



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of MUSIC

at Vilniaus Kolegija / University of Applied Sciences

Expert panel:

1. **Prof. Dr. Martin Harlow (panel chairperson)**, *academic*;
2. **Ms. Gretchen Amussen**, *academic*;
3. **Prof. Dr. Habil. Mihály Duffek**, *academic*;
4. **Mr. Simonas Cepenias**, *representative of social partners*;
5. **Ms. Larisa-Mirela Matei**, *students' representative*.

Evaluation coordinator – Ms. Evelina Keturakyte

Report language – English

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Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	<i>Popular Music</i>
State code	6531PX015
Type of studies	Higher education college studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time studies, 3 years
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education, Entrance exam
Registration date of the study programme	31 August 2009

** if there are **joint / two-fields / interdisciplinary** study programmes in the study field, please designate it in the foot-note*

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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 prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

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

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

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

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

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the 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 *13 May, 2021*. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Review Visit was organised online using a video-conferencing tool (Zoom).

Prof. Dr. Martin Harlow (panel chairperson), *Emeritus Professor formerly Vice Principal (Academic), Royal Northern College of Music, United Kingdom;*

Ms. Gretchen Amussen, *Independent consultant, France;*

Prof. Dr. Habil. Mihály Duffek, *Pianist, Head of Piano Department, University of Debrecen, Hungary;*

Mr. Simonas Cepenas, *CEO, Live music agency Rootslive, Lithuania*

Ms. Larisa-Mirela Matei, *PhD student in Musical Education, National University of Music, Romania*

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.	No additional information

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences (hereafter VK, University) is an accredited state higher education institution established in 2000, through the merger of separate specialized higher education schools. It provides higher education studies, conducts applied research, experimental development and professional art. It consists of 7 faculties. In 2019 VK had 6558 students with a small number of international students (72), and 852 employees. The mission of VK is to train practice-orientated specialists with professional higher education, including within the field of the arts and humanities. The development of internationality is a strategic goal of VK.

VK has one first cycle study programme in the field of music, the *Popular Music (state code 6531PX015)*(hereafter first cycle study programme, programme). It sits within the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies (hereafter the Faculty). The programme has run since 2003. The last evaluation of the programme was in 2015. After this earlier evaluation improvements to the programme were carried out and all recommendations of the previous evaluation were considered carefully.

The self-evaluation report (hereafter - SER) for the present evaluation was carried out by a team as follows: the Vice Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies (to 11/2020; after 11/2020), two lecturers, one student and one social partner.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Music study field and first cycle at Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences 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	5
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	5
	Total:	30

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field is being developed systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

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)

(1) Factual situation

The SER (p.6) details the anticipated increase in demand for professional artistic activity in line following the principles of creative empowerment defined in Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030'. The growth of the creative industries is predicted to mirror the greater participation of the Lithuanian population in cultural activity. The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* is the only professional bachelor study programme of its type in Lithuania, focussed as it is on the various sub-genres of what can broadly be described as 'pop music'. The aim of the first cycle study programme *Popular Music* is 'to develop a creative and socially responsible personality with his/her own original specific artistic vision, who is able independently develop professional solo and/or collective artistic activity of a popular music performer in the cultural and creative industries in the context of national and international popular music traditions and current trends'. The fulfilment of these aims is significantly helped by the possibilities of the interdisciplinarity (music, theatre, design) of the study programme within the VK Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies. Future graduates of the study programme will clearly be well positioned to contribute to the fulfilment of Lithuania's developing need for popular musicians. Already graduates pursue professional activities include work in bands, radio and TV, and as freelancers in the creative industries.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The content and level of the aims and learning outcomes are relevant for the labour market of the popular music industry in Lithuania and beyond. The professional success of students during and after their studies is indicative of the relevance and efficacy of the music training, and of the societal need for VK's musicians.

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

(1) Factual situation

The study programme maps directly to the VK mission, as detailed in the SER (p.8). There is alignment too with the strategic goals of the HEI, in particular the pursuit of 'high quality studies, internationalisation' and the 'development of applied research and professional art'. The systematic development of staff is a strategic goal, much of this being undertaken through international exchange and professional interaction of staff. The connectivity of music staff (with professional, Erasmus, Nordplus partners) is a feature for VK, and further demonstrates the alignment between institutional imperatives and those of the study field. Staff develop as much through professional advancement (working professionally at the cutting edge of the music industry) as though VK professional development training.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The aims and learning outcomes comply with the mission, vision and strategy of VK.

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

(1) Factual situation

The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* is at Level 6 of *Lithuanian Qualifications Framework* and complies with the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Music* (Approved by Order No. V-794 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 July 2015) (Annex 4) and the *Descriptor for Study Cycles* (Approved by Order No. V-1012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 16 November 2016) (Annex 3). It is a 3-year programme of 180 ECTS. The detailed study plan is included in the SER as Annex 1. 8.3% of study time is allotted to general subjects, 86.7% to subjects of study field (music) with 5% given to electives. Practical training (internships) is 35% of the total learning hours. Contact time varies by study course (module) between 22.5% and 60% of total study hours. The average independent study by module is 59%. The Study Programme Committee (SPC) reviews structure of student workload at least once yearly, with amendments made based on evidence of student performance and student survey feedback. There are clear procedures – that were articulated with great clarity during the site visit – for proposed programme or study course changes to progress within VK.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* at VK meets the legal requirements for first cycle programmes in Lithuania. The programme aims comply with the *Descriptors for the Music Study Field*.

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

(1) Factual situation

The correlation between expected programme learning outcomes and those of study modules mapped in the SER, Annex 5. The programme offers a range of teaching modes, with individual and group teaching where student-centred learning is the focus. There are the expected range of teaching modes for a practically orientated music programme: masterclasses, rehearsals, performance alongside lectures and seminars. There are also a range of studies which support students in the 'business' elements of the industry. More remote learning and e-learning has been undertaken during the pandemic, this being commended in the site visit meeting with students. There are a wide range of assessment modes both for practical, theoretical and general studies. The emphasis is, throughout, on the development of the individual, autonomous musician: aims, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment seek to support, in a coherent way, the student's achievement of this goal.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The single aim of the study programme – though it could be more elegantly articulated – focuses on the student's individual journey towards becoming a creative artist. The variety of teaching and assessment methods provide excellent conditions for students to work collaboratively with their peers, and yet develop their individuality in achieving the expected learning outcomes of the programme.

