



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD OF REHABILITATION**  
**AT KLAIPĖDOS VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA**

**Expert panel:**

1. **Dr. John Xerri de Caro (panel chairperson)**, *member of the academic community;*
2. **Dr. Maija Kangasperko**, *member of the academic community;*
3. **Prof. Dr. Magdalena Hagner-Derengowska**, *member of the academic community;*
4. **Ms Aistė Bielevičienė**, *representative of social partners;*
5. **Ms Karolina Limanovskaja**, *students' representative.*

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Report language – English

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## Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Physiotherapy</i></b>
State code	6531GX006
Type of studies	College
Cycle of studies	1 <sup>st</sup> cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Health Sciences Physiotherapist
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	05-06-2019

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# CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS	4
1.2. EXPERT PANEL	4
1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION	5
1.4. BACKGROUND OF REHABILITATION FIELD STUDIES AT KLAIPĖDOS VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA	5
II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT	6
III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS	7
3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM	7
3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES	11
<b>3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT</b>	12
3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT	15
3.5. TEACHING STAFF	18
3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES	19
3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION	20
IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE	23
V. RECOMMENDATIONS	24
VI. SUMMARY	25

# 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 to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by 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 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 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<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.

1. **Dr. John Xerri de Caro (panel chairperson), Senior Lecturer within the Physiotherapy Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta (Malta);**
2. **Dr. Maija Kangasperko, Coordinator of English Degree Program in Physiotherapy at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (Finland);**
3. **Assistant professor Dr. Magdalena Hagner-Derengowska, vice rector for science, dean of physiotherapy faculty at Private University in Bydgoszcz, Poland;**
4. **Ms Aistė Pranskaitytė-Bielevičienė, Center for care and supervision, Director of nursing homes for the elderly and disabled;**
5. **Ms Karolina Limanovskaja, Fourth year student in the Genetics study program at Vilnius University.**

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER 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.	Update of KVK KP SELF-ASSESSMENTENG 2022
2.	Studijų planas_ 2021-2024_Kineziterapija_ ENG
3.	10 annex_ Mobility

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF REHABILITATION FIELD STUDIES AT KLAIPĖDOS VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA

Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija (KVK) is a state higher education institution of the Republic of Lithuania. KVK offers collegiate studies based on professional practice and applied research and experimental development, higher education, and lifelong learning. KVK was established in 2009 by merging Klaipėda College with Klaipėda Business and Technology College.

KVK has three faculties (Business, Technology and Health Sciences) and ten departments, which administer the implementation of twenty-five study programmes in twenty-one fields of study. The Rehabilitation study field – also described as the Physiotherapy study programme fits within the Physiotherapy and Beauty Therapy Department of the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Physiotherapy study programme has been running at KVK for 21 years.

The previous external evaluation of the Physiotherapy study programme was held in 2015 and received a positive evaluation.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

*Rehabilitation study field* and *first cycle* at Klaipėdos valstybinė 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
	<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 the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

According to the SER the aim of the Physiotherapy study programme in the field of rehabilitation studies at KVK is to train highly qualified physiotherapy specialists who are able to provide personal health care services to clients of different ages, either independently or as part of a team of rehabilitation specialists, including the assessment of functional and physical conditions, treatment with movement and physical factors, prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The PT study plan and programme content were last updated in 2020 following an assessment of the programme by employers and social partners.

The corroboration of fact is that changes to the programme of studies were made to address the specific recommendations from previous evaluations. For example, the 2020-2023 study plan of the Physiotherapy study programme has increased the scope of the subject “Professional Foreign Language” from 3 ECTS to 5 ECTS. Also the updated study plan has changed the names of internships in order to facilitate identification of the content of internships, now reading as ‘Physiotherapy internship in traumatology, surgery and orthopaedics’, and Physiotherapy internship in Neurology.

The aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes meet the needs of the Lithuanian society and/or the labour market.

The external panel concludes that the aims and outcomes of the physiotherapy study programme conforms to the needs of the society and/or the labour market and merits a positive evaluation.

