year) the modules Law Paradigm (Law Theory, Law History) and Legal Research (Law Science Research Methodology, Logic, Law and Artificial Intelligence, Legal Information Management) are taught. In the later stages of the programme specific law courses follow.

As regards the development of practical/ professional skills reference can be made to the Law Research Module in the first semester, and the four internships that are spread out over the 3 years of the programme.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Development of competences is well thought-out. It is clear that the request of the previous external expert panel to pay more attention to gradual skills development has been taken seriously. Discussions with teachers and students confirmed that different opportunities are offered to students to be engaged in legal research.

During the 4 practices (for a total of 35 ECTS) focus is on practical skills. Practices are arranged sequentially (SER p. 35), yet it is not entirely clear what are the main differences between the 4 types of practices. Students and social partners did not seem to know the difference either. It might be a good idea to better communicate the sequentiality of the practices to the different stakeholders.

### *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*

Though the Law study programme mainly consists of compulsory subjects, there are a number of ways in which the students can personalise their individual study programme.

Students can choose:

- a foreign professional language (6 ECTS): English, French, German or Russian, according to the students' own choice;
- two elective subjects from a list (total of 6 ECTS). According to the SER electives include: Professional language culture; Human Rights Protection (English)/Human Rights Protection; Criminal Intelligence, Prevention of Corruption, Bankruptcy Law;
- a module/ specialisation (18 ECTS). The website mentions:
  - A1. Pre-trial proceedings (Pre-trial investigation, Criminalistics, Specialization practice, Term project)
  - A2. Preparation and management of legal documents (Preparation and management of procedural documents, Data protection, Specialization practice, Term project);
- the topic of their final thesis (12 ECTS).

If necessary (for reasons connected with the student's personal life), students can study according to an individual study plan.

According to PANKO's website, students of the Law study programme have the opportunity to take part in the ERASMUS student exchange programme. Erasmus partners can be found on the website.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Based on the above, the conclusion must be that 42 ECTS (almost 25%) of the programme can be filled in according to the students' own choice.

The requirement of the previous review panel to increase the number of electives with a legal professional dimension has been taken into account. However, electives mentioned in the SER are not the same as those mentioned on PANKO's website. According to the website, electives include: Proposed Corruption Prevention, Criminal Intelligence, Public Procurement, Intellectual Property Protection. It is advised to make sure that communication is uniform.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The final thesis comprises 10 ECTS. The thesis deals with theoretical, applied or practical problems in the field of law. Its requirements are set by the Description of the procedure for preparation and defence of final theses (projects) of Panevezys College. Methodological instructions are published in the virtual learning environment (SER p. 12).

Students can choose the topic themselves, or - alternatively – can pick a topic from a list. There are a number of directions to be taken into account when choosing a topic (SER p. 13):

- Continuation of coursework and/or research conducted during studies (student scientific society, study subjects, etc.);
- Topics, projects and practical problems relevant to companies, institutions, organisations;
- Other relevant topics that deal with the problems of legal activity.

The defence takes place in 2 stages (SER p. 13). During the preliminary defence, the student reflects on his achievements and receives suggestions for improvement. The final thesis is publicly defended in a meeting of the Qualification Commission, composed of competent researchers of the field of legal studies, practising professionals, representatives of social partners, members of the Law Study Programme Committee as well as teachers of the law study field. The chairperson is a judge. An external evaluator is also appointed.

Annex 3 gives an overview of the topics chosen in 2019, 2020 and 2022, and the awarded grades. One student did not defend. The other students obtained fair to excellent grades.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Surveys are conducted annually to assess the quality of the final thesis preparation and defence procedure. Students are reportedly (SER p. 13) happy with the state of play. In 2020 and 2021 the topics chosen by students are quite diverse and cover both public and civil law themes (although public procurement seems to be popular). In 2022 there is a clear focus on criminal law. Given the broad focus of the Law study programme, it is advised to keep all options open for the students and offer them sufficient examples of potential thesis topics.

Reference is made in the SER (p. 13) to the fact that, during the evaluation period, no topics were suggested by the social partners. This was confirmed during the meeting with the social partners, though they stressed they would rather have the students pick the topic themselves and highlighted that they are available for students to discuss several options. It is laudable that programme management wants to enter into a dialogue with social partners in order to have their input on thesis topics sooner in the process.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The Law study programme at PANKO obviously fulfils its aim to educate agile professional bachelors in law who are ready to take on new challenges (corruption, data management, public procurement, etc.).
2. Whilst the programme intends to cater in the first place for regional needs, management, teachers, students and social partners are well aware of the importance of internationalisation. Info provided by the Erasmus office is sufficient. The advice of the previous external evaluation panel has been taken into account.

3. Teachers are well aware of the need to define a minimum number of face-to-face contact hours. It is laudable that a policy on online/ remote teaching is on its way, in consultation with the students.
4. Development of (research) skills is organised in a well-structured way. There is a clear build-up over the different years of the programme. The request of the previous external expert panel has been taken seriously.

## **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Student enrolment in the programme is moderate and only 75% of graduates are employed 'according to the acquired specialty'.
2. The Law study programme's learning outcomes as mentioned in Annex 1 should be updated so as to formally reflect the special learning outcomes for first cycle college studies in law (Minister's Order of 13 October 2020 (V-1557)), and the relevant study subjects should be paired to the learning outcomes that have not been mentioned.
3. The SER and its annexes contain only limited information on the specific teaching/ learning and assessment methods that are used in every subject of the Law study programme.

## **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*

### *Factual situation*

The main goal of the College's research and experimental development activities (R&D) is to carry out applied research and experimental development work, involving the College's academic community, representatives of business and other social partners, ensuring the results of applied research and experimental development and the most advanced scientific knowledge and innovations implementation in the study process.

The Scientific research and experimental development activities mentioned in SER: teachers participate in national and international conferences, give presentations, publish scientific research in conference publications, scientific journals, etc.

Applied science activities mentioned in SER: areas of legislation, qualification improvement (seminars, training, consultations) organisation.

