



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of Management**  
at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija

**Expert panel:**

1. Prof. Dr. Steffen Roth (panel chairperson), *academic member*;
2. Prof. Dr. Christian Schachtner, *academic member*;
3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Adam Jabłoński, *academic member*;
4. Assoc. Prof. Dmitrijs Kravčenko, *academic member*;
5. Prof. Dr. Tadas Gudaitis, *representative of social partners*;
6. Ms Ieva Porutytė, *students' representative*.

**Evaluation coordinator – Ms Austėja Pliupelytė**

Report language – English

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**Study Field Data**

Vilnius  
2023

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Office Management</i></b>	<b><i>Production and Logistics Management</i></b>
State code	6531LX081	6531LX095
Type of studies	Professional bachelor college studies	Professional bachelor college studies
Cycle of studies	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)
Credit volume	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business Management	Professional Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	30 August 2002	28 July 2017

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order [No. V-149](#).

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

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

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field, SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the 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 the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

## 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on 10 May 2023.

1. Prof. Dr. Steffen Roth (Germany-France), panel chair - academic member, Professor of Management at Excelia Business School La Rochelle, President of the Senate at Kazimieras Simonavicius University;
2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Adam Jabłoński (Poland), panel member - academic member, Professor and director of the Institute of Management and Quality Sciences at the WSB University in Poznań, expert of the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA);
3. Prof. Dr. Christian Schachtner (Germany), panel member - academic member, Professor and Head of Public Management at IU University of Applied Sciences;
4. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dmitrijs Kravčenko (Latvia), panel member - academic member, Professor and Director of Entrepreneurship at Stockholm School of Economics in Riga;
5. Prof. Dr. Tadas Gudaitis (Lithuania), panel member - representative of social partners, CEO of Swedbank Asset Management, Chairman of the Board at Lithuanian Investment and Pension Funds' Association; Professor at Vilnius University Business School;
6. Ms Ieva Porutyte (Lithuania), panel member - students' representative, third-year Professional Bachelor's student of study programme Creativity and Business Innovations at Vilnius University of Applied Sciences.

## 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of document
1.	Examples of final theses

#### **1.4. BACKGROUND OF MANAGEMENT FIELD STUDIES AT ŠIAULIŲ VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA**

Šiauliai State College (hereinafter, SVK) is a state-funded higher education institution that offers undergraduate college programmes and was established in 2002 through the reorganisation of technical and medical schools.

The College operates according to its Statute, which outlines its objectives, the organisation of research and studies, and the rights and responsibilities of students and staff. The overarching goals are outlined in Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy for 2021-2030 and the UAS Strategic Action Plan for 2022-2024.

SVK conducts its studies through two academic units: the Faculty of Health Care (with three departments) and the Faculty of Business and Technologies (with five departments). Supporting these units are the Study and Science Coordination Unit (which integrates science and studies) and the Activities Planning and Management Unit (responsible for overall administration).

Approximately 24.28% of all college students are enrolled in the Business and Public Management fields, with 51.05% of them focusing on Management. Within the Management field, two specific study programmes are offered: Office Management (OM) and Production and Logistics Management (PLM).

The Office Management programme underwent an update following its accreditation in 2017. The update was based on recommendations from the 2017 international external peer review, graduate and student feedback, discussions with social partners, labour market analysis, and other. The most recent update of the OM programme occurred in the 2021-2022 academic year, following the guidelines outlined in the Order No. V-1776 issued by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on September 30th.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The **first cycle** of the **Management** study field at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija is given a positive evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	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
<b>Total:</b>		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

##### *3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of society and/or the labour market*

(1) Factual situation:

According to the SER, the HEI offers two study programmes in the field of Management: Office Management and Production and Logistics Management. The rationale and need for these programmes are generally well articulated and rooted in data on employment trends and research of business needs in the city and the broader region. There are opportunities for exchange and internships are a required part of the programmes, executed in close cooperation with social partners. Both study programmes have been successfully running for a number of years, with Office Management on offer since 2002 and Production and Logistics Management from 2017. During the sessions with teachers, students, alumni and social partners, the expert committee witnessed long-standing, strong, two-way working bonds between the study programme and local and regional stakeholders. The expert committee was assured that graduates of both management programmes are highly valued and readily employed by local public and private organisations.

The Office Management programme of study aims to train generalist administrators with skills to ensure ongoing operations of a public or private organisation. The programme is taught in Lithuanian and corresponds to the principles outlined in the 'Lithuania 2030' State Progress Strategy.

Production and Logistics Management programme of study aims to train management specialists in the field of logistics and operations management in a manufacturing context. The programme is taught in Lithuanian and corresponds to the principles outlined in the 'Lithuania 2030' State Progress Strategy. This programme of study has a rich history of alignment with the interests of local businesses. It was originally initiated in collaboration with the *Baltic Furniture Cluster* and is currently aimed at supporting municipal economic development strategy to supply the job market with trained production managers. The expert committee had the opportunity to witness this heritage during meetings with the SER team and alumni, employers and social partners.

(2) Expert judgement:

Both study field programmes conform with the needs of society and the local labour market. The Production and Logistics Management programme is especially well-aligned and highly valued by representatives of the local industry.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The stated strategic vector of the HEI is broadly aligned with the intent of the study field descriptor in Management and states that the HEI is to offer “personality-growing experiences in the higher education area by conducting multi-directional studies focused on practical activities and future competencies available to current and future professional leaders” (SER, p. 10). The SER further elaborates that this entails four aspects: 1) focus on students; 2) integration of research, theory and practice; 3) internationalisation; and 4) social responsibility.

(2) Expert judgement:

In line with the above, the expert committee evaluates study field programmes as follows (see Table No. 1).