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

(1) Factual situation

The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* offers an appropriate blend of specialist musical learning, with broad theoretical underpinning. Important industry relevant studies for the potential freelance artist (e.g. self-management, human safety in professional environments) support the practical work of student musicians. As is customary in music college education many studies extend throughout the duration of the programme (across years), with progressive challenges being presented to the student. Study subjects (modules) are clearly based on overall programme learning outcomes. There is a logical and complementary relationship of studies within and between modules, alongside the integration of the technological requirements (particularly pertinent to popular music) required in the profession. A detailed analysis and mapping of the relations of elements of programme content are undertaken systematically in SER, Annex 6.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* has appropriate level and content. Through the 3 years of the programme students are engaged in a logical and complementary range of studies, with practice-based music training always at the heart of the programme. The musical specialisms of students (vocal, instrumental and so forth) are relevant to the labour market in the popular music industry. The practical nature of the study, and the theoretical underpinning are sufficient either for direct entry to the music profession, or continuation at Master level. Both routes are achieved in practice.

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

(1) Factual situation

All students of the programme undertake a specialist 'principal' study (e.g. piano, bass guitar, saxophone, vocals) ensuring from the outset the personalisation of studies. Study courses – such as the improvisation training – also permit a uniqueness and expressive freedom. Structurally there are 'elective' courses in 3 semesters (of 6). 2 VK electives available to students of different study fields were added in 2019-2020. Interested students are also permitted to attend lectures of other study programmes. By its nature, practical music study allows the students to shape studies to fulfil their personal creative and musical goals. This freedom of artistic thinking was eloquently expressed by students during the site visit.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK *Popular Music* study programme students have excellent possibilities to customize and personalise their individual studies. Although the structure of the degree might seem a little rigid – mostly 'core' studies – within modules students have a good range of choice. The development of these unique learning packages is typical in vocational music higher education training. The approach is therefore congruent with best practice.

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

(1) Factual situation

Programme studies are completed with a *Final Project*, a performance-orientated module consisting of Main Instrument (solo), Ensemble and Portfolio. The requirements for the

preparation and defence of this 'thesis' is listed in VK documentation (referenced in the SER). This includes details of the committee which assesses the project. There have been no final projects commissioned by social partners of VK in the period under review. The project is self-defined by the student after some staff supervision, with the repertoire of the projects (solo and ensemble) listed in the SER, Annex 2. The Final Project is supported by a *Work Folder* (portfolio) which illustrates the studies undertaken and the achievement of learning outcomes. It includes an analysis of the final project, a CV, biography, and evidence of engagement in artistic activities across the programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The range of repertoire of the students' solo performances, the diversity in genres and styles, clearly demonstrates that there is ample scope for students to develop their own specialist interests, creativity and musical 'voice' during the programme. This is an important facet of the aims of the programme, and an essential feature of best practice in other practical music programmes in HEIs.

The final thesis requirements conform with the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Music*.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The proto-professional training environment which ensures the development of unique popular music artists.
2. Industry focussed studies, exploiting interdisciplinary working within the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

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

(1) Factual situation

Applied research and art activities in the *Popular Music* Programme are carried out in accordance with VK's 2017-2019 *Applied Research and Arts Programme* (SER, p. 16). These integrate teachers' professional national and international activities, educational, and scientific publications, seminars and master classes, artistic projects carried out as performers, composers, and arrangers in contemporary, jazz, electronic and other popular music styles, and participation in assessment commissions for competitions or examinations (SER, p. 16-17, 18). VK's research and development funding for music doubled between 2019 and 2020 to 26,063 Euros (SER, p. 16). The Rhythmic Music Department and a dedicated group of music field study programme researchers assure oversight of these activities.

Teachers' artistry is widely recognized, as the list of prizes and awards attest (Site visit, meeting with teachers, SER, Annex 9). Teachers' extensive networks, art activities and experience are integrated into the curriculum (SER, p. 16), and are largely responsible for students' extensive national and international artistic activities (SER, p. 16-17). Performances at popular music festivals, joint international teacher-student collaborations (SER, p. 17), experimental and innovative projects, as for example Creative Testing Ground (SER, p. 18),

student-teacher performances (VK International Week) are extensive. VK's partnerships with educational and social partners throughout Lithuania, of which over 25 examples are cited in the SER, range from libraries and cultural centres to music, art or vocational schools and leading music festivals (SER, p. 18-19).

Performances and competitions involving students and teachers take place with a range of educational and cultural stakeholders locally, regionally, nationally, and integrate sharing of best practices (SER, p. 18). Fourteen international educational partners feature major European popular music study programmes: these are largely Scandinavian (Latvia, Finland, Denmark, Estonia) but extend to Britain, Italy, France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Azerbaijan (SER, p. 19). The site visit meeting with students confirmed their numerous artistic collaborations with teachers, who willingly share both the stage and their networks to support students' artistic and professional development.

Applied science and art activity is largely funded through external sources. International teacher mobility is high: in 2019-2020, teachers participated in 35 mobility actions, in addition to which they receive support to attend seminars and conferences (SER, Annex 10). While some of these receive internal funding, much is made possible through Nordplus and Erasmus. Applied Professional Artistic and Experimental Development Activities detailed in Annex 12 indicate ten national and Baltic projects (master-classes, festivals, seminars) made possible in 2019-2020 through outside funding (Nordplus, festivals, schools).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Results documented in the SER demonstrate the breadth and depth of applied science and art activities within the *Popular Music* Programme, activities which feed back into programme delivery whilst being firmly aligned with overall institutional research and development strategies and goals.

