



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of Nutrition

at Vilnius University of Applied sciences

Expert panel:

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5. Miss Pegi Pavletić, *students' representative.*

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Dietetics</i>
State code	6531GX014
Type of studies	Higher Education College Studies
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 Health Sciences / Qualification of Dietitian
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary Education
Registration date of the study programme	26-06-2002

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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 **10 May, 2021**.

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Ms Pegi Pavletic, student 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.	Material resources - video
2.	

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

The mission of the VK is to train practice-oriented specialists with professional higher education in a range of study fields including health, which aims to meet the economic and social needs of the Vilnius region and Lithuania as a whole. Nutrition is an important field in Lithuania, for various reasons. The programme was formulated to take into account the State progress strategy "Lithuania's Progress Strategy" "Lithuania 2030", highlighting key areas for progress: smart society, clean environment, smart economy, smart governance. One of the main directions of the strategy is to prolong productive and healthy life expectancy, improving the training of healthy lifestyle skills for the population, including the improvement of nutrition habits and the management of harmful health factors (excessive alcohol consumption, smoking). Hence, management of health concerns of the population and also on a national and regional level, well-trained specialists in this field are in demand. The benefit of graduates' involvement in the treatment of diet related diseases and in public health and disease prevention has become more apparent from clinical research and developments. This has resulted in an increased number of students being trained and the number of Colleges offering training in this field in the last 10 years.

The College remains committed to delivering the dietetic study programme. The College is well established and notably ranks first in national rankings and has received various awards. Three times (in 2005, 2007 and 2017) the VK was nominated "for achievements" by the Vilnius Chamber of Commerce.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Nutrition_study field and second cycle at Vilnius University of Applied sciences is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	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	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	28

*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 study programme in the study field of Nutrition corresponds to the public and labour market needs. The programme is executed and systematically updated following the national and international strategic documents and plans governing the policy and development of nutrition specialists for a range of roles. The aims and outcomes of the programmes are based on the objectives set out in Government legislation and informed by the European Federation of Dietetics Academic curriculum standards 2018.

As a result of monitoring the public and labour market needs, the organisers of the study programmes update the programme content and learning outcomes accordingly.

The existing coherence between the programme content and qualification awarded enables the specialists prepared under the Nutrition study field to work in the health, food industry, kindergarten and sport nutrition sector. The graduates have the possibility to seek higher university education degrees by studying at universities in Lithuania and across Europe.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the learning outcomes development activity undertaken. One action from the previous review was to improve the learning outcomes in order to engage further professionalism within the field and to increase employment opportunities. Evidence was provided that professional activity had been enhanced. Other actions from the previous review were to increase involvement of the United Nations Global Contact initiatives and this has enhanced the range of projects offered. Involvement with the EFAD organisation has further assisted development of learning outcomes since the actions received from the last official review.

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 SER and meetings with stakeholders outlined how the programme aims and learning outcomes have been developed to conform with the HEI strategy.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the learning outcomes fitting with the College strategy. VK is an accredited state higher education institution of the Republic of Lithuania, which provides higher education college studies, elaborates applied research, experimental development, and professional art. VK was established in 2000.

The mission of the VK is to train practice-oriented specialists with professional higher education in a range of study fields including health, ultimately to meet the economic and social needs of the Vilnius region and Lithuania as a whole. The academic staff has a clear understanding of the value of aligning the learning outcomes.

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

(1) Factual situation

The aims and expected learning outcomes under assessment and provided under the study programme has been formed using five structural elements (knowledge and application thereof, research abilities, special skills, social skills, and personal skills), are in line with the Descriptor of the study field of nutrition and requirements applicable to the first-cycle college studies. The level of complexity of the learning outcomes conforms to the level 6 qualification requirements under the European and Lithuanian Qualifications Framework for higher education. The studies are focused on preparation for professional occupation in the nutrition field.