In 2019, the Business and Public Management, Legal Research Group was established to carry out applied scientific research and experimental development, the topics of which include research on legislation, collective labour relations, accounting and financial management.

### *Expert judgement/analysis*

During the meeting with the Senior Management and Faculty Administration Staff, the view was expressed that it was a high priority, both scientific and practical activity of teachers, related to the applied activities of legal science, is very important.

It is the view of the Panel that although scientific activities are carried out, at the same time, the indicators ensuring the adequacy of the level of scientific activities should be emphasised – strengthening of scientific potential, intensification of scientific activities in cooperation with researchers from Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions. During the meeting, only two teachers could mention that they participated in international scientific activities. Although according to The of Republic of Lithuania on Science and Studies External evaluation of studies, evaluation of research and study institutions, as well as evaluation of scientific research and experimental development activities and doctoral studies conducted in Lithuania are usually conducted in Lithuanian, in order to increase scientific innovative level of research, a strategy should be developed to help involve more teachers in international research projects.

During the meeting, the teachers did not seem motivated to participate in scientific research activities, citing lack of time as one of the reasons. Also, inactive participation in international projects of scientific activity leads to the conclusion that all possible research resources are not used, which determines the low level of modernity and relevance in terms of internationality.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The Law study programme Committee constantly reviews and updates the content of the programme, taking into account the achievements of law science and the changing needs of the labour market, and recommendations of social partners.

Experiential training, meetings with representatives of various legal institutions, joint events with students create conditions for integrating the latest knowledge of law science into the study content.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The content of the study program is supplemented with current topics related to changes in legal regulation and international scope. On the discussion panel with students, the students rated the experiential teaching well, which allows us to state the integration of specialised legal science knowledge into the study program and its transfer to the students.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The SER indicates that the College's studies are based on scientific applied research: students prepare final theses (projects) of a research nature, elements of scientific research are applied in coursework, practical, independent work, teachers use the results of the research in the



module (subject). Students prepare and publish scientific publications. Students are invited to participate in organised international scientific conferences.

Students are informed about the opportunity to participate in research and experimental development activities individually on social networks and by email.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

During the meeting with the students, when the students were asked about their participation in the research activities, the students first had to explain what the research activities were. Of the participating students, only one student mentioned that he had prepared a scientific publication. The panel of experts got the impression that the level of involvement of students in scientific activities is low, even though the College states that they provide information on research activities via different channels. Students' involvement in international scientific activities is limited by the students' low level of English. The number of publications per year could be higher if the number of law students is taken into account. Although the SER states that in order to promote student's participation in R&D activities, the Law program Committee is constantly looking for appropriate forms of promotion and even have it, but the students who attended the expert panel could not identify the applied measures. From this, we can conclude that students lack information, which demotivates them to engage in investigative research.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The content of the law study program is constantly reviewed and updated.
2. Experiential training, create conditions for integrating the latest knowledge of law science into the study content.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Low scientific potential. The involvement of teachers in scientific activities should be increased by ensuring aspects of mobility and cooperation with other higher schools in carrying out scientific projects and their continuity.
2. Low involvement of students in scientific activities. It is recommended to increase the involvement of students in research activities by using various forms of encouragement that would motivate students to engage in research activities.
3. Due to the low level of English, the aspect of internationality is not sufficiently ensured in scientific activities.

### **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***

##### ***Factual situation***

The College accepts students through the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Association for General Admission (LAMA BPO) system and via direct admission (only to self-financed study places).

The procedure for admission to studies is established in the "Rules for Student Admission to Panevėžys College" and published on the College's website ([www.panko.lt](http://www.panko.lt)).

Persons with a secondary education meeting the stipulated competitive admission conditions are admitted to the Law study programme according to the competitive procedure. The competitive score of those entering this course is formed from four subjects: 1) history exam, 2) maths, or information technology, or foreign language exam or annual grade, 3) any other subject that does not coincide with the first and second, exam or annual grade, 4) evaluations of Lithuanian language and literature exam.

The College has set a minimum competitive score, below which applicants cannot apply for study programs conducted by the College. From the year 2019 the established passing score was 4,3.

Since legal acts provide that there is no state funding for Law studies in Colleges, these studies can be chosen by graduates who have only passed the mandatory exams required to obtain the matriculation certificate.

In the evaluation period, the ratio of the number of students admitted to Law study programme and those who graduated on time is 91,2 percent on average. Student dropout has the greatest impact on this ratio. In order to reduce the dropout of students, a research group has been formed, which 20 conducts a detailed study of the reasons for student dropout, identifying measures to reduce student dropout.

In 2019, 2020 and 2021 the competitive scores of those admitted to Law study programme do not reach the average score of all admitted to the College. In 2019 the average competitive score of those accepted was 5,72, in 2020 – 5,82, and in 2021 the overall average competitive score of those accepted was 6,05. Weak preparation of entrants for studies also leads to "dropout" of students. Table 7 presents the share of students who were admitted and those who dropped out during the first year of studies, according to the circumstances of the dropout (SER p. 19).

Students can "drop out" of the College in two ways: to stop their studies voluntarily or to be expelled due to lack of progress or financial arrears.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The admission procedure is clear. The college follows national rules and does not pose any specific problems for applicants. Although the competitive scores of the entrants are not high (average competitive score 5.67), as mentioned due to the weak preparation of students for studies in higher education institutions and the large gap between the annual assessment and exams, this did not have a significant impact on the number of admissions, which increased in 2022.

The numbers in the SER report do not in themselves suggest a bad situation, but with reduced dropouts in mind, the disadvantage colleges across the country are in should consider some safeguards for the future.