Teachers are active, recognized artists who bring their national and international networks and experience to the programme. The national and international cultural and educational partners with which VK cooperates are strategically aligned, support teachers' professional development and mobility, and provide remarkable opportunities for students to grow their artistic activities through joint projects and ensembles, internships, seminars, competitions, and performances. Experimentation and innovation are encouraged. VK's inclusive approach ensures that all teachers and students benefit and engage with these activities.

The strategy and realisation of applied science and art activities is a successful one and the quality and quantity of these are steadily increasing while also remaining financially viable.

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

(1) Factual situation

Teachers participate actively in the Association of European Conservatoires Pop & Jazz Platform and the Nordic Nordplus networks, and they continue to advance their own subject-specific training, as for example with Estill Voice Training for vocal lecturers (SER, p. 19).

New study subjects added due to the increasing importance of digital technologies include *Audio Technology and Human Safety* and *Recording Internship* (SER, p. 19); students also learn about popular music software, such as *Sibelius* or *Band in a Box*, and such software is then consistently updated. Current popular music trends offer opportunities for students to reflect and develop their art, supported by apps such as *iRealPro* (SER, p. 20). Students' professional development includes knowledge of music management, copyright and related rights,

contemporary internet platforms, psychology, and communication skills, including the writing of a CV and cover letter. Audio and video resources and apps are integrated into studies, and courses are updated through online databases, electronic books, and periodicals (SER, p. 20).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK takes a broad and inclusive view of contemporary developments in the popular music sector and adjusts the curriculum accordingly. This includes digital software and technologies, knowledge of the music profession, music management, and communication skills. Teachers' participation in the principal relevant European educational popular music networks allows them to be fully aware of current educational, scientific, and artistic trends.

The content of studies in the *Popular Music Programme* is fully aligned with the latest developments in applied science and art activities and appropriate to the study cycle of music.

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

(1) Factual situation

Practical training is the major focus for the *Popular Music* first cycle study programme, with a strong emphasis on applied professional artistic activities. These include events, performances and seminars scheduled in a broad array of venues and can involve students only or students and teachers. These include internship performances at VK required of all students every semester, performances organized for the greater VK academic community, events for educational and cultural partner institutions, those organised at national events (SER, p. 18), festivals and concerts produced by social partners, and national and international network projects and competitions (SER, p. 18, Annex 7). Concert activities seek to develop social and cultural awareness: students are encouraged to perform for socially and culturally excluded groups, and projects have been led with disabled persons as well as in homes for the elderly (SER, p. 22-23).

Several courses (*Main Instrument, Ensemble, Ensemble Internship* and, in semesters III-VI, *Concert Practice*) require participation in in-house solo and ensemble performances as well as master classes, creative workshops and seminars. Formally, students are required to perform in the Concert Hall at least four times each semester (SER, p. 23). The course *Concert Practice* requires students to organize their own independent activities. Finally, renowned artists are invited to teach on a regular basis, and in 2019-2020, 16 foreign music professors' teaching visits took place, up from 9 two years earlier (SER, Annex 8).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students are provided with remarkably varied opportunities to both initiate and participate in professional artistic activities. Course obligations require participation in internship concerts, public solo and ensemble performances and master classes at VK, and in national and international educational, cultural settings. Students' experience mirrors that of practicing professionals, encompassing master classes and professional development, national and international joint ensemble projects, self-initiated artistic activities, and beyond traditional concert venues, experience working in educational and social settings.

Participation by students of music field studies in applied science and art activities is significant and covers the broad spectrum of activity and experience required to become a successful professional.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Teachers are active, highly respected national and international artists, and they share their experience and networks with students.
2. Frequent national and international collaborations involving students and teachers constitute a major component of the programme. Extensive opportunities exist for students to perform locally, regionally, and internationally for a broad spectrum of audiences.
3. The programme offers students the knowledge and skills to manage their careers while integrating the latest technical and digital developments.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

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

(1) Factual situation

Information about the admission process to VK is published on the websites of LAMA BPO and VK: (<https://bakalauras.lamabpo.lt/bendrojo-priemimo-tvarkos-aprasas>/<https://www.viko.lt/stojantiesiems/priemimas/>;
https://www.viko.lt/media/uploads/sites/3/2017/01/Stojamieji_2020_internetas.pdf

Admission to first cycle studies in Lithuania is organized by the Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for Organizing General Admission (LAMA BPO). Applicants must at least have a secondary education and have passed the entrance examination. The admission score is calculated as follows: performance and reflection of instrumental or vocal works (50 points) + improvisation according to a given harmony by voice or main instrument (30 points) + solfege, recognizing intervals and chords by ear (20 points). From 2020 the entrance examination makes 100% of the total entrance score to the Programme.

Additional points may be awarded applying to places not funded by the state (1 point) to applicants with at least one year of work experience related to the chosen study programme, graduates of non-formal education schools corresponding to the chosen study programme, etc.

The number of applicants to the Programme is not constant, and is influenced by the music schools, their public funding, as well as parents' financial and other conditions related to providing a child with a music education. During the analysed period, the number of students varied between 15 in 2017 and 22 in 2019. The admission scores of applicants admitted to the Programme exceeded the fixed minimum score requirements each year, between 5,66 (the lowest) and 10,69 (the highest) (SER, pp. 24-25).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The websites give clear and accessible information about the admissions procedure. This is confirmed by students, who found all necessary information on websites. Admission selection criteria are fair and appropriate.

Good assistance is provided by VK throughout the process. The number of music study field students is increasing, suggesting programme success and an increase in demand.

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

(1) Factual situation

The procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning are regulated by the Guidelines listed in the SER (p. 25). According to these, subjects and learning outcomes achieved at other higher education institutions and via non-formal education and informal learning can be recognized and included in the study programmes. Also, VK offers the opportunity to be an 'unclassified' student. Those who have studied separate higher college education study subjects and have collected at least 30 credits are given the opportunity to continue their studies according to the higher college education study programme, and to prepare and defend a final thesis.

In 2017-2020, study subjects were recognized and included for 4 students of the Programme: to one of them the subjects were recognized after studies in other Lithuanian universities, and for the remaining three – after studies in Western European countries or in a partner country (Azerbaijan) under an Erasmus + exchange programme. There were no cases of non-inclusion of results during this period (SER, p. 26).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedure for recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is clear and fair. The examples presented in SER demonstrate that these procedures are applied and function well.

