VILNIAUS DIZAINO KOLEGIJA
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
VILNIUS COLLEGE OF DESIGN

Grupės vadovė:
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Vertinimo sekretorė:
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Grupės nariai (kategorija):   Ms. Helen Angove, academic
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CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report

of **Vilnius College of Design.**

Dr. Annie Doona

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.

3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members:

   ● Dr. Annie Doona – Panel Chair, academic. Experienced quality reviewer, accredited by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), EQ Arts in Europe and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), Emeritus President IADT, Institute of Art Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire (Ireland).

   ● Dr. Daniela Jobertová – Panel Secretary, academic. Vice-president of the Council of Higher Education Institutions; guarantor for Quality Assurance and International Affairs, former vice-rector of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague for study affairs and quality assurance, member of the permanent committee of the Czech National Accreditation Bureau for study programmes in Arts and Humanities (Czech Republic).

   ● Helen Angove – Panel Member, academic. Education Consultant at United Colleges Group, former Head of Learning and Teaching at London Contemporary Dance School, London, former Head of Quality and Registry at the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, London, former Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for Dance at University Campus Suffolk (UK).

   ● Ieva Ševiakovaitė – Panel Member, social partner. The owner and fashion designer at design studio Uniforma by Ieva, participates in many well-known exhibitions, projects and collections (Lithuania).

   ● Ieva Porutytė – Panel Member, student representative. Student of Creativity and Business Innovations at Vilniaus Kolegija (Vilnius College) with experience in institutional evaluation (Lithuania).

4. As a result of external review **Vilnius College of Design (Vilniaus dizaino kolegija)** is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	3
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	3
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

*5 points - **excellent**– the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **33** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of Vilnius College of Design (Vilniaus dizaino kolegija) (hereafter referred to as VDK or the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and carried out in November 2022 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 Order No V-32 (hereinafter – the Methodology).

8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with annexes. SKVC provided the Panel with additional information about the College, as set out in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including: statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-ante programme and ex-post study field reviews; institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; State-budget

allocations for research activities; and information on violations of academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information including: the Annual Activity Plan of the Department of Studies; the Annual Activity Plan of the International Relations and Project Management Unit; the Personnel Division Action Plan; the Internationalisation Strategy; examples of filled-in questionnaires relating to the study programmes annual self-evaluations; and the final report from the survey completed by social partners.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the College on 8th-10th of November 2022 and undertook 13 meetings with 89 internal and external stakeholders. A 14th meeting was organised at the request of the Panel with (i) Students of Performance Acting, (ii) Teachers of Performance Acting, (iii) Head of Studies and Head of Administration, (iv) Director of VDK. Subsequently, the Panel met both in-person, and virtually, to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to SKVC.

11. In line with the Procedure the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management**, **Quality Assurance**, **Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review carried out in 2014.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

13. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

14. In line with the Methodology the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to submit comments on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.

15. The Panel did not receive any comments from Vilnius College of Design (Vilniaus dizaino kolegija). As a result, no changes were made.

16. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (hereinafter – the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 of January, 2020 order No. V-5, SKVC takes one of the decisions:

    - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
    - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

The higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre.

The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

17. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

- to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

18. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on it's website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the review of the higher education institution together with the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

19. The origins of Vilnius College of Design date back to 1997, when Giedrė Fledžinskienė High Art School was established. On 28 September 2005 the work of the entire community received a positive evaluation from the external experts and the right to reorganise the school into Public Institution Vilnius College of Design was granted following the approval issued by the Minister of Education licensing the provision of higher College education. The address of the College's headquarters is Akmenų Str. 3, LT-03106 Vilnius. The College is the only private college of art studies in Lithuania, with private capital, which does not receive funds from the budget of the Republic of Lithuania. The entirety of the College's income is related to student contributions and engaging in additional non-formal educational activities.

20. The College is managed by the following bodies: the Council (formerly the Academic Council, or Board), the Academic Council (formerly the Methodological Council), and the Director. In 2022, following the recommendation of the previous institutional evaluation, a new body, the External Consultants, was created. The Students' Representative Body was formed in 2006.

21. The College was externally reviewed by SKVC twice: in 2008-2009 and in 2013-2014. In both cases, the activities of the College received positive evaluation, and accreditation was granted for the maximum period. In May 2012 the College became a member of the CUMULUS Association which unites higher education institutions in the fields of art, design, and media studies. In June 2013 UAB "Bureau Veritas Lit" conducted an inspection focusing on whether the College complied with ISO standards and on 17 July 2013 the College was issued a certificate stating that the College complied with ISO standards.

22. Studies are organised in 5 departments which were formed gradually between 2006 (Clothing Design) and 2015 (Performance Acting). Currently the College offers the following study programmes in the Study Field of Design: Fashion Design, Interior Design, Graphic Design; in the Study Field of Media Arts: Applied Photography, as well as one Programme in the Study Field of Theatre: Performance Acting. The College has many national social partners, and develops its international dimension mainly through incoming and outgoing mobilisation of staff and students, institutional cooperation and collaboration, and a key event; the annual "International Week".

23. According to the data available in the SER, on 1 October 2021, 386 students studied at the College, of which 85 students studied part-time and 301 students studied full-time. 103 lecturers taught at the College in academic year 2021/2022 (2 professors, 9 associate professors, 71 lecturers, 5 assistants, and 16 College supervisors; 14 lecturers have the status of an artist, 3 lecturers are studying for a doctoral degree, 4 lecturers have a PhD, and 1 lecturer has a degree of a licentiate of arts). 18 administrative employees worked at the College; they constituted 14.15 staff units in the academic year 2021/2022.

24. The key source of information about the College is the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and its annexes. The Panel acknowledges the College's efforts in providing a comprehensive, well-structured document written in clear prose and containing relevant data. The style of the SER is rather descriptive as opposed to analytical, therefore the Panel undertook triangulation of the information through consideration of three types of source (the SER, the accompanying annexes and the onsite visit). Consequently, the Panel concludes that the information presented in the documentation (including statistics) correlates with information provided during the meetings with stakeholders.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;
1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;
1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

25. Vilnius College of Design stipulates its mission to be *the development of an educated, creative, independent, and responsible personality; quality higher education studies based on internationality; ability to respond to labour market needs* (SER), and articulates its vision *as a*

space for creativity, initiative and development, personal expression, and the progress of the society (ibid).

26. The mission of the College is consistent across its strategy and documentation and, in the meetings with the Director and staff, it was clear that there is a good and shared understanding of both the vision and mission of the College.

27. The College has clear strategic objectives, goals and principles incorporating aspects of education, artistic creation, dissemination of culture in the society, the development of professional graduates that meet labour market and community needs, teacher qualifications, the impact on the local and international environment and descriptions and terms of reference of the governing bodies of the College. In the area of strategy around research, the College strives to meet the expectations of the European Research Area. The Panel did feel however that the College's strategic approach to, and understanding of, research and, in particular, artist and scientific research, needs to be further developed. The Panel **recommend** that the College clarify its understanding of and strategic approach to research.

28. Reference is made to the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area. There are strategic documents that align the mission and vision of the College with the relevant internal and external documents, both national and European, as shown for the European Higher Education Area including the national strategy Lithuania 2030.

29. The College Statute outlines the main objectives and goals of the College, the main areas of artistic research, artistic studies and the role and terms of reference of its stakeholders and governing bodies. The SER states that there are plans to change the statute as currently presented and that a new statute is due to be published by the end of 2022. However, the Panel found that there are some discrepancies in the current statutes and the practice in the College and that terminology in the Statute does not match the terminology used in the self-evaluation process and accompanying annexes. The Panel **recommend** that the new Statute be published in a timely fashion and that the practice in the College reflects the content of the statute.

30. Two Strategic Activity Plans (SAP) documents were referenced in the SER, one from 2014 to 2020 and one from 2021 to 2027, with clarity provided in the SER on how issues from the first Strategic Action Plan were addressed and what still remains to be addressed. The goals and objectives of the SAP 2021 relate to the development and academic values declared in the documents of the European Higher Education Area.

31. The College was last externally reviewed in 2014, a number of changes were made as a result of that visit including international developments and the use of external consultants. This issue is explored further in the Quality Section of this report.

32. The College's Strategic Activity Plan 2021-2027 was prepared after conducting PEST (political, economic, social, and technological situation of the country) and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analyses. The goals and objectives of SAP 2021-2027 covered all areas of the College's activities. The Panel found that the Strategic Activity Plan is clear and comprehensive with a good understanding demonstrated of the external environment and that the use of SWOT and PEST analyses were thorough and helpful. In the meeting with the Director and the representative from the Council, the Panel was informed that changes to improve and streamline quality processes and the use of consultants were the most important changes from the last review.

33. The College envisioned five main strategic directions while preparing its Strategic Plan. These are: the development of the study programme portfolio; expansion of the College's portfolio of other educational services, increasing the weight and income of the College's activities in this area; strengthening the College's scientific potential and increasing the scope of artistic and scientific activities; strengthening the College's activities in the field of internationality; and improving the College's management system.

34. The College is developing at present an international strategy as part of its Strategic goals (SER) and in response to the 2014 evaluation. The SER and other documents (e.g. Internationalisation Strategy 2022-2027, lists of mobilities of academic and administrative staff´s mobilities, and of foreign teaching stuff arriving at the College) demonstrate the commitment to internationalisation and there is also a target to increase internationality and engagement for staff and students. There is a Department of International Relations which produces an annual action plan. An International Week is held annually with the aim of increasing understanding and highlighting international opportunities.

35. In the meeting with the Director and the Heads of Departments, the staff were clear about international strategic objectives and the Panel was given examples of international partners, projects and participation in various international associations in order to strengthen the international department. International partners included for example the University of Zagreb, HAMK University of Applied Sciences Finland and Luca School of Arts Belgium.

36. There is an internal monitoring and audit system in place related to the strategic goals. Departmental annual action plans are developed and approved by the College Director. Action plans are supervised by the Quality Management Department. The most important documents of the College are: Strategic Activity Plan; Statute; Annual Activity Report; and Financial Statements are approved by the Owner and the Council. The Panel is of the view that this works as an effective mechanism to review the strategic goals of the College.

37. Responsibilities of all employees of the College are set forth and described in the descriptions of procedures of the Quality Management System. A regular process management analysis is managed in a number of ways, including SAP annual activity reports which go to the owner and the Council. Action planning is regarded by the College as a strength (SER). The Panel conclude that there is a comprehensive system of action planning at department and unit level going up to Director and Owner level.

