SKVC

CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of TOURISM AND LEISURE

at Utenos kolegija

Expert panel:

1. **Associate professor Detlev Remy (panel chairperson),** *academic;*
2. **Senior lecturer Kristina Henriksson,** *academic;*
3. **Senior lecturer Anders Johannes Justenlund,** *academic;*
4. **Mrs Zita Krūkonytė-Teryaeva,** *representative of social partners;*
5. **Mr Mantas Jonas Vilimas,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Evelina Keturakytė*

Vilnius
2022

Study Field Data*

Title of the study programme	*Tourism and Hotel Administration*	*Management of Tourism Services*	*Hospitality Management[1]*
State code	6531LX075	6531LX122	6581LX005
Type of studies	College studies	College studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First	First	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)	Full-time (3 years)
Credit volume	180	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business Management	Professional Bachelor of Business Management	Professional Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian	English
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	7 June 2011	25 August 2021	23 April 2014

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

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[1] Joint Study Programme

CONTENTS

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 is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas is 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 *2 May, 2022.* Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Site Visit was organised online using video-conferencing tool (Zoom).

Associate professor Detlev Remy, Expert panel's Chair Person; Associate Professor & Deputy Cluster Director (Vice Dean DSB cluster Design and specialized Businesses) at Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore;

Mrs Kristina Henriksson, Senior Lecturer at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland;

Mr Anders Johannes Justenlund, Business Developer/Senior Lecturer at University College Northern Denmark; Director of Marketing, International Council on Hotel, Restaurant & Institutional Education (ICHRIE), Denmark; External Professor at Institute Paul Bocuse, Lyon France;

Mrs Zita Krūkonytė-Teryaeva, Representative of Social Partners; Human Resources Management Consultant at HR Hint Online, Lithuania;

Mr Mantas Jonas Vilimas, Student's Representative; Studies of Administration of Institutions and Companies at Kauno kolegija, Lithuania.

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.	38 Study Subject Descriptors
2.	Final Thesis
3.	Policy dealing with students having learning difficulties (in Lithuanian)
4.	Procedure for Organisation of Final Examinations and Preparation, Submission and Defence of Final Theses of Utena College (In Lithuanian)
5.	eLABa User Guide for Students (In Lithuanian)

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

Utenos kolegija (hereafter referred to as the College, UK) was established in 2000 as part of the reorganisation of Utena Medical School of Advanced Vocational Education and Training and Utena Business School of Advanced Vocational Education and Training. After approving the *Statute* of UK by the resolution No 948 of 18-07-2012 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the College became a legal entity acting as a public institution. UK is the only higher education institution in Lithuania's Eastern Aukštaitija region that offers college studies focused on practical activities. UK offers 1st cycle studies, with 1577 students enrolled in part-time and full-time studies. As of 1 October 2021, the UK provides 22 study programmes in 17 fields of study.

The Faculty of Business and Technology (hereafter referred to as the Faculty) has 3 departments: Engineering and Technology, Business and Public Management, and Law. There are 15 study programmes offered. From 2001 until now, all study programmes have undergone a comprehensive external evaluation. All the evaluated study programmes have been accredited. The study programmes in the field of Tourism and Leisure are carried out in the Department of Business and Public Management (hereafter referred to as the Department).

The *Tourism and Hotel Administration* study programme (hereafter referred to as THA) was approved on 1 September 2004, and in 2011 the study programme was updated, the ECTS credit system was introduced, a problem-based learning system was introduced, and students' e-learning opportunities were enhanced, the content of the study programme was changed significantly, and the elements of the module system were introduced. The programme was registered on 7 June 2011 (state code 653N83006). In 2013, the external evaluation of the THA study programme was carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (*Lith.:* SKVC), and the programme was accredited for 6 years (expert evaluation report No SV5-15 of 16 January 2014). The admission of students to the THA programme was terminated but there are still students.

Based on the information provided, in 2020, a new *Management of Tourism Services* study programme (state code 6531LX122) (hereafter referred to as TSM) has been developed to meet the changing needs of the regional and national labour market. The new TSM study programme synergises the best and most successful elements of the outdated joint *Hospitality Management* and THA study programmes.

The evaluated Tourism and Leisure study field (hereafter referred to as T&L) from 1 September 2014 to 30 June 2021 offered a joint *Hospitality Management* study programme (hereafter referred to as HM). Before 2017 it was provided under the field of study of Business and Management, and since 2017 – under the study field of Tourism and Leisure. The College developed the programme in cooperation with Rezekne Academy of Technology (hereafter referred to as - RTA), Latvia. The international joint HM study programme (state code 658N90001, from 2017 – 6581LX005) was approved on 23 April 2014. The HM programme was terminated as the RTA no longer conducts admissions to the HM study programme following the Consolidation Plan of the RTA Study Programmes and with Decision No 6 of the Senate of the RTA of 15 June 2021.

During the site visit the College informed that the programme will continue if the College finds a new foreign joint partner.

An external institutional evaluation of Utenos kolegija was carried out in 2021. The College was accredited for 7 years.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Tourism and Leisure study field and **first cycle** at Utenos kolegija is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	**21**

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER, there are three T&L study field study programmes with 180 ECTS credits (4800 hours). The SER points out that two of the programmes have been terminated concerning intake of new students, but the remaining students in the THA programme will complete their studies at the College. The remaining programme, TSM, is the only one running at present. The SER describes the TSM as follows: "The aim of the TSM (Tourism Services Management) study programme is to train specialists who meet the needs of the regional, national and international labour market and can organise and develop quality and competitive tourism services under the conditions of global digitalisation and innovation growth" (SER UK p.7).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the information received during the site visit, the expert panel concludes that the aims of the TSM programme are high, while the present implementation of TSM studies produces graduates for entry level jobs. Innovation and development of quality and services with an international outreach does not seem realistic with the present curriculum and studies offered. This is because of the lack of innovation studies and international activities and studies. Language studies are offered more than previously but to gain a practical working level of language skills, one needs to use the language(s) often. Therefore, international studies can prove useful. These can be carried out as joint online studies with international partners, for example by implementing Collaborative Online International Learning, or double degree programmes or joint degree programmes as the previous THA programme.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (p. 8), the aim of the T&L study field programmes follows the College's aim to provide "higher college education meeting the needs of the regional, national and European labour market and to create conditions for continuous learning by developing and promoting individuals' abilities to learn and act in the digital society continuously." Furthermore, the SER (p. 8) explains how the T&L study field programmes focus on strategic objectives of the College; the objectives include educating students to be able to work in the world of work comprising of "global digitalisation and growth of innovations" among others; and "to develop applied scientific activities, research and lifelong learning services relevant to the region and the country." The SER (p. 8) also lists several strategic priorities for the past three years and the next three years including 2022. The College's objectives include the "attracting and retaining of students; improving the quality of studies; developing

internationalisation; improving the College's organisational culture; developing applied scientific, consultancy, research and exploratory activities and studies; and developing cooperation."

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The objectives listed are valid objectives in the field of higher education at present. During the site visit, the expert panel received information from the social partners on their satisfaction with the level of skills and knowledge of the students they have received in their businesses and organisations. The objectives seem ambitious. However, evidence of innovative operations and education as well as the link to digital development in working life were not visible during the interviews with students. Evidence was also lacking on the topic of applied scientific activities and research. International cooperation on applied research activities can provide more results in both generating innovations in education and in digitalisation of services and learning these. One foundational need is to increase the intake of students. The size of the present intake and number of dropouts make the present status of the study program of TSM vulnerable.

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

(1) Factual situation

The description of Tourism and Leisure field studies in the group of study fields of Business Management is not currently approved; therefore, the special requirements for the programme of this study field are not regulated yet. The first cycle study programme is performed in compliance with the *Description of Study Cycles* (Order No. V-1012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015) and the *Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies* (Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016).