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

(1) Factual situation

Information about academic mobility is provided on the main websites of VK and the Faculty, on the VK Facebook page, is delivered to the students by e-mails, during individual meetings and Erasmus + information days, and, for first-year students, during introductory week events.

VK offers multiple academic mobility opportunities: long and short term mobility under Erasmus+ and NordPlus programmes. Erasmus+ student mobility competitions take place twice a year for autumn and spring semester studies. All students of 2nd and 3rd study year are eligible to participate in the competition. Up to now, none of the students expressed a wish to benefit from the NordPlus long-term mobility programme. The number of students taking advantage of short-term mobility is growing, because short-term mobility provides students an opportunity to use mobility advantages without interrupting artistic activities and without losing professional links in the professional market of the home country.

The number of students who took advantage of long-term and short-term mobility varied between 4 in 2017 and 20 in 2019 (SER, pp. 26-27).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution provides good conditions for academic mobility, including recognition, support and promotion. Students indicated having easy and timely access to mobility information. Those who benefit from the mobility programme appreciated their experience, as well as the institutional support which made it possible. Student feedback suggests that VK's mobility system functions well.

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

(1) Factual situation

Student support is regulated by the guidelines listed in SER (p. 27) and covers academic support, full access to resources and facilities, psychological-moral support provided by lecturers and psychologists free of charge, recreational programs and sports activities, and financial and social support.

Financial-social support includes scholarships, allowances, benefits for persons with disabilities, loans, and subsidized housing in a dormitory of VK. Incentive scholarships and allowances are distributed in accordance with the *Regulation of Scholarships and Benefits*. Group leaders and members of the Faculty's Students' Council play an important role in this process.

The Department and the Study Department of the Faculty regularly provide students with information on academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support opportunities, by email and through individual consultations.

Students of the Programme with important socio-financial needs are supported through a rigorously determined State allocation system: neither the Department nor the Faculty can influence the amount of financial support nor the procedures for its allocation (SER, p. 28).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution ensures an adequate and effective level of academic, financial, personal, psychological and social support. The number of students who have received such support and student survey results confirm this. During the site visit, students of the music study field also highlighted the support of their lecturers and overall, a highly supportive academic environment which in turn has a positive impact on the learning process.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

VK offers different means by which information about various activities related to the study process is disseminated: information seminars, signing of a Declaration of a Good Faith, anonymous surveys etc. The Rhythmic Music Department, the Department of Studies, and the Department of Study Organization are at the students' disposal to provide information, counselling and guidance (SER, p. 29).

During site visit discussions, students indicated they received continuous feedback and counselling.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK and student associations provide study information and student counselling in a timely manner and at a sufficient level. Student feedback was positive concerning study information and student counselling actions, indicating they were useful and efficient.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The supportive academic environment contributes to an effective learning process.
2. Applicants' high admission scores indicate the programme's quality and attractiveness.
3. Effective communication among stakeholders enhances the learning process as well as student experience.

4. The music field studies offer good conditions for academic mobility.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

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

(1) Factual situation

The *Popular Music* Programme is a full-time study programme in which the Fall and Spring 20-week semesters (of which 4 each are dedicated to the examination process) ensures an evenly distributed workload. Contact hours do not exceed 8 academic hours per day or 26 hours per week. These are balanced between theoretical lectures and practical classes, of which the latter account for 85% of programme contact work (SER, p. 30).

Study assignments for independent and contact work are distributed evenly and presented by teachers at the beginning of each semester. Mechanisms exist for students to repeat a final examination based on established criteria (SER, p. 31). Teaching methods include individual lectures (*Main instrument, Keyboard and Additional instrument, Solo Programme and written part of Final Projects*) for 21.76% of contact work; small groups for *Improvisation and Ensemble* (30.77% contact work), and two subgroups based on level of complexity or stylistics for *Rhythmics, Music Theory and Solfege, Pop/Jazz Harmony and Arrangement* (47.47% of teachers' contact work) (SER, p. 31).

The *Descriptor of the Study Field of Music* emphasizes the specific nature of music studies requiring individually tailored study processes predicated on individual artistic qualities and desired artistic outcomes (performance, experimentation, critical assessment, musical analysis). Teachers encourage students to apply prior and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to achieve professional learning outcomes. Priority is given to developing creativity. Principal study methods include demonstrations, practical work, critical listening and assessment of audio and video recordings, creative exercises, etc. Creative workshops, master classes, and rehearsals support the study process. Passive (lectures, seminars) and active (discussions, analysis of problems, etc.) teaching methods are used.

During the COVID19 pandemic, studies continued online, and VK introduced interactive remote learning, with video lectures using virtual environments.

Assessment of learning outcomes is regulated by *Description of Assessment Procedure of Academic Achievements*.

In order to ensure the continuous work of students throughout the semester, VK applies cumulative, formative and collegial assessment methods. All performance learning outcomes are evaluated collegially, with the participation of at least lecturers. Upon completion of the music study field programme, graduates can enter second cycle university studies in Lithuanian or foreign institutions of higher education.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The first cycle study programme of the music study field is oriented to practical learning, and helps students develop artistic skills needed to enter the labour market. The study process is

well organised, based on theoretical and practical classes. Students indicated during the site visit how supportive the VK community is, with a strongly dedicated, student-centered teaching staff. The teaching and learning process takes into account student needs and enables students to achieve desired learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

VK has a financial-social support policy, and funds are distributed in accordance with the *Regulation of Scholarships and Benefits*. Socially vulnerable students and those with special needs can apply for scholarships, disability benefits, loans, or subsidized VK dormitory housing. Due to the individualized nature of music field studies, there are many opportunities to adapt studies to students with special needs and to provide them with academic support. These include adaptation of individual and group lecture schedules, attendance at lectures in accordance to an individual study plan; creation of an individual schedule of interim assessments and examinations; adaptation of the study subject (module) syllabus. Additional consultations are provided by teaching staff and anonymous consultations are provided by VK psychologists.