##### *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*

The aims of the Physiotherapy study programme at KVK are to train highly qualified physiotherapists in line with the Colleges’ mission for the region and the country. The study programme objectives seek to enable graduates to provide personal health care service to clients of different ages, either independently or as part of a team of rehabilitation specialists, including the assessment of functional and physical conditions, treatment with movement and physical factors, prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

The corroboration of fact is that the programme is very much in sync with the Colleges’ strategy towards society in the region. The aims and outcomes of the physiotherapy study programme meet the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI.

The external panel concludes that the physiotherapy study programme aims and outcomes conform to the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The Table 1. below indicates the factual situation in respect of the distribution of ECTS across the programme. No evidence was provided with regards to signed attendance sheets for internships (clinical practice placements).

**Table No. 1** Physiotherapy Study programme at KVK compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes of College level (professional bachelor)

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	<b>180</b>
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	<b>174</b>
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	<b>6</b>
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	<b>56</b>
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	<b>9</b>
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	<b>876 + 1094 = 1970 (41%)</b>
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	<b>354 theory + 876 practical = 1230 (25.6%)</b>

The corroboration of fact of the number of ECTS described to the programme study plan is clear. Practical training that includes classroom-based practice (876 hours) and internships (1094 hours) total to 1970 hours. Contact hours that include theory-driven classroom contact (354 hours) and practice-based contact sessions (876 hours) total to 1230 hours.

	Hours involved					
	Th.	Prac.	Cons.	Self-study	Internship	
Year 1	166	468	42	866	58	
Year 2	104	314	46	750	386	
Year 3	84	94	26	746	650	
Total hrs	<b>354</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>2362</b>	<b>1094</b>	4800

%	7.4	18.3	2.4	49.2	22.8	100.0
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Internships	hours	ECTS
Cognitive Internship	58	3
Internal diseases	116	6
Traumatology, Surgery and Orthopaedics	135	7
Paediatrics	135	7
Neurology	240	12
Final Internship	410	21
	<b>1094</b>	<b>56</b>
% of total:	23	31

The external panel concludes that the physiotherapy study programme complies with the legal requirements and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The aim of the study programme is described in the description of the learning outcomes to the Bachelor level to include 'Knowledge and Application', 'Research skills', 'Special abilities', 'Social abilities', and 'Personal abilities' that match the provision set out in the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Rehabilitation (2015), Chapter 3 Point 16*.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are described in line with the learning outcomes of a first cycle of studies in higher education. There is a good mix of teaching/learning methods that are used to deliver the courses which are appropriate for achieving the desired and intended learning outcomes. Assessment is based on a good mix of reports, presentations and examinations which is appropriate.

The external panel concludes that the aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the physiotherapy study programme are compatible and merit a positive evaluation.

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

The course programme is described and presented in a logical manner as a modular course over 6 semesters, with two semesters each year. The course programme is described and presented as a subject specific course, covering general health subjects as well as specific physiotherapy subjects including internal diseases; obstetrics and gynaecology; surgery, orthopaedics and traumatology; and paediatrics.

The foundations of the programme meet the requirements for a profession competence-based curriculum that meets entry-to-practice level thresholds. The basis of the programme

considers the basic requirements for a physiotherapy professional curriculum that is linked to the needs of the local society.

The external panel concludes that the physiotherapy study programme subjects/modules, ensures consistent development of competences of students and merit a positive evaluation.

### *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*

Students can attend elective course subjects in the fifth term that are made available from the list of Optional Subjects of KVK. 6 ECTS are allocated to optional elective study-units with a possibility to participate in the ERASMUS+ programme at this time. The SER (pg. 12) reports that the most common choices for students on the physiotherapy degree programme are: Basics of Strength and Endurance Training, Rational Nutrition, Non-Traditional Healing Methods, Non-Medicated Correction of Sleep Disorders, Relaxation Techniques, Autogenic Training, Immune System Strengthening. These subjects are closely linked to the Beauty Therapy programme.

The external panel concludes that the opportunities exist for students to personalise the structure of physiotherapy programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes, and merits a positive evaluation. Whilst it meets expected requirements a larger, and more varied option of subjects should be made available in physiotherapy specific subjects.

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

The final thesis is organised according to the final examination order, the description of the procedure for preparation and defence at KVK. The final theses of the physiotherapy study programme reflect the outcomes of the first cycle of studies as students analyse and systematize professional scientific literature, formulate a research problem using the achievements and methods of fundamental and applied scientific research.