Table No. 1. Programmes'compliance to general requirements for *first cycle study programmes of college level*

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the TSM Programme	In the THA Programme	In the HM Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180	180	180
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	136	121	163
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	58	56	-
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	30	32	30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	10	10	10
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	~35 % (1693 hours = 63 (+/-) credits)	~36 % (1746 hours = 65 (+/-) credits)	~40% (1924 hours = 72 (+/-) credits)
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	~47% (2260 contact hours = 84 (+/-) credits	~47% (2265 contact hours = 84 (+/-) credits	~50% (2426 hours = 90 (+/-) credits)

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the table and information provided, the number of ECTS meet the requirements set.

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 SER (UK, p. 9) describes the TSM programme's learning outcomes to "include knowledge and understanding, knowledge applications and conditions. The aims, learning outcomes and subjects of the TSM study programme are related to and in line with the *Descriptor of the Study Cycles*, approved by order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No V-1012 of 16 November 2016, which describes the learning outcomes of the first cycle professional bachelor's degree." Furthermore, the report states that there are twelve different learning outcomes for the students to meet, and these outcomes reflect the needs of the field of Tourism and Leisure. The learning outcomes derive from results of a survey conducted among social partners and employers. The THA program had 16 learning outcomes. The SER states that "The aims of the TSM and THA study programmes are linked to the intended learning outcomes, the links between the learning outcomes and the learning outcomes of the programme subjects, the methods of study and the methods of assessment are set out in the subject descriptors" (p. 10).

While the SER states that the "aims of the TSM study programme are in line with the first cycle of studies and the type of college studies . . . regulated by the provisions of Article 11(1) of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (as of 29 June 2016, No XII-2534), i.e., to provide more practical training-based studies, developing functional competencies of the learner, which are needed in the labour market" (p. 10), the report continues to explain how this is defined in learning outcomes of the TSM programme: " '*can use applied information and smart technologies in professional activities and to disseminate information to the public by modern means and through various information channels*', '*carries out research using the latest research methods, systematises, processes, analyses and can use the data obtained to identify and solve the problems of a tourism enterprise*', '*develops packages of tourism services and organises accommodation, catering, travel and leisure services in a tourism enterprise, assessing the different needs of tourists and selecting the appropriate measures*', etc."

The SER provides much information about the assessment system and its timing (p. 11-12): "The TSM programme includes two course papers, the THA programme – three course papers." The students often study in groups to improve learning. There are various assessment methods which are described in relation to each subject to inform the students. During the site visit, it was informed that self-assessment is used by some teachers to provide up to 10 % of the grade. At least half of the grade derives from assignments etc, and the remaining can be received from exams or project work. Students complete their studies by writing their thesis and defending it.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The TSM programme strives to meet the learning outcomes defined. Teaching methods are explained in the SER, which seem adequate. Many subjects are offered providing appropriate knowledge and skills for entry level work in the Tourism and Leisure study field. Nevertheless, the aim of students "carrying our research using the latest research methods" and "analysing and . . . using data obtained to identify and solve the problems of a tourism enterprise" can be difficult based on the information received from the interviewees during the site visit. Students did not know the databases or how to use them, and research did not

seem to be mastered by the students. Furthermore, the students developing activities for tourism can prove challenging, based on the information received.

The assessment of students' studies seems varying and provides information about the learning. It is important though for the students to also receive feedback on their studies and not only grades. Self-assessment is a way to improve trust in the assessment process and develop students' skills in mirroring objectives with their own learning process. It would be advised to review the structure of the teaching & learning and assessment methods as such to ensure adequacy and alignment with the learning outcomes.

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

According to the information received in the SER (pp.12-13), the TSM and THA study programmes are offered as part-time studies. However, they can also be full-time if so needed. The students "receive a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Business Management." Part-time studies take four years, with both compulsory and elective subjects. Language studies are carried out in the first two semesters.

The TSM programme offers "an *Entrepreneurship Development Internship* in the third semester, an *Internship in a Tourism Enterprise* in the fourth semester and the *Final Internship* in the sixth semester," when also the final thesis is worked on. The THA study programme is also described, however, its intake is terminated. The joint HM study programme is terminated in 2018 and is not described in detail in this section. Part-time studies take eight semesters.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Part-time studies are organised in a continuous manner for students to receive a consistent development of their skills. Students seemed satisfied with their studies. The expert panel would like to see the implementation of a clear structured internship policy, outlining length, credits and assessments. Similar, regarding the final thesis, a policy should be put in place to ensure academic integrity and rigour.

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 explains in detail how students may personalise their studies in the programmes under evaluation (pp. 13-15). The report explains that students can study part-time or full-time but in fact, the report also on the previous pages mentions that the programmes running now in the field of Tourism and Leisure are only offered part-time. Studies are offered as distance learning. Students may study with an individual study plan. The College has an Electronic Learning Centre that is responsible for the elearning materials and processes. Moodle is used for studies as well as an intranet for students and staff. Students have been able to study using distance learning since 2013. The College uses Adobe Connect for synchronous learning.

Students may also change study programmes, institutions, modes of study, and other matters related to the studies.

According to the SER, "TSM study programme allocates 38 credits to students' alternative electives and makes 44 credits with freely elected subjects. In the THA study programme, 50

credits shall be given to students' alternatives and make 56 credits together with students' freely elected subjects." Students may choose their internship place in the fourth and sixth semesters (TSM, THA). Students may also introduce topics for their thesis or select from those suggested by the supervisor. Students may also participate in academic mobility.

Students in the TSM study programme may choose alternative subjects to the ones they study as follows: "Sociology or Philosophy (3 credits), a Professional Foreign Language (English, German) (10 credits), or a Second Foreign Language (English, German, Russian) (7 credits) in the first year." For the third year, from the following alternatives one can be chosen (18 credits): "1) *Hospitality Services Management* (Accommodation Services Management, Accommodation Services Management Systems, Restaurant Services Management); 2) *The organisation of Travel and Leisure Services* (Organisation of Trips and Excursions, Booking of Travel and Leisure Services, Organisation of Entertainment and Events)."

Students in the THA SP can choose the alternatives to subjects they study as follows: for the first year: "Sociology, Philosophy or Psychology of Communication (3 credits), Professional Foreign Language (English, German) (10 credits), a Second Foreign Language (English, German, Russian) (8 credits)." For the third academic year, one of the following can be chosen (29 credits): 1) *Hotel Administration* (Organisation of Hotel Activity, Organisation of Events at a Hotel, Organisation of Catering, Hotel Management Software Applications); 2) *Organisation of Entertainment and Leisure Services* (Organisation of Entertainment and Leisure Events, Project Management, Ethnoculture, Media Technology)."

In addition, there are Freely Elected Subjects (FES) which are annually listed for selection. The subjects are offered to allow students to develop their general skills and meet the needs of students' studies. In the TSM SP FES amounts to 4 ECTS and in the THA SP 6. The point of time when the FES can be taken is in the third and fifth semesters. Students may also choose the tourism company where they carry out their internship in the fourth and sixth semesters.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The opportunity for students to personalise their studies is a flexible way for students to carry out their studies. However, the programmes expect the students at some point to catch up with the schedule and follow the requirements as well as payments. Distance learning is a flexible way also to provide students with regular teaching and learning sessions. Nevertheless, contact teaching face-to-face serves learning in different ways compared to online learning.

Moodle is a traditional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which serves its purpose.