For students with limited mobility, the Faculty is equipped with special stair lifts, handicapped accessible sanitary facilities, and classrooms and common areas adjusted to students with limited mobility. Learning facilities and equipment are also adapted for visually impaired students eg. the screen reader Jaws for Windows with a voice synthesizer that converts text into sound. Increasing the accessibility of studies is supported by EU Structural Funding. VK is continuously adapting its premises and equipment to vulnerable groups and students with special needs.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK has a clear working policy of making its premises and equipment accessible for vulnerable groups and the music study field students with special needs, and provides financial support programmes for these groups. The management of VK is focused on implementation of these processes.

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

(1) Factual situation

Monitoring students' study progress is made under the rules of The Description of Assessment Procedure of Academic Achievements of University of Applied Sciences. There are cumulative, formative and collegial examination models applied for evaluating students' learning progress. Evaluations are shared with students and discussed according to the norms of academic ethics and in accordance with the legal acts regulating personal data protection in the Republic of Lithuania. In order to improve the quality of studies, anonymous student surveys are conducted every semester on each study subject studied in that semester.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Evaluation of students' study progress is made formally and continuously. The overall yearly results of students study progress evaluation are shared with students and discussed individually, which leads to better learning outcomes and nurtures students' self-

responsibility. According to the interviews with the music study field students and graduates this method supports independent, self-directed careers.

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

(1) Factual situation

VK established internal monitoring of the employability and career development of music field studies graduates, managed by the VK Career Centre and Rhythmic Music Department. Graduates of the Programme are provided with assistance for one year after their graduation – upon request, they are allowed to use VK classrooms for their own individual work and joint projects with students of the Programme. 20-30% of graduates take advantage of this option every year. VK graduates are an integral part of Lithuanian popular music culture, and actively participate and win prizes in various festivals, competitions, and TV projects. Some graduates of the Programme continue their studies and obtain master's degrees: 40% of all 2018 graduates, 63% of all 2017 graduates, 55% of all 2016 graduates. Some graduates start postgraduate studies one year after graduation or after a longer break. As most of the graduates are continuing their career on the basis of service agreements, copyright license agreements or other short-term employment contracts, the statistical data provided by Government's Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA) does not reflect the real situation of employability of graduates. According to STRATA, in 2018, 20% of graduates were not employed, in 2017, 50%, and in 2016, 36%. This data does not correspond with the data provided by the Employment Service, which indicates 100% employed in 2018, 93,33% in 2019, and 45,45% in 2020. Low employment in 2020 can be attributed to the pandemic of COVID19. According to data from VK employment monitoring, the majority of graduates in the music study field successfully establish themselves in the professional market as music performers, and the majority start their professional activity already during the study years.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK has developed a graduate career monitoring system which tracks and supports career development. Site visit interviews with graduates, students, employers and social partners indicate VK management and programme stakeholders form a strong, supportive community. During the site visit, the majority of music study field students indicated being already employed with the help of both the VK and social partners. These connections with social partners also provide students opportunities to hone their practical skills in the labour market. Social partners are encouraged to suggest changes in study programme of the music study field where and when they deem it necessary.

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

(1) Factual situation

VK's *Code of Academic Ethics* monitors academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, and includes provisions for the academic community not stipulated by regulatory acts within the Republic of Lithuania, VK employment contracts or procedural documents. The Committee of Academic Ethics, approved by VK's Rector, supervises adherence to the Code, and includes 9 members, 7 appointed by the VK Academic Council and 2 by the VK Students' Council. The activities and composition of the Committee are regulated by the *Rules of Procedure of the Ethics Committee of University of Applied Sciences*. The Code upholds and promotes the most important academic values: justice, honesty, respect, tolerance, professional, scientific and civic responsibility. The most serious violations of academic integrity are considered to be plagiarism, fraud related to assessment of the course unit or its

part, assistance to other persons in performing an unfair academic act, bribery. The environment of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination is monitored and analysed at the Faculty. During the period of the evaluation, there were no breaches of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination identified in the Programme of the music study field (SER, p. 34).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK has formal mechanisms to ensure and monitor academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The entire academic community is engaged in upholding these values and behaviours, thereby ensuring an excellent level of compliance.

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

(1) Factual situation

Appeals and decision making processes relative to study processes are described in the *Regulation on Appeals of the University of Applied Sciences*. Appeals regarding evaluations of study results, examinations and learning outcomes must be made within 3 working days upon announcement of study results. A 5-member Commission of Appeals is then established. Information concerning the right to appeal decisions is provided by the Study Department at introductory sessions. No appeals were filed by Programme students during the evaluation period (SER, p. 35).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints by students regarding the study process at VK are well regulated, clear, and accessible.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. VK's *Popular Music* Programme forms a closely-knit community with strong relations among management, teaching staff, students, graduates and labour market representatives.
2. The *Popular Music* Programme has a significant focus on students and their professional development (monitoring programme and support in establishing individual careers).

(2) Weaknesses: None.

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

(1) Factual situation

The 20 teaching staff include “5 associate professors, established artists (25%); 15 lecturers (75%), one of whom has a doctoral degree. For 13 of them, VK is the main employer institution. 19 subject field lecturers (95%) work for at least 3 years, 15 of them – employed at least for a half-time position (75%). Annex 13 provides a list of teaching staff of the study field indicating the pedagogical and/or scientific degree, the pedagogical work experience, the research interests (listing 3 major works over the last 5 years), the practical work experience in the

subject field, the subjects taught, and the current workload at the HEI.” (SER, p. 35). Thus, 100% of the study field subjects are taught by scientists or recognised artists, and 100% of the staff have more than three years practical experience in the subjects they teach. The teachers/students ratio in 2020 was 3.05 (20 teachers and 61 students). Teachers, who are primarily performing artists, perform numerous concerts in Lithuania and abroad; they conduct master classes, seminars, and workshops, perform on radio and in TV shows, and give public lectures. The members of the teaching staff have won prestigious awards and prizes in national and international competitions.