By assuring the close link between the theoretical materials delivered under the subjects (nutrition, science, food science, psychology) and practical classes as well as applying flexible (including remote) teaching and learning methods and techniques, the subjects studied play an important role in achievement of the programme aims and successful implementation of the learning outcomes. The content and description of the study subjects are in line with the requirements applicable to the college and first-cycle studies, and the programme volume is sufficient in view of the expected learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the evidence of the mapping of learning outcomes to the requirements. The information is clear and accessible for students and other stakeholders. Academic staff and students were positive about the alignment in place.

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

According to the SER, the learning outcomes of each subject take into account the results of the study programme and are mutually coordinated. The learning outcome of a specific subject provides necessary knowledge and skills required to achieve a certain result of the study programme.

The appropriate link between the study programme outcomes and subject learning outcomes has been reflected in the self-assessment report while the conformity of the teaching, learning

and assessment methods with the learning outcomes has been described in greater detail during the discussions with experts. Assessment methods include case studies, practicals, essays and exams and are aligned to the learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the evidence of the compatibility. Traditional, active, research methods of study and assessment were reported in the SER: traditional and interactive lectures, debates, discussions, case studies, simulations, practice diaries, role-plays, reflection, demonstration of practical skills, report preparation and presentation, observation, activity analysis, comparative analysis, project method, brainstorming, mind or concept map, literature analysis, problem-based learning, modeling, information search. Students were aware of the annual evaluation cycle.

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 SER described the content of the programmes consisting of general study subjects, subjects of study fields and special subjects. These included Health law and management, practice of nutritional assessment, practice of nutritional care and practice of menu arrangement, which are all highly relevant, applied areas. Academic staff reported being committed to this type of totality evaluation.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced by evidence of the curriculum information provided. The subjects and modules are positioned in the programmes consistently, the subjects and content/topics thereof do not overlap. The analysis of the logical relations and sequencing of the study subjects has shown coherent positioning of the study subjects by semesters. The subjects which provide fundamental knowledge, understanding and abilities forming the foundation for further studies and research are delivered in the first semesters. The modules delivered during subsequent semesters build on the knowledge and abilities gained during the previous modules. This enables the students to successfully achieve the learning outcomes.

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

The SER outlined how the study programme has been designed in such a way that during the study period students covered all the required subject content. Advanced students can study according to an individual study schedule after the first semester upon a motivated request. The individual schedule is approved by the Dean of the Faculty. Each student, studying in the *Dietetics* study programme, has the opportunity to choose three subjects to be studied together with students of other study programs ongoing in the Faculty. Subjects studied at

other higher education institutions may, at the request of students, be credited as optional subjects without content restrictions. The final evaluation of the *Dietetics* study programme in the field of nutrition is the final work and there is a choice of topic available.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the detailed curriculum information provided. The dietetics programme requires study of core curriculum including nutritional science, clinical nutrition and food science. The choice of modules provided in addition to this is sufficient. Close relationships with stakeholders support the field studies effectively.

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

(1) Factual situation

Theses are prepared in accordance with internal papers of the college. Students are acquainted with the procedure for the preparation of theses and methodological recommendations approved by the Study Programme Committees.

Theses are evaluated by the Qualification Commission, which is made up of at least five members, including representatives of social partners. The commission may also include lecturers from other higher education institutions. Reviewers with pedagogical and/or production experience are appointed by Order of the Director of the College.

The defence of theses is evaluated by each member of the Qualification Commission separately. The final grade of the thesis is determined in a closed meeting of the Qualification Commission, after evaluating the grade of each member of the commission, the supervisor of the thesis and the reviewer. Each lecturer supervises a small group of students simultaneously. This process complies with the field and cycle requirements. The SER provided a list of theses undertaken.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator was evidenced from the theses data provided. The process is comprehensive and complies with all requirements. Lists of recent topics indicate that the research areas are up to date and relevant for the students learning and development. The assessment of the thesis is overseen externally for full transparency.

Strengths of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The learning outcomes of the programme are comprehensive and support development of graduates with both nutritional science and clinical nutrition expertise.
2. A varied range of theses are completed by students providing useful research outcomes to further inform and develop the teaching and practice of the graduates.