**Table No. 1.** *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.*

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Focus on students</b>	<b>Integration</b>	<b>Internationalisation</b>	<b>Social responsibility</b>
<b>Office Management</b>	Good, with limitations	Good	Good, with limitations	Good
<b>Production and Logistics Management</b>	Good, with limitations	Good	Good, with limitations	Very good

In terms of focus on students, graduates of the HEI are regionally and nationally competitive, but the expert committee also observed that, internally, the competitiveness of the study process is hampered by severe grade inflation (most students seem to get top grades). This was further corroborated during the session with current students, who claimed that only those most apathetic to their studies receive poor grades. The expert committee considers this a minor limitation in alignment between study programmes and the HEI’s strategic direction.

Integration of research, theory and practice is evaluated as good on the basis of sessions with the SER team, teachers, and students. During the session with students, the expert committee heard evidence of teaching faculty utilising their research and practitioner experiences in the classroom to enrich the didactic process.

Internationalisation is evaluated as good but with limitations. The expert committee positively evaluates the integration of visiting foreign faculty into the study curriculum (International and Intercultural Communication module) and appreciates regional internationalisation efforts (with Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine). Despite such a commendable internationalisation footprint, the expert committee is disappointed in the absence of institutional efforts to mix local and international students.

Social responsibility footprint of both study programmes is evaluated as good for the Office Management programme and as very good for the Production and Logistics Management programme on account of its close integration with regional social partners and employers. The Office Management programme of study falls somewhat short on account of a growing divergence between skills trained and skills demanded by the job market, as was highlighted during the session with alumni, employers and social partners. Both programmes are highly valued by regional employers, who attested to sending their employees to the management field programmes at the HEI for upskilling. The expert committee considers this to be a significant positive aspect of the programmes.

Overall, the expert committee evaluates both study programmes as aligned with the HEIs strategy.

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

(1) Factual situation:

**Table No. 2.** Study programmes' Office Management and Production and Logistics Management compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor)

Criteria	General legal requirements	Office Management	Production and Logistics Management
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180 ECTS	180 ECTS
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	131 ECTS	136 ECTS
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	40 ECTS	35 ECTS
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	33 ECTS	36 ECTS
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	9 ECTS	9 ECTS
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	46%	46%
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	50%	51%

(2) Expert judgement:

Both study programmes are compliant with legal requirements (see Table No. 2).

### *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 compatibility is achieved by fulfilling the requirements of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. Five categories of aims and learning outcomes at the programme level are defined: Knowledge and its application, Research skills, Special abilities, Social abilities, and Personal abilities. Each category has specific learning objectives which are related to individual modules of the study programmes. The expert committee finds that the learning objectives used to describe each category of aims and learning outcomes properly reflect essential elements of knowledge, skills, and abilities expected from the graduates of first cycle study programmes in management.

A range of teaching and assessment methods is used to facilitate more interactive teaching, including but not limited to, oral presentations, group work, practical presentations and demonstrations. The expert committee found the use of case studies drawn from social partners commendable but identified a gap in the use of professionally prepared case studies (and the associated use of the case study teaching method) that are normally used in the management field study programmes to develop strategic thinking. The expert committee also confirmed use of faculty's research and/or practitioner experiences in the study process.

During the sessions with students and teaching staff, the expert committee noted and validated widespread use of excessively generous grading practices. Despite this not being the grading protocol, grading practice appears to be almost entirely binary - those few students who fail are given a failure grade, but the majority of students who do well-enough to pass are awarded a grade in the 80th percentile and above. The expert committee considers this to be an inappropriate application of the grading method and draws attention to the detrimental effects of grade inflation on the study process and on the valuation of the attained degree by stakeholders external to the HEI.

#### (2) Expert judgement:

Aims, learning outcomes, pedagogical and assessment methods are in line with the norm in the study field at this level, but grade inflation is an area of concern.

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

#### (1) Factual situation:

Programmes in the study field display a coherent structure typical of similar programmes elsewhere in the region. Design of study progression appears to front-load theory and progressively replace it with practice as the programmes progress.

In order to gain more insight into the content of the management field curriculum, the expert committee probed module outlines for a selection of modules from across the two study

programmes. Module outlines were for the following modules: Management, Human Resources Management, Personnel Management, Business Management Systems, Innovation Management. The expert committee considers these curricula to be adequate, fit for purpose and generally on par and up to date with what would be normally delivered to students at this level of study elsewhere.

Sessions with the SER team and with teachers suggested that there is good dialogue between the conveners of individual modules to ensure internal coherence of the study programmes and consistent development of competencies of students. This was not, however, corroborated by students, who highlighted multiple instances of repetition and duplication across different modules in the Office Management programme. The expert committee considers this to be a minor limitation. The Production and Logistics Management programme does not appear to have this fault.

Sessions with students and social partners highlighted some gaps in the skillset of recent graduates. These are mainly to do with the latest developments and technological innovations in the field of management.

(2) Expert judgement:

Programmes in the field study are adequately structured to ensure consistent development of competencies of students. It should be noted that the Office Management programme does this worse than the Production and Logistics Management programme, and so should be improved based on the experiences of the latter.

### *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:

Opportunities for students to personalise the structure of their studies are evaluated as adequate for both study field programmes. During general competencies training, students have opportunities to choose from three foreign languages to study, as well as between philosophy and sociology. Students are then able to choose areas of specialisation in addition to having a 9 ECTS allowance for free electives. The expert committee evaluates opportunities for students to personalise the structure of their studies as satisfactory.

During the session with students, it was, however, suggested that the choice of subjects available for the personalisation of studies is rather limited.

(2) Expert judgement:

Opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes are limited.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The procedure that regulates the final thesis covers all necessary aspects (guidelines for the topic selection, writing issues, ethical conduct, mentoring process, defence, and grading criteria). The thesis is written in the final semester, although this is done in parallel with other modules. Social partners are involved in the assessment of the final thesis.

