SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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INFORMATICS FIELD OF STUDY

SMK Aukštoji mokykla

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Johann Gamper

2. Academic member: Prof. dr. Jyrki Nummenmaa

3. Academic member: Prof. dr. Vitalij Denisov

4. Social partner: Vilma Eidukynaitė

5. Student representative: Vytautas Kučinskas

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Report prepared in 2024
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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The study field evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the study field.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by a HEI; 2) a site visit of the review panel to the HEI; 3) the external evaluation report (EER) prepared by the review panel 4) accreditation decision taken by SKVC and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER to report on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee operating under SKVC. Once approved the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If a HEI is not happy with the outcome of the evaluation, HEI can file an appeal.

On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. Dr. Johann Gamper
2. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Jyrki Nummenmaa
3. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Vitalij Denisov
4. Social partner: Vilma Eidukynaitė
5. Student representative: Vytautas Kučinskas

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 15 May 2024 in hybrid mode. Vytautas Kučinskas of the expert panel attended online, whereas the other panel members were onsite. Also, some of the participants of SMK attended the meeting online.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies)
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

The meetings were essentially conducted in English. To support some staff members of SMK and stakeholders, a translator was present.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

The SMK Higher Education Institution (SMK) was founded in 1994 in Klaipeda as a non-state University of Applied Social Sciences, and changed its name to a higher education institution in 2023 in order to fully reflect the expanded profile. SMK opened a branch in Vilnius in 1994 and in Kaunas in 2018. Today, the SMK is the largest non-state higher education institution in Lithuania.

The SMK is a recognized higher education institution in Lithuania, and four of its study programmes are ranked in the top-ten of the most popular study programmes in Lithuania.

The SMK has 4.230 students from Lithuania and 139 foreign students and 263 teachers, of which 54 have doctorate degree. As of today, 10.000 students graduated from SMK.

Overview of the study field

The SMK offers a total of 21 study programmes in 13 study fields. Four study programmes are delivered in English, with the plan to offer most programmes in English.

The evaluated study programme Computer Games and Animation is in the study field of Informatics and has 94 students. The programme was first offered in Vilnius and Klaipeda, and in 2018 it was expanded to Kaunas.

Previous external evaluations

The study programme under evaluation was accredited by the Order of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education when it started in 2016. Since then, no other external assessment was done.

Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested / provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- *List of the projects of the teachers of the Informatics study field of SMK, in which they participated*
- *List of scientific activity of the teachers of the Informatics study field of the SMK*

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**Computer Games and Animation**
State code	6531BX014
Type of study (college/university)	College Studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)
Workload in ECTS	180
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Professional Bachelor in Computer Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	The following minimum requirements are applied to the candidates to the SMK paid study places (not funded by the state): 1. For persons who obtained secondary education until 2017 inclusive, the minimum requirement is at least secondary education. 2. Persons who obtained secondary education later than 2018 must have passed at least 1 state maturity examination and must have at least secondary education.
First registration date	18.04.2016

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The first cycle of the Informatics study field at SMK Aukštoji mokykla is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[1*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
	Total:	21

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	**Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI**

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

The SMK regularly analyses the labour market to identify the need for specific study programmes. For several years, there has been high demand for professionals in the Informatics study field, both in Lithuania as well as at the European level. This is emphasised in numerous strategic documents, such as Lithuania 2030, Lithuania 2050, the National Progress Plan 2030, the Smart specialisation strategy, and the Lithuanian Industry Digitization Roadmap 2020-2030. They define information and communication technologies as one of six priority sectors for the country in order to develop Lithuania towards a modern European country with a knowledge-based economy.

The priority for information and communication technologies is also evident from a number of strategy documents of the EU, including the Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024, the document "Sustainable Europe - 2030", and the Digital Europe Programme for 2021-2027, where artificial intelligence, internet of things, and cyber security are mentioned as primary areas.

All these (Lithuanian and European) documents highlight the imminent impact of information technologies on the future development of the country and its economy. This is also backed up by several surveys, which show that the IT sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Lithuania. In 2020 there were close to 500 registered IT companies, and a survey in 2018 by "Infobalt" predicted a demand for IT specialists that is growing to 40 percent. In the past 5 years, the number of IT specialists has increased from 1.8 percent to 2.5 percent of the total number of employees.

Computer games represent a specific area in the landscape of the IT industry, which has a rapidly growing market value not only in Europe and world-wide, but also at the national level. In fact, the Lithuanian game industry has tripled over the last five years, a process that was accelerated by a number of new startups and important international players joining the Lithuanian ecosystem.

Through the establishment of the study programme "Computer games and animation", the SMK aimed at responding (1) to the high demand for IT professionals who are specialised in game development and animation in Lithuania and (2) to the lack of similar study programmes in other colleges or universities in the country.

1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

The SER reports three rather high-level and general strategic SMK mission statements for the period 2021-2030: (1) to empower and support students in the development of their personality and professional

activity, (2) to create scientific knowledge and transform it into innovations for foster economic and social progress, and (3) to make an impact on the society by creating an open and inclusive environment that promotes positive changes.