Thus, students have ample opportunities to individualise their studies, including flexible study conditions, but the expert panel believes that complete dissociation from contact teaching leads to poorer preparation of students for the labour market.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (pp. 15-16), the students complete their studies in the TSM, THA and HM study programmes by defending their final thesis comprising 10 ECTS. The thesis work is evaluated with "a 10-point system following the criteria of achievement of the learning outcomes. . . . The procedures for the final assessment" can be found at https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/kolegija/teisine-informacija. "In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final theses were prepared and defended remotely according to the interim procedure." Students' thesis work is independently carried out, and a supervisor provides consultation. After the

defence of the thesis, reviewers review the work. The final version of the thesis is uploaded "to the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library Repository (eLABa) no later than 5 days before the defence of the thesis at the Qualification Committee." Similarities in theses are examined, and "the permissible level of similarity shall be no more than 30 per cent." When more similarities are discovered, the student may write another thesis with a different topic and defend it the earliest 12 months after the first one.

The Joint HM study programme follows the same process as with the other two programmes "except that: 1) the final thesis is reviewed by 2 reviewers (1 from UK, 1 from RTA); 2) the final thesis is placed in 2 repositories – eLABa (Lithuania) and LAISPLAG (Latvia), with the permissible level of overlap in Latvia being no more than 7 per cent; and 3) a joint final thesis defence Qualifying Committee is composed of representatives of both HEIs: Utenos kolegija (Lithuania) and Rezekne Academy of Technology (Latvia).

A total of "24 final theses were defended in the T&R study field during the evaluation period. The average score of the THA study programme during the evaluation period is 8.2 points, and the average score of the Joint HM study programme is 8 points." Two theses were commissioned by social partners of UK.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found that the accepted level of plagiarism at Utena College is not acceptable at all, with a maximum of up to 30 percent. Therefore, it is advised to review the plagiarism policy, in line with international standards.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. *There is experience of three different degree programmes at the College in the field of Tourism and Leisure, including international experience.*
2. *Part-time studies are offered at present which serve students who have other commitments in life.*

(2) Weaknesses:
1. *International studies would be needed as well as full time studies with students.*
2. *A clear structured internship policy, outlining length, credits and assessments is missing.*
3. *A policy concerning the final thesis should be put in place to ensure academic integrity and rigour.*

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

According to the SER report, (p.18), the College has increased its intensity in Research and Experimental Development activities since 2018. This is based on 2014-2020 EU-program activities and support and due to the opportunity to participate in national and local government programmes. Furthermore Erasmus+ and Nordplus programs have played a key role in increased international activities. The College has been able to develop their activities within applied research, experimental development and consultancy for (mainly)

government/public organisations, but also for private companies and social partners to the College. A concrete example (among others) of this is the publication of 12 scientific articles done by full time staff members at the College. In the SER report (p. 19-20) it is further stated who the College works with in relation to external partners (e.g. hotel/restaurant associations, Hotels, tourism organisations etc.) A comprehensive list of all external partners are listed and shows a broad network of relevant partners, who are collaborating with the College.

A clear framework for inclusion of scientific methods during the programme is stated on p.20 and shows a link between the inclusion of relevant scientific research, empirical data and experiences from real-life context are being implemented into course programmes at the College. Also conference participation for teaching staff has increased since the last evaluation.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the site visit and the SER report it can be concluded that the College has high ambitions when it comes to the production and publication of scientific articles based on collaborations with social partners (public/private) and including students into these processes. Even though the College has these ambitions, the lack of evidence for this in their daily processes are missing. During the visit, full-time Faculty staff had difficulties in defining core terms within tourism and hospitality, and the number of students who could be involved in field research projects is alarmingly low. The titles of the scientific publications are relevant to the Tourism and Leisure study field, but it is difficult to figure out in which way these publications have been produced in collaboration with students and social partners. The SER does not mention how many of the scientific publications that have been produced together with and are relevant for the local/national industry. When it comes to international scientific contributions the College has not proven that they can act within this area. This is concluded by the lack of English skills for a majority of the Faculty and that courses are not currently taught in English at the institution. Furthermore it is questionable that the College is up to date on the latest research within tourism/hospitality. This is also based on the lack of English skills and the fact that a majority of peer-reviewed scientific material within this area is produced in English. In relation to Erasmus+ partnerships these are mainly used in relation to student/staff mobility and less for development projects.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p.20), during their studies (during TSM study programme subject *Social Research and Statistical Data Analysis*, semester 1), the T&L study field students are introduced to various research methods, which they can then apply to their project work, coursework, the final thesis, and research in tourism enterprises.

The TSM study programme includes the subject *Innovations in Tourism*, during which students study innovations and trends in tourism services and scientific achievements in the field of Tourism and Leisure.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found during the online site visit that teachers and students lack an understanding of the latest developments in science and industry, so it is recommended to place more emphasis on this area. The College is making sure that all Faculty members and students have access to proper scientific databases and it is recommended that Faculty

consult the latest research within tourism and hospitality to upgrade both literature used in classes, but also for their own purpose in relation to conducted research. As mentioned earlier, the structures are there, but the College should be looking at daily work processes related to this area. A small effort will make a huge difference and make sure that research conducted can live up to international academic standards.

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

According to the SER report (p.20), the College begins the 1st semester with courses in social research and statistical methods so students can conduct field research, project writing and participate in projects with social partners. Further courses include: Innovations in Tourism, Project Management, Media Technology (specialised in hospitality software e.g Amadeus). Students have access to EBSCO and Emerald E-journals via the College library. The College has high ambitions for their students working as research assistants for research active faculty members on commissioned assignments for local attractions and tourism organisations. These commissioned assignments are also the base for a student's final thesis and applied research papers.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the observations and answers to the questions during the site visit at the College and linked to the SER it can be concluded that the College is doing a lot to include students in relevant scientific work. Still it was not clear what students' tasks were during these commissioned assignments, but positive that gathered data is accessible to the student for the final thesis. It should be noted that there is a heavy focus on research methodologies already from the 1st semester, with less focus on introductions to the field of Tourism and Leisure It would be a good idea to balance these courses in order for the students to better understand what it is he/she is researching/studying thus making it easier to understand the application of field research methods. In relation to the course in Innovations in Tourism the institution has not shown in a proper way how Faculty keep themselves up to date with the latest knowledge within the field of Tourism and Leisure. For example it is mentioned in the SER that the College is teaching, using the latest and newest industry software e.g. Amadeus. The mentioned software is not considered new and innovative, but a well-established tool in the industry. It also seems that there is a missing relation between practical courses within the Hospitality Training Centre and research conducted. When asked, Faculty members had difficulties themselves explaining current trends and tendencies related to core hospitality subjects like e.g. revenue management. Furthermore, Faculty members were unaware of the ongoing international strategy for the College.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Focus on inclusion of students in commissioned assignments.
2. Access to international peer-reviewed scientific databases.
3. Faculty has started the process of publishing scientific research articles.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Lack of English skills limits Faculty only to participate in EU-regional/regional/local conferences.
2. Knowledge on latest developments within core Tourism and Leisure field are lacking.

3. *Latest international Tourism and Leisure literature and scientific research is not properly implemented into relevant courses (e.g. in the course Innovations in Tourism).*

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

Admittance of students is exclusively organised for the TSM study programme starting in 2021; admission to the THA and HM study programmes is no longer offered. In 2020, 33 students studied in the TSM study programme, while in 2020, 3 students studied in the THA programme, who are the last students of this study programme. Additionally, the TSM study programme annually accepts roughly 16 new students.

As stated in the SER report (p. 24), admission to the College is performed following General Admission Regulations to Higher Education Institutions and under Student Admission Regulations approved by the order of the College Rector, resolutions of the College Academic Board and other legal acts. Students with at least a secondary education are admitted to TSM studies through a competition, taking into account the minimum requirements, the list of competitive subjects, learning outcomes, and other criteria set by the College. All students, without exception, are subject to a minimum competitive score. The minimum competitive score is applied regardless of the year of secondary education acquisition. Every year the minimum competitive score for applicants to state-funded study places is specified by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (hereafter referred to as LR). The minimum competitive score for study places, not financed by the state, is identified by the College. Influence of additional criteria and additional points on the competitive score is determined in accordance with the descriptions of the procedure for compiling the competition queue for applicants to the state funded study places to first-cycle and integrated studies and applying for study scholarships, approved annually by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the LR.