Theses are written in Lithuanian language and appear to focus on either societal issues or challenges of local businesses. Theses appear to comply with the requirements of the study field descriptor.

(2) Expert judgement:

Final theses comply with the requirements set out in the descriptor of cycle studies.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Long history of cooperation and collaboration between both study programmes and a variety of social partners ensures production of qualified and in-demand graduates.
2. Tangible evidence of internationalisation on regional and European scale.
3. Evidence of research being fed into the teaching process.
4. Study curricula of sampled modules are of good quality.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Duplication of content across the Office Management programme and the apparent increasing mismatch between skills trained and skills sought after is an area of minor concern.
2. Internationalisation efforts, while good on an institutional level, do not filter down to students well. More effort should be made to expose students to an international environment (by, for example, mixing local and foreign students).
3. Grade inflation is perceived as a missed opportunity to further increase the quality of students and the study process by promoting internal competitiveness.
4. Personalisation opportunities are limited.

## **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:

Research activities at SVK are managed as one pillar of the institution's 2021-2030 Development Strategy. Research at SVK is organised into six research groups on Management,

HR Management, Consumer Behaviour, Intellectual Capital Management, Business Intelligence, and two different branches or topics of Finance. SVK publishes longer-standing as well as a recently kick-started academic journals. The number of research articles published in peer-reviewed journals has been partly increasing and partly stagnating in recent years. The report also refers to successful acquisitions of third-party funding of mainly local or regional origin, the amounts of which are ranging from a few thousand EUR to around EUR 80,000. There is also some evidence of emerging international research collaboration.

(2) Expert judgement:

Though the number of research publications has been increased between 2020 and 2022, the figures reported in SVK's self-evaluation document do not yet point at a well-established trend. Large parts of Annex 6 and thus the SVK core faculty's list of most pertinent publications are covered by contributions to proceedings of less well-known conferences, Lithuanian edited volumes or journals, and, occasionally, third-tier international peer-reviewed journals. It is therefore advisable that both institutional and individual effort be focused on sustaining a pipeline of increasingly higher quality research outcomes. In reading the SER and discussing with the faculty on-site, it has remained unclear why an estimated total of 15-20 FTE of research active faculty members (as per list in Annex 6) are organised into six different research groups, two of which being moreover dedicated to different yet not unconnected aspects of one and the same management sub-field. Strategic mergers between these still rather small research groups might result in more effective and powerful research units. As there is little to no indication for a dedicated research quality assessment and management policy or research incentive system, respectively, the expert panel recommends considering the development of a coherent and transparent research policy. This document should inform faculty members on which international journals, publishers, and conferences are of a quality that is sufficiently high to reflect SVK strategic research goals. Faculty who are successful in publishing in high-level research outlets or in presenting to selective scholarly audiences (such as the AOM, EGOS, or EURAM) ought to be rewarded along principles outlined in a fair and transparent research incentive scheme.

*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 SKV's SER, teachers autonomously keep up-to-date with the latest development in their fields through their own research activities and contacts with social and business partners. Teachers are then reported to integrate this knowledge into their courses. Students, by contrast, are reported to be exposed to mainly IT-based initiatives and software solutions implemented by SVK as an institution. Some students are also reported to be organised into a Student Scientific Society. Apart from this, the main student-level source of science-study transfers is reported to be student field visits of local and regional companies. There is little to no evidence of knowledge transfer between advances of international management research and practice on the one hand and the local teaching realities at SVK on the other hand.

(2) Expert judgement:

As is the case with many other fields of quality management and innovation at SVK, the maintenance and improvement of the science-studies link is understood as a matter of technological rather than social innovation. Apart from the implementation of the above IT solutions there seems to be little to no systematic institutional approach to the strategic management of the science-study link. The expert panel concludes that current and prospective forms of the diffusion of knowledge of advances of international management theory and practise into the content of the SVK study programmes must be analysed and imagined more concretely. Best practices may be identified, shared, and implemented in the form of both IT architectures and non-technological or “social” innovations. Moreover, the role of the Student Scientific Society ought to be strengthened as neither the students nor the Alumni the expert panel met during the on-site visit hardly knew anything about this “Society”.

*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:

Students at SVK are trained in the basics of academic research, writing, and presentation through the content of the study programmes as well as through the participation in student research conferences. Some of these conferences are organised by members of the SVK faculty. Dedicated research guidelines such as The Description of the Graduation Paper Preparation, Defense and Assessment Procedure are available to the students, and there is an annual prize for the best student paper. Selected students participate in a long-standing research project funded by a branch of the Lithuanian government.

(2) Expert judgement:

Though there clearly are made several commendable efforts to integrate students into research activities at SVK and beyond, the most obvious gap in SVK respective strategy is the under-defined role of the above “Student Scientific Society”, which interestingly has not even been mentioned in the section 2.3. of the SER. The expert panel suggests that this obviously little active “Society” be revived and strategically be included in SVK’s strategies for the promotion of a research culture among its students.

*Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

**(1) Strengths:**

1. Positive trend in the numbers of research outcomes (trend less positive with regard to the research quality though).
2. Some evidence of student integration in applied research.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. There is no clear and transparent research quality management in place. It therefore remains unclear what counts as sufficient-, good-, and high-level research outcomes (journal publications, conference participations, etc.) at SVK.

2. It remains unclear why a faculty of an estimated 15-20 FTE is organised into six different research groups.
3. There is an overlap between some of the research groups.
4. The “Student Scientific Society” seems to be very passive and needs to be re-activated.
5. Improvements of the science-studies link are understood as a matter of technological rather than social innovation. This technology bias must be challenged as research is, in the first instance, a social endeavour.