38. The preparation of the College's Strategic Activity Plan and the planning and monitoring of measures to improve the quality of activities are carried out by the Quality Management Department on an annual basis. The essence of monitoring is to follow the results of the implementation of the strategic activity plan and to make timely decisions on the need to improve the activities of the College. The Panel state that this is an effective way to monitor the strategic activities of the College.

39. There are key performance indicators which are a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures addressing the different areas of the College's operations, as outlined in their Strategic Plan. Responsibility for achieving strategic objectives is clearly laid out with assigned individuals or teams having responsibility and reporting to the Director. The Heads of Academic Departments and Units who met with the Panel were clear about their role in meeting the strategic objectives and clear about their role in the reporting process.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:
1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined; *1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;* *1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.*

40. The College has in place a structure for governance, decision making, and distribution of responsibilities. The main decision-making bodies are the Management, the Council, and the Academic Council. The documentation outlines the role of the Owner, the Director, the Council, and the Academic Council.

41. The management group consists of the Owner and the Director. The Director is described as the sole management body (SER) reporting to the Owner, and a Deputy Director has responsibility for the day to day running of the College's academic activities. In a number of meetings, including those with the academic staff and the Heads of Units, the Deputy Director was identified as the person in the College to go to regarding many issues including student issues and resources.

42. The Council is the management body for academic affairs, achievement of strategy etc. The members of the Council are elected by shareholders in the company and include members of the College community including staff, students, and external representatives. When asked by the Panel how they were chosen to be Council members, the members said that they were leading figures in their professions, and that the Director and administration suggested the people who could be on the Council.

43. The Panel found that there is some confusion on terminology and on the remit of the Council across the documents: the Council appears as the Board, or in some places as the Academic Council. This confusion is due to the fact that in 2022 names of the management bodies were changed: Academic Council became Council and Methodological Council became Academic Council. This change is now being progressively implemented into the documents of the College.

44. In the meeting with the Council, its members stated that they operate democratically and are able to make decisions regarding the direction of the College to the Director. They also stated that they review, for example, results of student surveys to monitor how the College is progressing and to identify issues. However, the members of the Panel discovered that there was a mismatch between the Council's remit as outlined and some of the Council members' understanding of their role which they described as predominantly advisory and providing an industry perspective and a relationship with business. The Panel recognise that this Council has only been recently constituted (only one meeting took place since June 2022) but **recommend** that the current statute of the College outline a more strategic role for the Council and a more proactive role in, for example, solving issues of employees, teachers and students.

45. The Panel agrees that there needs to be greater clarity around the role of the Council and the members' understanding of that role, particularly in relation to strategic direction. The Panel **recommend** that the remit and the strategic decision-making role and membership of committees and councils is consistently articulated and clear and is understood.

46. From 2022, there is a body of External Consultants in place and many of these are Council members. The use of external consultants was a recommendation made in the 2014 review.

References to the external consultants are made in the SER and annexes. For example, the financial part of the Strategic Activity Plan is supervised/monitored and, if necessary, improved by the Director and Finance Department with help of external consultants.

47. In the meeting with the Director and the representative external consultant from the Council, the Panel asked about the role of external consultants in the strategic planning process. The Panel was informed that external consultants help to develop relationships and connections with external industry and cultural partnerships, which is an aim of the College and work on the new strategy. The external consultant and Council member the Panel met had been commissioned to help to develop the new strategy which was approved in 2021.

48. The Academic Council is responsible for academic affairs, the evaluation of study methodologies, and artistic and social activities. The Academic Council meets 2-3 times per semester. The members of the Academic Council that the Panel met seemed clear about their roles and remit and clear about how they fitted into the management structure. Academic Council has an effective academic management role within the College and regularly receives reports and data to enable fulfilment of this role e.g. data on graduates' destinations and results of student surveys.

49. In the meeting with the Academic Council the Panel were told that the Academic Council is the executive body; the Council is more responsible for strategy and the Academic Council for execution. When asked if they, as Academic Council members, were involved in the development of the strategy the Panel was told that Academic Council ensure that the College's activities are in line with the strategy, review surveys of students, then provide insights into how the College is progressing.

50. The Panel considered the issue of student representation in governance and management at the College. The Panel noted that whilst there is student representation on the Council, there is, at present, no student representation on the Academic Council. In the meeting with Academic Council members the Panel were told that students can be brought into Academic Council meetings for specific issues. In the meeting with Academic Council members and in the meeting with students there was support for a more formal system of student representation on Academic Council. The Panel **recommend** that the issue of student representation on Academic Council is addressed as a matter of urgency.

51. As VDK is a private College the Panel asked about how the separation of academic and commercial considerations is managed, for example in admissions or in the allocation of resources. In the meeting with the Director and a Council member the Panel were informed that commerciality is not the pervading principle of the school. The Director stated that they adhere to national admissions standards and that they reinvest in the College to ensure quality. The Panel heard from academic managers of examples of requests for additional resources or staff being made and approved. The College has also involved external members on its Council as a way of ensuring impartiality in its decision-making. Whilst recognising that the College is responsible to its shareholders and is a private college, the Panel saw no undue influence of commercial over academic decision-making.

52. The management of risk is an important activity for any organisation; not least a College with many obligations to students and society in general. Comprehensive identification and management of risk shows both a self-aware organisation and one building a relationship of

integrity with its stakeholders, where it shares a true reflection of its external and internal challenges.

53. The College did not put in place a formal and comprehensive risk register document. There is a risk management system in place through an Internal Control Procedure, although it was not clear from the documentation provided to the Panel how risks were reviewed, monitored and managed on an ongoing formal basis. A Council representative told the Panel that risks are anticipated and dealt with as they occur; for example, external risks or student dropout may be discussed in the Council meeting. There may even be a separate meeting to discuss them and find a solution. However, the Panel could not see any evidence of formal regular predicting and monitoring of risk and found that there is no single document that identifies risk which is monitored and updated on an ongoing basis. The Panel understands that in a small College many issues are dealt with on an informal basis and risk does need to be more formally managed across the College. The Panel **recommend** the design and implementation of a comprehensive risk register, together with a risk ownership and assessment policy, with a process in place for regular review at the Council.

54. There is substantial evidence of staff and external stakeholder involvement and engagement across the College activities, for example, the SER working group which contained members from industry, the artistic community and student representation. There are external industry representatives on the Council.

55. Communication with the external stakeholders is identified as a weakness by the College in the SER. In the meeting with stakeholders, they were very positive about the College and gave examples of their interaction with it, however, most of them stated that they would welcome more formal and regular communication with the College. They also stated that they would welcome a greater role in programme review and development. The Panel agreed and **recommend** that more formal and regular communication would enable the College to benefit more fully from stakeholders´ experience and input, and that a stronger advisory role in programme review and development would also be helpful to the College.

56. Students engage in the management process through completion of questionnaires and the management takes the results into consideration when making decisions related to the management of the College. At the same time, emphasis is placed on informal communications and feedback between students and individual staff members and management; the Panel was given examples of where students had raised an issue and it had been resolved informally; for example, lack of access to car parking for students had been raised as an issue and a resolution put in place.

57. There is a student representatives' body - the Student Union. In the meeting with the Student Union, the Panel was told that this is a new body, and the members of the Student Union are still trying to define their role. They expressed an intention to join the Lithuanian National Union of students. The Student Union functions primarily as an organiser of social events although the current President of the Union is personally active in committees (e.g. in Council) and is active in representing students when communicating with the staff about the relevant issues. The members of the Student Union stated that they would like a more formal role in the decision-making process in the College, including representation on the Academic Council. The Student Union President stated that he is an intermediary between the students and the staff; he receives ideas and complaints, for example in the SER writing process he presented students' issues and ideas to the

SER group. The College could support students more in learning about the role of students in decision-making and help them to fulfil their role as an active body. The Panel **recommend** that the inclusion and the role of the Student Union in decision making across the College is strengthened.

> *1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:*
>
> *1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;*
> *1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.*

58. The previous evaluation in 2014 identified that the performance data was a strong point of the College, but suggested that quality assurance procedures and all the acquired data need to be synchronised, and the results need to be made accessible and understandable to the staff, students and social partners

59. In response to the recommendation in 2014 the College introduced an IT tool for management of documents and data records as a part of the internal quality processes and for management of quality indicators (measurement, monitoring and assessment management system). In the additional meeting with the Head of Administration, the tool was explained and its role in student record keeping and data management outlined to the Panel, which is very effective and accessible.

60. The Quality Management System has a comprehensive system of data and information collection including admissions, data from student surveys, drop-out rates and graduate destinations (SER). The Quality Management System appears strong, and these reports supported the preparation and revision of the strategic action plans. Annual action plans are devised at departmental and unit levels, and all these contribute to an annual report prepared by the Director which is presented to the Owner. The Director's annual report contains comprehensive data provided by Heads of Department and Heads of Units. In the meetings with Heads of Academic Departments and Units there was clarity on their role in providing data to the annual reports. The Panel were informed by the Heads of Departments and Units that the Council discusses the goals, annual goals and future goals, and that they produce yearly plans, and even additional plans for the semester enabling effective ongoing planning.

61. Staff and student surveys are carried out on a regular basis, usually at the end of every semester, and the students whom the Panel met were aware of these surveys. The Panel were told by staff that as VDK is a small College, issues that arise can be resolved informally and in a timely fashion. During the Panel's meetings with the students, they agreed that they can communicate with the management informally and have the opportunity to approach staff up to and including the Director, but this is done mainly informally.

62. Communication with students operates on an informal basis and through their individual teaching staff. In the meeting with students the Panel heard that whilst the College uses email to communicate with students, the latter did not really use this technology and relied more on informal communications with their staff which they said worked for them. This informal approach

did seem to work from the students´ perspective in terms of information sharing such as changes to classes, but the Panel had concerns that overreliance on these methods could lead to some student concerns being missed, or that students would not feel that their issues could be raised in a confidential manner. The Panel **recommend** that a more formal and systematic method of communication between staff and students e.g. in solving issues is developed.

63. All basic information about the College is made public on the website of the College in Lithuanian and English, also relevant information is made public on Facebook and Instagram accounts.

64. The most important documents, namely the Statute, the Strategic Plan, the Annual Activity Report, the Study Regulation, etc., are presented to the Council during the year. Upon the approval of the documents by Council, the documents are approved by order of the Director and presented to the College community. Presentation methods include the College's intranet, the College's IT system, and e-mail.