The learning outcomes are on one hand oriented on the general requirements in the Informatics field of study and on the other hand are extended with the specific knowledge and skills required for professionals in the game industry. The latter include, for instance, the creation, visualisation, modelling, and animation of two- and three-dimensional objects or the design, development, and programming of computer games. The technical knowledge and skills are complemented by teaching students a number of useful transversal skills, such as creative and critical thinking, independent work and team work, communication skills and foreign languages.

Thus the study programme is in line with the high-level SMK mission to support students in their personnel and professional development, thereby creating an impact to the development of the society.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The development of the study programme under evaluation was based on several strategic documents at the European and national level and motivated by the tremendous need for IT professionals for the local economy. The aims and the expected learning outcomes of the evaluated study programme respond to a very specific sector in the IT landscape, namely the game industry, which has shown to be fastly growing in Lithuania. While a large part of the learning outcomes are very specific for the game industry, the graduates acquire also basic skills in the Informatics study field as well as transversal skills, which allows them to be inserted in a broader context in the labour market. The learning outcomes of the study programme are compliant with the SMK mission statement, which is formulated by three rather high-level objectives.

1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The study programme under evaluation satisfies all necessary requirements set by the national legal framework. The content and structure are also compliant with the aims and guidelines of the Bologna process as well as several SMK strategic documents.

The study programme comprises 180 ECTS credits, corresponding to 4.800 hours of workload, and is offered for full-time students in 3 years and part-time students in 4 years.

The curriculum design and scheduling considers dependencies between specific subjects and aims at achieving a gradual development of skills and learning progress (Appendix 1 of SER). While individual course units have assigned a different number of credits, each semester consists of 30 ECTS credits, which guarantees a balanced workload for students across semesters.

1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

The aims of the study programme under evaluation are largely aligned with the learning outcomes and the teaching, learning, and assessment methods.

To achieve the learning outcome, a number of different teaching and learning methods are applied (e.g., frontal teaching, discussion, brainstorming, lab works, etc.), depending on the specifics of the course unit, such as a more foundational course versus a more practical course. A few years ago, SMK also introduced experiential teaching, a method where students solve real-world problems and business challenges and the teacher has the role of a tutor.

Similarly, for each course unit the appropriate assessment method is chosen, which is best suitable to evaluate the achievement of the learning outcomes and is at the same time compatible with the teaching method. Depending on the complexity of the subject and the amount of content, course units might also offer intermediate tests during the semester.

During the onsite visit, the expert panel collected from the students useful feedback for further improving the quality of the study programme: (1) the workload is not always balanced, in the sense that some courses are very time consuming but have a relatively low number of ECTS credits; (2) the exam dates are often announced rather late, and a more timely planning of the exams would be required. The committee was also surprised to learn that the teaching material for the same courses across the 3 sites are not synchronised. Thus, a unification of the teaching material is recommended to reduce the workload for the teachers and increase the overall quality.

1.2.3 Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The curriculum and the schedule are designed so as to ensure a constant growth of the students' competencies. In the first years, more general course units as well as foundational courses are taught, which provide the basis to successfully attend more specialised and practical course units in later semesters. An important part of the study programme at SMK is dedicated to internships (32 credit points). They are carried out in companies or other institutions to expose students to professional activities. Often, the work during the internships lead to the topic of the final thesis.

1.2.4 Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

The study programme foresees 12 ECTS credits of optional courses, which allow students to customise a part of the study plan to her/his own interest. It seems that these credits are dedicated to the development of interdisciplinary studies and general competences, such as languages, career development, psychology.

Students also have a limited possibility to deepen their knowledge in their field of studies by choosing two courses in the area of game development.

There is no mention about the possibility of creating an individual study plan.

1.2.5 Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

The selection, preparation and evaluation of the final thesis is fully compliant with the relevant regulations that are in place at the national and the SMK level. SMK has a quite detailed schema for the preparation and evaluation of the final thesis, which includes a preparatory defence and the feedback by a reviewer before students are admitted to the public defence. Every year, a number of final theses are conducted in collaboration with local stakeholders.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The evaluated study programmes fully comply with national and university legal requirements. The content of the curriculum and the teaching/learning/assessment methods are largely aligned and scheduled in a way to guarantee for students a coherent and gradual acquisition of competences in order to achieve the study aims and learning outcomes.

During the onsite visit the expert panel observed several opportunities for further improving the study programme. First, the ECTS credits assigned to course units do not always reflect the real workload for the students; careful analysis and reflection is required. Second, the possibilities to personalise the study program are limited, and adding a few more courses would render the study programme more attractive . Third, from an organisational perspective the exam dates are often announced very late; a more timely planning of the exams is strongly recommended.

The expert panel found out that in all three sites the teachers use their own teaching material for the same courses. A close collaboration between the teachers of the same course units and sharing the course material would not only reduce the workload for the teachers, but also increase the overall quality of the course.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The ECTS credits allocated to the course units does not always reflect the real workload for the students. Some courses are much more demanding than expected from the number of credits. A careful analysis and reflection on the course content, the teaching methods and the assessment methods is required in order to balance the credit points with the real workload.