### 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:

Entrance to SVK is organised through joint admission for state-funded (SF) and state non-funded (SNF) places and direct institutional admission for SNF places only. The competition score for college entrants is determined based on four subjects, with additional points possible according to Ministry criteria. The minimum entrance competitive score was 4.3 for SF entrants and 2.0 for SNF entrants in 2022. The PLM programme has gained popularity due to its focus on production management training. Most entrants come from Šiauliai city and the region, supporting local development. In 2019–2021, competitive scores for both SF and SNF places at the College consistently exceeded the minimum, with average scores of 4.45 for SNF and 5.75 for SF entrants (SER, p. 22-24).

(2) Expert judgement:

The College has defined standards for recruitment processes and ensure their equality, i.e., equal opportunities for all candidates. The conditions of admission to the studies, qualification criteria and recruitment procedures are transparent, and selective and enable the selection of candidates with initial knowledge and skills at the level necessary to achieve learning outcomes. The recruitment processes are impartial and provide candidates with equal opportunities to study in the relevant field.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The College employs a crediting system aligned with European Higher Education Area principles. Learning outcomes from modules and practices in foreign institutions are generally credited based on agreed content, with most credits given for non-reconciled content (SER, p. 25).

(2) Expert judgement:

There are procedures for assessing foreign qualifications and recommendations on the use of qualifications frameworks when recognising foreign qualifications. The procedures are sufficient and the track record of the number of students admitted via such qualifications shows a positive trend.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The College conducts the Erasmus+ selection contest for students twice a year, offering opportunities for mobility programmes. Information is disseminated through the website, social networks, and personal emails to inform students.

(2) Expert judgement:

The College promotes the educational mobility of individuals and groups. However, when discussing with staff and students, it does not appear that students are taking advantage of the mobility opportunities, with many of them having other commitments (work, family, etc.) that prevent them from participating in mobility. On the other hand, staff shared that they do participate in mobility opportunities and foreign staff is also present in a way compensating for students' inability to participate in international mobility themselves.

### *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:

SVK's support mechanisms include providing information about studies, facilitating internal communication, personalising study plans, developing competencies, and offering teacher consultations within the faculties. First-year students receive social adaptation support through the appointment of academic group curators, introduction to internal procedures, and awareness of available support opportunities. The Student Admission and Career Center aids students in finding practice placements, organising career development events, and coordinating visits to regional companies. The International Relations Department assists with mobility programmes and cultural integration for visiting students. Students are supported financially through scholarships for their extraordinary achievements. The institution also caters to students with special needs, offering psychological support and accessibility. There are opportunities for personal development, artistic, cultural, sporting, and scientific activities, and accommodation services are available in two dormitories (SER, p. 26-28).

(2) Expert judgement:

Students felt confident that the College was open to supporting them in need, additionally, examples were provided of how different forms of support were created and offered for students upon their needs, a flexible form of studying is also offered to allow more accessibility to education for students with other commitments.

### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

(1) Factual situation:

Information about studies is disseminated through available channels, such as the website, information stands, regional press publications, the Department, teachers, administrative staff, and Deanery. First-year students receive support through introductory days and group curators who introduce them to the study system, support options, and possibilities for moving to state-funded study places. Academic consultation is provided both in person and remotely. Specialists from administrative units offer assistance, with the Student Admission and Career Center offering career guidance and organising seminars (SER, p. 28).

(2) Expert judgement:

There are specific recruitment procedures that show you step-by-step guidance to become a student and study information provided through different means of dissemination.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Students can find full scope of information for application and support is present to allow accessibility to apply and study in the College.
2. The College accommodates student needs for flexibility to allow the possibility to participate in other commitments for applicants who want to study.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Opportunities for student mobility could be explored deeper to create more possibilities for students to interact with foreign peers, and preparation for students who are reluctant to participate due to language gaps could be offered to remove the reluctance on the student's side.

## **3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

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

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

(1) Factual situation:

The teaching and learning process is the process planned and implemented according to legislative requirements and internal procedures. During COVID-19, the teaching and learning process was transformed into distance (online) studies. In 2021/2022, studies were implemented in a blended and, if needed, hybrid mode. It appears that teaching staff have the freedom to decide on their subject, and which part of it to teach in selected teaching mode.

During the teaching and learning process, different management and document administration software, case studies and situation analysis are used. It allows a study programme to be oriented towards students' practical skills development, and this was appreciated by different stakeholders, including students, employers, and social partners. However, during the meeting with the teaching staff, it was identified that it was difficult to clearly provide examples of case studies and situation analysis, which were used in the specific subjects.

Both in the SER and during the on-site visit to SVK, the evidence was confirmed that at the beginning of each module, students are introduced to the teaching and learning process, the evaluation system and the learning outcomes of the module. The syllabus for each subject specifies the composition of the cumulative assessment of achievement (final grade). The subjects are constructed in such a way that students get a cumulative evaluation of study achievements. After each semester students have the opportunity to confidentially evaluate the course (teachers, teaching methods, evaluation principles and other material of the course).

(2) Expert judgement:

The assessment of the forms and methods of the study reveals their alignment with the students' requirements, a validation that emerged during the visit. The students have expressed high regard for the flexible and hybrid schedule, indicating its positive impact. However, it is noteworthy that the study schedule's exceptional flexibility should not compromise the quality of the study process and must continue to meet the expectations of the teaching staff.

The observation presented highlights commendable practices at the institution. Both in SER and during site visits to the HEI, clear evidence was substantiated, affirming that students are well-informed and introduced to essential aspects of the teaching and learning process, the evaluation system, and the expected learning outcomes at the onset of each course or module. This proactive approach to familiarising students with the course structure and assessment criteria ensures that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge to navigate their academic journey successfully.