### *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*

The results of partial studies, previous learning and self-informal learning are evaluated and recognized in accordance with the Description of the procedure for crediting study results and recognition of competences acquired through formal education at Panevėžys College, and the Description of the procedure for evaluating and recognizing competences acquired informally and independently at Panevėžys College. The general principles of assessment and recognition of partial studies, acquired qualifications, informally and autonomously acquired competences are: accessibility (every student has the right to apply for recognition of previous learning or acquired competences regardless of the method of their acquisition, information about the procedures is published on the website, first-year students are informed about them during the introductory week of studies); transparency and objectivity (assessment is based on approved procedures and official documents submitted by applicants, applicants are provided with feedback); comparability (assessed according to the student's knowledge and abilities described in the study program upon completion of the study subject, module); flexibility (the knowledge and abilities of students who come from various backgrounds are assessed: previous studies in higher education, education in a formal educational institution, non-formal and independent learning) (SER p. 20)

Applicants seeking informal and self-acquired competence evaluation and recognition of the results of the study program are advised by a competent person appointed by the Dean of the faculty, and competence portfolios prepared by the applicants are evaluated by the study area competence evaluation Commission established by order of the Director. The decision is made at the Commission meeting and formalised in the protocol. During the evaluation period, not a single applicant applied for the recognition of competences in the field of law.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Experts panel agree that the procedure for the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and previous informal and self-directed learning at Panevezyys College and its application is clear and corresponds to the principles specified in the SER.

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

#### *Factual situation*

Students are given opportunities to participate in mobility programs. The College has currently signed Erasmus+ bilateral partnership exchange agreements with 18 higher education 21 institutions in Latvia, Poland, Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Turkey, Italy, Greece, Portugal, which can accept Law study programme students. Unfortunately, the students of the

programme do not take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ program (SER p.20).

In order to provide knowledge and skills that will help overcome the fear of a foreign culture and foreign educational system, the subject of intercultural communications is offered to students as an optional subject. The study regulation stipulates that after leaving to study, the scholarship continues to be paid according to the study results. For those who have left, study and practice periods are credited using the ECTS credit transfer system. Not only an Erasmus scholarship is paid for ongoing studies or practice under the Erasmus+ program, but also a one-time Erasmus mobility promotion scholarship, the size of which depends on the country to which one is going.

Information about the Erasmus+ program, foreign higher education institutions for study exchanges, the selection procedure of students is published on the website of the College, discussed during the meetings with students.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Although the college provides conditions for student mobility and uses various forms of promotion (Erasmus scholarship, Erasmus mobility promotion scholarship), student mobility is still sluggish. As shown in 2020 student survey, the main barriers to mobility were lack of financial resources and language barrier. During the meeting with the students, the expert panel could get the impression that the main barrier is poor knowledge of the English language. Several students mentioned family and work obligations.

Students who are interested in international mobility are given sufficient information by the Erasmus office. In addition to the traditional Erasmus exchange also short-term mobility programmes are available, as well as blended programmes. PANKO offers additional scholarships for international mobility (€150 to 200 per month, on top of the international Erasmus scholarship), in order to take away financial barriers for students.

In the opinion of the expert group, as an optional subject, students are offered the subject of intercultural communications, it does not bring tangible benefits to the promotion of student mobility, so this study subject should be changed or integrated with learning in English.

Programme management could think of a mobility window within the curriculum, in order to assure students that their participation in international mobility will not cause difficulties for them in the form of increased workload or non-recognition of credits.

#### *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 College is developing a student support system, which is regulated by the Panevėžys College student support and student adaptation procedure description. All academic information is published on the College website in the Students section. Each student receives relevant information personally in the email box administered by the College. Each academic

group is assigned a group curator. In order to strengthen the adaptation support of students, from 2021 academic groups assigned not only curators-teachers but also student-mentors who help first-year students adapt and socialise in a new academic and social environment (SER p. 21).

Students who combine work and studies are given the opportunity to attend lectures according to an individual schedule. Lecturers provide individual counselling to students who are allowed to attend lectures on an individual schedule.

The Study, Career and Occupational Center ensures that every student receives financial support from the State Study Fund (social grants, loans, reimbursement of tuition fees, etc.). Social grants (299 Eur) are awarded to students from poor families or individuals living alone and other socially vulnerable groups.

All students are given the opportunity to live in the College dormitory. A professional psychologist worked at the College. The College is looking for an opportunity to provide psychologist services to students.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The expert group got the impression that students receive sufficient and multifaceted (financial, psychological, etc.) support from the college. During the expert panel with students, the students confirmed that they are satisfied with the help they need and are getting now, and are well informed.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

#### *Factual situation*

After signing the study contract, students receive all relevant information (addresses of faculties, contacts, map of buildings, principles of scheduling, services provided to students, etc.). First-year students are introduced to the study schedule, assessment system, informational and material study resources, academic and financial, support system and academic exchange opportunities.

Information about studies is publicly available for students at <https://panko.lt/category/studijos>.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The panel agreed that the information on support provided to students, study information and counselling provided to students is complete and appropriate. A meeting with staff and students during the visit confirmed the panel's view that this was sufficient and met the minimum standards.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Financial, social, personal and other support for students.
2. Providing study information and counselling.
3. A clear procedure for the recognition of partial study results, previous and other learning and its successful application.
4. Application of student mobility promotion forms.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. Inactive international mobility of students.

### **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*

*Factual situation*

Studies are carried out in full-time and part-time modes in semesters. The duration of the semester is 20 weeks, of which 1-4 weeks are devoted to the exam session. The duration and time of classroom work, online lectures, practice, exam sessions and student vacations are indicated in the study schedule (SER p. 23).

Using the latest technologies (Zoom, Google meet, Google drive, etc.) the college provides distance learning. To ensure students' participation and involvement, teachers use surveys, business game programs such as "Kahoot", "Menti", "Google Forms" and others.

The main teaching and learning methods, focused on the student: lectures, seminars, practicals, discussions, analysis of legal acts, analysis of judicial practice, brainstorming, analysis of cases and situations (problem solving), independent work (search and analysis of information, reflection, completed activity analysis, data analysis), monitoring and discussion of legal processes, educational, simulation games, document drafting, working in groups, projects. The College uses the Virtual learning environment Moodle, which contains learning materials, practical, independent work, control work tasks, tests, coursework (project) tasks and methodological instructions.

The assessment of study achievements is regulated in the Description of the procedure for the assessment of study achievements of Panevėžys College, which is published on the College's website.