2. The exam dates are often announced very late so that students do not have much time to prepare. Exams should be announced sufficiently in advance (e.g., at least 2 months) so that students have enough time to prepare. This is a pure organisational problem which should be fixed immediately.
3. Since the same courses are offered at all three sites and the course content is identical, the teachers should share and jointly develop the teaching material. Such an approach not only saves resources, but would also contribute to increasing the overall quality of the course.

For further improvement

1. It is recommended to regularly collect feedback about how to adjust the study programme, both from the students as well as from the stakeholders.

AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

FACTUAL SITUATION

2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

For several years now, the SMK has tried to strengthen its scientific profile and to engage professors and teachers in research activities, publications, and networking. To achieve these objectives, SMK delivers annual scientific activity plans.

The SER describes a number of (research) projects (Appendix 7 in the SER provides a more exhaustive list). Unfortunately, it is not clear from this description whether these are really research projects, whether there is an external funding, and what were the scientific outputs. The SMK tries also to provide financial incentives to increase the number and quality of scientific publications (Appendix 3 of the SER). Finally, the SMK is also active in the organisation of conferences and in editorial activities.

While all these initiatives to strengthen the research profile and a research-based teaching are very valuable and point in the right direction, the expert panel noted that most of the research activities are conducted by external teachers who are professors at other Lithuanian universities. For a sustainable development of the SMK towards a more research-oriented higher education institution it is important that the internal professors and teachers are active in research, focusing not only on national conferences and journals, but also on international outlets. Similarly, it would be important to be engaged in European projects in order to enlarge the international network.

2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

The SER report describes a long list of activities, through which the SMK teachers try to link the study content with the latest research results and to motivate students to learn about and use the newest results. A few examples of such activities include the use of scientific databases for literature research, the use of newest resources in the lectures, the collaboration with national and international associations and companies, practical project assignments for students, and the final thesis.

While all these activities and initiatives are helpful and appreciated, they cannot guarantee that the study content is sufficiently related to the latest achievements in research. This can only be achieved in the medium and long term if the teaching staff is itself active in research and motivated to integrate research results.

2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

The SMK encourages students to get involved into applied research activities, such as attending conferences, co-authoring research papers, or participating in national and international events and projects. For example, the SMK organises an annual student conference, termed "Future Creators", where students from SMK and other higher education institutions present their research works.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The SMK is aware about the importance of research activities for a higher education institution and for several years now is planning research activities on a yearly basis. The SER describes several projects, publications and events to which professors and teachers from the SMK contributed. An incentive system has been established to engage more academic staff in such activities. The SMK also tries to include the latest developments in research into the course units, as well as to teach and engage students in scientific projects.

The SER also reveals that (a) most of the research activities and results are achieved by external teachers, who are professors in other universities, and (b) many activities and research results are at a national level. To successfully develop towards a research-oriented higher education institution recognized at a European level, it is essential that the internal academic staff becomes active in research and the activities are targeted towards international publications and projects.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

| AREA 1 | Negative - 1

Does not meet the requirements | Satisfactory - 2

Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated | Good - 3

Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated | Very good - 4

Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings | Exceptional - 5

Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **First cycle** | | | 3 | | |

COMMENDATIONS

1. The SMK is spending a lot of effort encouraging students to actively participate in artistic and practical projects. To facilitate this, the management is very active in organising various events and keeping close relationships to the stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Currently, most of the research activities and results are achieved by external teachers, who are professors in other universities. This is not sustainable in the medium- and long term. To successfully develop towards a research-oriented higher education, which is recognized at a European level, it is essential that the internal academic staff becomes active in research.
2. Similarly, it is essential that the research activities are embedded into an international context, i.e., publications in high-quality conferences and journals, national and European projects with competitive funding, and the involvement of the research staff in international conferences and events.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1. Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

The admission system is based on the standard Lithuanian admission system. The program is open to individuals who have completed secondary education. In the field of informatics, the principal state matriculation examination with a coefficient of 0.4 is mathematics.

Admission to the study programs in the Informatics Study Field to non-state higher education institutions is available only in state non-funded (tuition-based) study positions.

It is important to note that the admission score for the only programme in the field of Informatics, the Computer Games and Animation programme, is relatively low.

3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

In 2023, SMK gained the authority to conduct academic recognition of foreign qualifications.

During the academic years 2020-2023, seven individuals utilised the approved procedure for assessing and recognizing competences acquired informally and independently, and they continued their studies at SMK.

Following the "Descriptor of the procedure of recognizing competences, acquired through formal education", as a part SMK, of a study programme, for persons, who want to continue studies in the 2020-2023 learning outcomes were credited to 7 students in Informatics Study Field.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The SMK's admission system, along with the system for recognizing foreign qualifications and other prior learning outcomes, operates with minimal criticism. However, the entry grades of admitted students tend to be relatively low. Despite this, the transparency and adequacy of the admission criteria ensure that the selection process is fair and accessible. The successful assessment and recognition of competencies acquired through informal and independent learning by several students further demonstrate the institution's commitment to inclusivity. Nonetheless, efforts to raise entry requirements could enhance the academic preparedness of incoming students.