The average age of the teaching staff is 46.5 years. Younger colleagues are steadily joining the teaching staff. The recruitment procedure is a regulated process (*Description of the Contests to the Professor at Vilniaus Kolegija*, and *Description of the Position on Associate Professor – for lecturers and assistants*). Recruitment selection is the task of the Head of Department, and the Dean of the Faculty makes the proposals for the Rector of VK.

There is a yearly evaluation of teachers’ academic activity; they are evaluated every five years by the Academic Council. The Rector announces the attestations and competitions for the teacher, which are organized and carried out by the Competition and Attestation Commissions. The length of contracts is determined by this procedure. Teaching staff indicated during the site visit that employment and relevant ongoing evaluations at VK are thorough and fairly managed.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The numbers of teaching staff and teachers’ qualifications exceed the legal requirements. Data concerning teaching staff indicates they are experienced, recognized teachers and artists. The small number of teachers allows for close connections with students. Members of the teaching staff are largely creative, practicing artists, and often perform together with students at festivals (jazz festivals and jazz clubs) and at other events. The employment policy of the VK ensures ongoing evaluation of teachers while also offering opportunities to renew staff.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs’ academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

(1) Factual situation

VK participates in the EU-funded Erasmus+ mobility programme as well as the NordPlus and Act in Art networks within the framework Nordic and Baltic higher education. Teachers can participate by joining in artistic projects or teaching. The Faculty supports teacher participation in mobility activities both in Lithuania and abroad. During the last evaluation period, 13 lecturers visited 20 countries to teach (SER, p. 38). Teachers also participate in the European Association of Conservatoires’ *Pop and Jazz Platform*, thereby keeping abreast of pedagogical developments in the field. Additional information concerning international mobility can be seen in Annex 10. There is an international academic exchange program, giving wider opportunities for the teachers for understanding of the international context in the field of popular music. This constitutes an important addition to the music study field study programme’s development.

“International academic exchange created excellent conditions for the development of international music projects: the 100th anniversary concert of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Azerbaijan at Vilnius City Hall (March 23, 2018), programmes at the biannual international festival Birstonas Jazz (in 2020, 2018, 2016) traditional concerts in Vilnius music clubs Tamsta and Jazz Cellar 11 (05/03/2020, 06/03/2019, 07/03/2018, 27/04/2017).” (SER 3/5, 158).

Teachers indicate that their own personal international contacts play a key role in VK international programmes. Additionally, many VK graduates of music field studies work abroad, and teacher connections with them in turn enhances the mobility opportunities outside of Lithuania.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The international nature of pop and jazz music and the need to lead active careers both in Lithuania and beyond makes the development of international mobility and networks indispensable, and within this, teachers' own personal networks contribute to making this a success. The Erasmus+ and Nordplus programmes, which allow for both performances and teaching, contribute significantly to teachers' ongoing professional development. VK's support and engagement in ensuring that all teaching staff participate in international mobility programmes and projects as well as participating in Europe-wide platforms allows for continued professional development and an up-to-date pedagogical programme.

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

(1) Factual situation

There is an action plan for the development of the teachers' competencies. Teacher training related to didactics, distance learning, and research competencies are organized by the VK. The Department of Rhythmic Music assists the teachers in their self-development. The VK establishes, approves and organises ongoing training activities for all teachers. These include developing computer literacy, attending conferences, seminars, and master-classes in Lithuania and abroad. Teachers indicated during the site visit how important opportunities for working with foreign colleagues was in helping them to learn new methodologies of performance and didactics. The new lecturers begin as assistants, advance to the status of lecturer, and have the possibility of pursuing a PhD degree.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK offers a variety of opportunities to teachers of music field studies to develop professionally. The individualised training plan can focus on computer literacy, didactics, performance, and can be realised within the institution or through international conferences, exchanges, and joint projects.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The close connections between students and teachers of music field studies, and the opportunities given for each group to interact with each other (joint concerts, projects, etc.) are beneficial to both students and teachers.
2. VK' strong international mobility programme contributes to supporting teachers' professional academic, professional and artistic development.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

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

(1) Factual situation

Adapting VK's *Popular Music* Programme needs to a Soviet era building continues to be a priority, as attested by the recent soundproofing of classrooms and noise-silencing of the ventilation system, both recommended in the last external evaluation. Additional recommendations included more practice rooms and a recording studio. As a result, 9 additional classrooms with pianos and 6 without have been installed, for a total of 30 classrooms available to students between 6 a.m. and midnight, up from 16 hours a day in 2019. An agreement has been signed with the Mazvydas National Library, which has a professional sound recording studio, and recording internships are held there (Site visit meeting with Senior Management, SER, p. 43).

Pianos are regularly serviced by a music technician, and music instruments acquired in 2019-2020 totalled 32,134 Euros. Computerized workplaces total 130, and in the last 3 years 35 additional computers were acquired (SER, p.40). Stationary multimedia devices and portable devices are installed in classes, training rooms and conference halls. Nevertheless, the Panel's site visit meeting with students suggests that certain areas of the building do not enjoy internet access, and computer hardware appears insufficient.

VK provides handicapped accessible stair lifts, and classrooms and common areas are also accessible; state-of-the-art equipment supports the visually impaired. These improvements have been made through the project "Increasing the Accessibility of Studies," co-financed by EU structural funds through the State Study Fund (SER, p.41).

The VK Library is home to a central library supported by 7 faculty libraries: the *Popular Music* Programme library represents 33,000 documents, including books, sheet music and audio documents. Requests for relevant books and sheet music published in Lithuania are systematically purchased, with a focus on music history, contemporary vocal and instrumental music, music theory, composers and performers, music management, and audio technology. Remote and live training as well as documentation in library skills and research methodology are offered, and all students can access digital sources both in the reading room and remotely (SER, p.41). However, the chief librarian indicated during the Panel's site visit that the library is unable to collect subject specific data as to library usage.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK's *Popular Music* Programme continues to upgrade facilities as needed, purchasing and monitoring instrument and equipment needs, supporting computer purchases and additional relevant library resources. Facilities are largely handicapped accessible, and EU structural funds will continue to support these improvements.