65. The SER states that the Council and Academic Council are supplied with data to enable decision making. This was confirmed in the meeting with Academic Council members who said that they received information from surveys etc. The College also collects data on allocation of resources and renewal of facilities. This data is used to enable Heads of Department to analyse their needs and submit their annual resource requirements to management. The Panel are of the view that this works as an effective system of resource allocation.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:
1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;   *1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*   *1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*   *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*   *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

66. The College staff consists of academic and non-academic staff. The academic staff comprises lecturers (College supervisors, assistants, lecturers, associate professors, professors), the non-academic staff includes the administrative staff.

67. The College staff follows the Statute of Vilnius College of Design; the Study Regulations of Vilnius College of Design; the Code of Ethics of Vilnius College of Design; the Description of the Quality Assurance Procedure of the Study Programmes of Vilnius College of Design; the Quality Guide of Vilnius College of Design; and other relevant legislations, which are made public on the College's intranet and website.

68. The procedures for recruiting and managing academic and administrative staff are in place, the number of the recruited academic staff is in line with the College's Statute. Staff include practising artists who are active in exhibitions and other events to showcase their artistic work.

69. Academic staff salaries depend on the assessment of their teaching quality, but also non-material incentives are provided, such as opportunities to participate in projects, mobility

programmes, conferences, training programmes etc. The Panel met staff who had availed themselves of these opportunities and were able to give examples of where they had been and how it impacted on their teaching. For example, the SER cites staff who had undertaken mobility visits to Spain and Latvia in 2021.

70. The academic and administrative staff assessment and procedures for human resource management are well defined and described in the Quality Manual and other related documents. Staff of the College are also encouraged to actively participate in decision-making processes, mostly through informal meetings where open and collaborative communication is encouraged.

71. In general, the College manages its staff pro-actively and effectively. The members of the academic staff that the Panel met were passionate about their teaching and focused on the needs of the students. In meetings with the staff, the Panel asked if they have a one-on-one meeting with the Head of Department to discuss their work. They stated that there are reviews at the end of each semester, and meetings where they are all together to discuss changes of the program and tasks for the upcoming semester. There did not appear to be a formal system of individual meetings about their further development but staff who met with the Panel felt that the current system was effective.

72. The Panel were informed that there are no formal peer observation systems in place but that there are surveys of students that give information on the performance of teachers and that staff can have individual meetings with their Heads of Departments. Whilst staff and management expressed satisfaction with the current system the Panel **recommend** that a more formal and recorded system of staff appraisal should be developed

73. There is a system of internal formal audits in place and the results go to the Director.

74. There are currently 103 lecturers in the College. Of these, 4 have PhD's with 3 more studying; 14 staff are currently practising artists; and there are 18 administrative staff in the College.

75. The Panel received documentation providing structured statistical data relating to academic and administrative staff, and a document specifically concerning the required qualifications for teachers (Description of Minimum Qualification Requirements for Position of Teaching Staff Members/Artists of Vilnius College of Design). Based on this documentation, the Panel concludes that male/female staff ratios are good, as is the age profile of staff. In 2021 there were 56 female staff and 47 male staff in the College. The age profile shows a reduction since 2018 in the number of the staff over 55, and an increase in the 40 to 44 age groups.

76. In 2020/21 the staff/student ratios were approximately 5.63/1 in the Spring and 5.34/1 in the Autumn, these had reduced in 2021/22 to 5.01/1 in the Spring and 4.54/1 in the Autumn. The Panel consider these ratios satisfactory. The average within the European Higher Education public and private sectors is around 15.1/1 The College states in the SER that lower staff student ratios are important as much of its teaching is based on one to one or small group work. Staff contracts are based on contact and non-contact hours and pedagogical activity for scientific and artistic research. In the meeting with the Heads of Departments and units the Panel were informed that if they need new staff, they inform the Deputy Director and she puts a job offer on their website or external sites.

77. The number of administration staff is decided by the Director on an annual basis. When asked by the Panel how a need for new staff is identified, the Director told the Panel that Heads of Units

or Departments can make requests to the Director or the Deputy Director, or identify them in their annual action plan, and that they are decided on a need basis.

78. Research is discussed in the SER, and in the meeting with the Director it was highlighted as a strategic area in which the College wants to improve. In the meeting with academic staff there was a lack of clarity regarding the College's role in research. Some colleagues expressed a desire to be more research active and would welcome time and funding to support this. This was discussed with the Director in the additional follow up meeting, and he informed the Panel that this is an area already under development for the College, and he was aware of the national statutory requirements coming into place regarding research. This is discussed further in section 3.3 of this report.

79. Teachers meet the qualifications requirements to work in higher education and are active in their specialist fields. Teachers are recruited in line with national legislation requirements of minimum qualifications and staff-student ratios. The Panel found out that the academic staff was well-qualified and experienced. 80 % of staff had over 3 years practical experience, 11 out of 44 in 2021 were renowned artists in their fields. The number of staff with a PhD is currently low, with 4 cited in 2021, but given the planned attention to research, there is potential for this number to increase in the future.

80. There is training provided for academic staff and administrative staff. In the meeting with academic teaching staff the Panel was told that academic staff are consulted about the need for further training: for example, in the spring semester, a survey was carried out and a long list of areas where academics could improve their skills was provided as a result.

81. Teachers are currently being trained in computer literacy. During the pandemic, MS Teams training was given, and psychological training on how to support the younger generation is planned. The library also provides training on electronic resources.

82. The College has procedures in place, which clearly outline the opportunities for both academic and administrative staff to improve their qualifications, expand their competences, and allocate funding for this. The SER gives information on staff attendance at staff development and states "lecturers may use qualification improvement tools several times a year by choosing different forms thereof, some lecturers are more active in matters of qualification improvement, others are more passive, but growth trends are visible" (SER p. 31). Staff that the Panel met gave examples of development activities they had taken part in, both pandemic related e.g. teaching online and non-pandemic related e.g. supporting students with psychological difficulties. Administrative staff also confirmed that they can receive training and can ask for specific needs to be met, e.g. one administrative staff member had been on a study trip to Portugal. Bearing in mind the need to focus on responses to Covid over the past two years the Panel think that a more structured approach to pedagogical training for academic staff would be useful, with required and optional training identified.

83. Procedures for the incentivisation of scientific and artistic activities of staff are in place and examples of these activities were provided. In 2020 these included a lighting design project, jewellery and quilt exhibitions, book illustration and performance design.

84. There did not seem to be a formal plan for pedagogical training in place. There is a response to staff needs and requests, but there is no structured College led staff professional development

strategy and plan. The Panel **recommend** formalising opportunities for pedagogical staff development across the College. This is explored further in Section 3.3 of this report.

> *1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:*
>
> *1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;*
> *1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*
> *1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*
> *1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

85. The College plans the financial resources necessary to achieve the anticipated goals by preparing the budget plan (income-expenditure plan). Costs are planned based on the funds received. If the strategic goals and plans include investments in the activities of the College in any field, this is also reflected in the plan of financial resources. The SER raises the issue of the College´s perceived issue of discrimination against non-state in funding studies/projects and its ability to apply for such funding. The SER also references their view that there is a lack of stable governmental long-term funding for the education and science field.

86. In the meeting with the College accountant the Panel were informed that there are external auditors who assure the financial accountability of the College. In terms of financial planning, they think about what they have and what they need; the needs of departments are usually reasonably based and formulated. The allocation of funds available within the approved budget is in the domain of the Director, although any significant structural changes are subject to approval by the Council.

87. There is a budget allocation process and Heads of Department and staff were clear on this process. The Director submits an annual financial activity report to the general meeting of shareholders every year.

88. The budget situation of the College is strong and there are good procedures in place to manage and monitor finances.

89. VDK is a private College with its funds and income coming from state fees and non-formal education. The College's activities are financed from four main sources: income earned by the College by providing formal education services (studies); income earned by the College by providing informal education services (evening, preparatory courses); state funds for study scholarships; funds for projects implemented by the EU. The Director has ultimate responsibility for financial management supported by a finance team. The Management of financial and material resources at Vilnius College of Design is detailed in the procedure description PA06 Material Resource Management. The College spends 60% of its budget on staffing and 14% on maintenance and facilities; these are its biggest outlays. The College recognises that it needs to increase its funding through a variety of measures including more fee-paying courses and through offering programmes in English as a way of increasing funding and attracting international students. The Panel support the College´s desire to diversify its income streams and are of the view that more could indeed be done to attract fee-paying international students; programmes in English and better

marketing internationally would assist in achieving this goal. This is further explored in Section 3.3 of this report.

90. One of the strategic goals of the College provided in SP 2021-2027 is "ensuring the material and financial resources and suitable infrastructure necessary for the process of high-quality studies", where the set task is "to improve the study environment by developing the infrastructure".

91. The Panel had a tour of the College's facilities and was shown the equipment and tools in workshop rooms, learning spaces and studios, software programmes etc. The Panel thought it was fit for the purpose of subjects, level and number of students taught. The infrastructure of the College was sufficient with generally good facilities available for staff and students. During the visiting of facilities and meetings with students, they said that the equipment and space was adequate and was improving year by year, although there was still some room for improvement. The acting students were dissatisfied with their spaces, particularly space for preparation and private rehearsal; the Panel were informed that these students had to find spaces often in corridors or even outside in the yard, on occasion. In the meeting with the Panel, the Acting students raised concerns about the lack of a stage for their performances, which is an issue for the College. There is also no gallery space available within the College to exhibit student design and artwork. When the panel queried this the College stated that they use walls and spaces around the building to exhibit work but the Panel **recommend** that a more formal Gallery space, either on campus or in a partnership arrangement externally, would be beneficial.

92. The index of renewal of library stock is one of the quality indicators of the College, which is recorded every year and is presented during the management evaluation analysis, and data on the renewal of facilities is presented in the Annual Reports.

93. The Panel visited the Information Centre/Library, which is well-stocked. When asked, students were satisfied with what was provided. It contains a range of appropriate and up-to-date material in Lithuanian and English. Librarians also organise training for students about academic writing and database usage. All students can access the library database on their own computers from home. The course material is electronic, and all key documents are on the web page that is on a separate server. Some students said that the opening hours of the building (studio, workshops, and library) should be extended. The Panel acknowledge this view, but recognise the resource implications of this for the College; it may require further exploration on a longer term.

94. The Career Centre which is new and still in development provides students with information about career planning; students and graduates receive information about placement traineeships, work opportunities, and announcements about regional/national competitions

95. The hardware and software of the College is modern and meets the study demands. The College has three computer rooms with 25 stations each. Workplaces have computers with access to the Internet and Wi-Fi is available everywhere in the College. In the meeting with students, they stated that while they had access to software on College computers they have to pay for software if they wish to access it on their laptops outside of College and saw this as a disadvantage. The Panel concludes that facilities are sufficient.