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

During the evaluation period, several international and national projects have been launched or were previously implemented, mostly within Erasmus+ and the COST programme. The projects addressed existing challenges in the healthcare and catering sector. Several projects focused on student and lecturer competencies development. Lecturers have published an adequate number of publications (14) in the field of nutrition studies in scientific journals and conference proceedings and have actively participated at (11) international and national scientific-practical conferences.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. Based on site visit it was evident that the expertise of individual faculty members is taken into account and their strengths are utilized at the university level. Teaching staff also feel the support that comes from the university level for their activities, both through the provision of tools and resources and through verbal support. The research groups and priority research areas for the period 2020-2022 have been defined and will focus on food production and food safety as well as nutritional assessment of some population groups: pre-school and school children and the elderly. However, the key performance indicators should be also determined and monitored. For instance, number of publications, number of released projects, citation and indexing etc.

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

(1) Factual situation

The lecturers actively participated in national and international scientific conferences. The accumulated knowledge and results from scientific research are constantly incorporated into the courses of the study program, taking into account the latest scientific and technological achievements. Based on the site visit, however, students would like to see more use of new technologies and approaches. More use should be made of digital technologies during the educational process. From SER, a very good example is training students to work with weight management software to analyze clients eating habits and create meal plans.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. There is a very good collaboration network with social partners and alumni, constituting the base for the future development of study directions. Research topics covered a relevant, broad range and up to dated fields relating to nutrition and dietetics.

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

About 10% of Nutrition students were involved in applied research activities. Their work has resulted in the publication of six articles in peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings. Students have participated as presenters at national and international conferences and this provides useful experience.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. Employees are aware of the importance of the role of practical work in the development of students scientific knowledge and the dissemination of scientific results through publication of articles with their own students, especially in scientific journals with a high impact factor.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Well established and effective research projects and collaborations, resulting in a commendable number of peer reviewed scientific publications.
2. Researchers maintain formal and informal collaborations with research groups from abroad.
3. The number of involved students within research activities/projects increased in last period and is projected to further increase in the future.

(2) Weaknesses/Areas of improvement:

1. Participation in international funding programs should be more encouraged since scientific research is important, a clear strategy should be defined showing the expected income in the coming period. It is therefore a strong recommendation to adopt a research funding strategy to ensure the sustainability of scientific research.
2. It is recommended to include as many new technologies as possible in the curriculum to increase student interest in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle

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

The admission criteria are clearly stated, as well as the student selection process based on their competitive score and the enrollment process. Information on admission requirements, competitive score and support services are available to the students online, through the webpage of the institution.

The teachers participate in many different events to attract students. Before the pandemic, students were able to meet the faculty representatives and be introduced to the programme. Now in the virtual environment, the same approach is applied to an extent. The number of students interested in the programme exceeds the number of placements in the programme (approximately 2 applicants per 1 spot in the programme from a total of 40 spots available).

An Open Day, Career Day and Summer programme are organized to attract students, and the study exhibition is held. Word of mouth plays an important role in attracting students as well. The studies are only in Lithuanian language. International students can join only for part-time studies. They often have internships at the faculty and are members of the Erasmus+ programme. There is a Lithuanian language course that full-time students can take.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies fully with the indicator. The admission criteria is very clear, however it would be good to further develop admission criteria for underrepresented student groups. It was noted during the interviews that the studies are available only in Lithuanian and that student internships can be undertaken in English, however, courses are not internationalized in practice. Generally, students were quite pleased with their admission procedures, and they consider them well developed.

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 recognition of higher education qualification acquired abroad is carried out by the Study Quality Assessment Center (SKVC) in Lithuania. At the student's request, learning outcomes, obtained in both Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions, can be credited by the submission of official documents to the Dean of the Vilnius University of Applied Sciences. Crediting history is available online to the students. Recognition of prior learning is in place. There are no master-level degrees in nutrition, however the students can proceed to take up a master's degree in management, or they can choose to do their master's degree abroad.