Physical, informational, and financial resources are adequate to effectively deliver the study process.

The Panel recommends that VK continue to support acquisition of computer hardware, and that internet access be guaranteed throughout the building. It further encourages the library to develop tools to track subject-specific use of electronic documents to better target programme needs.

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

(1) Factual situation

Long-term and short-term strategic plans (1 to 5 years) assess resource upgrading, considering student numbers and state funding. Study resources also benefit from funds allocated to VK by the Ministry of Education's R & D activities allotment. Sound equipment is upgraded annually, and 2020 saw the purchase of 5 pianos YAMAXA and a baby grand piano Yamaha. Each of the last four years has seen music equipment upgrades ranging in value from 3199 Euros (2018) to 10734 Euros (2019) (SER, p.42).

Since the last evaluation, classrooms have been soundproofed and noise silencers installed in the ventilation system. 9 classrooms with pianos and 6 classrooms without pianos have been added, and opening hours have been extended by 2 hours/day. A new partnership with M. Mazvydas National Library now offers access to a professional sound recording studio; the *SER* indicates this may be a temporary solution and suggests using annual research and development funding from the Ministry of Finance to install a sound laboratory (SER, p.43).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Facilities are upgraded in accordance with short-term and long-term strategic plans, student numbers, and State funding. The *SER* details specific resources and equipment purchases made in the last few years. VK has responded to recommendations in the last evaluation by soundproofing classrooms and installing noise silencers in the ventilation system; the number of classrooms has been increased, and availability has been extended by two hours each day. A new local partnership provides access to a professional sound recording studio.

The Panel recommends that VK integrates into its resource planning upgrading of internet access throughout the building and acquisition of additional hardware to ensure optimal delivery of the first cycle music field studies. Installing a professional sound laboratory on-site would doubtless enhance the programme offer significantly.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Facilities and resources (instruments, equipment, digital resources) are sufficient to deliver the first cycle music field studies and are monitored and upgraded on a regular basis. The library is well furnished and acquires digital resources, databases, scores and audio and visual documents as requested by teachers and students.
2. Planning and upgrading of resources is integrated into short-term and long-term financial planning, taking into consideration available funds, student enrolment, and specific funding opportunities, as is the case for handicapped access.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient IT system and infrastructure, including inadequate internet access in learning facilities.
2. Lack of tools to track subject-specific use of Library digital resources.

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

(1) Factual situation

VK has a comprehensive internal quality assurance system which, since 2015, has integrated European standards and guidelines in its quality assurance mechanisms (SER, p. 46).

The *Popular Music Study Programme Committee's* function is to coordinate the study plan and its content, keep abreast of labour market needs and other relevant issues. The Committee takes into account survey results, international trends, and solicits social partners and employers regarding current professional developments. The Rhythmic Music Department and Study Programme Committee are responsible for updating the music study field programme curriculum. Surveys conducted on a regular basis provide feedback from VK students, non-classified students, graduates, lecturers, employees; personal interviews and roundtable discussions complete these. These are stipulated in the *Description of the Procedure Using Students' Feedback on Improving the Quality of Studies at Vilniaus Kolegija* (SER, p. 44).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The formal feedback mechanisms of the internal quality management system are well structured and on a par with European standards. They allow for ongoing feedback from all the stakeholders (students, teachers, employers). The roles of the *Popular Music Study Programme Committee* and the Rhythmic Music Department are well defined. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure regular surveys, and these are completed by interviews and roundtable discussions.

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

(1) Factual situation

Social stakeholders – students and other social partners - are involved in the supervision of internal quality assurance through their participation in the Programme Committee, the VK Faculty Council, and in the Faculty and VK competition commissions. They participate in decision making relative to evaluations and improvements, choice of pedagogical staff, and issues related to study quality assurance.

As members of the Programme Committee, social stakeholders attend biannual meetings to discuss revision of study plans and content, labour market needs, learning outcomes, proposals for improvements. The music study field programme evaluation process is made with the participation of the social stakeholders and the employers. *“After the evaluation of the final (theses) projects, the chairman of the commission presents a report indicating strengths and weaknesses of the learning outcomes demonstrated by the students of the Programme. The process and the results of the defence of final theses (projects), suggestions and remarks of employers and students are regularly discussed at the meetings of the Department and meeting of the Programme Committee, recommendations for improving the quality of Programme and preparation of the final projects are adopted by consensus”* (SER, p. 44).

According to the *Description of Contests to the Office of Professors at Vilnius Kolegija*, social partners account for one third of the VK/Faculty Competition and Attestation Commission, in addition to which one member is delegated by VK faculty/student representation. This allows for participation by all stakeholders in recruitment of teaching staff.

Teaching quality is assessed through student surveys; results are analysed in department meetings so as to improve study content and quality, and a summary is forwarded to the Faculty Competition and Attestation Competition as part of the teaching recruitment process.

Numerous and regular student activities with social partners ensures ongoing dialogue, cooperation and feedback.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

VK has efficient procedures in place to guarantee a well-balanced and comprehensive involvement of all its stakeholders (students, lecturers, employers and social partners). These play an important role in internal quality assurance supervision, and the SER details the many ways in which the participation of these stakeholders in turn feeds into evaluation and improvement of study processes and outcomes. Input from students, employers, social partners, and lecturers is sought through regular surveys, interviews and discussions after which results are analysed and disseminated.

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

(1) Factual situation

Information on programme implementation is gathered by the Faculty's Department, the Study Department, and Study Organization Department: this is in turn provided to the Programme Committee. This committee is responsible for the programme's implementations and determines further improvements to the programme of the music study field. These improvements are reflected in the self-evaluations, and the report is submitted for the Vice-Dean of the Faculty.

Due to a very small student population, the SER indicates it is thus difficult to ensure anonymity or statistically reliable results. As a result, student opinions are sought individually or in small groups. The Department organises verbal sessions for self-reflections for the students. This system has proved to be most effective (SER, p. 45). Opinions are then passed on to the Programme Committee, which implements study improvements.