96. When viewing the buildings the Panel visited, disability access nor signage was not evident for students or staff. The Panel were informed by staff of a lift but were unclear about who had access to this and how it operated. The Panel were shown a service lift that students confirmed was not available for their use. However, the College stated that they had mobile stair-climbing equipment

to carry disabled people up and down stairs. This seemed to the Panel to operate on a need basis with no clear reference to the availability of this around the College. There is a section on the website that outlines the range of support available to students which is good, but the Panel **recommend** that disability access could be more clearly marked and publicly visible on site.

97. Health and safety training is provided which was confirmed by students, but on viewing the room the Panel saw no reminders to referrals to health and safety on the walls or in booklets in the studios and workrooms. The Panel **recommend** that more visibility regarding health and safety is included in the workspaces particularly where dangerous materials or equipment is in use.

98. **In summary,** the purpose of the Management section of this review is to assess whether, and how, the strategic planning and management of the College is being analysed in accordance with the appropriate indicators and criteria. Based on the evidence given in the Self-Evaluation Report and Annexes, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the College, and the site visit where meetings with a wide range of stakeholders were held, the Panel found the College to be active in systematically developing its management and governance structures. There is an evident commitment on the part of management and staff to improve and develop the College. Although the Panel did not identify any major drawbacks, it did identify a number of areas that require further development and has made a series of recommendations in this regard. The College has clear strategic objectives and goals in all areas apart from Research where there is a need for a clear research strategy and research priorities. A key issue for the panel is the representation of students in decision-making management bodies, namely Academic Council. Students are involved in other ways e.g. through regular surveys and through a variety of informal processes but the Panel consider that addressing the Academic Council representation is an urgent issue. Whilst noting that the Student Union is a relatively new body at the College, the Panel again believe this will add value to the management of the College particularly if the College supports students to take a greater role in decision making. Industry and cultural stakeholders are involved in management and governance and the introduction of external consultants in response to a previous 2014 report is a welcome addition and will add value over time. The College has good staffing and recruitment processes in place, and staff are well qualified and well regarded in their artistic field. Academic and administrative staff have opportunities to develop and to avail of mobility although the College should develop a more formal and systematic approach to pedagogical staff development rather than responding primarily to individual requests. The College has strong financial systems in place and systems for the identification and allocation of resources. The College also recognises the need to develop alternative ongoing sources of income for the future. Resources across the college, spaces, library, computer facilities, are generally adequate and sufficient, with the exception of Performance Acting where additional specific resources are needed.

99. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; the area is given 2 points.

100. **Recommendations for the area:**

● The Panel **recommend** that the College clarify its understanding of and strategic approach to research.

- The Panel **recommend** that the new Statute be published in a timely fashion and that the practice in the College reflects the content of the statute.

- The Panel **recommend** that the current Statute of the College outlines a more strategic role for the Council and a more proactive role in for example solving issues of employees, teachers and students.

- The Panel **recommend** that the remit and the strategic decision-making role and membership of committees and Council is consistently articulated and is understood.

- The Panel **recommend** that the issue of student representation on Academic Council is addressed as a matter of urgency.

- The Panel **recommend** the design and implementation of a comprehensive risk register, together with a risk ownership and assessment policy, with a process in place for regular review at Council.

- The Panel **recommend** that more formal and regular communication would enable the College to benefit more fully from stakeholders´ experience and input, and that a stronger advisory role in programme review and development would also be helpful to the College.

- The Panel **recommend** that the inclusion and role of the Student Union in decision making across the College is strengthened as a matter of priority.

- The Panel **recommend** that a more formal and systematic method of communication between staff and students e.g. in solving issues is developed.

- The Panel **recommend** that a more formal and recorded system of staff appraisal should be developed.

- The Panel **recommend** formalising opportunities for pedagogical staff development across the College.

- The Panel **recommend** that regular access to a more formal Gallery space, either on campus or in a partnership arrangement externally, would be beneficial.

- The Panel **recommend** that disability access could be more clearly marked and publicly visible on site

- The Panel **recommend** that more visibility regarding health and safety is included in the workspaces particularly where dangerous materials or equipment is in use.

3.2. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:
2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;

> *2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;*
> *2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;*
> *2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;*
> *2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;*
> *2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.*

101. The College has developed a system for the planning, implementation and improvement of its activities, and has established corresponding documents, so that concrete actions and opinions can be tracked, appropriate measures undertaken and remedial actions carried out. It has approved and made publicly available on the website of the College the key internal quality assurance documents.

102. The Quality Manual was first adopted in 2010, and over the years up to 2022 it was modified several times, mainly because of the changes in the College structure. Several important changes occurred in the past: in 2013 in relation to the primary certification of the College, and in 2017 in relation to the adoption of ISO 9001:2015. The most recent change took place in June 2022 and was related to the changes in the governance structure.

103. The Quality Policy of Vilnius College of Design was approved by the Director of the College in 2012, and has not changed since; it names ten general, sustainable major principles of Quality Assurance. The Quality Policy is included in the Quality Manual.

104. Implementation of an improved model of internal study quality management system of Vilnius College of Design and strategy of constant improvement of quality 2021-2024 sets the strategic objectives and tasks for quality improvement of the College studies for the period 2021-2024. These objectives correspond to those formulated in the Strategic Plan of the College 2021-2027. The document functions as an action plan for a shorter period of time, up to 2024.

105. The Description of procedure of quality assurance of study programs of Vilnius College of Design was approved in 2021 by the Director, and contains templates for study programme evaluations, both for intended programs and for implemented programs. The structure of these templates is identical, and copies the national standards (as was stated during the meeting with Heads of Departments).

106. The Procedure of internal control of Vilnius College of Design is a document approved by the Director in 2014; according to the SER, internal audits are carried out no later than May 30 every year, with management evaluation analysis taking place in August.

107. Vilnius College of Design has developed further documents in order to ensure transparent and objective processes such as: Minimum qualification requirements for positions of lecturers-artists; Study regulations; Description of the procedure for assessment of learning outcomes; Description of procedure of evaluation and recognition of competences acquired in the system in informal adult education; Description of assignment of study achievements to levels; Procedure of encouragement of artistic/scientific activities of the teaching staff; Rules of student admission to Vilnius College of Design for 2022; and Description of the equal opportunities policy and the

procedure for monitoring measures of its implementation. It is evident that clear processes are established that ensure transparent functioning of the College as an institution for students and staff.

108. The College affirms in the document entitled Implementation of improved model of internal study quality management system of Vilnius College of Design and strategy of constant improvement of quality 2021-2024 that it seeks compliance with three main sets of standards: ESG, ISO 9001:2015 and standards fixed by the Law on Higher Education and Research. The above-mentioned documents create a coherent quality assurance system that covers all key processes of the College. It should be added that the size of the school and the specific nature of the academic staff (mainly practising artists and especially the great majority of part-time and external teachers) seem to be in slight contradiction with the robustness of the system that puts emphasis on extremely formalised procedures. The very specific and non-academic ISO language is used in key documents such as the Quality Manual and Procedure of Internal Control that is intended to be read and understood by the whole community of the College. The Panel heard, during the sessions both with teachers and supporting staff, that processes at school were not bureaucratic and formal, that methodological documents and templates at their disposal were helpful and comprehensible, and that necessary actions were usually quick and efficient. The session with the Quality Department, however, did not confirm that the Quality Manual as the key quality assurance document was used by employees College-wide. Therefore, the Panel **recommend** more effort should be made in order to translate quality assurance processes into the language of the College and its academics, as the whole community should share the common understanding of quality culture and make concerted steps towards its further enhancement.

109. The College Council was renewed recently and has only met once since June. The Panel heard at the meeting with the Council that the Council is not expected to be deeply involved in quality processes, but some members of the Council who come as teachers have more influence on quality assurance matters. The quality assurance agenda is therefore mainly managed by the Director and the Deputy Director, who is the Management Representative for Quality, and then the Head of Studies. The Panel **recommend** that the Council is regularly involved in Quality Assurance and informed about the processes and their outcomes, so that it can take them into account in making strategic recommendations and decisions.

110. Students provide regular systematic feedback on their study experience which is analysed by the Academic Council and the quality assurance staff. Although the Panel did not see the corresponding document, students confirmed their views were collected.

111. Teachers fill in a questionnaire at the end of each academic year, which has two main goals: to gather information about their professional (arts, research) activities; and to inquire about their needs regarding further training and suggestions of activities they would like to develop with the support of the College. The questionnaire was introduced in 2021 and is applied annually. Feedback from administrative staff is collected via the internal audit every year by the end of May. The Panel thinks these mechanisms are effective and sufficient.

112. The SER states that graduate surveys and social partners surveys are carried out annually. The Panel had at its disposal the results of the survey among graduates between 2019-2021, and the survey among social partners in 2022; both were rigorously done and brought relevant information.

113. According to the SER and the annexes, self-evaluation of study programmes is carried out annually and constitutes the basis for annual plans of departments. Before the on-site visit, the Panel requested as additional documents three examples of completed self-evaluation questionnaires, and was provided with self-evaluations of Performance Acting (from 2021), Interior Design and Graphic Communication Design (from 2022). The template contains rather robust standards and criteria which should be assessed on a longer term rather than annual basis. During the sessions with teachers, Heads of Departments and members of the Academic Council, some respondents said that the questionnaire was filled in only when important changes were occurring, and also that the implementation of the questionnaire was still in a pilot phase. Therefore, the Panel **recommend** that the self-evaluation questionnaire should be carefully analysed as far as its structure is concerned, so that information collected on an annual basis is relevant and not over-bureaucratic; otherwise, the danger of getting purely formal responses is high, and the process may not lead to further quality enhancement but to the general feeling of unnecessary administrative burden.

114. The process for the implementation of new activities is described in the documentation of the College, mainly in the Description of the procedure of quality assurance of study programs. Preparation of new study programs includes the Academic Council, the Council and the Director of the College as approving bodies, the initiators of the programme and the working group (appointed by the Director) as persons responsible for the development of the curriculum, and the Deputy Director as a person providing methodological support for ensuring the compliance with the standards and the legislation. Sessions with teachers, Heads of Departments, the Council and the Academic Council confirmed that all the relevant staff were aware of the procedure of planning and implementation of new study programs.