3.2. There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

Students participate in mobility programs through the EU Erasmus+ exchange program in two ways: for studies and/or internships. Information about the Erasmus+ program, participation procedures, partners by study fields, partners by countries, and SMK Erasmus+ coordinators is available in Lithuanian and English languages on the smk.lt website.

During 2020-2023, six students from the Informatics Study Field participated in the Erasmus+ program: five for studies and one for an internship. To enhance international competences, Informatics students are encouraged to actively engage in other international activities at SMK. Students from CGA SP interact and collaborate with incoming Erasmus+ students at Vilnius Branch, participating in events such as the Erasmus+ Day in SMK Kaunas, Erasmus+ Day in SMK Klaipėda, cultural activities, and movie screenings.

CGA SP students attended lectures by visiting teachers on topics like "Computer Architecture and Operating Systems" and "Fundamentals of Programming."

During the academic years 2020-2023, Informatics students had the opportunity to attend online lectures taught by 20 teachers from foreign higher education institutions.

During the analysed period, there were no foreign students who came for study periods in the Informatics Study Field under the Erasmus+ exchange program because SMK doesn't offer CGA SP in English.

3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

To ensure a steady number of students and enhance study accessibility, SMK offers students comprehensive academic, social, financial, psychological, and personal support. The support processes are marked by continuity and consistency, considering the students' needs and social integration.

Each semester, the most proactive and forward-thinking students at SMK have the opportunity to earn study scholarships. From 2020 to 2023, three students from the Informatics program were awarded these grants.

Financial support for students is provided through scholarships from social partners and SMK. Between 2020 and 2023, Informatics students received cash prizes and incentive gifts from social partners. For example, in 2022, UAB Pepi Play awarded a gift for an excellently defended final thesis on a practical topic. That same year, two prizes for the best final theses in the study program were awarded by the Director of Electronic Information Centre E-Lietuva, UAB, and the Lithuanian Electronic Sports Association awarded a prize for the best thesis in the study program, among other awards.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Information on studies is comprehensive, consistent, timely, and openly available. Details about study programs, changes, faculty, consultations, SMK publications, sociocultural events, and regulatory documents are provided on the SMK website (www.smk.lt) and through the E-learning (Moodle) virtual learning system.

The measures implemented by SMK help to assess students' awareness of the adequacy of information and counselling. They also enable SMK to identify and implement additional strategies to further improve the effectiveness of the information and the counselling provided to students.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The situation at SMK appears to be appropriate and beneficial to students, both in terms of the general situation at the higher education institution and the field of informatics studies. It is, however, of equal importance to direct attention not only to the departure of existing students from the institution abroad but also to the attraction of international students. Enhancing the international appeal of the Informatics Study Field by offering courses in English could significantly increase foreign student enrollment. By continuously improving support systems and international outreach, SMK can solidify its position as a globally competitive institution.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The SMK is demonstrating a commitment to the well-being of students, which is a commendable and laudable approach. The students across all three sites feel like one big family.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. It is recommended that the admission requirements are revised in order to ensure that only students who are adequately prepared and have achieved higher entry scores are admitted. This would also help to reduce the dropout rate.
2. In order to attract a greater number of international students, it is necessary to expand the opportunities for internationalisation and offer study subjects for foreign students of Informatics in English.

AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.1. Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

The SMK Study Regulation states that to assess the learning outcomes of course units the SMK applies cumulative assessment. Composite parts of the cumulative assessment are used to assess different learning outcomes, or their parts, foreseen in the programme of a course unit/module, depending on the complexity of the learning outcomes. The general assessment of learning outcomes of a course unit/module is determined in accordance with the assessment system foreseen in the programme of the course unit.

At the beginning of each semester, SMK teachers coordinate the distribution of classroom and independent work, schedule tests, and discuss interdisciplinary relations to ensure course content aligns with learning outcomes and avoids duplication.

Every semester before starting to teach a course unit, a teacher prepares a Course Unit Assessment System, in which they plan the content and tasks for independent study, test forms and terms, assessment methods and criteria, and requirements for specific independent work tasks, all of which are included in the system for assessing learning outcomes of the course unit.

The SER report states that the SMK teachers actively use the virtual learning system "E-learning" (Moodle), where students are provided with learning material of a course unit, a clear and detailed information of studies, self-check tasks, interim tests and examinations, a course unit assessment system.

To achieve the learning outcome, a few different teaching and learning methods are depending on the specifics of the course unit, such as a more foundational course versus a more practical course.

During the visit, students mentioned that the exam dates are often announced very late so that students do not have much time to prepare. The expert panel noticed that teachers at all three sites use their own materials for the same courses. Enhanced collaboration and sharing of course materials among teachers of the same units would not only lighten their workload but also improve the overall course quality.