Several examples detailed in the SER demonstrate how feedback from different stakeholders has led to concrete music study field programme changes: reduction to 3 credits of *Foreign Language*, with *Professional English* offered as an alternative; creation of an elective on *Psychology of Performing Arts* to respond to social partners' concerns; also responding to social partners, new elements typical to popular music were integrated into *Pop/Jazz Harmony and Arrangement* (SER, p. 45). Student feedback regarding study quality and the organisation of studies is taken into consideration by the Department and Programme Committees, and appropriate decisions are then presented to students and other stakeholders.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Effective procedures are in place to collect information on music field studies and to implement changes where necessary. The SER details the responsibilities of relevant departments and committees, and demonstrates how opinions of students and other

stakeholders are regularly solicited and well integrated into ongoing modifications of the study programme of music study field.

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

(1) Factual situation

Students and graduates are surveyed regularly regarding the programme, as indicated in the *Description of the Procedure Using Students' Feedback on Improving the Quality of Studies at Vilniaus Kolegija*.

Teaching quality is also evaluated by students through surveys conducted by the Department each semester. Results are discussed individually with each teacher, and subsequently presented and discussed during meetings with the Dean. Summaries of feedback reports are published both on the VK and Faculty websites. Where needed, additional surveys are carried out, as was the case in April 2020, when a student survey assessed their needs for remote studies during the pandemic.

The SER indicates a decrease in student participation in surveys, although it also indicates surveys over the last three years indicate satisfaction of the students with information provided, quality of studies, and its relevance to their future profession.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Effective mechanisms exist to collect student feedback relative to all aspects of the music field studies, including assessment of teaching quality. A detailed procedure describes the way in which feedback is then individually discussed with teachers, in larger meetings with the Dean, and disseminated on VK and Faculty websites. The system also makes allowances for additional surveys to be made in specific instances as needed. Student participation in surveys has declined in recent years, and VK is sensitive to the questions this raises as to representativity of this data. The Panel recommends VK consider mechanisms to incentivise students to complete formal surveys.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Effective internal quality mechanisms, on a par with European guidelines and standards, guarantee participation in the programme of music study field evaluation and development by all stakeholders (students, teachers, social partners).
2. The small size of the music study field students in the programme has led VK to compensate surveys with in-depth interviews and round table discussions.
3. VK responds in a timely manner to recommendations made through its internal quality assurance mechanisms.

(2) Weaknesses: None.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

1. The first cycle study programme *Popular Music* offers unique industry focused studies, exploiting interdisciplinary opportunities with the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies, and offering a proto-professional training environment which ensures the development of outstanding popular music artists.
2. Teachers of music field studies are active, renowned national and international artists, and they readily share their experience and networks, collaborating regularly with students.
3. Internal quality mechanisms offer an exceptional model, with efficient mechanisms for all stakeholders (students, teachers, social partners), facilitating rapid and meaningful ameliorations of the first cycle study programme of the music study field.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broaden international partnerships with higher education institutions (in the EU and beyond) that offer popular music as a practical specialism.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase investments to address IT infrastructure needs, and guarantee internet access throughout the facilities.
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen the mentoring system through specialist career mentors from outside the institution.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	None
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase opportunities for ongoing professional development to develop music study field teachers' pedagogical skills.
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase funding sources to facilitate installation of a new sound laboratory on the premises, thus reducing VK's reliance on an external partner.
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Panel recommends VK consider mechanisms to incentivise music study field students to complete formal surveys.

*If the study field is going to be given negative evaluation (non-accreditation) instead of RECOMMENDATIONS main **arguments for negative evaluation** (non-accreditation) must be provided together with a **list of “must do” actions** in order to assure that students admitted before study field’s non-accreditation will gain knowledge and skills at least on minimum level.

VI. SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the findings of the expert panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report and interviews conducted with the institution's administration (senior management, faculty administration staff), staff responsible for writing the SER, teaching staff as well as stakeholders (students, alumni, employers and social partners). The evaluation gives a positive evaluation to the implementation of the first cycle music field studies (*Popular Music*) at the Vilniaus Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences (hereafter VK). Six out of seven areas were assessed as very good or excellent, and one was assessed as good.

The *Popular Music* programme at Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences, the only such programme in Lithuania, offers an appropriate blend of specialist musical learning in various genres of 'pop' music with a broad theoretical underpinning. Industry relevant studies for the potential freelance artist support the practical work of student musicians, and VK offers excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary activities through its Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries. A professional learning environment with strong industry connections and personalised student trajectories ensure the development of unique popular artists.

The first cycle study programme benefits from remarkable connections with the music industry in Lithuania and beyond. High profile national and international artistic opportunities are provided to students, thus allowing them to gain professional experience of the labour market and develop strong professional networks prior to graduation.

Teachers are active, well recognized practicing artists who bring their national and international networks and experience to the music study field programme. The national and international cultural and educational partners with which VK co-operates are strategically aligned, support teachers' professional development and mobility, and provide remarkable opportunities for students to engage in varied and extensive high quality artistic activities. VK provides strong support for teaching staff to participate in international mobility programmes as well as in relevant European platforms, ensuring their continued professional development and an up-to-date pedagogical programme.

Students of the music study field benefit from clear and thorough information regarding all aspects of admission and study, and this, coupled with VK's strong academic, financial and social support, creates a positive academic environment. High admission scores confirm the attractiveness and quality of the programme. Good conditions are provided for academic mobility, including information, recognition, and support.

The management structure is exemplary. Responsibilities are clearly delineated: the formal feedback mechanisms of the internal quality management system are well structured and on a par with European standards, allowing for ongoing feedback from all the stakeholders (students, teachers, employers). Efficient procedures guarantee comprehensive involvement of stakeholders, whose evaluations feed back into and improve study processes and outcomes.

The infrastructure for teaching and learning is upgraded as needed, be it through purchasing and monitoring instrument and equipment needs, supporting computer hardware and software purchases, laboratory equipment or additional relevant library resources. Facilities are largely handicapped accessible. Physical, technological and financial resources allocated are sufficient to ensure effective learning on the music field studies.

Expert panel signature:

Prof. Dr. Martin Harlow (panel chairperson)