115. The most recent programme provided by the College is Performance Acting, which was implemented in 2015, with accreditation for three years. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 of this report. The current strategic plan reveals that the College aims to open other new study programmes in the near future (study programmes at MA level, study programmes in social studies, study programmes in foreign languages and/or in collaboration with international partners). Compliance with standards must be assured, especially if the strategy of the College is to enlarge and transcend the scope of its original activities (B.A. in Design), and strategic decisions must be taken mainly with regard to the quality of the programmes (experienced teaching staff, carefully built curriculum and sufficient material facilities must be in place for the opening each new programme). The Panel **recommend** that intended study programmes be carefully discussed and prepared, and close attention paid to their monitoring especially in the first years of their realisation.

116. The College is a relatively small institution with a strong emphasis on informal communication and efficient and quick problem-solving. Sessions with academic staff, non-academic staff and students confirmed that all the members of the community know where to look for support within the hierarchy of the College. Still, the Panel conclude that formal and systematic methods of communication should be in place, and a corresponding recommendation was formulated in Section 3.1 (Management) of this report.

117. Heads of supporting services (mainly Library and Career Centre) communicate directly with the Deputy Director. Questions were raised during the discussion with supporting staff, students and the social partners around the function and the development of the activities of the Career

Centre, where potential for further development is felt, but not yet fully used. The Panel **recommend** that the role of the Career Centre should be enhanced and more clearly systematised especially in view of students and prospective alumni seeking for internships and jobs.

118. Students confirm that they communicate their problems with individual teachers and especially Heads of Departments; serious problems are dealt with on the level of the Academic Council, with the help of the Deputy Director and the Head of Studies. Sometimes, students consult with their student representatives. Consequently, the Panel has formed the view that significant responsibility is left with teachers, especially in matters such as psychological support and specific learning problems etc. The Panel recommend that professional non-academic support should be contracted, and compulsory training should be provided to teachers and staff related to problems such as Asperger syndrome, ADHD, autism etc.

119. The College has several documents where information concerning academic integrity, ethics and non-discrimination are embedded. Description of the equal opportunities policy of Vilnius College of Design and the procedure for monitoring measures of its implementation, was approved by the Director in 2018. This document deals mainly with hiring and dismissals of employees, wages and promotion of employees, protection of employees; according to this document, training is organised about equal opportunities "taking into account strategic goals and financial possibilities", which implies rather ad hoc and not strictly systematic planning. The Panel **recommend** that training related to equal opportunities and academic ethics should be provided regularly on a compulsory basis.

120. Assessment of learning outcomes (undated document) deals with the ethics of assessment of students, appeal procedures and steps to be taken in case of academic misconduct; it provides a firm basis for fair evaluations of students.

121. Code of Ethics is an undated document covering an appropriate range of principles, procedures and cases. The Panel heard, mainly during sessions with students, that the role of the Ethics Supervision Commission and the Dispute Commission is held by the Academic Council, consisting mainly of Heads of Departments. Students confirmed that more anonymity and especially a more professional approach would be very beneficial, as the accumulation of several responsibilities by the Academic Council might hinder them from undertaking an objective exploration of problems.

122. Students are very positive about the way academic integrity is presented to them with regard to academic writing and research. However, the Panel noted that no formalised procedures are applied in cases whereby an ethical dimension needs to be evaluated and approved in relation to student projects, for example when sensitive topics are being explored. Students confirmed that basic information about ethics is embedded in some of their courses (for example documentary photography), but professional guidance (concerning for example parental approval of children's visual representation, implementation of GDPR, i.e. General Data Protection Regulation, etc.) has not been put in place by the College. The College should address this issue more proactively. The Panel **recommend** that more attention should be paid to the composition of and procedures carried out by the Ethical Commission, in order to prevent conflicts of interests and also to make sure anonymity and professional approach is guaranteed.

123. Recommendations from the previous institutional review in 2014 were taken seriously by the institution. Quality assurance procedures were systematised and data analysis has been carried out

since. The management structure was updated in 2022, with the re-definition of responsibilities between the College Council and Academic Council, and with the creation of a new body of External Consultants. However, the Student Union as the students' representation seems to have no fixed guidelines and functions mainly as an agent for social and cultural activities at the College; this has been already mentioned in the Management area section, and a recommendation was formulated.

124. A Personal Management system was developed, with feedback from academics and support staff collected and prioritised. The recommendation for a certified course in pedagogy in higher education was partly implemented and an agreement with Vytautas Magnus University was signed, but the Panel understand that pedagogical training is organised mainly on demand and is not compulsory. The College also admits that some of the actions were not successful: for example, the implementation of Alumni association, which turned out to be rather formal and ineffective, while informal cooperation with alumni, organised by departments and consisting in concrete projects, is successful and functions well (SER).

125. During the sessions with the Director of the College, questions were raised about two somewhat negative outcomes of analysis and surveys: a) the low score in an analysis carried out during the academic year 2021-2022 and using the EFQM excellence model (European Foundation for Quality Management) in the area of personal results, and b) a finding from the social partners´ survey (provided by the College on demand of the Panel) consisting in an opinion that alumni of the College are not sufficiently prepared for the professional career. In the first case, the significant majority of part-time and external teachers is regarded as the main reason for a looser adherence to the institution as such. In the second case, the Director suggested that expectations of some social partners might be too high and their requirements, especially with regard to the maturity and the previous professional experience of students, might not be realistic, given the curriculum and the time of studies. This view was supported by current students during the corresponding session and, in fact, the meeting with the social partners during the visit suggested that they were satisfied with the preparation of students for the workplace. The Panel conclude that students' skills are adequate when they enter the professional sphere.

126. The Panel noted that the SER was still rather descriptive, as was the case in the last institutional evaluation in 2014. Aspects requiring improvement, as defined in the SER, are not always clearly explained in the text; for example, whilst the College wishes "to improve the College´s Quality management processes (planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and self-evaluation as well as improvement processes", the preceding passages do not provide concrete examples of problems or shortcomings in quality management processes that would require immediate action; in the same way, "to improve internal and external communication" is an objective with no explanation why such an improvement, mainly in internal communication, is needed. Therefore, the Panel found that the SER was not strictly evidence-based and during the discussion with the SER team it was not clear whether the process of writing the SER helped the College to open up topics leading to further quality enhancement. However, the College took into serious consideration the outcomes of the previous review and implemented most of the recommendations, for which it has to be commended.

127. **In summary,** quality assurance has been developed systematically since the last evaluation, and the academic community is aware of the main principles, procedures, documents and criteria. Quality assurance staff are qualified and provide guidance to academic and administrative

employees of the College, both in individual departments and in common support units, such as the Library and the Career Centre. The quality assurance system is supported by a number of key documents which cover all areas of activity– management, studies, art, research and define responsibilities and timeframes. Next to the formal quality assurance system, which is very robust especially due to the adoption of the ISO standards in 2017, there is a strong informal communication setup at the College. Given the size of the College and undoubtedly also the nature of the study fields, problems are treated in a timely manner and without unnecessary administrative delays. It is important to preserve the balance between formal and informal processes. An issue for the Panel is the fact that the commission dealing with ethical questions is the Academic Council, i.e. one of the two main collective governing bodies of the College; this issue should be addressed, as the present arrangement does not ensure conditions for anonymous treatment of sensitive problems. The College took into serious consideration the outcomes of the last review and implemented most of the recommendations, for which it has to be commended. In order to transform quality assurance into a quality enhancement culture, the processes should continue to be embedded into the ongoing activities of the College, and the involvement of all stakeholders including the Council reinforced and cultivated through a rhetoric and terminology that is accessible, understandable and naturally owned by the whole community.

128. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks, and is given 3 points.

129. **Recommendations for the area:**

● The Panel **recommend** that effort should continue to be made in order to translate quality assurance processes into the language of the College and its academics, as the whole community should share a common understanding of quality culture and make concerted steps towards its further enhancement.

● The Panel **recommend** that the Council is regularly involved in Quality Assurance and informed about the processes and their outcomes, so that it can take them into account in making strategic recommendations and decisions.

● The Panel **recommend** that the self-evaluation questionnaire should be analysed as far as its structure is concerned: information collected on an annual basis should be relevant and not over-bureaucratic, otherwise the danger of getting purely formal responses is great, and the process may not lead to further quality enhancement but to the general feeling of unnecessary administrative burden.

● The Panel **recommend** that intended study programs be carefully discussed and prepared, and attention paid to their close monitoring especially in the first years of their realisation.

● The Panel **recommend** that the role of the Career Centre should be enhanced and more clearly systematised especially in view of students and prospective alumni seeking for internships and jobs.

● The Panel **recommend** that professional non-academic support should be contracted, and compulsory training should be provided to teachers and staff related to problems such as Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, autism etc.

● The Panel **recommend** that training related to equal opportunities and academic ethics should be provided regularly on a compulsory basis.

● The Panel **recommend** that more attention should be paid to the composition of and procedures carried out by the Ethical Commission, in order to prevent conflicts of interests and also to make sure anonymity and professional approach is guaranteed.

3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

Studies and Research (Art) area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:
3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution; *3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;* *3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);* *3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

130. The College provides a range of formal educational opportunities through the provision of five study programmes: Interior Design; Fashion Design; Graphic Communications Design; Applied Photography and Performance Acting that award professional bachelor degrees.

131. The information provided to the Panel during the visit aligns with the documentation provided, including the SER, Strategic Plan 2021-2027, and Internationalisation Strategy 2022-2027. The Panel are satisfied that in the main, the study and research activities offered are aligned with the College mission. Meetings with staff, students, graduates and social partners during the visit confirmed a consistency of understanding by all stakeholders regarding this mission. The Panel did, however, have some queries about the alignment of the Performance Acting programme with the strategic aims of the organisation as mentioned in Section 3.2 of this report. The Panel explored these queries through a number of meetings during the visit. In particular, questions regarding the clarity of focus of the programme and its stated emphasis on 'visual theatre' were explored and, whilst the College's interpretation of 'visual theatre' became more clearly articulated during the visit, there is still a disconnect between the discussions and the clarity of communication of intent and application in the study programme documentation and descriptions provided with the SER and the related annexes. These same queries had already been raised in the last study programme evaluation of Performance Acting in 2021 and the feedback in that report should be used to further clarify and refine this programme's offer.

132. The Director and staff emphasised the specificity of this programme in comparison to other acting courses in Lithuania, and asserted that there is a demand for a programme of this kind in Lithuania. However due to its 'differences' to other acting programmes on offer nationally, the Panel **recommend** that it might be useful to position the Performance Acting programme within a broader theatre context beyond Lithuania to demonstrate its unique features as 'visual theatre' and better align it with the College mission and strategic aims. This is echoed in the study programme review which recommends: "Enrich the programme by drawing further on contemporary models and understandings of visual theatre to complement the current emphasis on twentieth century practice".