All students prepare and submit a final thesis in the 6th semester in fulfilment of the requirements to graduate. The criteria for the assessment of the final thesis are logical and fair.

The external panel concludes that the final theses complies with the physiotherapy requirements at a bachelor level and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. The total number of hours dedicated to internships (1094 hours).
2. Strong input of practice-based training.
3. Very closely linked to the needs of the Region.

## **(2) Weaknesses:**

1. The selection of subjects made available as optional are closely linked to the Beauty Therapy programme. It is advisable to consider optional subjects more closely linked to physiotherapy specific topics.

### **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES**

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

The aim of the applied research activities at KVK is to develop applied scientific research and experimental development in the fields of technology, social, medical, health and natural sciences needed in the Western Lithuania region. The activities are planned in accordance with the priorities of research and experimental development approved by the Director of KVK and the indicators foreseen in the strategic plan of activities. The SER (pg. 15) reports that the PT study programme carries out applied research in the fields of medicine and nursing science. During the period under review, the department had 6 on-going studies ranging from proof of concept to prototyping. Between 2019 and 2021, PT programme teachers presented 79 (29 in 2019, 22 in 2020, 28 in 2021) research-based presentations at international scientific and practical conferences. This research is led by the academic staff holding PhDs and these do not include physiotherapy academic staff members.

There is a need to involve the physiotherapy academic staff into the research programs in the physiotherapy area.

The expert panel group concludes that the science activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research related to the field of study is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The SER (pg. 16-17) reports that the results of applied research are integrated into the content of study programmes, e.g., the study The Influence of Physical Activity on the Quality of Life of Individuals has been implemented and situations have been developed on the basis of which the students studying the subjects of Sports Physiotherapy, Physiotherapy of Nervous Diseases analyse the situations and select appropriate physiotherapy methods.

Teachers in the RSFP formulate and propose thesis topics based on the results of the research carried out, thus involving students in the applied research activities. The graduation paper topics are also proposed by the social partners in line with current needs. This was corroborated during the site visit.

The expert panel group concludes that the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology is sufficient for a positive evaluation.

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

Students are involved in applied research activities directly through their final thesis. They are encouraged to carry out applied research on topics related to the themes developed in the Rehabilitation field of KVK. Students have the opportunity to do research during their professional practice in health care facilities or other facilities licensed to provide physiotherapy services. Otherwise there are no other opportunities.

In order to systematically support students, additional information and methodological seminars are organised during the preparing their final thesis. Students are involved in research activities by encouraging them to choose themes for their final thesis that are related to the topics of the research being developed in the department, and to disseminate research data if, and when possible. The SER in fact reports that in in the years 2019/2020/2021 5/6.7/6% of students respectively, gave field presentations including remote presentations that were facilitated due to the pandemic consequences.

The expert panel group concludes that the conditions for students to get involved in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle is sufficient, and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. Strong drive to involve students in applied research, and on-going research programs.

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

None.

## **3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT**

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

KVK admits students according to standard state procedures. The admission criteria for physiotherapy study program is available on the college's website. To be eligible for application prospective students must complete secondary education and pass state exams. The competitive score for studying Physiotherapy is calculated from: biology, mathematics, Lithuanian language and literature, and an additional subject that doesn't correlate with other subjects mentioned. To be admitted into state-funded places students must obtain a competitive score of at least 4.3. Admission to state non-funded places requires a competitive score of 2.0 which is lower than the state recommended score. Despite the drastic decrease of the competitive score for state non-funded places the average competitive score amongst the applicants stayed stable over the last 3 years.

The number of applicants for studying Rehabilitation studies remained relatively stable between 2019 and 2022. In 2019 there were 63 first-choice priority applicants, and 284 remaining priority applicants. In 2021 there were 52 first-choice priority applicants, and 178

remaining priority applicants. The number of signed contracts remains stable over the period assessed. In 2019 there were 18 students admitted to study in state-funded places and 40 students to study at state non-funded places. In 2021 there were 15 students admitted to study in state-funded places and 51 students to study at state non-funded places. The minimum admission score decreased from 4.32 in 2019 to 2.14 in 2021. The highest admission score was 8.34 in 2019 compared to 7.81 in 2021. These both signal a downward trend in the level of admission scores.