4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

The SMK administration and teachers try to adapt the study environment and study material to the individual needs of students. Students with a disability or a temporary health disorder can individualise their studies.

Since 2014, SMK has participated in the State Studies Foundation Project "Increasing Study Availability". This included training on disability awareness and support for higher education, attended by 10 SMK staff. They shared their knowledge with the broader community to improve study accessibility and adapt courses

for students with special needs. The Department of Studies informs teachers about students' disabilities before classes begin and adapts tasks as needed.

From 2020-2023, through the "Increasing Study Availability" Project, SMK improved study conditions for disabled students by purchasing specialised equipment, including alternative computer mice, adjustable tables, a stationary image magnifier, a mobile staircase climber, and magnifying software. Additional tools are planned for future acquisition to further enhance accessibility.

In 2020-2023, there were 2 students with disabilities studying at Klaipėda Branch, 3 students at Vilnius Branch, and no students with disabilities studying Informatics at Kaunas Branch.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

SMK employs a cumulative assessment approach, with teachers coordinating work and assessments each semester to align with learning outcomes. Detailed Course Unit Assessment Systems are prepared, and the Moodle platform is extensively used for course delivery. Various teaching methods are tailored to course specifics. Students raised concerns about late exam date announcements. Greater collaboration and material sharing among teachers across sites is recommended to enhance course quality and reduce workloads. The SMK provides conditions, ensuring possibilities of studies for students with special needs.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.2.1.   Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic

The SER report states that throughout the academic year, SMK systematically monitors student study progress according to the SMK Study Regulation and the Order of Organizing Feedback. Monitoring is conducted at multiple levels: Study Departments handle study administration and surveys; Heads of Study Programmes focus on planning and quality; Teachers monitor achievements and provide assistance; and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their progress. The monitoring involves tracking lecture attendance, interim test participation, and exam assessments multiple times per semester, alongside monthly counselling sessions, ensuring students maintain steady academic progress.

SMK provides feedback to students, primarily through lecturers and study programme heads. Lecturers offer feedback during lectures and consultations, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, and use the Moodle system to provide written feedback. Feedback helps students prepare for exams by addressing interim assessment results. Study programme heads provide feedback on exam performance, contacting students with academic debts to identify issues and propose solutions.

During the onsite visit, the expert panel formed an opinion that the feedback system is not transparent, neither to teachers nor to students. Results are only discussed with the (course) director (for critical cases).

4.2.2.   Graduate employability and career are monitored

Monitoring graduate employability is very important for ensuring the quality of SMK's activities, and this is conducted according to the Graduate Career Monitoring Programme, which involves contacting graduates 6 months and 36 months post-graduation to gather data via questionnaires on their employability, career aspirations, competences, abilities, skills, job search methods, and the duration of the employment process.

Another important source of data on graduate employability is the Education Management Information System (ŠVIS), which collects information on the demographic, social, and employment status of the country's population in relation to their educational attainment; SMK uses this statistical information from ŠVIS to analyse graduates' transition into the labour market and the correlation between their education and employment status.

During the analysed period 29 graduates finished studies in the Field of Informatics Studies (2 in Klaipėda Department, 11 in Vilnius Branch, 16 in Kaunas Branch). Based on EMIS data, 12 months after graduation from studies 75 percent of graduate's work under employment contracts, 13 percent – individually. Around 70% of the employed graduates from the Field of Informatics Studies work in highly qualified positions.

SMK focuses on monitoring graduate employability and enhancing students' and graduates' career management skills. Through its HeyReady initiative, SMK organises activities to foster productive professional relationships between students, graduates, and the business community. HeyReady provides career management services, coordinates annual career days with diverse sector participation, and facilitates real job and internship opportunities. SMK also offers open lectures, creative workshops, and mutual learning programs for continuous professional development. Informatics graduates actively contribute to improving study quality by participating in decision-making processes and suggesting curriculum enhancements.

The expert panel noticed that the drop-out rate of students is very high. During the onsite visit, it was noted that at the Klaipėda branch, 12 students enrolled, 6 students dropped out in the first year, and only 2 students graduated.

4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

The SMK provisions and procedures of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are regulated in the following documents: the SMK Code of Academic Ethics; the SMK Regulation of Academic Ethics Commission; the SMK Descriptor of the Procedure of Assessing Learning Outcomes; the SMK Procedure of Implementing Examination Session in a Remote Mode; the SMK Descriptor of the Procedure of Preparing, Defending and Storing Final Theses; Descriptor of the Procedure of Equal Opportunities Policy and its Implementation; the SMK Descriptor of the Procedure of the Prevention of Psychological Violence and Mobbing; Regulation of the Appeals Commission; Dispute Solving Provisions.

The SMK Code of Academic Ethics is published in www.smk.lt website and E-learning system.

The policy of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination and its procedures implemented in the SMK are clear and systematic, orientated towards prevention of academic dishonesty. The Policy document on the use of artificial intelligence has been established.