The College uses cumulative assessment. The final grade consists of the sum of the grades of intermediate assessments (seminars, colloquiums, laboratory, independent, practical, control, coursework, etc.) and the grades of the exam or project, multiplied by the weighting factors assigned.

Exams are written or written and oral. Students acquire the right to take the exam if they have all the intermediate assessments during the semester. Students who have not passed the exam are given the right to retake the exam twice (for the second time, the student must pay the fee set by the college).

Various forms are used for students' independent work, which depends on the number of students.

The following forms of independent work are used to systematise and consolidate knowledge: work with educational materials; preparation of practical works, practice reports; preparation of reports for conferences, seminars; preparation of reports, analysis of legal acts, court practice, analysis of situations, case analysis, problem solving, learning from experience, answers to control questions of assignments, tests; preparation of course projects, etc. (SER p. 23).

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The college learning process takes into account the needs of the students. Students are given the opportunity to learn in a virtual environment. In the learning process, students and teachers use the latest technologies and programs for surveys and educational games, which increase the computer literacy of students and teachers, expand innovative thinking and involve students in the learning process. The cumulative assessment system is clear and transparent, motivating students to study throughout the semester.

Great attention in the learning process is given to various forms of practical training, which allows students to prepare for a professional career and easier integration into the labour market.

The expert group agrees that the learning process enables students to achieve the intended study results.

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

##### *Factual situation*

The college provides conditions for students with a limited level of working ability to study. The Study, Career and Employment Center has a counsellor for students with special needs. Different forms of payment are available for students with disabilities.

The study process is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of a disabled person, the physical and informational environment, the use of various payment forms, etc.

Students with disabilities studying at the college have the right to receive support in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania. Information about support for disabled students is published publicly on the College's website. During the evaluation period, students with special needs did not study in the law study program.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

Although the college does not have students with disabilities during the evaluation period, judging by the informational and physical environment of the college (a stationary lift, two mobile stairlifts for students with mobility disabilities, several computer desks and chairs adapted for them. Braille reading programs, two video magnifiers) the college is ready to accept both mobility and visually impaired students.

In the implementation of the project "Inclusive higher education" funded by the European Union, financial support is provided – targeted payments to students with disabilities.

### *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*

College students' progress is monitored at the following levels: College (analysis of termination of study contracts), faculty (semester results are discussed at dean's meetings twice a year), law study program Committee (analysis of progress indicators), individually.

After the completion of the module (subject), a survey of students about satisfaction with studies, satisfaction with the studied subject, problems that have arisen is carried out in a mandatory manner.

Taking into account the needs of students, information, counselling, etc. are provided. services. Students are provided with counselling both individually and in groups (at least 10 percent of the number of hours allocated to the studied module (subject)). Each academic group is assigned a curator who ensures the dissemination of information between students and academic staff.

Students receive feedback on completed tasks from teachers through individual or group consultations, during which teachers comment on the most common mistakes and the context of correct answers. This allows students to compare their work with others, to make sure of the objectivity of the assessment.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The monitoring of student study progress is not informative in the SER. As one of the ways of monitoring progress, the college indicates mandatory student surveys in order to find out the satisfaction of students with studies and the studied subject, the problems that have arisen. Although the surveys are mandatory, law students are slow to participate in the surveys.

According to the data provided in the SER (according to the analysis of the results of the autumn and spring semesters of 2021, there was only one student whose level of academic achievement can be classified as excellent) it can be seen that the level of student achievement is quite low.

Students mentioned during the meeting that they rarely or never use counselling hours.

Students receive feedback on completed tasks from teachers through individual or group consultations, during which teachers comment on the most common mistakes and the context of correct answers. This allows students to compare their work with others, to make sure of the



objectivity of the assessment. Moodle's capabilities are used for remote accounting and feedback: providing a teacher's comment for each question or task. After evaluating the settlement results, the teacher recommends the means by which the students could achieve a better result.

Electronic means are used to discuss study program subjects and study works: comments on tasks uploaded to the virtual learning environment, e-mail messages to a specific student's email address. post office With individual consultations, the teacher helps the student to fill the knowledge gaps and direct his education in the right direction. Evaluation of feedback is especially clearly visible in the process of preparation of theses.

The expert panel suggests a more rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring from now on.

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

##### *Factual situation*

Career management services are provided in the form of lectures and consultations. Students are worked with and advised by the staff of the Study, Career and Occupational Center and teachers professionally trained during the project. The Career Management Information System (CMIS) is functioning allowing students to manage their personal careers and use the virtual career library. This system allows colleges to monitor students' careers. After analysing the data obtained in the <https://karjera.lt/saiku/> system, it can be seen that the graduates of the programme successfully enter the labour market immediately after graduation – half a year later, and are still working one year after graduation (SER p.25).

##### *Expert judgement/analysis*

There is no data in the SER to show that the college conducts regular research, surveys of graduates about the quality of studies and their impact on employment. However, conversations with employers and alumni during the visit suggest that the program provides an educational offering that is so far in high demand in the local region and across the country. The employers who participated in the expert panel discussion, mainly from the public sector, indicated that the graduates are attractive to the regional labour market, the professional and organisational skills they have acquired perfectly meet the needs of employers. During the meeting with the students, the experts panel got the impression that the students positively evaluated the study program in the context of preparation for the labour market. The graduates indicated that they perfectly apply the knowledge acquired at the college in their daily work. The course design appears to provide students with practical skills that increase employability. More systematic data collection, improved monitoring of graduates' careers would help to receive feedback on the necessary changes to programs to ensure that their graduates adequately meet the requirements of the labour market, not only in the public sector and not only on a regional scale.

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

### *Factual situation*

In order to ensure students' honest study, teachers control the honesty of intermediate tasks. Students are obliged to study honestly by the terms of the study contract and the Study Regulations. Each student declares on the title page of the thesis that the final project has been prepared honestly. The originality of the thesis is checked using the eLABa resources of the electronic object repository of Lithuanian higher schools.

The college's academic values, such as equality, justice, non-discrimination, are enshrined in the PANKO rules. The trust line "Trust" was created: <https://panko.lt/studentams/pasitikek/>; primary psychological assistance is provided as needed.