While the usage of case studies sourced from social partners is commendable, there exists a deficiency in professionally curated case studies, which merits attention.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The HEI ensures conditions to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. Neither in the SER nor during the site visit to the HEI, it was identified that students from socially vulnerable groups and/or students with special needs are studying currently or have studied during the last few years. Procedures are built and there are appropriate architectural solutions for people with special needs.

(2) Expert judgement:

The provisions for facilitating access to education for students with special needs demonstrate adequacy and careful consideration. The HEI offers opportunities to personalise the study process, catering to the unique requirements of each student. Additionally, the presence of specialised programmes and equipment within the library further enhances the inclusive learning environment, fostering an atmosphere of equal opportunities and support for all students, including those with special needs.

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

#### (1) Factual situation:

The College has developed and applied a systematic approach to the monitoring of the student study process. It was identified both in the SER and during the site visit that the study process is evaluated collegially by the academic staff teaching the module. The students' survey results are also evaluated once per semester by the Study Field Committee. The Unit for Studies monitors the progress of all students in the Study Management System. It also monitors student turnover and records dropouts.

However, in the SER it was not described how the HEI has developed and applied a systematic approach to providing feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress. Both in SER and during the site visit it was identified that there is a process and system in place for students to provide feedback on the study process. However, it was not identified that there is a systematic nature in providing feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress.

#### (2) Expert judgement:

The evaluation of the systematic nature of monitoring student study progress and providing feedback to foster self-assessment and subsequent study planning indicates a robust and well-defined process in place.

Students are afforded the opportunity to engage in self-assessment, facilitating a deeper understanding of their academic development. The established process ensures clear and comprehensive support for students in planning their future educational endeavours. During the meeting students expressed high satisfaction with the level of support and feedback received, attesting to its effectiveness in aiding their academic journey. Moreover, the provision of assistance from curators and mentors further enhances the support system, catering to students' individual needs when necessary. This comprehensive approach underscores the institution's commitment to fostering students' self-assessment skills and empowering them to chart a successful study progression.

However, upon thorough evaluation of the materials presented by SER and the interactions at HEI, it becomes evident that a systematic process for soliciting feedback to students about the implementation of their suggestions to enhance the learning and teaching experience is currently absent. This aspect warrants further consideration and improvement.

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

(1) Factual situation:

Employability of graduates is analysed by data provided by Lithuanian State institutions: Lithuanian Employment Services and Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA). The data provided in the SER (Table 4.3.) shows that the level of graduates' employability increased during the period 2019-2020 from 67% to 72%. However, deeper analysis e.g., analysis of the level of qualified employment (e.g., low, medium or high) would allow to assess employability in a more structured way. During the meetings with various counterparties (especially in the meeting with employers and social partners), the experts identified that graduates are oriented towards the local labour market and the College is orientated towards the needs of employers in the Šiauliai region. However, the experts missed a broader approach to prepare graduates who would be ready to work in international business companies outside the Šiauliai region and/or Lithuania.

(2) Expert judgement:

The visit to the HEI provided valuable insights, particularly through the meeting with employers and social partners. It became evident that both graduates and the HEI display a strong orientation towards meeting the demands of the local labour market in the Šiaulių region, aligning well with the needs of employers in the area.

It is noteworthy to highlight that the HEI has effectively established robust and enduring partnerships with local social partners and employers. During the meeting with these stakeholders, strong endorsement and support for the HEI and the study programmes they offer were evident, especially in the public sector and municipality. The institution's efforts in nurturing such relationships have proven fruitful, contributing to the overall effectiveness and relevance of the HEI as an institution in response to the needs of the local community and labour market.

However, it was noted a potential limitation in the absence of a more comprehensive approach to preparing graduates for the international business environment beyond the confines of Šiaulių region and/or Lithuania. A broader perspective on equipping graduates to thrive in the international business landscape seems to be lacking.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The HEI implemented policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. Nor in the SER, nor during the site visit to the HEI, it was identified that there were cases of breaching academic integrity, non-tolerant behaviour or cases of discrimination currently or have been identified during the last few years.

(2) Expert judgement:

The academic community places significant emphasis on upholding ethical and honest conduct among all its members. During the meeting with the panel of experts, students reiterated their awareness of the expectations regarding academic ethics, as they receive regular reminders about the zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism and the paramount importance of maintaining honest and ethical behaviour.

#### *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 College has clearly described the procedure for appeal processing.

(2) Expert judgement:

During the visit, it was identified that students understand the process of providing appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the Management field studies. Neither in the SER nor during the site visit to SVK there were identified cases where students have provided appeals and/or complaints during the last few years.

#### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

##### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Long developed and strong partnership with the social partners and employers.

##### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. There is no systematic process during which students receive feedback on whether their suggestions for improving the learning and teaching process are implemented.
2. The study process is oriented to the local regional labour market and opportunities for employability in international financial markets are not exploited.

### **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:

SVK employs 39 faculty members who teach management subjects. Among these 39 members, 10 hold the title of Associate Professor and 19 the title of lecturer. A few lines later, the report refers to 29 “subject field teachers” (SER, p. 37). Obviously based on the latter number, SVK reports a teacher/student ratio of 1/7, while it remains unclear how this figure would translate into an FTE/student ratio. SVK plans the workload of its teacher-researchers based on a

document entitled “Description of Teacher’s Full Time Working Day (2021)”. In line with the standards outlined in this document, about 50% of a faculty member's workload pertains to so-called “contact hours”, which include both classical teaching and other forms of direct contact with students such as thesis supervision or participation in student research activities. The preparation of teaching material, however, is not listed among and, thus, apparently not counted against these contact hours. SVK reports that slightly over 34% of teachers in its management modules hold a doctoral degree. Study programmes are, by default, taught in Lithuanian language, with occasional on-demand offers in English language for Erasmus students. 50% of the pertinent teaching staff is reported to be proficient in English language (levels B2 or above).