Information on admission procedures and the dates is announced and applications for General Admission of Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions (LAMA BPO) are submitted on the websites. The study programme TSM is publicised using a variety of tools and methods, such as open lectures, visits by teachers and students to schools in the country, etc.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel has read the admission procedure to the College and believes that the admission process and procedure are conducted in a fair, public, and lawful manner, whereas the College has validated all procedures based on legal acts. However, the expert panel believes that insufficient efforts are being made to attract international students, as no information was provided on how the College promotes these studies in the international community. It has been mentioned that information publications about study programme TSM have been prepared in English and Russian, but this is not enough, as an action plan is needed where they will be published so that as many international students as possible can see them.

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

As stated in the SER report (p. 26), entering study programme TSM at the College, recognition of a foreign qualification is regulated by the Lisbon Convention on Recognition, decision No 212. Regarding Recognition Procedure Descriptor Approval of Education and Qualifications, Related to Higher Education and Acquired according to Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations, the CollegeAdmission in 2021 Procedure Descriptor of EU Member States, States of European Economic Area, Other Foreign Countries Citizens and Persons without Citizenship.

At the College learning outcomes of partial studies abroad are acknowledged following the College Study Regulations, Acknowledgement Procedure of Partial Studies, Teaching and Learning Outcomes. Personal learning outcomes, achieved at Lithuanian or foreign states' HEIs, acknowledgement principles and the procedure of their official registration, the study certificates' as well as module (subject) descriptors' issue is specified in the above documents. Every student is informed about the principles of learning outcome acknowledgement before departing to partial studies at foreign HEIs.

The College executes the admission to higher than the first-year of studies. Persons, who were studying and due to various reasons failed to graduate from the College or other HEI, or are graduates and wish to study other study programme, are admitted.

There were no College students who would have submitted a request for credit for study credits or subjects during the course of the three years. Study credits were, however, granted to all students who had enrolled in part-time studies through the ERASMUS programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel analysed this legislation and found no deviations from the norm. At the College, study subjects that have been acquired at another educational institution are credited without any complicated processes. Of course, the College should approve the description of the recognition of study subjects for foreign students and publish it in order to attract more international students.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

(1) Factual situation

Based on the SER (p.25), students may perform internships or studies abroad for three weeks up to two months. Erasmus+ is arranged as a competition for students to enter, and they can be selected for study exchange. Selection criteria include the results from the studies from the previous year of the student, the studies offered by the receiving institution, language skills and motivation.

Internships are offered in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. Partial studies are offered in Turkey Cyprus, Latvia, and Finland.

According to the SER, in "2016-2018, 7 THA and 14 HM study programme students completed internships abroad (in Bulgaria, Germany, the United Kingdom) under the Erasmus+ programme; 1 THA and 6 HM study programme students studied abroad."

However, there have been no students who have come from abroad to study in the HM program in the last 3 years.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students who participated in the site visit, mainly illustrated medium-level language skills, which could be improved by international studies and student exchange programmes abroad. Teachers could also gain more fluency by participating in international activities, such as teacher exchange, joint online teaching, and joining international weeks at various foreign colleges and HEIs.

The fluency of teachers' language skills benefits also students and their motivation to go abroad. The data provided for the years 2016-2018 is old for the SER; it should cover the three study years 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. It has also been established that communication with international partners and higher education institutions at the College has weakened, which results in less choice for students who want to do an internship abroad. However, the College has endorsed a strategic plan for how this collaboration will be re-established and developed in the future. The College should seek greater involvement in international projects in which students can participate.

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

At the College, academic support can be provided to students by any department. All information about studies and other important subjects is passed on to students only at the beginning of their studies. As stated in the SER report (p. 28), students have an opportunity to receive various forms of financial support: study, social, incentive, one-time and targeted scholarships, a state loan for tuition fees and a state-supported loan with a state guarantee – to pay tuition fees, living expenses and partial studies under international agreements, a scholarship for partial studies abroad under mobility programmes. According to the students' study performance level (grade) from the previous semester and the weighted average of the learning outcomes, scholarships for study results are given competitively to the top-performing advanced students. The scholarship allocation procedure is regulated by the College Scholarship Allocation Regulations. Equal choice and accessibility opportunities are provided to everyone, willing and able to study. Incentive scholarships are awarded to students without academic debts studying in state-funded and state non-funded study places, considering their study results and other academic performance.

Students, paying for their studies, have the opportunity to receive a discount on the price of the studies. Social scholarships are paid to those who need more tangible support. The Collegestudents, meeting the criteria, set by the Government of the LR, may receive them.

Psychological support is provided to the students. Psychological counselling is intended for those who want to better understand themselves and their own behaviour, get to know their feelings, increase awareness in communication, grow in self-confidence, solve personal difficulties, find support and understanding. Psychological counselling is provided by psychology teachers, working at the College.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel assessed that the College provides various kinds of support to students. Students who are disabled or socially vulnerable are cared for and assisted. Although it has been noted that the information on support to students with learning disabilities and learning difficulties was not available in advance nor in English. Moreover, it has been established that students are provided with psychological assistance by a College lecturer and not by a professional psychologist, so students are not provided with impartial assistance.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

The website of the College contains all the necessary information for entrants: about the study programmes of TSM, THA and HM, its goals, results, and about the study subjects. All important documents are placed on the website: study regulations, descriptions, etc. SER (p. 28) states that studies begin with introducing students to information technology tools, College resources, and structure. Admissions students are assigned a tutor who provides all the necessary information to the students and answers any questions they may have during their studies. Students can also consult with the Faculty and other the College staff during their studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

During the meeting with the representatives of the College, it was stated that the studies (the joint study programme HM) are no longer organised in English, as there are no teachers who could teach, so the website should correct this information and not mislead the student, as it states that it is possible to study in English and Russian. In general, all the necessary information about the studies is provided to the students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. The College has a strong support system for students.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. The study programmes of TSM and THA are not designed for international students.
2. Student academic mobility is not sufficiently implemented.

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

Based on the SER (pp.27-29), studies in the Tourism and Leisure Study Field were offered from 2020 as part-time, distant studies. Students must participate "in seminars, practicals, training internships" and in lectures it is recommended. Students may also study independently. However, the SER points out that "contact work of the study subject is performed in a full-time way." When students decide to study by distance learning, then all studies are offered online. Moodle is used for studies, and the Electronic Learning Centre "takes care of the digitization and accessibility of study information, documents used in the study process and study material to the students, lecturers and the College responsible employees. . . . All prepared e-study courses are fully adapted for students' self-study and individual studies of the subject."

Studies carried out are "assessed under *Procedure for Assessment of Learning Outcomes* (approved by 21 03 2017 resolution No AT- 4 of Utena College Academic Board)." The SER explains that "the following principles are followed when assessing students' LOs: validity,

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reliability, clarity, usefulness, impartiality. Assessment of the LOs consists of knowledge, understanding skills, specified in the study programme description and the subject description, assessment." The student completes a thesis of 10 ECTS.

The College has a regulated procedure for students' internships. Teachers are responsible for internships and send students to places that have a signed agreement with the College. Students may also find their place independently when agreements will also be signed. Teachers and Faculty Practice Supervisors visit the students during the internships. Students receive counselling from the College. The internships are also evaluated. Students receive feedback from the teachers after grading. Studies are organised so that 50% of the time is carried out independently.