Students have the possibility to recognize their formal competencies and many are happy to use this opportunity. They can account for 75% of the studies at most, but they have never had such examples. In regards to non-formal competencies, students can participate in different initiatives and projects organized by their study programme. Students get certificates of participation in these activities. There are a number of qualification development courses offered by the study programme that are updated based on student feedback and needs. Today, there is a need for short 2 hour courses (infection control, ethics), and the interest for them is quite high. The course changes are being introduced regularly.

However, students do not know how their competencies are recognized in practice at the end of their education, when obtaining a degree.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, since requirements for admission are clearly described and accessible to potential students. Academic staff were clear about the procedure but it had not been required very often.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

Mobility is assured mainly through the Erasmus+ programme, for which promotional activities are organized by the Vilnius University of Applied Sciences at the beginning of each semester.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. However, more mobility options need to be explored, in terms of collaborations with foreign higher education institutions and other programmes available, to diversify the offer. In the Self-Evaluation Report, it is visible that the Erasmus program is prioritized when it comes to mobility and mobility is highly promoted among students within this program.

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

Consultations for students are held individually with the administrative officers and the teaching staff. The Social Partners cooperate with the institution through the Department representatives, and offer consultations and information to the students.

Students' representatives are participating in the governing boards of the Vilnius University of Applied Sciences.

Financial support to the students is available through the Faculty Scholarship Fund and the Rector Scholarship Fund directly. All students are granted dorm placements as well. Other financial support is external, from governmental sources.

Psychological counselling is available to all students.

Before the study starts, on the second day that the students come, they are offered an introductory meeting that explains to them the documents required for their studies, the study plan, the University services etc. The department head also introduces the subjects, teachers, labs etc. The students are also introduced to the library services. From the students' perspective, the admission process is very helpful and accessible and the consultations are useful.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. Even during the outbreak of COVID-19, services were available to the students, and the institution provided their counseling services in a virtual mode. During the interview students mentioned that they have good support from the administration staff and the study program has improved in the past years.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

Admitted students are provided with constant and consistent academic and other support under their study programme. Particular attention is given to first-year students who are introduced with the study organisation, library facilities, scholarship and career opportunities.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. Students' representatives should present their activities to the students aside from the student-mentor scheme. Additionally, support services available to the students need to be introduced as well.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strength:

1. Consistency in providing a relevant range of services to the students

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Diversifying the offer of opportunities for students from all backgrounds. Even though many activities for students are available (in terms of scholarships, mobility opportunities etc.), there is still a potential to grow and to offer them more options per opportunity

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

During the visit, as well as in the SER documentation presented, it was evident that the teaching process is organised taking into account the valid legal acts and other documents of the Republic of Lithuania regulating the study process. There is a clear balance between nutrition, food science and the process of training a dietitian's specialty with clear connections with hospitals. There is an adequate balance between the needs of the students and the offer in order to achieve the learning outcomes with a clear schedule and planification.

Teachers are in charge to assign the specific work to be developed by the student. Apart from theoretical lectures, the methodology consists of a critical reading of scientific articles and preparation of presentations based on those articles. It also includes a problem-based teaching model, which analyzes the situation related to the subject taught, searching for information using databases subscribed to by the College; preparation and presentation of projects on proper nutrition for people of all ages and health conditions. Analysis of a specific clinical situation and preparation of recommendations; preparation and presentation of a training plan to individuals, their relatives or groups in society; assessment of the relevance of ethical principles in the modern health care system; preparation of technological cards for dishes; application of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system requirements; preparation of planned and individual menus; preparation of nutritional care plans, evaluation of dietary recommendations and diet effectiveness.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, due to the evidence provided that the students meet the learning outcomes. Academic staff and students were positive about the learning process. All the materials are appropriately designed and monitored taking into account the needs of the students and enabling them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. However,

students do note that there is a considerable need for modernizing the approach to teaching and learning- they want to receive field-relevant knowledge first-hand from the experts instead of doing independent research.