The policy of equal opportunities and the principles of its implementation, as well as the means of implementation of the principles of supervision of the implementation of this policy, are defined by the equal opportunities policy of Panevėžys College and its implementation procedure. During the evaluation period, information on possible violations of equal opportunities was not provided (SER p.25).

### *Expert judgement/analysis*

SER mentions (p. 26) principles and means of academic integrity, tolerance, and guaranteeing non-discrimination and refers to the Code of Academic Ethics of Panevėžys College. Only one case of infringement due to potentially unethical behaviour of the teacher during the evaluation period. No case of infringement was reported during the three years of the report, but no details of monitoring are given.

The Expert Panel thinks the policy documents are satisfying to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

### *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 college ensures the possibility of students' appeal regarding the received assessment.

The right of students to receive reasoned answers regarding the consideration of the appeal is also ensured. Students who do not agree with the assessment of module (subject) semester study achievements, who see violations of the module (subject) semester study achievement assessment procedure, final project evaluation procedures, have the right to file appeals. Students of the law study program did not file appeals during the evaluation period.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

As can be seen from the SER, there were no appeals, complaints about the application of the study process and examination procedure during the evaluation period, which allows us to evaluate the study process and examination procedure applied at the college as effective.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Support and assistance for student adaptation.
2. Conditions for students with special needs.
3. Attractiveness of graduates and compliance with the needs of the labour market on a regional scale.

### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Low student engagement in surveys to monitor study progress.
2. Inadequate monitoring of student employability.

## **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*

### *Factual situation*

The staff recruitments take place for a period of 5 years in accordance with the Description of the procedure which was set by the institution. There is also the opportunity to have recruitments outside the usual procedure, but in that case a short-term contract of one year is signed.

The staff workload consists of teaching hours, preparation for teaching, administrative duties, etc.

The staff assessment is based on certain criteria regarding scientific research, personal and professional improvement, ability to communicate in foreign languages, etc.

The institute tries to hire teachers with at least 3 years of work experience in their field.

PhD holders teach 33 courses, which refers to 18.3% of the programme volume. Six (out of 17) teachers hold a PhD. Only five (out of 17) teachers are full-time members of the teaching staff.

The average pedagogical experience of the staff is 15.4 years and the average practical experience is 12.5 years.

The ratio between teachers and students is 1:3.

Eight teachers have no publications during the last 5 years, whereas some of them have published articles in fields other than law, e.g. education, community needs, tourism, etc.

The data brought to the attention of the committee for the research output of the teaching staff concern the period 2019-2021. The SER reports only some of the publications made in 2022 and does not include publications made in 2023.

### *Expert judgement/analysis*

There are not many full-time teachers. The teaching staff consists mainly of part-time teachers, many of whom participated in our meetings. They are mainly practitioners, who combine their main professional activities with teaching in the college. This combination can end up against teaching, since their main profession is set as priority, although the impression we gained is that they really love their work at the college. The college does not seem to have realised the importance of having full-time staff who are dedicated to their teaching duties, as shown by the statement that it is preferable to have professionals as teachers rather than academics.

The frequency of the extensive evaluation is particularly rare. It may comply with the requirements of the law, but it is obvious that this is not adequate. The staff's scientific presence and production cannot be judged as satisfactory. As mentioned above, some teachers have not made a single publication during the last years, while some have not followed any training that could lead to their personal and professional improvement. Therefore, the following phenomenon is observed: despite the fact that the extensive evaluation is carried out in the period set by the law and is based on the criteria set by the college, in fact the intended results are not caught, as the scientific presence and production of a large part of the teaching staff is not considered as satisfactory.

Finally, a clear answer was not given regarding the total number of teaching hours per week, but it was only clarified that the workload includes not only teaching, but also research, administrative tasks, etc.

### *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*

Internationalisation is set as a priority by the college. The International Relations Coordinator disseminates information on mobility possibilities and relative information can also be found on the college website. Applications for mobility are examined and approved by the Erasmus commission under certain criteria: subject competence, knowledge of a foreign language, etc. The teacher's program is rescheduled favourably for the period during mobility.

During the evaluation period 11 teachers from universities abroad visited the college to give lectures under the Erasmus+ program (ingoing staff), whereas 6 staff members visited universities abroad for teaching in Latvia, Hungary, Spain and Poland (outgoing staff).

Applications were submitted in 2020 for funding to attract teachers from other countries to give lectures in the college.

### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The participation of teachers in mobility programs is not disappointing, but promising, since there are actually some teachers who participate in them, but there is room for improvement. Even more promising is the fact that, during our meetings, staff members have admitted that participation in mobility programs is an area that should be improved.

Nonetheless, the part-time staff has expressed the opinion that there is no place for mobility due to their professional duties. The response of part-time staff that it is not possible to participate in mobility programs due to professional commitments should be of concern to the college. Participating in mobility programs brings many important benefits. The majority of teachers do not participate in these programs because they are part-time teachers and thus the college is deprived of the positive effects of staff mobility.

The college could put more effort into increasing the internationalisation of the faculty by trying to increase the incoming staff, who will visit the college to give lectures.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The college applies the Professional development program, which sets the certain planning and implementation of each teacher's professional development, including participation in mobility programs, seminars, conferences, etc. The college has also implemented a monitoring system, which collects teachers' data on participation in improvement events and initiatives, applying certain criteria: methodological, organisational and teaching qualifications.

Each teacher is expected to set his/her personal goals at the beginning of each year and at the end of the year the teacher reports on his/her activity during the past academic year. Besides, an extended assessment is conducted every five years. Students also participate in teachers' evaluation.

The college offers a foreign language course every year and their participation is strongly recommended.

The college has established an average amount of 350 euros for each teacher, which is used for their professional development.

The majority of the teachers are practitioners, so the college puts effort in improving their educational competences, by offering training and seminars for the teachers, who are aimed to develop appropriate study, teaching and assessment methods.