Graduates have the opportunity to study further at Lithuanian and foreign HEIs in accordance with the first and second cycle university SPs. They can also study further in other fields. Any receiving HEI decides the conditions on which a graduate receives admission to further studies.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The possibility of learning remotely is a useful approach to provide education to those students who have limited options of participating in class physically due to any reason. The thesis is 10 ECTS which is more than the minimum requirement. Internships are monitored and organised at theCollege. It is important that students get internships in their field of study. However, the expert panel believes that distance learning alone does not provide high quality knowledge.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER provides information about the accessibility of studies (pp. 29-30). The different groups mentioned include the "disabled, socially sensitive, working, students with other needs." Depending on the level of working capacity the registration fees are reduced accordingly. "Utena College students with a disability and the established 45% or a lower level of working capacity or a severe or moderate level of disability, receive targeted benefits from the project *Increasing the Accessibility of Studies* financed by the State Studies Foundation." Students who receive social benefits or cannot work 100% can receive social scholarships from the State Studies Foundation.

Students with disabilities may choose distant learning and individual schedules, depending on their situation.

Students may have a personalised study plan when they have the need to adapt their plan due to changes in life circumstances, for example. People with disabilities receive support in equipment and physical challenges. Some support with psychologist(s) is offered, according to the information received. However, when asking about learning difficulties, the answers did not provide information about the support for students. Students choose online learning when it is suitable for them.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel learned at the online site visit about the various efforts of the College to support socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs.

The College has a procedure on accessibility to studies, but information on how the support is offered for helping with employment is not available concerning students with disabilities and

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special needs. There is no information on learning disabilities or students with mental issues and mental health problems.

Additional information was provided by the College but in Lithuanian only on the procedures of support for students with learning disabilities. The College had also submitted an Erasmus+ KA2 application on inclusivity etc but it probably was not funded since the project itself was not introduced.

Students with disabilities receive some support, but it seems that employment might prove to be difficult. There is no evidence provided that there are some agreements with social partners to support disable students' employability.

Students may adapt their study plans but the system is not flexible. The students need to pay for their studies, even in instalments, but they must pay. With changes in a student's study plans, they still need to meet the requirements and carry out their studies according to plans previously made. Students with learning difficulties are not supported enough, based on the information received.

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

Each semester the staff meetings analyse the students' performance, any problems, study progress, and underachievement cases. Progress monitoring takes place twice a year and the results are analysed. The Department of Studies shares the results in form of summaries of average progress of students. Students can monitor their progress with the Student Academic Database (SADB).

The figures for the period of analysis in the SER are as follows: the Tourism and Leisure study field did not form a study group in 2018 due to too few students; since 2016, a total of 72 students have graduated from the tourism study programmes at UK. Only 77% of enrolled students complete their studies in the planned period of time for studies. Drop-out is monitored all the time.

According to the SER, students and teachers cooperate when working together. Teachers assist students in their subject assignments to help them to develop their learning process, and how to learn and develop various skills related to carrying out studies. This process also indicated any learning difficulties or other challenges that might exist. Feedback is thus based on the cooperation between the students and teachers.

During the study unit, teachers discuss the students' process consistently, while the studies are ongoing. This is part of the teaching and learning process, where a course unit begins with an introduction of all facts that need to be known, expectations and learning objectives, as well as the assessment procedure and criteria.

According to the SER, "students self-assess knowledge and the ability to apply them, decision-making, communication, learning to study (further development). Thus, they are educated to monitor their own progress. Personal responsibility for the assessment of own performance, sharing of the feedback on the assessment of the study progress is developed, encouraged and strengthened throughout the entire study period." After the study unit ends, the teacher carries out a survey for feedback.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Self-evaluation is used by some teachers to allow students to provide approximately 10% of their grade. It is recommended that students may participate in the evaluation process to indicate their understanding of the learning process, aims and results.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER (p.32), the employment of graduates is monitored by using data provided by the "Lithuanian Higher Education Information System (KVIS), Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA), Employment Service and of the results of the students' survey, performed by Career and Communication Department." The College publishes the results on their website.

The Career and Communication Department annually analyses the employability of graduates. The monitoring analysis results indicate "that the employment rates of TRSF graduates are high enough." (SKVC note: TRSF – Tourism and Leisure study field). In the time of five "years after the end of studies, over 90 percent of graduates do work (www.karjera.lt data), after 36 months 85 percent of graduates are employed, and 12 months later from the end of their studies over 65% graduates are employed."

The SER mentions that "The employment of graduates of the *Hospitality Management* study programme seems to be statistically lower, reaching about 25 percent." Reasons for this are explained to be the graduates working abroad, meaning that their data is not included in the statistics. The report mentions that some graduates work in the field while others work in other kinds of professions, such as in shops, security, and warehousing. The report further explains that about 20% of the graduates work in "highly qualified jobs" while half of the graduates work in "low-skilled jobs" and 30-50% do not have "paid employment." The statistics omit graduates who live or work abroad.

UK carries out annual surveys on the quality of studies among graduates. The survey asks, for example, about the studies meeting the needs of the labour market and whether the graduate is successful in obtaining a position in the labour market. The survey results are available at https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/kolegija/kokybe/studiju-kokybes-komitetas.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel is satisfied with the procedures in place, and the explanations provided during the online site visit.

Recommendation for the College is to make a real action plan with social partners on how to improve this area of monitoring the employability of their graduates and alumni, nationally and abroad.

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

(1) Factual situation

The SER describes the present state of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination (pp.32-33). The College has their own Code of Ethics and other documents providing the principles steering the procedures. The College has their own "Academic Ethics Committee which is responsible for the implementation of the above mentioned principles; academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination." This

Committee acts upon requests and delivers decisions and recommendations. When students begin their studies, they sign a "*Declaration of Integrity*, which obliges to comply with the provisions of Utena UAS *Code of Academic Ethics* and other documents, regulating ethical conduct; to look responsibly at own-as-a-student duties, to perform them honestly, etc." According to the SER, "no cases of violation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination related to the behaviour of students studying or of teachers working in the Tourism and Recreation Study Field were recorded" during the evaluation period.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The College has their own Academic Ethics Committee to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination which illustrates their strong commitment towards an ethical study and learning environment for all.

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 SER explains that "Persons, studying at Utena UAS, have the right to submit appeals regarding the knowledge evaluation score, violations of knowledge assessment procedures or disputing the imposition of penalties. Upon appeal submission to Utena UAS Rector or the Faculty Dean, a commission shall be formed by their decree to re-examine the student's learning outcomes. Appeals may be submitted following *Utena UAS Study Regulations*" (p. 33). The report concludes that for the reporting time, no students had filed any complaints or appeals of the Tourism and Leisure study field.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel believes that the process for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process seems to be in order. During the online site visits there were no no concerns raised.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. *E-learning and Moodle have become the main way and channel for students to carry out their studies.*
2. *The College has taken care of ethical issues and developed a process for any issues with their Ethics Committee.*

(2) Weaknesses:
1. *The situation for students with a need for individualised study plans is still demanding because they still need to follow payment schedules despite difficult life circumstances.*
2. *A clear procedure for assisting students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities could be provided also in English and on the website and in the SER.*
3. *Internships and employment after graduation for students with social or other disabilities should be in the field of studies, with a support programme if possible.*
4. *Employment of students after graduation should preferably be in the Tourism and Leisure field of studies.*

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

According to the SER report (p.34) TSM subjects are taught by 23 lecturers (20 full-time and 3 part-time working teachers). 19 teachers are the College full-time (at least having 0.5 full-time work load) members and 19 of them teach core and compulsory subjects. The contracts of part-time teachers are constantly renewed. Choosing the teaching staff for delivering general subjects of college studies or for other theoretical subjects, their education, i.e. is considered as a priority (at least a Master's degree or equivalent) as well as their academic title acquired; anf for teachers, delivering practicals, practical experience not less than 3 years is required.

