



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of VETERINARY
at Vilniaus kolegija

Expert panel:

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2. Prof. Dr. Peter Holm, *academic panel member*;
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5. Ms Kristina Kundrotaitė, *students' representative*.

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Report language – English

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Study Field Data

| | |
|--|--|
| Title of the study programme | <i>Veterinary medicine</i> |
| State code | 6531HX001 |
| Type of studies | Professional higher education |
| Cycle of studies | First |
| Mode of study and duration (in years) | Full-time studies, 3 years |
| Credit volume | 180 |
| Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification | Professional Bachelor of Veterinary Science, Veterinary nurse |
| Language of instruction | Lithuanian language |
| Minimum education required | Secondary education |
| Registration date of the study programme | 1 September 2001 |

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 25th of May, 2022.

1. **Prof. Dr. Thomas Wittek**, *University clinic for Ruminants, , Vetmeduni Vienna, Austria;*
2. **Prof. Dr. Peter Holm**, *Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen;*
3. **Prof. Dr. Jaroslaw Kaba** , *Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw;*
4. **Mrs. Dr. Eglė Svaldenienė**, *UAB Baltic Agro, representative of social partners ;*
5. **Ms. Kristina Kundrotaitė**, *Vytautas Magnus University, students' representative.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

| No. | Name of the document |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Document containing additional information (Video on facilities of the college); |
| 2. | Documents of the previous evaluation; |

1.4. BACKGROUND OF VETERINARY FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIAUS KOLEGIJA

1) The evaluation took place the 25th May 2022 at Vilniaus kolegija (Vilnius University of Applied Sciences) which is a state higher education institution of the Republic of Lithuania, The college was established in 2000 and is currently the largest professional higher education institution in Lithuania.

2) The college has 7 faculties, one among them is the faculty of Agrotechnology in which the evaluated study field and programme of veterinary medicine (H01) is located. Veterinary medicine is a first cycle professional education programme which is studied over 3 years having 180 ECTS.

3) The programme was previously evaluated in 2017.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Veterinary study field and **first cycle** at Vilniaus kolegija is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

The aims and outcome of the veterinary medicine study programme (first cycle studies) are well defined and described. The study programme attracts sufficient applicants from Lithuania; however the majority of students are coming from urban areas (mainly Vilnius). Although there was a minor decline in applications caused by demographic reasons, the study programme can be considered as very attractive. The alumni have excellent chances on the national labour market, the alumni and employers are very satisfied with the study programme.

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

Within the framework of the national educational legislation, the study programme aims to train qualified veterinary nurses with a professional bachelor's degree according to international standards for veterinary nurse educations, i.e. recommendations of the Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse Education and the Veterinary European Transnational Network of Nursing Education and Training.

The expert panel found that the veterinary medicine study programme objectives and outcomes are well adjusted to the general mission, objectives and strategy of the HEI. The studies are focused on providing the society with skilled and well-educated veterinary nurses and although some students are going to study veterinary medicine at university after finishing the college education it is not a major intention to prepare students at the college for secondary university studies.

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

The expert panel evaluated the provided information of the amount of teaching provided to the students in the study cycle according to legal requirements and found that the

ECTS of the programme is in accordance with the requirements. Details are provided in table No 1:

Table No 1. Study Programme Veterinary medicine at Vilniaus kolegija compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes

| Criteria | Legal requirements | In the Programme |
|--|---|------------------|
| Scope of the programme in ECTS | 180, 210 or 240 ECTS | 180 ECTS |
| ECTS for internship | No less than 29 ECTS | > 29 ECTS |
| ECTS for final thesis (project) | No less than 9 ECTS | 10 ECTS |
| Contact hours | No less than 20 % of learning | 44% |
| Individual learning | No less than 30 % of learning | 56% |
| Practical training and other practice placements | No less than one third of the programme | 59 % |

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

The SER describes the use of innovative cumulative assessment which was further discussed during the online visit to the higher education institution. Although we agreed the cumulative assessment may result in a continuous and sustainable learning process, we had the impression that the college needs to define guidelines for assessment methods more precisely and provide training to the persons assessing the students to ensure objectivity and fairness of the assessment methods. However, the expert panel had no indication that the assessments were performed in an unfair or unjustified way.