The expert panel group concludes that the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The outcomes of partial studies and previously acquired learning outcomes are evaluated and recognized according to the guidelines approved by the KVK academic council. The guidelines provide the opportunity for inclusion of differentiated study results. For students to have as much academic freedom as possible KVK ensured a system for accreditation of non-formal learning outcomes.

During 2022 no students applied for previously acquired competence recognition. In 2019 36 inclusion credits were approved by the college. This number remains stable since in 2021 there were 32 credits recognized. Students noted that the requirement for accreditation of foreign qualification is always available to them and that the staff is always eager to help them collect the necessary documents in order to do so. The procedure by which foreign qualifications are validated are in line with regulations and satisfactory.

The expert panel group concludes that the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The ERASMUS+ funding is increasing every year at the College which means that more students get the opportunity to travel abroad. KVK holds two events each year to promote international mobility amongst their students and the students of foreign institutions. Students who choose to participate in the mobility programs receive a grant. Opportunities for student mobility are uploaded to KVK website. Information is also presented to students through annual meetings. KVK also offers international mobility options with countries outside of EU.

The number of international students coming for full-time studies has increased over the years. In 2019 there were 8 students admitted while in 2021 there were 33 international students admitted. The number of students leaving for international studies or practice has

also been increasing. In 2019 there were 11 students who participated in the foreign exchange program and in 2021 the number increased to 39 students.

The expert panel group concludes that the conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

#### *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*

The students at KVK have access to academic, psychological, financial, and social support. Students may apply for social scholarships in accordance with their living situation. Besides social scholarships students may also get loans to compensate their study fees. Academic support is provided to the students with appropriate allowances for their studies as well as personal consultations with their teachers. KVK consistently renews information about consultation times and career management sources. Students may also get access to a psychological counselling. Students may also request additional support for their individual needs.

Teachers emphasized that they closely monitor the progress of students who ask for help and who are struggling whilst studying at KVK. With all available support options students may progress to better themselves and to solve their personal problems which results in a positive mental environment at the KVK. In 2019, 88 students received financial aid in various forms (17 students – social scholarship; 28 - incentive grant; 12 – tuition fee loan). In 2022, 92 students received financial aid in various forms (17 students – social scholarship; 27 - incentive grant; 13 – tuition fee loan).

The expert panel group concludes that the academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to the students of the field are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

First year students are acquainted with the structure of KVK in the first week of studying at the College. Students are also assigned to tutors who accommodate them with the new environment and explain the rules of academia. There are two meetings organized in the month of September to make sure that students are integrating well and to assess if they need additional guidance. The quality of guidance is assessed through surveying first-year students at the College. Further in the semester tutors communicate with students through e-mails.

Students' progress in integration is monitored through the ongoing semester. If it is necessary teachers help students adapt by modifying their study course and guiding them through the study process so that they can get the best possible results. Students note that the atmosphere in the HEI is very easy-going, and they are not afraid to ask for assistance if necessary.

The expert panel group concludes that the study information and student counselling are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. Good academic flexibility.
2. Well Implemented counselling evaluation system.
3. Strong direction to recognize prior learning.
4. Year on year increased funding towards international mobility.

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

1. Low admission score requirement for studying at state non-funded places.

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

### ***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***

According to the evaluation report, the lecturers of the physiotherapy study programme use active and inclusive study methods, i.e. discussions, situational role-playing, visuals, brainstorming, problem-based learning, reviewing, analysing and discussing visuals, sharing and analysing good practice, pair and group work, research and analysis of scientific literature and case studies. Students in the physiotherapy programme are encouraged to be active learners throughout the semester by accumulating marks for the course assignments completed during the semester, i.e. mid-term assessments. The methods used to evaluate achievement are: presentation of case study results, presentation of practice report, oral and poster presentation, test, essay, presentation of individual and group work, presentation of analysis of good practice, self-reflection, and feedback. A new method of assessing achievements, the practice portfolio, was introduced from 2021.

During the on-site evaluation, students reported that the College tries to fulfil their needs to enable them to achieve their learning outcomes, and that counselling is organised to help students solve problems and express their opinions. Feedback towards evaluation report is provided through electronic student surveys at the end of each semester. The purpose of these surveys is to help students assess the level of achievement of the course outcomes and to help the lecturer improve the teaching of the course. In this way, the lecturer has the opportunity to adjust and improve teaching methods and independent learning tasks.