All TSM teachers have a Master's degree, and 91% of the teachers have at least 3 years of practical experience, related to the subject taught.

In terms of faculty-student ratio, the SER (p.32) report states that "during a 4-year period, the average ratio of teachers to students is 1:2".

Furthermore, the SER report (p.32) states that the composition of both full-time lecturers-practitioners as well as part-time lecturers teaching in TSM has remained unchanged for the last 3 years.

However, the SER report did not specifically outline the teacher allocation of the THA and HM study programmes, nor detailed information regarding faculty-student ratio, as these programmes do not admit any more students.

Table No. 2. T*ourism and Leisure* field lecturers compliance with the general requirements for the <u>first cycle</u> studies of college level

Requirement stated in Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies	In the study programmes TSM	In the study programme THA	In the study programme HM
No less than 10 % of the first cycle of college level of study field subjects' volume must be taught by scientists or recognized artists	40%	NA	NA
More than a half of staff of college level study field should have no less than 3 years practical experience matching to the subjects they teach	91%	NA	NA

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Within the site visit, the Expert panel felt that the College is doing well in the provision of faculty/teachers. Although evidence is missing regarding the teacher allocation in the THA and HM programme. The assumption is, based on discussion with teachers at the site visit, that the TSM teachers cover the THA and HM programmes up to the moment of termination.

However, the Expert panel believes that teachers' English language skills are insufficient to teach foreign students, as only 56 percent of teachers' knowledge reaches only B2 level, so these studies can only be regional; thus, the College should change the goals and results of this field of study accordingly.

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

Teaching staff of the Faculty of Business and Technologies annually participate in academic mobility activities (teaching assignments, internships). International cooperation is one of the best developed areas of College activity. *International Relations Department* activities are focused on raising UK awareness within and outside the European Higher Education Area as well as encouraging internationalisation. Internationalisation is promoted through academic mobility, bilateral and multilateral institutional cooperation, international study development projects, updating the content of the study programmes and adapting the international dimension, joint scientific research and applied research. Conditions have been created for UK lecturers to share good practices and improve their professional competencies in foreign partner institutions, participating in Erasmus+ and other programmes and international projects. The SER report (p.33) states that the number of outgoing Tourism and Leisure study field subject teachers for mobility activities is higher than the number of incoming ones; in numbers, 15 teachers went for mobility activities, whilst 9 teachers are visiting the College (SER table 13).

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Expert panel learned that teachers are utilising the opportunities of academic mobility, though there is room for improvements, especially post-Covid.

The expert panel also doubts whether this area is a strength of the College, as teachers have a weak knowledge of English, which in turn leads to less involvement of teachers in promoting and increasing internationality at the College.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p.36), the College provides good conditions for improving the qualifications of the academic staff. Teachers have the opportunity to participate in various professional development courses, seminars, conferences, projects, events organised by professional associations. Teachers are provided with opportunities for research work, to visit other Lithuanian and foreign educational institutions for qualification improvement, for scientific and practical internships. During the pandemic, more professional development courses, seminars and conferences are organised remotely. As foreseen in Article 89 of UK Statute, every 5 years teachers may have a year-off from pedagogical work for a maximum of one year to perform scientific research, and for improvement of scientific and pedagogical qualification.

Teachers' internships and delivering lectures at foreign partner institutions under the Erasmus+ exchanges programme contribute to the teachers' professional development. Teachers can share good practices and improve their professional competencies in more than 65 foreign partner institutions.

In UK Strategic Activity Plan priorities, measures and appropriations for the teachers' in-service training are foreseen.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The Expert panel learned about several initiatives of the College regarding improvements of competencies, so that the claim as in the SER report seems to be substantial.

Moreover, teachers confirmed in the online site visit session, that the College supports them in improving their competences by various offerings.

Some concerns, however, are that despite the fact that 20 percent of teaching staff comes from the Tourism and Leisure field, it seems that there are not that many teachers with domain expertise/thought leaders, who can support relevant content. The aim should be reaching a position being the number one employee/graduate pool for international tourism companies in Lithuania.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. *Teachers are enthusiastic and praised by students for their engagement.*
2. *The majority of teachers have a good level of business practice in the industry.*

(2) Weaknesses:
1. *Teachers shall focus more on technology, developments and trends in their domain.*
2. *Teachers shall work on their English language competencies.*

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURSES

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

According to the SER report (p.38), in order to create suitable conditions for the implementation of Tourism and Leisure study field programmes, great attention is paid to strengthening the material base, preparation of teaching materials, supplementing the library fund and implementation of the latest teaching and learning technologies.

Students use auditoriums that are equipped with a sufficient number of workplaces and equipment necessary for the organisation of lectures (magnetic board, smart boards in some classrooms, Multimedia, computer with Internet access). At the Faculty of Business and Technology of the College, 21 auditoriums are used for the study process. Theoretical lectures and part of practical classes for T&L students take place in 11 classrooms and 5 computer laboratories. The Faculty has 8 computer laboratories with 12-18 workplaces.

According to the SER report (p.35), it states that to meet the study needs of students with disabilities, the UK has purchased special equipment for the visually impaired, hearing and / or mobility impaired, and the report provided sufficient examples of this equipment.

With regards to practical training, the SER reports (p.35) states that many theoretical lectures and practical classes of the study programme are organized at the UK *Educational Hospitality Center* (EHC). The EHC was established in 2013 after the reorganization of the former

Tourism Center. The SER report outlines in great detail the different facilities, from hotel rooms to kitchen facilities. The expert panel has the opportunity to see the facilities which are well equipped.

According to the SER report (p.37), the UK library with a total area of 166.5 m² has a reading room (10 workplaces) and an Internet reading room (5 computerized workplaces), it provides information services and ensures access to information sources. The library's collections are constantly updated (2 times a year) and supplemented with the latest literature, and various periodicals are subscribed to.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Based on the observations of the expert panel at the online site visit, there is only a very small number of students coming for contact hours to the College so all very well equipped classrooms seem over wasted. Premises of UK are well equipped, but on the site visit expert panel met just two students working there on Monday midday.

The library lacks modern literature (books and magazines) about tourism management. On the shelves the expert panel found soviet times books about restaurant management.

Library content should be audited and some coherent literature must be acquired. Students do not fully use the literature resources of the College.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p.40), the process of planning and updating the material resources required for the performance of studies is defined in part 11.01 "Procurement" of Chapter 11 "Resource Management Processes" of the UK Study Quality Management System. The main purpose of this process is to plan the purchases of goods, services and works for the coming year (to support the infrastructure and ensure the smooth running of the processes) needed to ensure the changing needs of students and teachers and the quality of studies.

The need for important resources that directly affect the quality of studies is considered by the Department of Business and Public Management, study programme committees, Faculty of Business and Technology and other departments and submitted to the rectorate for consideration. After summarizing the procurement needs, a procurement plan for the year is prepared and approved by the Rector. Procurement initiators prepare procurement applications-tasks and submit them to the procurement organizer. Procurements shall be announced, procurement documents shall be prepared and published in accordance with the description of the UKpublic procurement organization and execution procedure; the tenders submitted by the suppliers are examined, the most suitable supplier is selected; purchase agreements are signed; the performance of the procurement contract is monitored and the quality of accepted purchases is assessed.