(2) Expert judgement:

SVK employs a comparatively mature faculty which is indicated by both the age span and the academic credentials of its faculty, many of which hold academic titles. With over 34%, the proportion of teaching staff with a doctorate compares positively even with otherwise more research-oriented universities of applied sciences. Particularly the current age distribution, however, indicates that an institution with only two researchers below the age of 35 would soon need to start developing a dedicated junior staffing strategy in a bid to ensure the continuity of its research activities.

The SVK faculty’s research performance is adequate in scale and topical scope, yet still focused strongly on publications in regional and national outlets, with only limited numbers of publications in well-established international journals or with internationally renowned publishers, respectively. Given that the above calculation of “contact hours” or teaching obligations does not include the preparation of teaching content, and that many faculty members also perform considerable amounts of administrative tasks, the definitely required increase in the quality of research at SVK would require a reappraisal of the role of research at SVK and certainly also a redistribution of the workload of promising research profiles. At the moment, a research quality system defining research publication quality thresholds that need to be attained by SVK faculty is missing, as is a systematic and transparent research incentive system that allows not only for the production of research results but also rewards their successful multiplication in good-to-high quality research outlets.

### *3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff's academic mobility*

(1) Factual situation:

According to the SVK report, international mobility is well on the agenda of both the management and the teachers at SVK. Mobility-related selection procedures are described as transparent and collegial. Outgoing faculty members visit universities rather than universities of applied sciences. SVK has also been hosting incoming faculty from foreign universities, in one case for three years in a row. Moreover, the SER team clearly stated and confirmed SVK’s ambition to join an international alliance of nine universities.

(2) Expert judgement:

International mobility is well-developed at SVK. The fact that most faculty members visit foreign universities rather than universities of applied sciences indicates that their research is of a certain relevance and quality, even if these qualities do not yet translate into high-level international publications in most cases.

It would be desirable that the positive internationalisation culture at SVK translates into more foreign-language teaching modules and thus offers for international students. To the mind of the expert panel, SVK does have the competencies in place to offer solid international study opportunities to incoming students.

### *3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competencies of the teaching staff*

(1) Factual situation:

Faculty members' achievements, competencies, and needs for development are assessed annually and based on a comprehensive and transparent set of written standards. Faculty members have at their disposition a dedicated amount of just less than 90h annually for further education/development.

(2) Expert judgement:

SVK has put considerable effort into increasing the levels of support and quality of further development opportunities for its faculty. Faculty members are clearly encouraged to participate in international mobility schemes and are given the necessary support for that, including language training. The emerging support infrastructure also includes incoming professors who clearly have a positive impact on SVK's research, teaching, and broader organisational culture.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Well-established strategy and culture of international faculty mobility.
2. A comparatively high proportion of faculty members holding the title of Associate Professor or a doctorate, respectively.

#### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. International faculty mobility has, as of yet, not translated into improved offers for international students.
2. International faculty mobility and the faculty's comparatively high level of academic qualification have not yet truly increased the quality levels of research publications.

## **3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

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

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

#### (1) Factual situation:

The historical building of Šiauliai State College is constantly renovated and, in general, is in a good condition. There is a historic conference hall for international conferences or events, an amphitheatrical room with 96 workplaces, large lecturing rooms with up to 70 workplaces and regular lecturing rooms with a capacity of 30 students. Group work for lessons e.g., in English and Russian languages, could be taken into consultation as well as computer rooms for practical work. Thus, the College provides appropriate working conditions for students to achieve the intended learning outcomes in the programmes. Because of goals in internationalisation, the orientation within the facilities should have room descriptions and signposts in English language as well as user instructions and information of a similar kind in the library and computer laboratories.

The hardware equipment for the Management and Business fields seems to be properly equipped and adequate for theoretical and practical learning during studies. In computer laboratories, the virtual learning environment of the LieDM Association was installed including webcam and multimedia projectors for distance learning and videoconferencing classes in the time period between the years 2020–2022. There was a process of identifying software solutions in cooperation with a variety of institutions and companies to a cloud-based system that is also used in real-time company processes. For accounting and business management the system “Rivilė”, as a suite of warehouse management modules, was found. Warehouse logistic modules like process management and human resources for personnel management were included.

In practical training study rooms for professional activities and graduation practices, the College uses the computer business simulation game “Hard Nut”. Additionally, the College cooperates with the local Business Incubator sponsored by the city of Šiauliai to start a business and develop a start-up company by selling products to foreign countries via the internet.

For hybrid conferences, a high-quality conference system “Meeting Owl Pro” and a 360-degree sound system were installed in several rooms (SER, p. 42). Also, for physically handicapped persons specialised portable tables with adjustable height and angle were procured. Additionally, an electronic Braille device is digitally available. As the building is freely available for disabled persons, no construction work had to be done. International students don’t find each facility titled in English language and also the homepage and learning platforms are not available in English language in the same level of detail.

The library and Self-study Centre provide students’ self-study services in a 615.34 m<sup>2</sup> area with 66 workplaces, 16 of which are computerised. The book lending process is based on an RFID chip system (SER, p. 42). The stock of resources includes over 36,000 copies and over 15,000 titles of documents. Scientific databases, which are subscribed, are EBSCO, Publishing eIFL

Package, Taylor & Francis. Because of cooperation with Mykolas Romeris University and Vytautas Magnus University, further 40,000 electronic journals, 350,000 eBooks (e.g., OAPEN Free, SpringerLink etc.) and open-access databases are available. The last-mentioned sources are overwhelmingly written in the English language.

(2) Expert judgement:

The facilities at the College appear to be in good condition and well-equipped for academic and practical learning, with renovated historical buildings, modern technology, and ample resources in the library. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the need for improved English language signage and information for international students, and ensuring that facilities are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

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

(1) Factual situation:

The College holds a process where financial resources are planned and calculated annually by the identification of priorities in improving the material resources considering the faculty's strategic objectives.