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

(1) Factual situation

There are several programs (University and Ministry) to ensure the access of students from socially vulnerable groups receive help and attention. As it is stated in SER (page 23), students from socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs receive consultations on the accessibility of studies at the Study Department of the Faculty, especially for those student visual, hearing, movement or other disabilities, where flexible forms of assessment are applied, adapted to the possibilities of these persons (e. g., by increasing the font of examination tasks, extending the time for the assessment of study achievements, etc.). Once the student informs about his/her special needs, the Study Department of the Faculty informs the lecturers about it and initiates the preparation of recommendations as needed. The necessary tools for the assessment of study achievements are provided and the adaptation of the place of assessment of study achievements is ensured. One of the principles of study achievements' assessment, defined in the Description of Study Achievements' Assessment, is the inclusion of assessment, which means that assessment must not only measure the level of achievement of the same learning outcome but also be flexibly adapted to different (individual) learning needs (disability, pace, learning style, etc.); alternatives to assessment methods must provide each student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate the level at which he or she has achieved learning outcomes. When organizing the activities of the academic community, all members are provided with opportunities to participate in them, taking into account the health status of students, financial opportunities, social obligations, etc.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Taking into account the information provided in SER, students from socially vulnerable groups and special needs are supported from the benefits available throughout the Republic and at the College level. Students reported being aware of this support and provision even if it was not relevant to them personally. For instance, it is stated each year of study, VK have 2-3 individuals who take advantage of these individualized conditions.

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

The study program is changed flexibly, taking into account the documents of the Republic, the needs of the social partners and the observations of students. Taking into consideration the entire programme, the review is undertaken at least once a year. If the legislation changes, or based on the students' feedback, it changes more frequently throughout the year.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The indicator is met since the study program is changed flexibly, taking into account the documents of the Republic, the needs of the social partners and the observations of students. The stakeholders were positive about and aware of the monitoring process in place.

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

(1) Factual situation

There is a clear connection with clinical dietitians, collaborating actively with hospitals which enhance the perspectives to employ graduates. There are different programs to evaluate the employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator as evidenced by the graduate data. Students spoke of having contacts with alumni and their positive anticipation of future employment. For instance, at it is stated in SER over the last year the percentages of employment varied from 60% (2018) to 80% (2017 and 2019) of employment, with a variable percentage in the public sector organization/civil service (35,3 % (2018) to 70% (2019)) or private sector.

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

(1) Factual situation

The policies are in agreement with the programs developed in the Republic of Lithuania. Moreover, each student gets acquainted with and signs the "Student Integrity Declaration", in which he/she freely and consciously undertakes to comply with the provisions of the VK Code of Academic Ethics, which regulates ethical behavior. Provisions of tolerance and non-discrimination are also embedded in the Procedure of Studies: students have the right to freely express their thoughts and views; to receive social and material support following the established procedure, students with disabilities can report for their studies in alternative ways.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicators as evidenced by the examples provided. There is a specific document regulating the academic integrity of the VK is the Code of Academic Ethics. Academic ethics is overseen by the Academic Ethics Committee.

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

The procedures are robust and students are aware of them. They are updated when required, taking into consideration the entire programme, at least once a year. If the legislation changes, or based on the students', teachers or stakeholders feedback and needs change can be implemented more frequently. Moreover, there is a specific procedure for submitting and considering appeals in VK "VK Regulations of Appeals".

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator as evidenced by staff and student engagement and awareness. The processes are clearly described and appropriate. There have been no appeals or complaints about the study process in the study field of nutrition in the last three years.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Flexible model which allows timely change of the study program in order to adapt to external requirements.
2. Excellent conditions for learning such as library facilities and number of books and journals available