133. The College is guided by the Rules of Admission for learners wishing to enter the study programmes. According to the data provided to SKVC, entrants to the College have ranked highly over several consecutive years with an average competitive score of 7.46 for non-state funded entrants in 2021 compared to the minimum score of 5.64 in 2020/2021.

134. Professional Bachelor degrees were issued to 460 graduates during the analysed period, 2018-2022. Based on data presented in the SER annexes (Percentage of students of Vilnius College of Design who completed their fields of studies on time) which showed the percentage of completions in each academic year, the Panel came to the conclusion that on average, only 52% of students have completed their studies on time during the period analysed. The Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania allows students to take a break in academic studies for personal reasons once during their entire period of study which presents challenges to retention and completion. Moreover, the College has experienced continuing issues with drop-out rates across the study programmes which it recognises as an issue and this was discussed in meetings with the Director, with support staff and with teachers.

135. The College has activated a partnership with a British company that offers a retention tool with the intention of improving the management of this issue at institutional level. However, in discussion with staff at the College, there is not yet a consistent understanding of a strategic approach to addressing drop-out rates and the impact on student completion and achievement across all levels and departments.

136. Staff cited examples of reasons that might lead to student drop-out, including students realising the course is not for them or not being able to continue for financial reasons. SER data provide a breakdown of reasons why students drop out in the first year, and in some areas the issues cited would benefit from closer interrogation at all levels to see where the problem lies, what steps need to be taken and by whom. For example, personal reasons is cited as one factor leading to drop-out across all five programmes at some point between 2017 – 2021, whereas quality of studies is only cited once from 2017 – 2021, and specifically only related to Acting. The Panel recognise that when the data is presented as a percentage, and group sizes at the College are relatively small, a percentage such as 11.11% may only relate to one or two students. Nonetheless, a systematic awareness of steps that could be taken to address some of these issues in a proactive way at all points in the learner journey (from initial marketing, advice and guidance, through application, enrolment, induction and support whilst studying and during periods of intermittence) is not yet evident.

137. The Panel **recommend** that (i) consideration of the roles and responsibilities and (ii) identification of specific actions for all individuals and departments supporting different stages of the learner journey from application through to completion might enable a more proactive and holistic approach to be developed alongside the use of Retinent.

138. In the submitted documentation, a summary of programme goals and mapping of learning outcomes against course units was provided. This was prepared in accordance with the Description of the Study Field of Design (Order No. V-410 18 March 2021). In addition to specifying subject specific knowledge and skills, this also outlined the inclusion of transferable skills, business skills and links to employability. Meetings with staff, students, graduates and social partners reinforced that in four of the five study programmes (Interior Design, Graphic Design, Fashion Design and Applied Photography) there is a coherence between the curriculum design, the knowledge and experience of teaching staff and the range of artistic activities undertaken by staff and students in

the form of publications, exhibitions, events etc. Students commented that their teachers are experts in their respective fields and produce work that is current with regard to their specialist subject area, but also relevant to wider national concerns and trends. For example, in 2022 magazine articles written by staff exploring the Spring and Summer Trends 2022 and the Pantone colour of the year 2022 were published in MOTERIS, 2022, No. (840). Students also noted that their teachers' relationships with social partners and other artists enable them to gain experience in undertaking professionally oriented projects such as client designed briefs and this is evidenced in the range of supporting documentation presented alongside the SER. One example of this is a 2019/2020 project whereby Interior Design students worked as co-participants in a project with the Institute of Environmental Protection exploring topics such as circular economies and the use of recycled materials. This project connected the curriculum intent with the professional workplace and with wider socio-economic and environmental concerns.

139. Teachers meet the qualification requirements to work in higher education and are current and active in their specialist fields, as evidenced by their portfolio careers as artists and practitioners. This links to the College mission regarding the ability to respond to labour market needs. Nonetheless, it was stated in the SER and reinforced by meetings with academic staff that the participation of lecturers in staff training and pedagogical development activities is not as regular or consistent as it ideally should be. In 2021-2022 activity by staff reached 62%, but in the SER a desire to make it more active and intensive is articulated. The College notes in the SER that this is an area for improvement but the action plan in the SER states that there are specific actions for artistic and scientific research and practice, but not for staff training and development in pedagogy. Thus, the Panel **recommend** that the College establish a clear set of actions specific to staff training and development in pedagogy to run alongside the actions for artistic and scientific research. For example, an annual programme of training events published at the beginning of each year that is facilitated by the College but might include training sessions offered by internal colleagues to address specific pedagogical topics but also input by external pedagogic specialists.

140. Current artistic activity and research falls broadly into three areas of exploration; subject specific knowledge, artistic skills and arts pedagogy. The richness of the College's offer in developing and sharing artistic research and practice through a range of events, exhibitions and publications is evident from the significant range of examples provided in the SER. This includes 161 examples of articles published in the press, participation in radio and TV shows, and public lectures. Moreover, each department provided a list of methodological projects undertaken by staff. It is sufficient in quality and quantity to support the effective delivery of the study programmes on offer.

141. Research has been identified at institutional level as an area for development and plans are already in place to address this at institutional level. The Panel **recommend** that specific actions and timeframes for this are established at study programme level for individual departments and course teams to develop their research agenda, as this will inform the curriculum content, design and delivery. A recommendation has already been made at programme level for Acting in their most recent Student Programme Evaluation in 2021 and any future recommendations in the forthcoming study programme evaluations for the other programmes should be triangulated with College wide plans.

142. Meetings with teachers indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to be introduced to, and engage with. a full range of approaches to research. It is important that when working in a

higher education context, all staff are provided with the opportunity to engage in appropriate artistic and academic research activities as noted in the strategic plan. It is also important that students are introduced to the full range of approaches to research in their field; both practice-based artistic research and more formal academic research through exploration of different research models, methodologies and methods. Attention to this strategic aim will, in turn, inform the creative and intellectual rigour of the curriculum, and better prepare students for future study at Masters level as well as future employment.

143.   The total number of places for study each academic year is approved by the Director annually. Students (including unclassified students) are admitted to the College in accordance with Lithuanian law (Description of Procedure for General Admission to the First Cycle and Integrated Studies of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions) via LAMA BPO which informs the rules of admission approved by the Director annually. Individuals who have acquired secondary or equivalent education in foreign institutions are processed in accordance with published procedures approved by the order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 19 June 2020 No V-932. And V-1035 and their qualifications are examined by SKVC.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):

3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);
3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

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144. Internationalisation is recognised in the Strategic Plan 2021-2027 as one of the College's key strategic objectives in terms of helping it to integrate into the wider higher education system and enhancing its competitiveness as an institution. The College asserts that the work undertaken towards internationalisation must become equal to the work undertaken at national level. Progress is being made with regard to the internationality of studies and research (art) at the College and the work is shaped by a clear set of Strategic Objectives embedded within a comprehensive Internationalisation Strategy 2022 – 2027. These objectives are:

- Developing and teaching study programmes in English;
- Developing joint study programmes with international partners;
- Increasing the number of international students;
- Partnerships with higher education institutions abroad: short-term mobility programmes, MicroHub, franchising, double degree programmes, strategic partnerships;
- Expanding Vilnius College of Design's international partnerships in the EU and beyond by joining new ERASMUS+ and NordPlus programme activities;
- Incorporating an international, intercultural dimension into applied artistic and scientific activities.

145. Quality indicators specific to the implementation of internationality are provided in the College's list of Quality Indicators and also in the annual plans of the Department of International Relations and Project Management. Examples of key indicators include: the number of employees participating in project activities of the College; the number of staff and students engaged in

mobility e.g. via Erasmus activities; the number of incoming students under the bilateral agreement with Macromedia University of Applied Sciences (Germany); and cooperative activities with foreign partners.

146. The College Internationalisation Strategy 2022 – 2027 sets out a clear vision and purposeful associated targets and these were clearly articulated and explained in the meeting with the Administrative Staff. These targets are shared widely within the College and there is a clear intention to involve as many people from the College community as possible in helping to deliver these. For example, there is a focus on building partnerships and this happens in different ways: the Head of International Relations and Project Management finds schools, students ask for specific types of links and lecturers recommend potential partners.

147. The College has 76 international academic partners and growth in this area has maintained a positive upwards trajectory since 2014. Whilst there were no incoming students for full-time studies during the previous 5-year period (2017-2022), 88 visiting students attended VDK for periods of study under Erasmus+ student exchange and bilateral cooperation programmes and VDK students talked positively about the inclusion of these visiting students in their programmes.

148. Presentations are given to learners across all study programmes about the mobility options available to them and it was clear from meetings with students and graduates that they are fully aware of these opportunities and many have participated; for example, 74 graduates went abroad for internships during the reporting period. Students are also encouraged to come back and share experiences with their peers, which again builds the understanding and excitement about this area of work.

149. One area of challenge is the provision of courses taught in English, as both teachers and students noted that at times, teachers have to be supported by the College students in delivering lessons and workshops. Whilst this demonstrates a collaborative attitude to delivery, it is not a robust or sustainable approach to ensuring the consistency and quality of pedagogical experience from all learners which must be safeguarded. Discussions with the Panel suggested that staff can undertake English language sessions, but the degree to which this is practical in terms of time, physical and human resource and availability requires further consideration. The Panel **recommend** that the provision of English Language lessons for staff be explored further to enable the strategic aim to develop more study programmes in English to be achieved.

150. A range of activities are employed to raise the profile of the internationalisation strategy including an 'International Week' which the graduates spoke highly of, and which facilitates collaboration between representatives of foreign partner higher education institutions; the College has to be commended for this activity. This aims to promote interculturalism and share good practices via creative means including exploration of pedagogic approaches and subject specific content. The impact of this on programme planning and delivery and pedagogic strategy is not immediately evident in terms of specific examples of impact, although staff and students recognised the benefits as an enhancement activity. The Panel **recommend** that the exploration of pedagogic approaches and subject specific content during International Week could be explored as part of the commitment to staff training and development.

151. Whilst the Internationalisation Strategy 2022 - 2027 is in its infancy, the Panel **recommend** that the sixth strategic aim to 'incorporate an international, intercultural dimension into applied artistic and scientific activities' become an area of immediate focus, as it also connects to previous

recommendations regarding the understanding and application of research more generally. Lecturer mobility does happen; 63 lecturers and administrative staff came to the College during the period under analysis and 55 lecturers and administrative staff visited foreign partner schools. These partners greatly enrich the International week. At present, however, the records of artistic research and publication do not reflect a significant international outlook, and therefore the impact of these international collaborations does not yet inform the curriculum content and delivery in a noticeable way.