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

The curriculum is well balanced and enables the students to continuously develop their knowledge and skills. The curriculum is especially focused on practical teaching and development of first day competencies. Talking to the students the majority was not willing or able to use English in our conversation. The focus on language teaching should be increased to improve language skills. Further we would suggest including a course that would teach on

dealing with complicated clients, working under difficult circumstances and other psychological issues to a greater extent.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

Currently the curriculum offers very limited opportunities for students to individualise their study. However, since it is a first study cycle, the expert panel does not necessarily see the need for a wide variety of elective subjects or courses. We were more concerned about the low number of staff and students using exchange possibilities going abroad. We would encourage the college to support and promote such activities. However, we acknowledge that similar study programmes do not exist in all EU countries making it more difficult for students to study abroad.

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

The expert panel was not able to assess individual final theses in depth; however we had the chance to look at the topics of the theses. The topics varied within the study area but the majority of the topics were related to food producing animals although in contrast to this almost the majority of the alumni started working in companion animal practice. We have been told that this has historical reasons. Generally, the students had the impression that they are well mentored doing research and writing the thesis.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The curriculum is well designed and focused on necessary theoretical background but mainly on practical teaching to obtain a high command of skills;
2. The study programme is well aligned to the needs of the Lithuanian society; however, currently the demand of the labour market is greater than the number of graduates;
3. The alumni have excellent opportunities at the labour market in Lithuania;
4. Employers and stakeholders are more than happy with the teaching quality of the college and the knowledge and skills of the alumni.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The topics of the students' theses are not well adjusted to their later work areas; more companion animal related topics for final theses are necessary in the near future;
2. More students from all over Lithuania (not just the Vilnius area) should be attracted to get a better coverage of more rural areas of Lithuania.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

The HEI has established research groups according to the scientific areas. The priority research areas have been indicated and included in the HEI guidelines for applied research. The two-thirds of the lecturers are involved in scientific work. There is several research projects carried out in the HEI. Some of the projects are financed by the state budget. Those projects are focused on parasitological investigation. The international project has also been implemented leading to publishing books and guidelines on zoonotic diseases. There are also commissioned studies being conducted. These researches are commissioned by social partners. The HEI is now working on the next project financed from domestic sources. All research projects carried out by the HEI focus on production animals. This is because such topics are dealt with by lecturers. This is mainly due to the fact that in the past the main veterinary activity was mainly focused on treating large animals. HEI is currently taking steps to change that and shift research into small animals. HEI has hope for young lecturers who practise mainly with small animals. This ensures that in the near future the aims of research will change and be in line with current students' needs and market requirements.

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

The teachers participate in national and international scientific conferences which allow them to follow the latest developments in science and technology. The HEI has a modern laboratory providing optimal conditions for scientific work allowing applied research to be conducted. The results of this research are used by lecturers in teaching (discussing case studies, examples of good practice). The lecturers cooperate widely with different research institutions including the Veterinary Medical Faculty of LSMU (e.g. use their cattle farm for AI training and many personal contacts). Moreover, the lecturers collaborate very closely with veterinary practices. They take part in many scientific conferences and courses, both presenting their scientific achievements and spreading theoretical and practical knowledge among participants. That allows for constant updating of the teaching programme according to the latest achievements in science and technology.

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

A lot of effort is put into engaging students in scientific work. In order to develop students' research competences, the subject of "Applied Research Methodology" is conducted. During this course, students prepare written works that are presented to the group, and then discussed. This provides a good background for scientific work. Students are encouraged to participate in research work carried out at the HEI, including collaboration with external partners. Students assist in collecting samples, laboratory work, as well as take part in analysing results of scientific investigations. Moreover students prepare theses within which they solve a given problem. This requires the analysis of scientific literature, conducting laboratory tests, and teaches how to analyse data and draw conclusions, and is supposed to lead to appropriate solutions. The research work carried out by students is supervised by lecturers who chose research areas. However, students have influence on the research topics. HEI organises an annual national scientific conference. Students participate in it as well as in many other scientific conferences. This gives them opportunities to present the results of their scientific work. All this creates very good conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle. Generally the expert panel found the students have good conditions for getting involved in research throughout their study,