For a period of five years, the plan is fixed but the possibility remains to adjust annually according to the changing needs expressed by teachers. The final decision about changes applies as a joint decision by the Department and the Dean of the Faculty.

The library was funded with over €6000 in the year 2022 by procuring new physical and electronic resources. The investment in new academic resources is continuously foreseen at an adequate rate to reach the learning outcomes for the institutional strategy.

Also, in the case of new software solutions for business management systems, there are new plans of investments in the development of BC Plus business management and accounting programmes, e.g., SpinCRM, Odoo, etc., and ambitions to integrate AI in an updated IT infrastructure.

(2) Expert judgement:

Resource planning at the College appears to be well-structured and systematic, with annual financial calculations and the flexibility to adjust according to changing needs. Investment in both physical and electronic resources, as well as plans for software development and AI integration, demonstrate a proactive approach to resource management in alignment with the institutional strategy.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. College premises are fit for purpose and all main equipment and facilities for learning are available and of good quality.

2. The equipment for organising conferences for students and scientists is good.
3. The IT infrastructure is modern by using specific software in cooperation with social partners.
4. There are several good research resources for access for teachers and students.

**(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The internationalisation should be continuously extended to local facilities, homepage and internal platforms.

### **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:**

At the College, the effectiveness of the quality management system is assessed by analysing the compliance of diploma theses topics with the field of study, assessing the level of teaching of individual subjects and analysing study plans, comparing them with education standards. This also applies to analysing and evaluating study programmes. Meetings with students and employees are initiated, the purpose of which is to analyse the quality of education and assess the effects of teaching, including in particular the preparation of teachers for classes, the level of classes, and the preparation of students.

**(2) Expert judgement:**

It should be noted that the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of education are measured by a complex measurement system, which concerns, among others, the quality of lectures, classes and seminars, the quality of academic staff and the infrastructure owned. Such a system must be interconnected and standardised. Verification of the system confirms this.

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

**(1) Factual situation:**

Social partners generate opinions on study programmes. Social partners clearly communicated the added value of cooperation with the HEI. They claimed that the combination of theory and practice has a positive impact on the possibility of continuing education. Round table discussions are held. This is a positive perspective for the development of the College. The social partners believe that both technical and soft skills should be improved at the same time as well as the ability to communicate in a team which is crucial for making critical solutions.

Through dialogue with lecturers, students indicate their opinions on various areas of education. The exchange of information leads to adjustments in the education quality system.

(2) Expert judgement:

Based on the evidence presented in both the SER and in the meetings, it can be asserted that stakeholders are actively integrated into the internal quality assurance process. This inclusion is notably evident through the engagement of regional social partners and employers in various aspects of the study process, such as their role in the study programmes' committee, accepting students for practical training, proposing topics for students' final bachelor thesis, participating in thesis defence committees, and contributing to round table discussions.

However, the evaluation also reveals a notable absence concerning the attraction and engagement of international social partners and employers in the quality assurance process. To bolster the College's ambition to become an internationally acclaimed educational institution, it is advisable to recommend defining clear objectives to be achieved and the formulation of a well-structured action plan that encompasses the inclusion of international stakeholders in the study process and internal quality assurance.

Additionally, an area of potential improvement lies in the more effective utilisation of the expertise possessed by the College's alumni. A more proactive approach involving regular and robust communication with alumni, such as organising annual meetings, could provide valuable insights from graduates who have gained practical experience. These insights would contribute to enhancing the study process and ensuring internal quality assurance standards.

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

(1) Factual situation:

Information about studies, admission requirements, qualifications, mobility opportunities, and support is available on the HEI's website and through events and social networks. The institution maintains the quality of education by collecting data on teacher qualifications and student enrollment, conducting analyses, and allowing for individualised study plans. Graduation results are monitored, and, additionally, feedback is sought from students and teachers (SER, p. 48).

(2) Expert judgement:

The College has developed a system for collecting data on improving the quality of education, along with an analysis of the results of internal and external evaluation. This data is communicated to current and potential students through various forms of media (social media, website, meetings and conversations).

### *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:

The institution employs periodic student surveys to monitor the quality of teaching and study subject satisfaction, with overall student satisfaction with studies increasing from 78 percent in 2021 to 86 percent in 2022 (SER, p. 48).

**(2) Expert judgement:**

Direct interviews with students communicated their statements regarding the College's organisational culture and cooperation with deans and lecturers on which the feedback is positive. According to students, the rules of communication are appropriate, and information about study mechanisms, including changes, e.g. in the timetable, always arrives at the right time. Students are satisfied with their studies and believe that the climate of the HEI is positive and gives them many chances and opportunities. However, focusing primarily on local job markets in student education processes leads to limited diversity of students, potentially restricting the opportunities and prospects for students both nationally and internationally.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. Positive opinion of students about the College's atmosphere for studying.
2. Good communication between students and lecturers.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The College's internal quality assurance process actively involves regional social partners and employers, but there is a notable absence of international stakeholder engagement.
2. The College has the potential to utilise the expertise of its alumni more effectively.
3. Concentration of student education processes mainly for the local labour market, which results in a small diversity of students. This may limit the possibilities and chances of students at the level of the whole country and abroad.

## IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

***Core definition:*** Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

The expert panel appreciates the capacity of the HEI to operate proficiently in various languages and its adaptability in delivering education in different languages, thereby demonstrating a student-centred teaching approach. This provides an important interface not only for Ukrainian war refugees but also between students of other international backgrounds and the EU labour market.