152. As noted by the College, in order to increase the quality of studies and research and the international competitiveness of the College, and meet the mission to 'offer quality higher education studies based on internationalisation', internationalisation must become an equivalent/integrated strand of activity alongside the regional and national agendas.

153. **In summary,** students enjoy studying at the College and in general they express satisfaction with the quality of their learning experience. Staff are passionate about their work and impart their expertise to the students with enthusiasm. The College is guided by a range of formal institutional policies and procedures with regards to admissions and enrolment which, in turn, are compliant with published procedures enshrined in Lithuanian Law. Professional Bachelor degrees were issued to 460 graduates during the analysed period. Based on data presented the Panel came to the conclusion that on average, only 52% of students have completed their studies on time during the period analysed, thus this is an area for investigation. The College has activated a partnership with a British company that offers a retention tool with the intention of improving the management of this issue at institutional level. In the main there is a coherence between the curriculum design, the knowledge and experience of teaching staff and the range of artistic activities undertaken by staff and students. Teachers meet the qualification requirements to work in higher education and are current and active in their specialist fields, as evidenced by their portfolio careers as artists and practitioners. Current artistic activity and research is sufficient in quality and quantity to support the effective delivery of the study programmes on offer. Research has been identified at institutional level as an area for development and plans are already in place to address this as meetings with teachers indicated that they would welcome more. Moreover, it was stated in the SER and reinforced by meetings with academic staff that the participation of lecturers in staff training and pedagogical development activities is an area for improvement. Internationalisation is recognised in the Strategic Plan 2021-2027 as one of the College's key strategic objectives in terms of helping it to integrate into the wider higher education system and enhancing its competitiveness as an institution. The work is shaped by a comprehensive Internationalisation Strategy 2022 – 2027. A range of activities are employed to raise the profile of the internationalisation strategy including an 'International Week' which the graduates spoke highly of, and which facilitates collaboration between representatives of foreign partner higher education institutions. The College has 76 international academic partners and growth in this area has maintained a positive upwards trajectory since 2014. Presentations are given to learners across all study programmes about the mobility options available to them and it was clear from meetings with students and graduates that they are fully aware of these opportunities and many have participated. One area of challenge is the provision of courses taught in English, as both teachers and students noted that at times, teachers have to be supported by the College students in delivering lessons and workshops. Whilst this demonstrates a collaborative attitude to delivery, it is not a robust or sustainable approach to ensuring the consistency and quality of pedagogical experience

from all learners which must be safeguarded. The College and the individual study programme teams have identified a range of strengths and areas for development and, in many cases, actions are in place to address them. Greater clarity regarding 'how' these actions will be achieved at all levels, by 'whom' and in what 'timescale'–particular with regard to addressing the drop-out rate, staff development and research–would be helpful.

154. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks and is given 3 points.

155. **Recommendations for the area:**

● The Panel **recommend** that it might be useful to position the Acting programme within a broader theatre context beyond Lithuania to demonstrate its unique features as 'visual theatre' and better align it with the College mission and strategic aims.

● The Panel **recommend** that (i) consideration of the roles and responsibilities and (ii) identification of specific actions for all individuals and departments supporting different stages of the learner journey from application through to completion might enable a more proactive and holistic approach to be developed alongside the use of Retinent.

● The Panel **recommend** that the College establish a clear set of actions specific to staff training and development in pedagogy to run alongside the actions for artistic and scientific research. For example, an annual programme of training events published at the beginning of each year that is facilitated by the College but might include training sessions offered by internal colleagues to address specific pedagogical topics but also input by external pedagogic specialists.

● The Panel **recommend** that specific actions and timeframes are established at study programme level for individual departments and course teams to develop their research agenda, as this will inform the curriculum content, design and delivery.

● The Panel **recommend** that the provision of English Language lessons for staff be explored further to enable the strategic aim to develop more study programmes in English to be achieved.

● The Panel **recommend** that the exploration of pedagogic approaches and subject specific content during International Week could be explored as part of the commitment to staff training and development.

● The Panel **recommend** that the sixth strategic aim of the Internationalisation Strategy, to' incorporate an international, intercultural dimension into applied artistic and scientific activities' become an area of immediate focus, as it also connects to previous recommendations regarding the understanding and application of research more generally.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

Impact on Regional and National Development area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;

156. In order to formulate general strategy and establish specific goals, the College relies on two main sources of information with regards to national and regional aspects. The first source comprises the national policy and corresponding strategic documents (governmental documents such as "Lithuania 2030", but also municipal documents, such as the Strategic Plan of Vilnius City Municipality 2020-2022 and, analogically, strategies of other cities). Therefore, the College does not carry out its own analysis, but uses existing documents as a basis for its action; for example, the SER mentions a seminar that was organised by the College in 2022 referring to the "Lithuania 2030" strategy and focusing on the use of applied arts as a tool for its implementation.

157. The second source of information is the ongoing cooperation with the professional sector, and the strong existing interconnection between the pedagogical staff of the College and representatives of the external stakeholders; this was confirmed by social partners during the corresponding session. Teachers at the College, particularly those who are part-time or external, play the role of ambassadors of the business world and, consequently, the needs and expectations of the professional sector are communicated to the school in a timely manner and without an intermediary of a formal analytical process. The impact of the College on the professional environment is achieved mainly through individual projects undertaken by students in response to demands from social partners, often in the form of final practical works whereby tasks for final theses are based on real identified needs. The SER quotes several collaborative projects between the College and its social partners. One partner informed the Panel about a recent successful cooperation that was initiated by his institution in which the College showed its capacity to react quickly to the partners´ needs and carry out a project effectively. In addition, students´ showcases take place twice a year in different exhibition places of the city.

158. As stated in the SER, the objectives of the cultural impact are already realised in the study process: students' coursework and thesis topics are relevant to regional cultural issues as students interact with social partners and other organisations. This was confirmed to the Panel by the social partners present at the meeting: a good example is when interior design students designed new spaces for a public educational institution as a subject of their course work.

159. Another important factor for regional impact is social-cultural activity. As published in the SER and confirmed by the College website and social media, it is evident that both students and teachers are actively involved: the most notable examples of long-term cooperation are fashion events such as "Fashion Infection", in which all students of design, fashion design and acting programmes actively participate.

160. In a survey completed by 17 social partners, 'Social Partners of Vilnius College of Design Questionnaire Survey Report' (2022), it was noted that 47% of respondents agree or tend to agree that the students were adequately prepared for the labour market but 24% either rather disagreed or disagreed that graduates of the study programmes were not adequately prepared. As 29% did not respond, this 24% is a significant percentage, bearing in mind the College's mission statement to 'Have the ability to respond to labour market needs'. Subsequent exploration within the survey revealed that 47% felt that theoretical knowledge was sufficient, whereas only 24% felt that practical skills were adequate and 53% rather disagreed, or disagreed that practical skills are sufficient.

161. Discussion with a range of stakeholders during the week did not reflect these initial findings. Both students and graduates spoke positively about their programme, and the knowledge and skills covered, including examples of business and employability skills. Graduates noted that the main thing they needed on graduation was real life experience to develop their skills. The representative group of social partners was small (7 people), and they were asked whether the graduates of the College had the necessary knowledge and skills to enter the labour market. Their answers were affirmative; that they feel that graduates are adequately prepared for progression into employment. The meetings with social partners reinforced the ways in which the connections with industry and the artistic community were managed and the social partners asserted that within the study programmes there is a good connection with business skills, a good understanding of the national needs related to the design world and an awareness of the role of the College can play in meeting those needs.

162. Thus, the Panel are satisfied that this aspect of the mission statement is adequately addressed, but they encourage the College to continue working closely with a wider range of social partners, as this group are keen to be more actively involved, and **recommend** extending the reach of the survey in subsequent years to a wider number of social partners to gather more representative datasets to ensure this aspect of the mission is addressed successfully.

163. The educational activities, seminars, conferences, evening and distance learning courses offered by the College are effective tools for the development of regional cultures. The SER also mentions activities undertaken by individual teachers in the regions; the College's lecturers are renowned Lithuanian cultural figures, members of various associations and unions, whose social, creative, social and artistic activities contribute significantly to a real cultural impact on the region. In addition, field trips organised by the College, especially before the pandemic, can be regarded as an efficient and useful means of achieving impact on regions whilst concurrently promoting the College among prospective students. The SER outlines the College's aims to cover all regions of Lithuania. The College's lecturers are also renowned Lithuanian cultural figures, members of various associations and unions, whose social, creative, social and artistic activities contribute significantly to a real cultural impact on the region.

164. Therefore, there is a good, partly evidence-based and partly experience-based, balance between: awareness of larger societal and political needs and decisions; up-to-date reaction to concrete demands; and creating an impact and undertaking self-promotion.

165. The main indicator of the effectiveness of the impact is the employment of graduates returning to their home cities after their studies. The other important indicator is the rate of participation and success of students and graduates in field-related competitions, such as "Good Design", "Young Designer Award", "Fashion Week" etc. Whilst no specific statistics were available, the Panel received information during the session with social partners.

166. The Panel were rather surprised by the list of Lithuanian social and academic partners of the College which was provided to it and which contains more than 800 entries comprising various legal forms and a varied scope of activities. The Panel formed an opinion that a more structured view of partnerships would be helpful, with prioritisation of key long-term strategic partners. The Panel **recommend** that the College foster privileged strategic partnerships with local galleries in Vilnius and in the regions where professional artistic outcomes of students could be systematically disseminated.

167. The impact on regional and national development is clearly evident in the traditional fields in which the College operates, i.e. the fields of design, whilst it is less developed in the field of acting, which is still under construction. The College has a good and well-evidenced knowledge of its impact on the profession through individual projects and activities. However, the monitoring and analysis of the effectiveness of the measures is not carried out systematically; the SER and its annexes mainly list projects rather than detailing their contribution to change or quantifying the impact. The mechanism and monitoring framework for measuring and improving social impact is not defined or evidenced, and there is a lack of a structured monitoring, evaluation and anticipation process. A representative of the theatre profession shared his conviction about the fact that the introduction of the acting programme will have an important impact on the theatrical landscape in Lithuania in the future. The Panel **recommend** improving the framework for measuring the impact of especially applied arts projects carried out in cooperation with external partners, and to trace more systematically fresh alumni professional activities.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;
4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;
4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.