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. HEI's research is closely related to the student curriculum;
2. Students have the opportunity to present the results of their research at scientific conferences.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Research conducted at HEI focuses mainly on production animals. There is a lack of research in the area of companion animals;
2. The further alignment of research areas with the future area of employment of students needs to be taken into consideration in the near future.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Student admission requirements and process are comprehensive and definite. General admission is organised and coordinated by the Association of Lithuanian higher education institutions for general admission (hereinafter - LAMA BPO), which is authorised by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania. The main admission criteria is a competition score calculated assessing the grades of state maturity examinations of Biology, Lithuanian Language and Literature, including the grades of state maturity examinations or annual grade averages of Chemistry or Mathematics and of one freely chosen subject. By the Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (LR MESS) the minimum competitive score is set annually. Admission rules are discussed and approved by the College's Academic council on a yearly basis and all information about students' admission process is published and available on the College's website (<https://www.viko.lt/stojantiesiems>). To encourage young people to take an interest in the study programme, the College organises Open days, meetings with students in schools and science promotion events.

International students' admission system uses similar principles and criteria as the national students, i.e., using an analogous admission platform and applying the same admission rules. 30-credit courses are offered each semester for foreign students, the information about international students' admission is published and available on the College and Faculty websites. During the 3 year period there were no students coming from abroad for full-time studies. The expert panel finds the admission criteria and process to be clear.

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

The procedure for recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning is clearly described and publicly available on the College's website. The procedure for the recognition of part-time studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is carried out in two areas: recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning; recognition of part-time studies.

The results of studies could be obtained in both Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions and credited within two weeks from the beginning of the new semester. Information on the procedure for crediting prior learning is available on the College's website. The expert panel finds the procedure for recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning to be good.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Information provided about academic mobility of students is acceptable. The Erasmus+ coordinator of the Faculty advises students on the conditions of the Erasmus+ call for mobility for studies or placements.

Although the students confirmed that they are well-informed and encouraged by the teaching staff to participate in the international mobility programmes and projects (Erasmus +, etc.) , according to 2018-2021 period analysis, in total only 9 students (less than 2 percent) participated in the Erasmus + programme and 3 students came for practice at the college. The pandemic condition from 2020 onward may have contributed to low numbers, during this period; on the other hand it could be lack of students' motivation and language barrier problem. The expert panel finds the conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students to be lacking; the panel suggests introducing more courses in English to enhance the proficiency of foreign languages.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

Students are provided sufficiently with academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. The College's normative documents state that the following financial support is provided to students: incentive scholarships, bonuses, lump-sum social benefits, tuition fee instalments, state-supported loans to cover the costs of studying or living expenses and social grants. The best-performing students are given the opportunity to take up a state-funded place when one becomes available. Faculty lecturers provide academic support to students during tutoring hours, via email or in a virtual learning environment. Consultation timetables are prepared, approved by the Dean of the Faculty and published on the Faculty's website. The College's Career Centre provides counselling for career planning, individual and group career counselling. Job offers and advertisements are published on the Faculty's website and sent to students by email. In order to ensure the successful adaptation of first-year students to the academic and social environment of the College, the Faculty appoints tutors (2nd or 3rd year students) for first-year students every academic year. Since 1 January 2017, students have access to free psychological counselling. More information should be provided about students' organisations during events. The expert panel finds assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field to be good.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

The detailed information about the study aims and the objectives of taught subjects is provided in the subject descriptions and is published and periodically updated in the college website. Enough academic support is provided to the students. Counselling hours are planned, prepared time tables are published and available on the college website.

The expert panel finds evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling to be good.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Well organised admission system for students;
2. Strong students' academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support system.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low student participation in mobility programmes (Erasmus +, etc.);
2. Lack of information about students' organisations.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

The teaching process is held according to a schedule approved by the Dean of the Faculty. This includes lectures and practices (seminars, wet classes, skills lab) as well as internships. At the beginning of each course, students are introduced to the applicable rules, deadlines and assessment criteria. More than a third of the total study time is spent on independent work. In the case of professional and final practices (internships), before their commencement, the lecturer in charge familiarises students with the programme, goals, expected results, procedures and assessment criteria. Students can choose professional and final practices (internships), from the list of recommended companies. A three-party agreement is signed between the student, the Vilniaus kolegija and the host institution. In case of conflicts, the practice coordinator is informed about it and typically solves the problem through personal discussions. After professional and final practices (internships), students provide their opinions as part of general feedback. Students feel that HEI takes these opinions

into account. Students are generally happy with the teaching and learning process and believe that they are well trained especially on practical skills.