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

Appropriately qualified staff deliver the programme. There is a clear multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity between all the teachers. Professionals coming from the hospitals have a wide experience in clinical nutrition. In addition other teachers have expert knowledge of food technology, public health, and the nutrition of healthy individuals. The study programme is implemented by 18 lecturers who work continuously in the institution for at least half of the full-time position and at least 3 years. They represent around 90 % of all lecturers teaching field subjects in the study programme in the field of Nutrition. Taking into account the pedagogical and scientific degree, 4 (22,2 %) are associate professors – doctors of sciences (PhD) and 14 (77,8 %) lecturers work in the Dietetics study program, one from them is a Ph.D. student. The average length of employees' pedagogical work is 21,3 years, and the average practical experience in the field of teaching is 25,3 years. The pedagogical and practical experience of teachers is directly related to their pedagogical mastery, i.e. the ability to communicate, collaborate with students and colleagues, to combine students' expectations with the results of the study program, to apply flexible study methods to students of different abilities, to select appropriate subject information, to develop methodological material, to participate in applied research and experimental development.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, as evidenced by the range of staff employed on the programme. Academic staff were able to describe their input to the overall training provided. For instance, 12 subject teachers in the field of Nutrition conducted applied research, read reports, and published articles in publications under their research interests. Five lecturers participated in organizing scientific-practical conferences for nutritionists, 4 – carried out project activities. Two lecturers were engaged in consulting and expert activities.

Four lecturers in the field of Nutrition supervised the students' commissioned applied research.

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

Mobility data was provided within the SER. Based on discussions with academics, it is clear the University of applied sciences offers a great amount of opportunities for mobility, with their own funding, although it is not clearly stated if there is any specific program for funding fellowships. The European experience is invaluable, and there are opportunities for dietitians to become involved in mobility opportunities. Mobility is promoted, and meetings are taking place to assure this. It was acknowledged that teacher mobility in practice has some challenges. Apart from mobility between universities (national and international), there are several possibilities to choose from. For instance, there are professional opportunities together with the partners from the industry. There are 7 Faculties, and experience exchange between Faculties is encouraged and supported. Unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic the mobility was limited, but academics used working remotely to connect with other institutions.

(3) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator since mobility is promoted to a great extent. Teachers provided examples of mobility undertaken. During the pandemic virtual contact and exchange has continued. Moreover, some examples of subjects teachers in the study field of Nutrition who have gone for academic work abroad over the last 3 courses are detailed in SER. For instance, they attended conferences or enjoyed short stays in different countries (Germany, Estonia, The Netherlands, etc.).

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

(1) Factual situation

At the end of each semester, teacher evaluation is conducted, and staff get the results of this feedback, and readjust if something has not been working properly. After each subject an assessment is done. Yearly reports are prepared by the professors, in all subjects they teach, methodology used etc. Then the teachers have to comment this to the Head of the Department. Every 5 years the teaching process of each professor is "revised". Monitoring of the measures is also implemented. The expertise of each teacher is taken into account and their strong points are utilised at the University level. The professors also feel the support coming from the University level for their activities, both in providing tools and resources, and in appraisal support. Hence, the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff are favourable.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, since the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff are favourable. In addition, the available teaching resources provide a positive environment. When planning the annual budget of the institution, funds are provided for the improvement of teachers' competences. VK teachers are also offered internal training to improve the competencies of pedagogical and general abilities. So, they are informed about the principles of the institution's activities and information systems.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There are several opportunities for mobility at a national and international level.
2. Strong collaboration remotely with other universities, even during the pandemic
3. Not only students and staff mobility between universities, but also at a professional level.

(2) Weakness:

1. There is a need for further internationalisation to acquire more knowledge and background from international institutions.

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

Physical resources include classrooms and training laboratories; necessary equipment, teaching/learning tools and demonstration equipment; methodological and other teaching/learning materials available in classrooms, laboratories, lecturers' offices, library; reading room and internet; computer hardware and software, gym.

Teaching staff and students are generally pleased with the teaching and research equipment available in the teaching and research laboratories, as was evident from the site visit and held discussions. It is used in accordance with the mission, yet there is still space for improvement in the acquisition of modern equipment through implementation of the "Modernisation of the study infrastructure of VK" project's activities and EU funds.