Some staff members have not attended any conferences, seminars, etc. during the last 5 years, whereas in some cases it is mentioned the participation in conferences, training programs, lectures, etc., without any additional information in order to check if these were held during the last 5 years.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The college has set a satisfying assessment method, based on certain and classified criteria. However, it is questionable whether this method is implemented in practice and achieves its objectives. Teachers are not scientifically productive and do not participate in educational programs, even though they need it.

The offer of foreign language training is a positive initiative, but the participation should be obligatory and not just strongly recommended, as it was noticed that the English language level of the teaching staff is low.

The offer of training programs on how to cope with disabled students is a commendable and useful initiative.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Initiatives from the institution for the enrichment of the teachers' competences.
2. Funding of the enrichment of teachers' competences.
3. Samples of participation in mobility programs.
4. Training on how to cope with disabled students.
5. Approachable teachers.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Few full-time teaching staff.
2. Unsatisfactory participation of teachers in conferences, seminars, training, etc.
3. Great number of teachers with no or only few articles published.
4. Room for improvement in mobility programs.
5. Inadequate level of foreign language knowledge.

## **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*

### ***Factual situation***

The college buildings are not in good condition outside, as they are considered part of the national heritage and cannot be renovated. However, an effort is being made to renovate the buildings internally and especially the classrooms.

The college has classrooms of various capacities. Most of them are renovated, although some of them are equipped with old furniture and some of them still have a blackboard. 18 classrooms with 240 computerised workplaces have modern technological equipment for teaching needs. The college has invested a large amount of money to acquire modern technological equipment. Some of the smaller rooms have been configured appropriately for teamwork between students.

University premises are accessible for people with disabilities as there are suitable ramps and lifts. Also, the college has been equipped with suitable computers and software programs for students with hearing and visual impairments.

The library does not have many workplaces and only 20 of them are suitable for computer use. The library is open for an average of 51 hours per week.

The college has taken initiatives to promote distance learning, as well-equipped classrooms have been set up which are used for video recording and broadcasting of courses.

Students have the option to stay in the dormitories, which can house 203 students.

The college has a sports hall, as well as a small gym and a student space, which are both small and need renovation.

The college uses the Virtual Learning Environment, where students are able to find the material for the courses, useful information about the structure of the program, etc. The college also uses its website, social media and newsletters to communicate with the students.

The college provides access to e-journals, e-books and e-resources (Lithuanian and international). Students have access to online resources even when they are not in the university premises. However, the library does not have enough printed books.

Students can choose the institution in which they will do their internship or choose from a list of institutions provided by the college. There is an effort for continuous cooperation with the social partners for the students' practice.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The college has made a remarkable effort to renovate the internal part of the building spaces and renew its equipment. However, even more extensive efforts should be made. Some rooms have old furniture, while some rooms are still equipped with a blackboard. However, there are also computer rooms with modern equipment. Besides, it is worth mentioning that all the premises of the university were spotlessly clean.

Students do not have adequate and pleasant places to spend their free time. For example, there is no canteen, the gym area is small and with minimal and outdated equipment, while the students' space for games, meetings, etc. has an old and unpleasant decoration.

The library makes an appreciable effort to have access to many electronic resources. However, there is an immediate need to renovate and increase the workplaces in the reading room. The reading room should be open for more hours especially during exam periods. Besides, maybe 3 employees are not enough for the efficient operation of the library.

The care of the college for students with physical, hearing and visual disabilities is remarkable. Care is taken to ensure that university premises are accessible and that appropriate facilities are in place to facilitate their study and learning.

The college has developed good cooperation with the social partners as far as the students' internships are concerned. The social partners also financed part of the renewal of the college's equipment. It is a typical and commendable example of social contribution on behalf of the social partners.

During our visit we had the opportunity to visit the Erasmus office, which is a very pleasant space and the staff is remarkably friendly, helpful and willing to provide us information related to the office operation.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The college aims at frequent renewal of technological equipment and software. Funds for the renewal of equipment come from various sources, including social partners.

Also, the teachers take care of stocking the library with new publications.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The college is indeed making remarkable efforts to be equipped with modern hardware and software. The effort of the college also results from the fact that it is trying to obtain funding even from the social partners in order to achieve the renewal. This renewal is indeed achieved to a large extent, without this meaning that there is no room for improvement.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Suitable facilities for students with disabilities.
2. Adequate number of electronic resources, books and journals.
3. Close relations with social partners that help the institution to develop its material facilities.
4. Efforts for renewal of the premises.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Need for further renovation of premises and renewal of equipment.
2. Insufficient places for students' leisure time.
3. There are not many printed books in the library.
4. Inadequate workplaces in the library.
5. Limited library working hours.

## **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*

#### *Factual situation*

The principles of Quality Assurance within the institution can be found in the institutions Charter and the Activity Strategy and Strategic Activity Plan 2021-2016.

Detailed explanations on the functionality of Quality Assurance are laid down in the guide to the Internal Study Quality Assurance System.

QA of the institutions follows and is governed by th international standards:

LST EN ISO 9001: 2015

LST EN ISO 14001: 2015

EN ISO 14001: 2018

The institution has implemented steady and repeated monitoring of the performance indicators of the College.

The SER offers a detailed insight into the administrative and personal responsibilities at different hierarchical levels concerning the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Law Study units.

The most important and active part in steering and assessing quality in the Study Field Law is the Law Study Field Programme Committee, currently consisting of 7 members from 3 different stakeholder groups:

- 3 law field teachers
- 3 social partners
- 1 student representative

The fourth stakeholder group, namely the graduates/Alumni have no standing representation in the Committee.

In order to ensure a high level of study quality,, the College collects different data pools through surveys and analyses, monitors and discusses results on different administrative and management levels.

The College has done a SWOT Analysis. Concerning the Law Studies Programme the following risks/Threats were identified:

- decreasing student numbers
- unrealizable two-way mobilities
- failure to achieve the planned indicators of applied research and experimental development

Counteracting measures to fight these threats effectively were identified and promoted to be implemented.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

The panel is satisfied that the implemented quality assurance measures and tools of the institution are made good use of, guarantee quality studies, continuous improvement and are steered with the help of all relevant stakeholders.