The study infrastructure is being renewed in accordance with the UK strategic action plans for 2019-2021 and 2022-2024. Planning and updating of required resources take place in November-December each year, drawing up a plan for the following financial year. The Department, the Study Programme Committee and teachers are actively involved in the planning by submitting applications for the necessary resources. After examining the needs and matching them with the possibilities, a resource acquisition plan is drawn up, according to which procurements take place for the next year. Teachers forward the need for books to the Department on a monthly basis, and the Department emails the library, which purchases books and magazines and e-resources.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel believes that the processes involved in planning and upgrading the resources are well structured and clear; stakeholders interviewed by the expert panel during the site visit did not raise any concerns. Also, the process of planning and updating material resources is clearly defined in the statutes of the College, so the expert panel assumes that everything works well in this area, as defining the process is a step towards progress.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. *Premises of the College are well equipped.*

(2) Weaknesses:
1. *Library needs to restock books and magazines, both in English and Lithuanian.*
2. *The College should encourage students to come back to campus to utilise its classrooms.*

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

According to the SER report (p. 41), in order to achieve the mission, vision and goals of the College, the high quality of studies and the satisfaction of the needs of learners and other stakeholders, in 2013 UK implemented the study quality management system (hereinafter - SQMS) based on the ISO 9001 quality management standard, the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) excellence model and the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines (ESG).

SQMS consists of 12 process groups and 44 processes, covering management positions, marketing and advertising, curriculum development and improvement, study management, applied science management, non-formal adult education, project management, international and republican cooperation, resource management, SQMS evaluation and improvement processes. Descriptions of SQMS processes and other information are available to the UK staff online, via the Domain Generation Algorithm(DGA) electronic environment. The implementation of the SQMS is coordinated by a collegial institution - the Study Quality Committee, formed by the Rector of UK on 15 January 2019 by Order No. V-24 and on 4 February 2019 by Order No. V-24.

The Study Quality Committee consists of 13 members: the staff of UK and Faculty Administration, the Career and Communication Department, a student from each faculty. The Committee prepares and updates questionnaires / questionnaires for the opinion of students, graduates, employers and managers of companies, summarises the results of the surveys, and disseminates the results of the surveys within the UK community.

The summarised results of the surveys are published on the UK website https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/kolegija/kokybe/kokybes-komitetas. In addition, students have the opportunity to evaluate individual teachers at any time during the study process by completing an anonymous *VMA Moodle* questionnaire. Thus, all students and faculty of Business and Technology involved in the development of T&L study programmes.

The main group of SQMS processes, which includes / defines the structure of study management and decision-making, is Study Management Processes. This group of processes includes student admission, preparation of study and examination schedules, organisation of distance and part-time studies, management of internships, organisation of final assessments, management of dormitories, support for student career planning, methodological support for students, provision of scholarships and benefits.

Measures to ensure quality implementation of T&L programmes include quality management planning, organisation, control, supervision, monitoring and are described in detail in the electronic access to SQMS, describing different quality management processes – study programme development and improvement (03 process), study management (04 process), applied research management (process 05), customer feedback processes (process 07), resource management processes (process 11), SQMS evaluation and improvement processes (process 12), etc.

The management and decision-making of T&L programmes is carried out solely by the orders of the Rector, the Dean of the Faculty and collegially by resolutions or decisions of the Department, Dean's Office, Rectorate, Faculty Council, Academic Council, Council, College Study Quality Committee, T&L Study Programme Committee (hereafter referred to as T&L SPC). In accordance with the UK policy (Quality Manual, 2021), the College management bases its activities on the responsibility of each member of the community. Therefore, the functions and responsibilities for the quality management of the T&L programmes are also allocated and delegated to staff at all levels of management.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel learned during the online site visit with the administration of the College that there is a quality management system in place, although not specifically linked to the Tourism and Leisure studies field. The expert panel heard that there were internal processes to revise and update studies programmes, on a regular yearly basis.

The expert panel recommends conducting small research on quality management systems practices in others partnering HEI and trying to implement components in a timely manner.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p.43), stakeholders within the UK are employees of the College, students, outside - strategic partners of UK, alumni. Stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance of studies by the following means:

- Employees of UK and Faculty Administration, Career and Communication Department, students of both faculties participate in the Study Quality Committee, responsible for systematic coordination of study quality assessment, monitoring and improvement procedures;
- representatives of the academic and administrative staff of UK appointed as the hosts of SQMS processes coordinate the processes assigned to them, take actions to achieve the process result indicators set in the strategic action plan;
- the Academic Council, consisting of 6 teachers, 2 students, representatives of the UK partner higher education institutions (1 researcher), the UK management (1 member from this position - the Rector of UK), participates in quality assurance by assessing the quality and level of research, approving the internal quality assurance system, controlling

its implementation by approving the manual of the UK internal study quality assurance system;

- the Academic Ethics Committee, representing employees, students and social partners, ensures the implementation of the provisions of the Code of Academic Ethics;
- The Faculty Council, represented by the teachers and students of the study programme, discusses and resolves issues important to the Faculty, thus involving students in the management of the Faculty, actively participating in making important decisions on the organization and implementation of studies;
- T&L SPC, as well as TSM and HM, represented by lecturers, social partners, students, supervises the implementation of the study programme, performs internal evaluation, updating and improvement of the study programme quality.
- Teachers, students and social partners (researchers from other higher education institutions, representatives of employers) are also represented in the UK S Competition Commission and the Faculty Certification Commission. The competition commission participates in quality assurance by selecting the certified teachers and candidates for the positions, taking into account the results of their scientific and academic activities and the goals of UK. The Faculty Certification Commission participates in quality assurance by attesting the lecturers by evaluating the activities performed by the lecturers during the attestation period according to the established criteria in order to make a decision on their compliance with specific positions.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found during its online site visit that evaluation of effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders is not measured or has some objectives or key results indicators. All in all, the involvement of stakeholders could be strengthened.

Therefore, the recommendation is to look for a few Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to ensure effective involvement of stakeholders. Moreover, to establish a process to monitor it periodically to measure success and cope with risk management.

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

(1) Factual situation

According to the SER report (p.44), Information on the study programmes of UK is published on the website of UK, on the main page, in the section "*Studijos*" and in the English version of the website, in the section "*Studies*". Information on T&L study programmes is provided by groups of study fields. Information for foreign students is also available on the website www.studyin.lt.

The conclusions of the external evaluation of the UK study programmes and the adopted decisions are published on the website of UK, in the section "College / Quality / Evaluation of study programmes". After selecting a specific study programme, the conclusions of the external evaluation of this programme are entered, a reference to the order of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education regarding the accreditation of the programme is provided, and the Progress Report of the programme is presented.

The Study Quality Committee conducts questionnaires for lecturers, other employees, students, graduates and employers, and the faculties organise discussions asking about the adequacy of information about the activities of UK. The survey of first-year students, conducted by the Department of Career and Communication, asks what channels they received information about UK, whether they were enough to choose a specialty, make

decisions, etc. The Career and Communication Department periodically analyses the effectiveness of social networks - the size of the audience reached, the comments, the shares and the information provided in the media. Based on the results of surveys and monitoring, the most appropriate channels for disseminating information to individual target groups are being sought, such as attracting prospective students, focusing on online media, improving the presentation of information on the College website, and activating the social network Facebook.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel believes that the College is doing well in this area, based on the provided information. Based on the evidence provided, the College publishes the information requested publicly.

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

According to the SER report (p.45), surveys of students at the end of the autumn semester and surveys of graduating students are conducted to assess the quality of studies.

Of the surveys conducted, the majority of T&L students who participated in the surveys are satisfied with the quality of their studies. Students positively evaluate the professional ethics of the teachers of this study field, the presentation of the study material in Moodle, the application of study methods and the organisation of studies. In 2018 the surveys of graduates and students influenced the relocation of the library, which was far from the city centre, where most of the UK teaching facilities were concentrated, to the UK central building in the city centre. In 2019 the results of the graduate survey showed that students lacked information about the terms of their self-work and intermediate tests for subjects. In response, faculties have decided to publish detailed information in the Moodle environment of UK. In 2019 and 2020 the results of surveys of graduates and students, and discussions with alumni led to several changes in T&L study programmes.