Two hundred and fifty dorm placements are available to the students. The Faculty has elevators to ensure access for students with physical disabilities. Practical training for students is organised in collaboration with external partners, and evidence of supervision was assured.

The Library is well equipped and the literature is available both in Lithuanian and in foreign languages. The Library includes both printed and digital literature. During the site visit, we heard that in 2017, online resources outnumbered paper sources. There are 47% more electronic than paper sources. Also, students' use of electronic resources is four times higher than before. The students can use the services through the online catalogue. The number of e-journals the institution is subscribed to is growing every year.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. During the interviews, it was clear that the practical competencies received by the University's partner vary substantially according to

students' experiences, which have to be controlled better by the University (possibly through assessing learning outcomes). Dorm rooms available to the students are quite small and students reported that some need refurbishing, however the internet services are fully functional and good.

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

(3) Factual situation

The Library fund for students in the study field of nutrition is complemented with publications in Lithuanian and English every year, and foreign language publications ratio is growing. Remote access to the subscribed databases, e-books, e-journals, and the Virtual Library are assured. Every year, the library subscribes to the electronic book collections of various Lithuanian and foreign publishers.

Training on the use of Library tools is organised for students.

New equipment was purchased under a current project that includes the renovation of some of the existing laboratories. Even before the project, equipment was considered quite suitable, however, this will additionally improve the conditions. Every year the dietetics programme is allocated financial resources for obtaining new equipment.

(4) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator. The library facilities and resources are excellent and students appreciate this support with their studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The steady and progressive quality enhancement of the Library services and literature.
2. Collaboration on students' practical competencies with the external partners.
3. The availability of numerous databases of titles that support high level research and teaching.

(2) Weakness:

1. Quality of the students' accommodation facilities is variable. Ongoing upgrading should continue and this relates mainly to the age of the buildings.

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

It is clearly shown that the internal quality assurance is established by means of questionnaires evaluating the studies at different levels. After each subject an assessment is completed. Yearly reports are prepared by the professors, in all subjects they teach. Then the teachers have to comment this to the Head of the Department. Every 5 years the teaching process of this teacher is revised. The SER outlined the Vilnius's model, where a survey is completed twice a year by the Department to analyse the quality of studies, and the results

are then presented to both students and teachers. The Department, supervising the Dietetics study programme in the study field of Nutrition, maintains direct and feedback with the Committee, plans and carries out the feedback of all participants in the programme, and submits the results to the Committee. The Department organizes ensuring feedback according to the Description of the VK Feedback Procedure for Improving the Quality of Studies. Monitoring of the measures is implemented routinely.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, as evidenced by the range of quality assurance processes. The 5-yearly cycle is a thorough process design to support staff and enhance programme quality delivery.

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

(1) Factual situation

The study program is adjusted operatively, taking into account the comments of students, social partners, and the documents of the Republic. There is a clear connection with public and private institutions, including hospitals and there are programs to monitor quality (mainly using questionnaires). For instance, social partners, some of them alumni, working in the public and private sector emphasized during the interview regarding that possibility. The Department actively cooperates with both employers and graduates by conducting annual surveys and survey reflection.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator from the range of evaluation embedded within the programme. Stakeholders were positive about the processes in place, especially regarding the preparation of surveys from VK to evaluate the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance.

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

(1) Factual situation

The websites of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania and the VK contain information about the study programme Dietetics implemented in the study field of Nutrition. The learning outcomes of the programme, study subjects and their arrangement in semesters, qualification degree and professional qualification are named. It also provides information on how the competitive score is formed and, for the convenience of entrants, a calculator for this score. There are specific programs for evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes yearly by means of a publication prepared and published, which is distributed to gymnasium students at career events and when they visit the VK. Coordination is carried out at both the Faculty and the University level, and the results are publicly available.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator from the evidence of the results. The data is accessible and some results are publicly available for full transparency. Collection of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes are included in the annual report prepared by VK.