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

There were no students with special needs at the time of the analysis, but HEI made preparations to deal with this situation in the future. The HEI employee received appropriate external training and then disseminated the knowledge to other faculty staff. This was the preparation for the situation when students from vulnerable groups or students with special needs will come in the future. The expert panel was informed that no such students have been studying recently. The HEI building was also rebuilt and the premises are fully accessible for students with decreased mobility. The expert panel appreciates these measures to address the special needs of certain students in advance.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

The monitoring of students' progress is carried out and analysed systematically. Students are assessed using a cumulative assessment system. This means that the final assessment consists of the results of the mid-term assessment, the independent work and the results of an examination or project.

The results of each test and examination must be published within 5 working days, not including the reporting date. Interested students must be given time to become aware of the major weaknesses and errors in their work before they can improve their credit. A faculty's periodic teaching quality assessment survey is held. The purpose of this survey is to identify the student's achievement and gaps. The lecturers shall review the results of the survey at the end of the semester and if necessary, appropriate modifications are made.

The evaluation of professional and final practices (internships) is done. Its results are analysed taking into account decisions of the Curriculum committee as well as alumni surveys carried out every year. On these grounds, decisions are made to improve student study progress.

The results of students' progress is regularly analysed by the Study Department and presented to the Dean, the Vice Dean and the Head of the Department and appropriate decisions are made. Students can monitor their performance constantly in the AIS system.

Moreover, students are informed personally about their deficits in knowledge and skills at the end of the course.

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

Graduate surveys are carried out every year. The aim of the survey is to collect the appropriate information and provide feedback to the HEI. That allows us to improve the quality of the teaching.

Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate careers is done using data from various sources. Moreover, the Karjera.lt platform allows even to track graduate salary. Before the pandemic, graduate employment rates were very high (about 90%). This confirms that graduates are in high demand on the labour market and shows that in the future, many of them will become leaders. The HEI operates the College Career Centre which helps students in planning their careers and future professional work.

The meeting with employers also confirmed that they are satisfied with the theoretical and practical skills of the graduates. Graduates are ready to work right after finishing college, although of course they require more practical experience. Experience, however, has to be built over a longer time, which cannot be achieved during the study period.

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

Academic integrity is based on the Code of Academic Ethics and is controlled by the Academic Ethics Committee. Each student signs the "Declaration of student integrity". The policies of tolerance and non-discrimination are also guaranteed in The Study regulations.

Questions whether academic dishonesty, plagiarism and copying of works were tolerated are included in the teaching quality survey. The students did not notice and did not report such problems.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

The College Regulations on appeals are in force. This document allows a student to appeal and submit complaints regarding the study process. The appeal must be made in writing and must be reasoned. It is submitted to the Dean of the Faculty or the College Rector. The appeal is examined by a five-person Appeal board. There were no complaints regarding

discrimination/ tolerance/ ethical problems and no appeals during the period under review. However, we were assured that anonymity is ensured. The expert panel had no concerns about the regulations but was not able to assess if they would work in practice since there were no cases.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Graduates are very well prepared for their future professional work.
2. Graduates are very much in demand on the labour market.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Although the cumulative assessment is a positive way to assess student performance, the objectivity and fairness has to be addressed.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

There are 13 programme teachers employed in HEI. The average age of teachers is 42 years. Professional subjects are taught by 5 associate professors and doctors of science and 8 lecturers. These numbers are in accordance with the legal requirements. The ratio of teachers to students in veterinary studies is 1:9 which is more than sufficient. The average teaching experience of the teachers is 12 years giving a balanced mixture of very experienced and less experienced teachers. Teachers with less than 3 years' experience at the HEI account for 31% of the total teachers. 61% of lecturers in the field of study are veterinarians and their average practical experience is 22 years. It should be emphasised that many lecturers are practising veterinarians on a daily basis, which is of great importance for proper veterinary education allowing an applied teaching approach.