The Alumni could be stronger involved in an institutionalised way (e.g. have a standing place on the Law Study Field Programme Committee).

Data collection, analyses of data, monitoring, discussion and decision making on certain pressing matters and the feedback to stakeholders and the public seem to work smoothly.

Laudable is the risk-based approach to quality assurance, leading to a SWOT Analysis with identified and plausible threats for the programmes. Equally plausible counter measures are mentioned in detail in the SER.

Altogether the QMS of the College allows to plan the future open eyed.

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

#### *Factual situation*

The main groups of social stakeholders are regularly and actively involved in internal quality assurance matters of the Study Field Law. Stakeholders are therefore part of the Law Study Programme Committee, overseeing the QMS.

At the time of the last major updating of the programme in 2021 the stakeholder group 'Teaching Staff' made a number of suggestions how content and scope of certain modules (e.g. International Law) should be altered. The points were taken and alterations made.

The same is true for suggestions from social partners who wanted to bring in more practical points concerning Civil Law procedures to add professional tools to theoretical knowledge.

Students are represented in the Law Study Programme Committee and have the opportunity to suggest new ideas and modifications through different channels inside the institutions. Every suggestion is taken, discussed and decided upon.

Feedback is given to all stakeholders in due course, what has happened with improvement suggestions, which decisions have been taken and why.

In 2019 and again in 2022 forums between the College and social partners mainly from the public sector (police, probation, prosecution, municipalities, courts, border protection etc.) have been established to interlink more and create a strong institutionalised cooperation.

Graduates/alumni are heard through surveys and meetings that take place from time to time.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

In the discussions between the visiting experts panel and representatives of stakeholder groups it could to the satisfaction of the panel be established that College and the Faculty of Law alike

do encourage stakeholders of all kinds to take part in the steady improvement and quality assurance management of the institution.

Students named changes in the possibilities of remote studies, information politics on Erasmus grants for short term stays and blended learning or recreational facilities and a meeting place with access to food and drink.

Teachers could name several changes and adaptations in courses.

Social partners put forward that they had stepped up the offerings for internships, and steadily tried to have more practical aspects in taught courses. Also many social partners themselves are high ranking practitioners presenting the students with a most valuable network.

Only alumni/graduates as the link between College life and professionals with a longer career and more experience don't have a really adequate place in the Quality Assurance Cycle. It is true that their opinions are surveyed but their presence and active partaking in Quality Assurance procedures is not as institutionalised as the other stakeholder groups.

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

#### *Factual situation*

All quantitative and qualitative information gathered regarding the QA of the operations of the Study Field of Law are regularly discussed in the Directorate, the Dean's Office and in the Study Field Programme Committee, trying to meet legal regulations, benchmarks and find possible improvements.

The results of the meetings, decisions taken and other measures to modify contents of studies or administrative procedures lead to a steadily changing and improved study environment.

All new insights derived from the survey data analysis and following discussion in the decision taking units, are channelled to the social partners for their perusal and their expertise opinion.

The College disseminates in connection with its internet Website presence numerous easily accessible online sources, leading to data, information and analysis around its Law Studies, from enrollment procedures and the content of courses up to the results of external evaluations activity reports, a list of national and international partners, activities, projects, events etc. Accessing the links, the information offers a full and transparent actual picture of the respective studies.

Presence in social networks, websites of stakeholders (e.g. of social partners) and the wide spread communication of different events is also a means to be visible in and for the public.

#### *Expert judgement/analysis*

To the satisfaction of the panel, the collection, analysis and publication of the developments in and around the Study Field of Law seem to be functional and satisfactory.

The processes are well described and effective results for the stakeholders inside and outside the institution as well as for the general public. Data collected mirror a full picture of the activities of the Law study field.

Lacking in the SER were examples to establish proof of recent modifications undertaken on the basis of the analysis of data derived from surveys. However, in the discussions with the different groups contacted, some recent examples for modifications could be established.

Social partners verified upon request of the panel that they get regular information about actual or possible changes within the Law Study Programme and are asked about their professional advice. The social partners also voiced that modifications in the programme are suggested by their group and that the advice is taken by the institution.

The public can access a wealth of information all around studies and events online and on an up to date basis. Some more clarification for the interested public could bring the approach to spread the information on a 'Where we were – where we are now – what we changed and why' basis. It would not only show the very presence but rather the development process and the reasons for it. It might lend more credibility to change and transformation processes.

#### *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*

The evaluation of student's opinions on the quality of studies and the organisation of the study processes (coursework teachers, infrastructure, internships, employability etc.) is done with survey tools and the analysis of the results.

Surveys of the aforementioned kind were conducted in 2019 and 2021. According to the SER, the absolute majority of students either agreed or 'really agreed' when asked about the sufficiency of theoretical and practical knowledge administered, the taking into account students' requests and recommendations by the institution, the collaboration with teachers in joint applied research, the quality of the institutions infrastructure or the communication culture on enrollment procedures, available Erasmus+ programmes, events etc.

The curriculum of the study programme and the implementation of studies were rated with an average 4 points out of five.

The general assessment of the quality of the Study Field Law was duplicated in the survey of 2021.

Information about the number of students having taken part in the surveys was not offered.

##### *Expert judgement/analysis*

In the discussions with the student group, the core results of the mentioned surveys could be verified. The overall satisfaction with the provisions of the Study Field Law was high.

Students generally feel that their voices are heard, sometimes leading to a modification of courses, a purchase of library hard copies of recent textbooks when the need for that arises and the information about and partaking in different College events and projects.

Students generally felt that internationalisation is a necessary and important part of studies because national laws are very much influenced and infused by European Law.

The students were aware that the College is publishing regular activity reports, projects with international partners etc. Some but not many students have taken part in international conferences, Erasmus activities etc.

Interestingly enough, many students voiced that their first cycle qualification in Law could be a stepping stone towards later joining a Master Programme (cooperation partner in this respect being Mykolas Romeris University).