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168. The College articulates as part of its vision an aspiration to be a space for creativity initiative and development. Part of that aspiration is the development of lifelong learning and this is one of the goals outlined in the SER which states that the intention of the College is to contribute to the acquisition and improvement of skills and knowledge and the abilities necessary for a dynamic society. During the Covid pandemic the College developed a number of courses remotely which it believes has the potential to encourage participation by people in the regions. The College provides examples of conferences it has organised e.g. a conference with Vytautas Magnus University in 2020 on The Paradigm of Applied Arts and in 2019 on The presentation of Innovative Art/ Design Studies and Research Methods. The Panel states that the College´s goals in lifelong learning are relevant and realistic, and actions correspond to its vision.

169. The SER states that the need for lifelong learning is determined by questionnaire surveys completed by former and current course participants, teachers and social partners once a year. Prioritisation is based on the summarised results of the questionnaire surveys and the data collected from the surveys; and a review of the supply of courses on the market already and the role the College can play in adding to that portfolio.

170. The aggregated data from the surveys allows for more successful planning by the College and enables them to prioritise areas of organisation and demand, directions for process improvement and measures to improve them and the processes and measures to be taken to implement them.

171. The College perceives lifelong learning as having a significant impact on improving employability and occupational mobility, helping to respond flexibly to changes in the labour market, demographic processes and reducing social exclusion.

172. Lifelong learning at the College is open to all ages. For children, workshops and „open days" are organised, and presentations of the College are made during visits to their schools. For those

wishing to enrol, the College organises preparatory courses for design, media arts and acting studies. For young people and adults, the Colleges organises additional studies (non-formal education), courses in drawing, sewing and construction, photography, computer graphics (Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator), make-up and make-up artistry, interior design. Full-time and part-time study programmes are made available at reduced rates or free for existing students and staff.

173. The College also organises different online seminars, events and training which worked effectively during the pandemic. For example, an online conference Implications of Lithuanian Progressive Strategy 2030- using Applied Arts as a tool was delivered in 2021.

174. All information on available learning programmes is clearly set out on the College website and on the Facebook page of the College and the Information Centre. A table on numbers accessing lifelong learning programmes is provided in the SER which shows that around 500 students annually avail of such programmes, and also shows that these numbers have remained relatively stable since 2017. The need for additional income sources was articulated to the Panel in the meeting with the Director and with the Accountant, and the SER identified the need to grow these programmes for financial reasons as an area of improvement; the Panel would agree with this strategy.

175. Although the College website states that the lifelong learning programmes are accessible to people with disabilities, the number of people with disabilities involved in the programme is unknown. During the interviews with students and lecturers, reference was made to a student with a hearing impairment for whom the curriculum had been adapted and an interpreter hired.

176. Although the SER refers to the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy for the staff through the development of qualifications for both academic and administrative staff, the meeting with lecturers only mentioned the Adobe Photoshop courses currently being organised. When asked about seminars, internships and trips to exhibitions, all admitted that they were developing their skills on their own initiative. The College also organises a seminar-conference once a year for art teachers to improve their qualifications; this activity is carried out with the help of other academic partners, i.e. Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian College of Democracy etc., and is attended by the community of the College, but also by art teachers from various other institutions.

177. As confirmed during the meetings with the Head of the Career Centre, the College has in place a number of mechanisms for monitoring performance and collecting data for decision-making. The main internal mechanism for monitoring, summarising and evaluating the effectiveness or diversity of the implementation of lifelong learning in meeting the needs of the learners are the surveys of trainers and participants after each learning programme, course or event. In the meetings with the social partners, it was mentioned that they take part in questionnaire surveys in order to find out what kind of lifelong learning activities they would find necessary and relevant. As confirmed in the meeting with the Director of the College, the identification of priority areas for basic and continuing studies is carried out by combining data on the College strategy, the market availability of courses and their commerciality.

178. Whilst the College does have a number of evaluation mechanisms in place as outlined above, the SER identifies the need to analyse the activities more systematically to improve lifelong learning. In line with this finding, the Panel **recommend** the development of a system of more

systematic analysis of lifelong learning activities in order to find opportunities to improve the current implementation of the LLL strategy, and to enable further growth of LLL programmes, including a sustainable and up-to-date offer of training intended for the employees of the College.

179. **In summary,** there is good evidence of the impact of the College at the regional and national level, with many examples of activities reported in the SER, confirmed in interviews with social partners, developers and students, and visible on social media. A number of lifelong learning initiatives are in place which contribute to the regions and contribute to the College's portfolio. A variety of programmes related to the mission of the College are on offer to a range of external participants, although the opportunities for College staff are less well developed. The evaluation of the LLL programmes needs developing to identify opportunities for growth and to further add to regional and national development. Nevertheless, the Panel concluded that the College has a clear plan for the implementation of its lifelong learning strategy and that its approach is sufficiently developing.

180. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks, and is given 3 points.

181. **Recommendations for the area:**

● The Panel **recommend** extending the reach of the Social Partners survey in subsequent years to a wider number of social partners to gather more representative datasets to ensure this aspect of the mission is addressed successfully.

● The Panel **recommend** that the College foster privileged strategic partnerships with local galleries in Vilnius and in the regions where professional artistic outcomes of students could be systematically disseminated.

● The Panel **recommend** improving the framework for measuring the impact of especially applied arts projects carried out in cooperation with external partners, and to trace more systematically fresh alumni professional activities.

● The Panel **recommend** the development of a system of more systematic analysis of lifelong learning activities in order to find opportunities to improve the current implementation of the LLL strategy, and to enable further growth of LLL programmes, including a sustainable and up-to-date offer of training intended for the employees of the College.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel did not identify any examples of good practice.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- The Panel **recommend** that the College clarify its understanding of and strategic approach to research.
- The Panel **recommend** that the new Statute be published in a timely fashion and that the practice in the College reflects the content of the statute.
- The Panel **recommend** that the current Statute of the College outline a more strategic role for the Council and a more proactive role in for example solving issues of employees, teachers and students.
- The Panel **recommend** that the remit and the strategic decision-making role and membership of committees and Council is consistently articulated and is understood.
- The Panel **recommend** that the issue of student representation on Academic Council is addressed as a matter of urgency.
- The Panel **recommend** the design and implementation of a comprehensive risk register, together with a risk ownership and assessment policy, with a process in place for regular review at Council.
- The Panel **recommend** that more formal and regular communication would enable the College to benefit more fully from stakeholders´ experience and input, and that a stronger advisory role in programme review and development would also be helpful to the College.
- The Panel **recommend** that the inclusion and role of the Student Union in decision making across the College is strengthened as a matter of priority.
- The Panel **recommend** that a more formal and systematic method of communication between staff and students e.g. in solving issues is developed.
- The Panel **recommend** that a more formal and recorded system of staff appraisal should be developed.
- The Panel **recommend** formalising opportunities for pedagogical staff development across the College.
- The Panel **recommend** that regular access to a more formal Gallery space, either on campus or in a partnership arrangement externally, would be beneficial.
- The Panel **recommend** that disability access could be more clearly marked and publicly visible on site
- The Panel **recommend** that more visibility regarding health and safety is included in the workspaces particularly where dangerous materials or equipment is in use.

Quality Assurance:
- The Panel **recommend** more effort should be made in order to translate quality assurance processes into the language of the College and its academics, as the whole community should share the common understanding of quality culture and make concerted steps towards its further enhancement.
- The Panel **recommend** that the Council is regularly involved in quality assurance and informed about the processes and their outcomes, so that it can take them into account in making strategic recommendations and decisions.
- The Panel **recommend** that the self-evaluation questionnaire should be carefully analysed as far as its structure is concerned, so that information collected on an annual basis be relevant and not over-bureaucratic; otherwise the danger of getting purely formal responses

is high, and the process may not lead to further quality enhancement but to the general feeling of unnecessary administrative burden.

- The Panel **recommend** that intended study programs be carefully discussed and prepared, and attention paid to their close monitoring especially in the first years of their realisation.
- The Panel **recommend** that the role of the Career Centre should be enhanced and more clearly systematised especially in view of students and prospective alumni seeking for internships and jobs.
- The Panel **recommend** that professional non-academic support should be contracted, and compulsory training should be provided to teachers and staff related to problems such as Asperger syndrome, ADHD, autism etc.
- The Panel **recommend** that training related to equal opportunities and academic ethics should be provided regularly on a compulsory basis.
- The Panel **recommend** that more attention should be paid to the composition of and procedures carried out by the Ethical commission, in order to prevent conflicts of interests and also to make sure anonymity and professional approach is guaranteed.

Studies and Research (Art):
- The Panel **recommend** that it might be useful to position the Acting programme within a broader theatre context beyond Lithuania to demonstrate its unique features as 'visual theatre' and better align it with the College mission and strategic aims.
- The Panel **recommend** that (i) consideration of the roles and responsibilities and (ii) identification of specific actions for all individuals and departments supporting different stages of the learner journey from application through to completion might enable a more proactive and holistic approach to be developed alongside the use of Retinent.
- The Panel **recommend** that VDK establish a clear set of actions specific to staff training and development in pedagogy to run alongside the actions for artistic and scientific research. For example, an annual programme of training events published at the beginning of each year that is facilitated by the College but might include training sessions offered by internal colleagues to address specific pedagogical topics but also input by external pedagogic specialists.
- The Panel **recommend** that specific actions and timeframes are established at study programme level for individual departments and course teams to develop their research agenda, as this will inform the curriculum content, design and delivery.
- The Panel **recommend** that the provision of English language lessons for staff be explored further to enable the strategic aim to develop more study programmes in English to be achieved.
- The Panel **recommend** that the exploration of pedagogic approaches and subject specific content during International Week could be explored as part of the commitment to staff training and development.
- The Panel **recommend** that the sixth strategic aim of the Internationalisation Strategy, to' incorporate an international, intercultural dimension into applied artistic and scientific activities' become an area of immediate focus, as it also connects to previous recommendations regarding the understanding and application of research more generally.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The Panel **recommend** extending the reach of the survey in subsequent years to a wider number of social partners to gather more representative datasets to ensure this aspect of the mission is addressed successfully.
- The Panel **recommend** that the College foster privileged strategic partnerships with local galleries in Vilnius and in the regions where professional artistic outcomes of students could be systematically disseminated.
- The Panel **recommend** improving the framework for measuring the impact of especially applied arts projects carried out in cooperation with external partners, and to trace more systematically fresh alumni professional activities.
- The Panel **recommend** the development of a system of more systematic analysis of lifelong learning activities in order to find opportunities to improve the current implementation of the LLL strategy, and to enable further growth of LLL programmes, including a sustainable and up-to-date offer of training intended for the employees of the College.