4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

The procedure of appeals and complaints regarding the study process at the SMK is formalised. Procedures of appealing and complaining about the study process in the SMK are regulated in the following documents: Regulations of the Appeals Commission and Provisions of Dispute Solving Commission.

The SMK Regulations of the Appeals Commission distinguish that appeals and complaints can be filed on procedural violations during examinations, on the final assessment of achievements of a course unit, on the procedures of defending final theses, violations of admission results and/or admission rules. The formed Dispute Solving Commission solves disputes concerning learning conditions, learning and rest time, payment for studies, imposing disciplinary penalty, study process implementation, following internal order rules, implementation of safety and health requirements and other issues.

Students are introduced to the possibilities of filing appeals and complaints during the introductory lectures. They are introduced to the main documents that regulate the order for filing and analysing appeals and complaints, disputes. These documents are also available in the www.smk.lt website and E-learning system.

Within the analysed period the Appeals Commission received appeals from 19 students concerning the assessment of final achievements of course units. Final assessments of course units were changed to 5 students. The Dispute Solving Commission solved disputes submitted by 4 students. Disputes raised by 2 students were resolved in their favour.

The presented evidence confirms that the procedures of filing and analysing appeals, disputes concerning the study process are followed.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The SMK has clear and systematic policies in place to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, aimed at preventing academic dishonesty. Additionally, a policy document regarding the use of artificial intelligence has been established.

The presented evidence confirms that the procedures of filing and analysing appeals and disputes concerning the study process are followed.

The high dropout rate among students necessitates thorough analysis by the SMK to identify underlying reasons and implement appropriate measures.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

COMMENDATIONS

1. A policy about the use of modern AI tools for study purposes is already in place.
2. SMK proactively monitors graduate employability and provides career management skill development through the HeyReady brand. HeyReady facilitates connections between students, graduates, and the business community and annually organised career days with contact fairs and competitions, enhancing essential employee competencies in line with modern trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Exam dates should be announced well in advance to ensure students have ample time to prepare effectively.
2. The feedback system is not transparent, neither to teachers nor to students. This calls for a careful analysis about the current status and the development of concrete measures on how to improve it for all groups of people that are involved, including professors and students.
3. The drop-out rate of students is very high, and measures to reduce it are urgently needed. The SMK should analyse the reasons and take appropriate measures.
4. Measures to increase the attendance to lectures are needed.

For further improvement

1. Expert panel encouraged enhanced collaboration and sharing of course materials among teachers of the same units, which would not only reduce their workload but also improve the overall quality of the courses.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1. Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes.

The situation with the teaching staff follows the regulations, such as the relevant laws, labour codes and additionally the SMK's own Statute. Teachers are employed based on rather standard criteria, such as their qualification, scientific degrees, and experience (pedagogical and/or work).

The Study Programme is taught by qualified and competent teachers, who are assessed by their scientific, pedagogical, expert and practical experience.

The teacher to students ratio is 1 : 2.5 in the worst case, but typically lower. Anyway, it is relatively low and there is no shortage of teachers.

The same program is taught in three locations, and it seems that the teachers do not share teaching materials, problems, etc.

The teachers have a reasonable participation in research taken into account that the HEI is a college. It is, however, striking that in the author list the teachers nearly always list another institution as their home institution than SMK.

The teachers have also participated in artistic and project activities, which is a definite bonus as the program deals with computer games.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The situation with the teachers is sufficient. However the fact that teachers do not collaborate in giving the same courses does not sound that good. It would make the work easier and the different study implementations more uniform, if the teachers of the same course in different locations shared their teaching materials. Now a large part of the teachers' publications are credited to other institutes. This makes one think that SMK itself does not have a lot of research activities. SMK should develop its own research.

5.2. Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured.

Over the evaluation period, the SMK has concluded inter-institutional cooperation contracts with 87 foreign higher education institutions from 31 countries of the world. While this includes all fields, at the same time out of the partners more than 40 implement studies in Informatics Field. In 2020-2023 there were 26 outgoing teachers and 11 incoming teachers. In addition, there are other international activities and also "virtual mobility".

5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured.

The SMK teachers are provided with possibilities to systematically develop various competences, through participation in competitions, seminars, conferences, internships, takeover of good experience from the Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions, studies for a doctorate and so on. The demand is analysed on an annual basis. Data on the development of teacher competences are accumulated and analysed.

Teachers have an obligation for developing their subject and didactic competencies and to participate in applied research activities. They carry out self-evaluation of their activity at the end of each course unit, and they participate in evaluation interviews held by the institute. In the interview, the teachers can also make their proposals on improving things. Further plans for developing teacher competences are made based on the interviews.

At the site visit, the staff stated in the meeting that they can get practically any training they wish.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The situation overall is good. There are plenty of exchange programs and good participation in exchanges. The possibilities to develop competencies are overall good and the teachers wishes are taken into account.. The SMK should aim at developing its own research projects or in some other way create its own research.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The staff has good activities in project participation, which brings valuable expertise and experience to the study program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The teachers should collaborate more to develop and share the course materials to have the same materials in all locations.
2. The teachers should participate and create research activities that are more directly aimed for the HEI.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process.