Internships with social partners, the practical knowledge gained and the employment outlook to getting an adequate first job were cherished by the students.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. A detailed and plausible QMS
2. Involvement and feedback of and towards stakeholders and public
3. Risk awareness and solution orientation

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Not all performance indicators seem to be realistically achievable.
2. No real close and institutionalised ties with alumni.
3. Currently no student satisfaction surveys on a yearly basis.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Given the broad focus of the Law study programme, it is advised to embed this even more in the entire curriculum. As per recommendation of the previous external review panel extra electives have been added (do make sure however that communication in different places is uniform). The programme might also want to offer to the students sufficient and diverse examples of potential thesis topics (not merely criminal law).</li> <li>2. Whilst many efforts have already been made to draw students and teachers towards (short-term) mobility and initiatives of internationalisation at home, it is advised to continue this way forward. Think, e.g., of the introduction of a mobility window.</li> <li>3. It is recommended to invest in finding the reasons for the relatively low number of students enrolled in the programme and the fact that not all graduates are employed according to their specialty.</li> <li>4. Although the Law study programme does contain subjects that work towards all of the legally required learning outcomes, it is necessary to visually reflect this in all official documents. That should be remedied.</li> <li>5. Consider the development of a system that allows management to better monitor the specific teaching/ learning and assessment methods that are used in every subject of the Law study programme.</li> <li>6. Do continue the development of a policy on online/ remote teaching.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To increase scientific potential by carrying out joint scientific activity projects with other Lithuanian and foreign higher schools.</li> <li>2. To increase the involvement of students in research and experimental development activities by providing more opportunities (increasing the diversity of research projects) and creating a strategy of promotion measures.</li> <li>3. To strengthen the English language level of teachers and students in order to ensure internationality and the use of all resources in scientific activities.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrating English into the intercultural communication elective in order to promote international mobility of students.</li> </ol>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase student engagement in progress monitoring surveys.</li> <li>2. Carry out monitoring of the quality of students' studies with the needs of the labour market by including various forms (alumni surveys, meetings, organising career experience days, etc.)</li> </ol>

Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruitment of more full-time teaching staff instead of short-term contracts.</li> <li>2. Enhancing teachers' participation in conferences, seminars, training courses, etc.</li> <li>3. Engagement of more teachers in scientific work (e.g. publication of legal articles).</li> <li>4. Encouraging participation in mobility programs.</li> <li>5. Obligatory participation in the English language training program.</li> <li>6. Initiatives to increase ingoing staff.</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrich the spaces for teamwork in the library.</li> <li>2. Renovation of the library premises.</li> <li>3. Renovation of spaces for students' leisure time.</li> <li>4. Extension of library working hours, at least during exam periods.</li> </ol>
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is recommended to undertake student satisfaction surveys in shorter time cycles to be able to always rely on the most recent information.</li> <li>2. It is recommended to publish for the general public also why and when changes with which results have been undertaken.</li> <li>3. It is recommended to avail in an institutionalised way of the expertise of Alumni as it is done with other social partners.</li> <li>4. It is recommended to work with performance indicators that can realistically be reached.</li> </ol>

## V. SUMMARY

The panel wishes to extend its gratitude for preparing a realistic, detailed and convincing report. The workload going into the preparations is much appreciated. Thanks to the College, the site visit could take place in a friendly, cooperative and hospitable way.

Generally speaking, the College caters for the needs of the regional labour market for first cycle graduates of the Study Field of Law. The curriculum is composed of different elements of criminal, civil and administrative law, enriched by some courses in European and International Law. Coursework has undergone sensible changes in the past, mostly taking into account recommendations from stakeholder groups, such as the social partners which have direct access to the changing needs of the labour market.

In the discussions, the panel could establish that as a matter of Quality Assurance, almost all stakeholder groups were involved in different steering committees, were asked for ideas in formulating strategic points to follow in the future and these groups were getting feedback from the College management on decisions on modifications and changes. The only group that would need more attention, closer ties and a more institutionalised approach are the Alumni.

In the discussion with management it could be clarified why the SER speaks of graduates being able to work as compliance or data protection officers, given that the programme doesn't offer any such courses to a satisfying extent, thus not allowing to create such qualifications for the labour market. The remarks were meant as a future perspective needing programme reform steps. Other than that the curriculum has only minor inconsistencies. However, English language courses should be stepped up and be obligatory. Students are as of yet not able to hold a conversation in English in a fluent way. It is laudable that some of them successfully tried their best. Also teaching staff when hired should prove their abilities to communicate in English.

Saying this, the panel has noticed that internationalisation efforts within the College is on its way. There are teachers and students. An international conference was conducted during the site visit. International partnerships are active in both ways. Stakeholders are well informed about the new possibilities to internationalise at home or with a wealth of new tools, which allow part time students, full-timers, lecturers and administrative staff to cooperate internationally alike.

The College runs a transparent Quality Management system with a clear focus and clear responsibilities. Data compiled through surveys lead to conclusions that allow for sensible planning. However – as the College itself states – more realistic performance indicators should be set to be able to reach them.

The teachers-student and student – social partners relationships are good and helpful, taking into account the helpful internships offered, leading to later employment, the innovative teaching methods and the approachability of lecturers etc. Information about anything going on in the College is disseminated to the general public by many different means, including the website, social media channels, visiting schools, inviting to events etc. The College has a good and up to date visibility in the regional community. A budget is set aside for PR activities.



Infrastructure and equipment are mainly fine. Some improvements need to be done, like updating the library resources, foremost in the print sector. Recreational facilities and the catering sector are sparse and need attention. However, it is laudable that there is assistance for disabled students and that teaching staff is coached on how to best work with disabled students.

Lecturers can avail of a personal development incentive budget and have to run a personal qualification improvement plan, which is monitored.

Research activities are executed by lecturers, most of them being practitioners - and to a small extent by students also. These activities should be enhanced with adequate measures and incentives. A higher figure of full-time affiliated lecturers would lend the studies more consistency.

As a result of the analysis the Study Field of Law is accredited for 3 years with the marks laid down in the report.

**Expert panel chairperson signature:**

**Prof. dr. Achim Albrecht**