In 2019 the results of surveys of alumni and students, interviews with members of the Alumni Club highlighted that students lack comfortable rest areas. The initiative to improve student recreation areas was demonstrated by the UK Alumni Club, which donated sofas, which were proportionally located in the buildings of the Faculties of Medicine and Business and Technologies and in the central building. The hall of the Faculty of Business and Technologies has been renovated, and recreation areas for students have been established. The College annually allocates funds for the renovation of student recreation areas. In 2020-2021 the first floor of the Faculty has been renovated: the cloakroom and the lobby for students have been renewed.

During the surveys of students and graduates, students are asked questions about their satisfaction with the academic, financial and personal support provided by UK. About 80 per cent of students are satisfied with the types of support. Depending on the students' wishes, more methodological seminars are organised on how to prepare written works, how to prepare a good presentation, as well as various psychological seminars, meetings with graduates of the chosen study programme.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The expert panel found that the students are surveyed on a regular basis and their voices as stakeholders are heard. Moreover, students of UK in the Tourism and Leisure study field are

quite happy about the quality of studies and teaching staff performance. Although, a note of concern, there was no sufficient evidence that students are striving for exceptionally good results. Some of the students interviewed confirmed that they are in this College just because they need a bachelor diploma for his/her careers at their existing job position (especially in government institutions).

The expert panel recommends looking for good teaching practices in the field in Lithuania and abroad.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. *The College has established a quality management system, which runs internal processes to revise and update studies programmes, on a regular yearly basis.*

(2) Weaknesses:
1. *The College does not have a measurement system to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Quality management system.*
2. *Low level of involvement of all stakeholders.*

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS*

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	• The expert panel recommends much more focus on innovation studies, a review of the existing curriculum and international activities to strengthen the current *Management of Tourism Services* (TSM) programme, and the both terminated but still running *Tourism and Hotel Administration* (THA) and *Hospitality Manegement* (HM) programmes. • Moreover, international cooperation on applied research activities can provide more results in both generating innovations in education and in digitalisation of services and learning these.
Links between science (art) and studies	• The expert panel recommends focusing more on research activities, especially in collaboration with international partners, which would strengthen the level of English language and ensure relevant and up-to-date research.
Student admission and support	• Although the College has a good support system for its students, it should make students and perspectives aware of it, by disseminating the information.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	• The expert panel recommends gathering data on graduate employment to monitor the programme's long term performance. • More support, respectively, information should be provided for students with learning difficulties. • Some more credits for internships should be allocated as well.
Teaching staff	• Although the teachers have been praised for their engagement, they cannot stop here. • Teachers need to work on their competencies such as in languages and their domain of expertise to keep themselves updated.
Learning facilities and resources	• Although the learning facilities seem to be sufficient and adequate, it looks like they're not fully utilised. • The library needs a review in terms of stocking modern textbooks as well in terms of monitoring the usage rate.
Study quality management and public information	• Although the College has established a quality management system, not all stakeholders are aware of it. Moreover, measures should be implemented to monitor the effectiveness.

*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.

V. SUMMARY

In the following, a summary of comments regarding the Tourism and Leisure field study programmes implemented at Utenos kolegija (hereafter referred to as the College, UK) is given. The process of external evaluation follows the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) methodology for external evaluation of study fields and is based on the Self-Assessment Report (hereafter referred to as SER) provided by the College and the assessment agreed upon by the Expert Panel during its online visit on the premises and following discussions.

The first cycle study programmes *Management of Tourism Services* (hereafter referred to as TSM) and *Tourism and Hotel Administration* (hereafter referred to as THA) are offered in full-time and part-time modes. The TSM and THA programmes prepare graduates for careers in the Tourism and Leisure study field. The THA programme as well as the HM joint study programme though do not admit anymore students, as these both programmes have been terminated.

The expert panel formed the opinion that not enough attention is paid to newer developments and trends in the tourism & hospitality industry, which in fact, may prevent prospective students from joining the TSM programme.

While the learning outcomes of the TSM and THA programmes are quite well developed, they failed in the aspects to integrate newer technologies and developments such as digitisation, data analytics etc.

The curriculum of the TSM and THA programmes meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania but not necessarily the requirements of the labour market. As already outlined, a broader perspective on newer developments and trends would benefit the programmes.

The staff members of the College are enthusiastic and meet all the legal requirements for their appointments as teachers. However, there are some weaknesses that need to be addressed. Most staff members need to improve their competency in the English language. Secondly, staff members should constantly update the curriculum, respectively their subject contents. A more formalised process and more international collaboration shall help the College to ensure the up-to-date level of curriculum and subjects.

The learning facilities seem to be sufficient and adequate. The library does not seem to be well equipped with modern textbooks. Furthermore, the expert panel has concerns that there are no records of the usage of electronic databases, both students and faculty.

The admissions requirements are in line with the requirements and regulations of the Ministry of Education Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, but there has been an alarming drop in student numbers in the recent past and this is a cause of concern.

The expert panel wishes to thank the College for their preparation of the SER report and for taking their time to attend the online visit sessions.

Based on the evaluation, the Expert panel advises to focus on:
- With regards to the learning outcomes and curriculum, to offer innovation studies and international activities and studies.
- To offer more language studies in order to gain a practical working level of language skills.
- To offer international studies. These can be carried out as joint online studies with international partners, for example by implementing Collaborative Online International Learning, or double degree programmes or joint degree study programmes as the previous HM programme.

- To review the TSM, THA and HM programme in terms of updating the curriculum regarding newer developments and trends, and reviewing the internship policy (structure, length, assessments).
- To add self-assessment as a way to improve trust in the assessment process and develop students' skills in mirroring objectives with their own learning process. It would be advised to review the structure of the teaching & learning and assessment methods as such to ensure adequacy and alignment with the learning outcomes.
- To see the implementation of a clear structured internship policy, outlining length, credits and assessments.
- Similar, regarding the final thesis, a policy should be put in place to ensure academic integrity and rigour. The expert panel found that the accepted level of plagiarism at theCollege is not acceptable at all, with a maximum of up to 30 percent. Therefore, it is advised to review the plagiarism policy, in line with international standards.
- To place more emphasis on the latest developments and trends in the industry, for both, teachers and students
- To strengthen Faculty of Business and Technology language competencies, and encourage faculty to keep themselves up-to-date.
- To place more emphasis on scientific publications that have been produced together with and are relevant for the local/national industry.
- To put urgent action on low admission numbers by reviewing the TSM programme value position, its career paths and job opportunities to make it more attractive to prospective students.
- To put more efforts to attract international students, as no information was provided on how the College promotes these studies in the international community.
- To focus more on the internationalism of the TSM programme, also to attract new students.
- to place more emphasis on support to students with learning disabilities and learning difficulties as information accordingly was not available in advance nor in English. Moreover, it has been established that students are provided with psychological assistance by a College lecturer and not by a professional psychologist, so students are not provided with impartial assistance.
- To equip the library with coherent tourism literature, and library content and usage should be audited.
- To implement measures within its quality management system to monitor its effectiveness.
- It is recommended that students may participate in the evaluation process to indicate their understanding of the learning process, aims and results.
- To conduct some best practice research on quality management systems practices in others partnering Higher education Institutions and trying to implement components in a timely manner.
- To review some key performance indicators (KPI) to ensure effective involvement of stakeholders. Moreover, to establish a process to monitor it periodically to measure success and cope with risk management.
- To create an action plan with social partners with regards to employability and on how to improve this area.
- To involve more stakeholders for the benefit of the study programmes in the field of Tourism and Leisure, and adapt this field of study to international students.

Signature of expert panel chairperson

Associate professor Detlev Remy