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' communication is assured, and if improvement is necessary, consultation with students is held. All surveys are initiated on the department level; students of the last year and graduates are included as well.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institution complies with the indicator, as evidenced by the survey process and results. For instance, according to 75 % of students, the studies meet their expectations, the order of teaching subjects was consistent and logical, and the knowledge and skills acquired during the studies are in demand in the labor market; 85 % think that the practical training performed during the studies is useful, there is an opportunity to participate in the project and scientific activities; according to 70 % of the respondents, the classrooms are adapted for the implementation of the study programme, there is a possibility to use special equipment, laboratories and other premises for performing independent tasks. 85 % of the final-year students consider their preparation for a professional career to be sufficient for work according to the acquired education.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strength:

1. Feedback procedure for improving the quality of studies well established.
2. The learning outcomes of the programme, study subjects and their arrangement in semesters, qualification degree and professional qualification are named and transparently advertised.

IV. EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENCE

The research outputs of the academic staff are excellent and worthy of recognition.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	Continue to update these as required.
Links between science (art) and studies	Continue to develop noble research areas to involve students in the research process and conference presentations.
Student admission and support	Consider how students requiring additional support can have their needs met.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	Continue to support students to progress to a varied range of employment opportunity and postgraduate study
Teaching staff	Encourage staff to broaden collaboration networks and international mobility opportunities
Learning facilities and resources	Ensure all accommodation meets student expectations.
Study quality management and public information	Continue to publish performance data transparently

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Nutrition* at Vilnius university of applied sciences:

The study programme in the study field of Nutrition corresponds to the public and labour market needs and is in line with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the College. The programme is executed and systematically updated following the national and European strategic documents (e.g EFAD) and plans governing the policy and development of health.

The coherence between the programme content and qualification awarded enables the specialists prepared under the Nutrition study field to work in the sector. Graduates of the programme have the possibility to seek higher university education degrees by studying at universities.

The aims and expected learning outcomes under assessment are in line with the Description of Study Fields and requirements applicable to the first-cycle college studies. The level of complexity of the learning outcomes conforms to the Level 6 qualification requirements under the European and Lithuanian Qualifications Framework for higher education. The content and description of the study subjects are in line with the requirements applicable to the college and first-cycle studies, and the programme volume is sufficient in view of the expected learning outcomes. The subjects and modules are positioned in the programmes consistently.

In preparation of the final theses, the students select the topic and apply them to produce a report. This allows the students to tailor their studies further.

The College has a transparent motivation system for staff involvement in scientific research including financial support and special awards to staff and students. Conditions for the involvement of the students in scientific research exist and consist of different mechanisms incl. annual research conferences.

The panel believe that the position of the college in the market is very good.

The experts find that the college tries to foster the mobility of students to a reasonable extent and the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students and study information and study counselling offered by the college are suitable and adequate. The variety of feedback is a good method for reaching all students, taking into account the variety of tasks they are given and the variety of their personalities. The experts appreciate that students have the chance to submit their thoughts on the study content, including their opinion on the teaching methods at the end of each semester.

Considerable attention is given at the HEI to improvement of the international scope of activities. Teachers have been provided with appropriate conditions ensuring academic mobility, i.e. the teachers are provided with the opportunity to undergo internship, exchange professional experience, improve their competences and practical skills of teaching in a different academic setting. The teachers also cooperated with other institutions of higher education.

Appropriate attention has been given at the HEI to teachers' improvement in the research and professional development.

The strategy of the organisers of the study programmes to engage social partners in the process of preparation of the final theses is assessed positively.

The list of purchased laboratory testing equipment plus information collected during the meeting with SER staff and teachers prove that the faculty is committed to investing in the ongoing development of the programme.

The programme has a strong track record in Lithuania and remains fit for purpose.

The regular participation of students including the feedback in case of problems appears to work and bear the necessary fruit. The participation in the surveys should, however, be improved. Short of making them compulsory, the college might consider introducing a formal approach to the feedback, so that the students get a definite idea about the use of the questionnaires for the improvement of their programme.

Expert chairperson signature:

Prof. dr. Fiona McCullough, academic;