The expert group visited the Vilnius campus, which is probably the most modern of the campuses. Since the space is used for other study programs, too, it is a bit hard to make a judgement about the amount of facilities, but the students did not complain about the study space and basically the facilities seemed modern.

The labs fulfil the minimum requirements, though the students said that for some things better alternatives exist - like drawing on a tablet instead of a mouse. While the labs, according to the SER, are equipped with an impressive list of software, then on the other hand according to the students the labs did not seem to have a uniform setup so that one could use any software in any lab using any computer.

The SMK has access to a wide selection of electronic materials via different contracts and collaborations. It also has a physical library that contains e.g. course books.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

There is a process for updating the necessary resources. As formulated in the SER, it is carried out taking into account the number of newly admitted students, the proposals presented in the annual self-assessments by the teachers conducting the Field studies and the latest developments in art and technology in national and international markets.

The necessary study resources are planned in close cooperation with teachers and students. There is an annual activity report by the teachers at the end of each academic year, and there, teachers specify what are the new resources necessary for the study programme. Student input is also taken into account.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

Generally, the study spaces are modern, innovative and sufficient. The institute has a process for maintaining the necessary resources. The computer lab situation has room for improvements. The hardware could be more up-to-date to allow drawing using touch screens. The software maintenance is not uniform across different labs and computers.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Vilnius campus has nice multi-function premises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. It is recommended to unify the computer setup so that all software is available in all labs and in all computers.
2. Computer graphics and animation rooms should also be equipped with devices that have touch screens, e.g. graphical tablets.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

A Quality Guide approved by the SMK Academic Board and by the Order of the Director serves as a main document of assuring the quality of the SMK activity and it complies with the SMK strategic goals and organisational culture. The document complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG) and the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

As clearly described in the SER report, internal quality assurance is based on the participation of stakeholders, including the entire academic community and social partners, with responsibility for quality assurance shared at all levels. The Study Program Committee (PPC), together with the Heads of study programs assigned to each division of the SMK, are responsible for ensuring the quality of the implemented study programme and for its continuous improvement.

The procedure for organising feedback established in the SMK determines the forms, methods and frequency of organising feedback, the procedure for analysing data and publishing the results obtained during surveys. Four main stakeholder groups are surveyed periodically: students, teachers, graduates (alumni) and employers. It is significant that feedback from employers also includes a report on the quality of student internships, evaluation of final works and participation in joint meetings with the SPC twice a year.

In general, the internal quality assurance system is well developed and is used productively to ensure timely updating of the structure and content of the study program, monitoring and improving the quality of the study process.

7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

Collecting the opinions of stakeholders on the quality of studies is organised at SMK through their periodic surveys and meetings with them. The students of the program are surveyed several times a year, the teachers at the end of each semester, and the graduate survey is organised 6 months and 3 years after graduation. The first two surveys assess the quality of the study process and the program, the graduate and employer surveys - to monitor the position of graduates in the labour market and update the program in time.

Social partners also participate directly in the process of ensuring the quality of education, being members of the Academic Council and the SPC, commissions for the defence of final theses, as well as curators of student internships. By participating in regular meetings of these bodies and in round tables organised by the SMK, they express their opinion on the quality of current studies in the informatics field and make proposals for its improvement.

However, it should be noted that the SER report only contains general information on stakeholder participation in internal quality assurance at SMK; sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 of the SER do not contain any information specific to the informatics study field. Meanwhile, during the meeting of the expert panel with

social partners, it became obvious that there is a close working relationship with the Lithuanian Game Developers Association, which helps the SPC maintain contacts with game market participants, organises various events and competitions in which Students and teachers also participate.

7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

Information about the evaluated study programme Computer Games and Animation, its goals, main learning outcomes, career opportunities and the admission process can be found on the SMK web site: https://www.smk.lt/en/studies/computer-games-and-animation/20.

Both survey results and the information obtained during the regular meetings with stakeholders are used in the changes of the study process. The results of these meetings are also discussed with students and announced in the E-learning system of SMK.

The SER document provides specific examples of what has been accomplished based on the feedback. In particular, students recently proposed introducing a course related to AI, so the course unit Artificial Intelligence in Computer Games is introduced from the new academic year. A similar request from teachers related to artificial intelligence led to SMK's decision to create an AI working group. The group shares examples of best practices and organises training on the use of artificial intelligence in the educational process.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Student feedback on the quality of studies in the informatics study field is systematically collected and analysed. The generalised results are shortly presented in the SER report, they show overall student satisfaction with studies (4.2 out of 5) and are similar in the all three branches of SMK, i.e. in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. The detailed information on the student satisfaction with studies is given in a separate document: Survey Reports on Student Satisfaction with Studies.