Teachers are involved in applied scientific research and therefore are able to publish articles. Teachers improve their competences also by participating in various courses, seminars and conferences. Talking to the teachers they all seemed to be very proud and enthusiastic about their teaching. The expert panel were generally very satisfied and concluded that the teachers' didactical enhancement system that is in the HEI is excellent and can be seen as a positive example.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility

The HEI encourages teaching staff's mobility. This is mostly done in the frame of Erasmus+ programme. There is an Erasmus coordinator as well as the College's international relations and projects office that provide the appropriate information. The information is also available on the College's website. In 2018-2019 two teachers used this opportunity, which is very much appreciated for the number of teachers. Due to Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2021, there was no academic staff mobility. The HEI also organises an International Teaching Week during which lectures are conducted by foreign teachers.

The expert panel members are in awe of the mobility of Vilniaus kolegija teachers for veterinary teaching staff.

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

HEI has developed and implemented the College's Staff Competence Development Procedures. According to them, Departments and College administration allocate appropriate funds. The College also offers internal training courses for the improvement of pedagogical skills and to get acquainted with the information systems used.

The expert panel was also very satisfied with the reported conditions for improving didactical and other competences of teaching staff members.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Very enthusiastic teachers adapting their teaching to the needs of the Lithuanian society and the profession;
2. Teachers are very close to practice, allowing an applied teaching approach.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. (Temporary) Low teaching staff academic mobility caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

Since the evaluation was performed as an online evaluation we were not able to visit the facilities personally. However, the provided information, especially the video and the discussion with the different groups convinced us that the college has invested in state of the art resources which allow a high quality teaching and ensure effective learning of the students. It is remarkable that the college runs a veterinary clinic for training purposes for the students. Additionally we learned that there is a wide support of private veterinary practices and other stakeholders (e.g. zoo) providing excellent opportunities for practical training. The large animal teaching is partially performed in cooperation with the LSMU Vet school at their teaching farm. The higher education institution has informed the expert panel that funding is sufficiently available from different sources which seems to be the case since major investments have been made recently. Also the support from the private sector is spectacular.

The expert panel is more than satisfied with all resources (physical, informational, financial) available for students and teaching staff. Also the experts are pleasantly surprised with the intensive cooperation between college and private social partners.

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

It was reported that the college recently received a larger grant allowing substantial improvement of equipment and facilities. Therefore currently there are no plans for major investments. We like to encourage the college to develop a strategic plan for scheduling maintenance and new investments for the upcoming years. The expert panel was very impressed by the currently available resources

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The college is generally well equipped and has excellent resources for teaching the students on a high level;
2. It is exceptional that the college runs its own veterinary clinic;
3. Well established collaborations with private veterinary practices and other stakeholders and partners allow excellent teaching in areas where no own facilities are available.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. None.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

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

HEI set up a Veterinary Studies Committee, which is responsible for the quality assurance system. The Committee works on the basis of the College's Internal quality assurance procedures for Fields of Study and the Regulations of the Study Committees. The Committee meets at the beginning of each semester.

In 2019, the Committee carried out a pilot annual analysis of the monitoring of the field of study indicators, discussed aspects of the areas for improvement and recommendations from the external evaluation, and their implementation. Following the entry into force of the new normative acts, the Regulations of the College's Study Committees have been drafted, and the Committee for Veterinary Studies has been approved for 2021. The Committee prepares an Annual monitoring report on the field of study during the analysis. The QA monitoring programme includes student feedback, study progress indicators (admission results, study achievements, attrition and support) and reports and Department activities including reports from lecturers. The Veterinary Studies committee discusses and evaluates the feedback reports and suggests improvements of educational activities. The Department directing the veterinary nursing programme has the responsibility for planning and implementing suggested improvements and reports back to the Study Committee.

Interviews with staff and students revealed general satisfaction with the QA-system. On this background the team finds that the effectiveness of the QA-system is satisfactory.

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

One student is always a member of the Veterinary Studies Committee. This ensures the influence of students on the internal quality assurance system. There are also representatives of the social partners in the committee. Their task is to represent the needs of employers and to establish a curriculum corresponding to the specialist veterinary labour market.