History (and ongoing efforts) of close development of the Product and Logistics Management programme with the regional market results in a highly relevant programme that produces qualified and in-demand graduates. The degree of collaboration that goes into the design of this programme should be considered as an example of excellence.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
<p>Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum</p>	<p>The evaluation panel identified warning signals indicating a potential trend to grade inflation. A grading policy ought to be implemented that avoids situations where +80% of the student population receives top grades.</p> <p>There is a demand from the student body for a broader choice of study subjects. Combined with the reports from employers and social partners on the skill gaps of recent graduates in areas of the latest management technology innovations, adding new specialist electives should be considered.</p> <p>Duplication of content between different modules in the Office Management programme should be investigated and addressed.</p>
<p>Links between science (art) and studies</p>	<p>SVK's dissemination strategy concerning research publications and presentations is currently mainly reactive and built on individual faculty members' network contacts rather than on a systematic concept of research quality evaluation and management. The expert panels recommend that a dedicated research policy be implemented that combines increasingly ambitious research targets with a reasonably attractive, individual researcher-focused research incentive system. The panel also suggests a restructuring of the existing portfolio of research groups (see comments in section 3.2.1).</p> <p>SVK is an innovation-driven institution, yet the majority of change management initiatives pertain to technological innovation such as digitalisation initiatives. The expert panel recommends a period of deceleration of technological change processes and an increasing focus on social innovations in a bid to ensure that technological and social innovation go hand in hand and complement one another at SVK. The expert panel recommends a discussion on and a potential redefinition of the role of the Head of ITC at SVK, whose influence and knowledge have been assessed as surprisingly large for the head of a support unit not only by the expert panel but also by participants in several on-site discussions at the SVK premises.</p> <p>The "Student Scientific Society" seems to be very passive and needs to be re-activated.</p>

	<p>Improvements of the science-studies link are understood as a matter of technological rather than social innovation. This technology bias must be challenged as research is, in the first instance, a social endeavour.</p>
<p>Student admission and support</p>	<p>It is recommended to further exploration of student mobility opportunities, including offering language preparation programmes, to encourage students who may be hesitant due to language barriers.</p>
<p>Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment</p>	<p>It is recommended to create a systematic process during which students would receive feedback on whether their suggestions for improving the learning and teaching process are implemented.</p> <p>The expansion of the network of social partners and potential employers would allow SVK to harness the opportunities of the international labour market and would create potential benefits for students' employability in the international business market.</p>
<p>Teaching staff</p>	<p>Whereas the scale and scope of international faculty mobility activities are commendable, strategies ought to be developed to support the translation of this wealth of international experiences into increasing numbers of foreign-language teaching offers for international students.</p> <p>Moreover, the concepts of local/regional and international may be fruitfully combined if SVK more strategically considers neighbouring Latvia as an international partner. Strategic cooperation with academic, business, and social partners from Latvia will create an additional internationalisation boost without straining SVK's budgets of time and money.</p>
<p>Learning facilities and resources</p>	<p>The local facilities, the homepage and internal platforms should be continuously extended to be usable for international guest students and researchers in the same details as for Lithuanian users.</p>
<p>Study quality management and public information</p>	<p>SVK has made commendable progress in engaging regional stakeholders in its quality assurance activities. Nonetheless, the absence of international stakeholders' involvement represents a very important area for enhancement.</p> <p>Moreover, optimising the use of alumni expertise through consistent and proactive communication would significantly contribute to overall improvement and development in the pursuit of academic excellence and international recognition.</p>

	<p>It is also recommended to broaden the focus of student education processes beyond the local labour market to enhance student diversity and expand opportunities for students on a national and international scale.</p>
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## VI. SUMMARY

The management study field at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija exhibits several positive aspects noted by the expert panel. These include a long history of cooperation with social partners and employers, evidence of research integration into teaching, good quality study curricula, positive trends in research outcomes (despite some concerns about research quality), student integration in applied research, accessible information and support for students, flexibility for students with other commitments, a well-established culture of international faculty mobility, a high proportion of faculty members with advanced qualifications, suitable premises and equipment, good communication between students and lecturers, and the College's adaptability in delivering education in different languages, benefiting various international backgrounds and the EU labour market. Additionally, the Product and Logistics Management programme is highlighted as producing qualified and in-demand graduates due to close collaboration with the regional market.

However, to further enhance its educational quality and international competitiveness, the College should consider the following recommendations:

The expert panel identified potential grade inflation and recommends implementing a grading policy to address this issue. There is a demand for a wider choice of study subjects, particularly in areas of the latest management technology innovations, and the panel suggests considering the addition of new specialist electives. The duplication of content in the Office Management programme should be investigated.

SVK's dissemination strategy for research publications and presentations should be more systematic, and a dedicated research policy with ambitious targets and incentives for researchers is recommended. The institution should shift its focus from technological innovation to also emphasise social innovation. The role of the Head of ITC should be discussed and potentially redefined. The Student Scientific Society needs to be reactivated. The institution should balance technological and social innovation, and improve the link between science and studies.

It is recommended to enhance student mobility opportunities, implement a systematic feedback process for student suggestions, expand the network of social partners, and translate international faculty mobility experiences into more foreign-language teaching offers. Consideration of neighbouring Latvia as an international partner is suggested.

SVK's local facilities, homepage, and internal platforms should be made more user-friendly for international users. The involvement of international stakeholders is essential, and leveraging alumni expertise through proactive communication is recommended. Finally, broadening the focus of student education processes beyond the local labour market to enhance diversity and opportunities on a national and international level is advised.

The College is mostly operating in the local market and, therefore, could increase its activity on the international market through scientific and research cooperation, participation in international scientific conferences and building mutual relations. It is worth permanently expanding the areas of international communication, which will strongly strengthen the educational potential of the College as well as its competitiveness.

**Expert panel chairperson signature:**  
**Prof. Dr. Steffen Roth**