Although these overall positive results were largely confirmed during the meeting with students, former students also identified certain problems and shortcomings that need to be eliminated. Relevant expert recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the study program and its implementation process are presented in this and other sections.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Internal quality assurance in SMK is based on the participation of stakeholders, including the entire academic community and social partners. The SMK Procedure of Organizing Feedback defines the forms, methods and periodicity of this core element of the Internal quality assurance system. Flexible cooperation with social partners stakeholders facilitates the regular revision and timely update of the study programme.

Although the SER document reports a fairly high level of student satisfaction with the quality of the studies, during the on-site meeting with experts, students presented a number of shortcomings of the study programme and its implementation process.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			3		

COMMENDATIONS

1. A close relationship has been established with the Lithuanian Game Developers Association, which helps ensure that the curriculum meets market needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Admitting applicants with low grades resulted in high student drop-out rates, especially at local branches. Although the learning environment and overall atmosphere are rated as good by students, more measures should be taken to monitor students' individual progress throughout the semester and anticipate problematic cases in advance, as well as provide more active academic support, including individual advising and more opportunities to learn from their peers in a team, etc.
2. Low attendance reduces the motivation of other students. It is recommended that the SPK committee analyse the reasons for low attendance (perhaps by organising a joint discussion with students) and suggest additional steps to increase it and to make studies more attractive.
3. According to the opinion of students a better balance should be found in the study plan between design/graphic art and programming subjects.
4. The feedback loop is not fully closed through proper reporting and follow-up discussions, so the internal quality assurance system is not transparent to either teachers or students.

IV. SUMMARY

First of all, the expert panel wishes to thank the SMK and all who worked hard to compile a coherent, detailed, and well written SER. It provided valuable insights into the institution, its strategies, and the study programmes under evaluation. The onsite visit was well prepared and happened in a friendly, transparent and cooperative atmosphere.

The SMK was founded in 1994 and is the largest non-state higher education institution in Lithuania with branches in Klaipeda, Kaunas, and Vilnius. The study programme under evaluation targets a very specific sector in the field of Informatics. Based on the SER and the onsite visit, the overall impression about the college and the study programme is good. The expert panel also identified a few aspects that need further improvements and are summarised below.

The evaluated study programme is fully compliant with the legal requirements, in line with strategic documents at different levels, and a response to tackle the high demand for IT professionals in the local economy, targeting the fastly growing Lithuanian game industry. Curriculum and teaching/learning/assessment methods are largely consistent to ensure a coherent and gradual learning process. To further improve the quality of the study programme, the expert panel recommends for some course units to carefully analyse the balance between the ECTS credits, learning outcomes, and the real workload for the students. Also, the students wish to know the exam dates much earlier, and they miss some courses they deem important and interesting. The panel also recommends sharing the course material across the three sites to increase to save resources and improve the quality.

It seems that the SMK recognized that research is important for high quality teaching in higher education, even for colleges. In fact, several measures have been activated in the past few years to engage the teaching staff and students in research activities. However, most of the results so far have been achieved by external teachers and target national conferences and journals. The expert panel recommends developing internal research activities, embedded in and competing with the international scientific community.

The SMK is committed to the well-being of the students and provides very good support at all levels. In fact, the students feel like one big family. The admission system works with one criticism, namely the relatively low entry requirements. The admission requirements need to be revised to ensure a decent quality of the students. To attract international students, it is important to offer more study subjects (also) in English.

The study methods are in line with academic and professional standards and are largely adequate to address the needs of the students. Academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are ensured by a clear policy, and the use of modern AI tools for study purposes has been regulated. There are also some weak points, such as exam dates should be announced well in advance, the feedback loop of the teacher evaluation by the students requires more transparency, and measures to reduce the drop-out and to increase the attendance to lectures are urgently needed.

The overall situation regarding the teaching staff is considered sufficient to ensure a good quality and the achievement of the learning outcome. However, the research related activities are mostly done by external teachers from other institutions. It is recommended that SMK's internal staff develop its own research activities. The teachers of the same courses at the three sites should share and synchronise the course materials.

The facilities and the equipment are generally very good, modern, and appropriate to support the study progress, with a few issues that need improvements. Regarding the setup of the computers, it is recommended to develop a maintenance strategy so that all software is available in all labs and in all computers. Moreover, the students expressed the desire to equip the computer graphics and animation rooms also with devices with a touch screen.

The SMK has a good internal quality assurance system in place that involves all relevant parties, such as the academic community, students, stakeholders and social partners. While the SER reports a fairly high level of student satisfaction with the quality of the studies, the onsite meeting revealed a number of shortcomings regarding the study programme and process. Hence, the expert panel formulated a number of recommendations. Measures to reduce the drop-out rate are urgently needed, such as increasing the admission requirements, increasing the attendance to the lectures, and a closer monitoring of the students' progress. The students expressed the desire to find a better balance between design/graphic art and programming subjects as well as to introduce some new courses. The internal feedback system regarding the teacher's evaluation is not transparent to either teachers and students.

As a final note, the expert panel hopes that the feedback and suggestions provided in this evaluation report will be motivating and helpful for the SMK to continue along the path initiated in the past and to strive for a internationally recognized college with a strong teaching and research track.