In general, the inclusion of social partners and students contributes to a comprehensive and objective quality assurance which is appreciated by the expert panel.

However, a more standardised approach is recommended even if there are multiple personal connections.

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

The Department directing the Veterinary studies Programme of the Veterinary field of studies collects the feedback in accordance with the College's Procedure of Feedback for improving the quality of studies. This information is passed to the Veterinary Studies Committee which analyses the results of the feedback received. That leads to elaboration of appropriate proposals to the Department for changes in the curriculum. The Committee also makes suggestions to the Department regarding the development of competences and needs of lecturers, as well as the methods of teaching and assessing students used. The department obliges lecturers to implement these arrangements in a timely manner. This ensures that the teaching content is properly updated.

In general the ways of feedback collection can be considered as above average and meets the requirements.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

The Committee and the Department organise surveys of employers, graduates, lecturers and students. An anonymous questionnaire is sent twice a year to all students and once a year to all lecturers. The results of the surveys are published on the College's website and discussed at Department meetings and Faculty Board meetings.

This leads to revision and adjustment of the Veterinary study Programme. The same is true of students' opinions. As a result of the student's surveys, changes were made to the curriculum as examples of the duration and location of practical training were mentioned further the closer association and coordination of private practices with the college. This led to an increase in student satisfaction. 85% of final year students consider their preparation for a professional career to be sufficient to enable them to work in the field of their education.

The expert panel is satisfied with the current standard in this criteria area.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Quality assurance system is in place and works well;
2. Students consider their preparation for a professional career to be excellent.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The standardisation of formal response in the quality assurance system is advised.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The expert panel was very impressed by the excellent in-house teaching facilities and the collaborations of the college with private partners and stakeholders allowing a high level of practical teaching connecting teaching and practice. This is an outstanding achievement. Additionally, special emphasis deserves the demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment of teachers in their work, which has a great impact on the quality of teaching.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

| Evaluation Area | Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle) |
|--|---|
| Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve alignment of teaching and job perspective of the students with the topics of their final theses; • Improve the internationality of the study programme supporting student and staff exchange; • consider strengthening English teaching to improve language skills of the students; • Consider offering elective courses/subjects within the curriculum from which the students can choose according to their interests. |
| Links between science (art) and studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research area should be more suited to the subsequent area of student employment. |
| Student admission and support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an active motivation system to increase students participating in mobility programmes. |
| Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attention should be paid to objectivity and fairness in the cumulative assessment of student performance. |
| Teaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staffs' academic mobility should be improved. |
| Learning facilities and resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the standard of facilities and resources high and adjust to the upcoming changes. |
| Study quality management and public information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardisation of the formal response in the quality assurance system should be implemented. |

VI. SUMMARY

The evaluation took place on the 25th May 2022 at Vilniaus kolegija (Vilnius University of Applied Sciences) in the field of veterinary studies (H01). The field of veterinary is a first cycle professional education which is studied over 3 years having 180 ECTS.

Because of the current Covid -19 pandemic situation the evaluation had to be done purely online which resulted in a different way of assessment in comparison to the on-site evaluation. It was not possible for the expert panel to verify the information on the equipment and resources and we could not assess the factual situation in the facilities. However we hope we were able to conduct a fair and honest evaluation producing valuable information for further improvement within the HEI. Additionally, we like to thank all staff members and students who have prepared the SER and took part in the discussion rounds.

Overall we got a very positive impression of all assessed areas, which is reflected in the high marks rewarded. Although there are always further improvements possible, we did not identify problems which would substantially threaten the study programme or study success of the students.

We were especially impressed by recent efforts of the college to improve the facilities and equipment for teaching. It is very remarkable that the college runs its own non-commercial veterinary hospital for teaching purposes. Further we appreciated the high level of satisfaction of the employers with the knowledge and skills of the graduates.

We like to encourage the college to monitor the position of the graduates in the changing labour market and adjust the teaching and research accordingly. The close relations with numerous private practitioners and clinics shall be further utilised to maintain the high standard of clinical teaching. We further suggest taking suitable measures to better serve the whole country, not just the capital area.

We like to congratulate the college on the achievements and wish good luck for the further development of the programme and facilities.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Thomas Wittek

(signature)