The expert panel group concludes that 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 are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

Based on the evaluation report, students with special needs can study at KVK according to an individual study plan. During the period under review, the lecturers of the PT study programme were learning how to adapt the study process to students with special needs.

It is to be congratulated that the College tries to be a socially responsible institution for students with special needs. To this aim, the Moodle environment has been adapted by increasing the font size so that students with visual impairments can fully participate in the learning process, and an audio system has been purchased to work with students with hearing impairments.

Training was provided for College lecturers to acquire skills in working with socially vulnerable student groups. In addition, the College has drastically reduced the entrance score. Whilst this is viewed as openness for inclusion, there is a concern that a drastic reduction in the entry score could undermine the quality of the PT curriculum, as students may not be sufficiently prepared for their studies.

The expert panel group concludes that the conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

#### *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*

Based on the evaluation report, the progress of PT students is systematically monitored at the level of the Department and Faculty of Health Sciences. The following methods are used to monitor the progress of PT students: individual student counselling, monitoring of mid-term evaluations, and in-service training for PT lecturers. Lecturers encourage students to use self-monitoring tools (self-evaluation questions and assignments) to monitor their academic progress and to maintain their motivation. The self-evaluation questions and exercises are hosted in the virtual learning environment Moodle, on the subject account, together with other methodological material.

Students appreciate the feedback given by lecturers, and there is a student management system where each student can see his/her grades and the lecturer's comments on weaknesses or other comments.

The expert panel group concludes that the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

According to the evaluation report, KVK systematically monitors graduates' employability and careers. There is a positive employment rate of graduates according to the study programme completed. After the on-site evaluation, the experts note that the annual discussions and

surveys organised by the PT study programme with employers, social partners and graduates on the readiness of KVK graduates for the labour market are very useful. The social partners and employers gave concrete examples of changes made to the curriculum in accordance with their opinions.

Further cooperation with the social partners should be encouraged in order to create more physiotherapy positions as well as to increase employment opportunities in social environment.

The expert panel group concludes that the employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in physiotherapy are sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The assurance of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination in KVK is defined by the Code of Academic Ethics of the College. During the period under review, two reports of breaches of academic integrity committed by PT students were investigated. Based on the evaluation report, the cases were discussed at the Dean's meetings. The following decisions were taken: verbal warnings, written explanations for academic integrity, exam retakes and correction of the practice report.

The expert panel group concludes that the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

#### *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*

According to the report, appeals at KVK are submitted and examined in accordance with the College's Appeals and Complaints Procedure. The Expert Panel noted that the appeals procedure is understandable, fair and appropriate. No appeals were received and dealt with during the period under review.

The expert panel group concludes that the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the physiotherapy studies is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. Strong social responsibility
2. Active approach to use inclusive study methods
3. Training is provided for lecturers to acquire skills in working with socially vulnerable student groups.

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

1. A drastic reduction in the entry score that could undermine the quality of the PT curriculum, as students may not be sufficiently prepared for their studies.

### 3.5. TEACHING STAFF

#### *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*

THE SER (Pg. 32) reports that the total number of teachers in the field of Rehabilitation studies, Physiotherapy study programme in 2021-2022 was 15, of whom 10 (67%) have been working for more than three years and 10 (67%) have been working for at least half-time.

The external panel finds that composition of the teaching staff meets the legal requirements set by the state and the Procedure for Certification of Job Competitions and teachers are employed in a transparent manner. More physiotherapists have been recruited to the staff. The interviewees informed that the total number of teachers in the program is 15, out of which 11 have physiotherapy background. Almost all the teachers have a master's degree in Rehabilitation Studies and 5 of the teachers have PhDs. New teachers are encouraged to participate in training and to develop their teaching competences e.g., in 2020 57% of teachers in the field of study have participated in the training on "Virtual Learning Methods and Tools".

The expert panel group concludes that the number, qualification, and competence of teaching staff within a physiotherapy field study programme at KVK is adequate in order to achieve the learning outcomes and merits a positive evaluation.

#### *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)*

The importance of the international cooperation and academic mobility is taken into consideration along the lines of KVK Strategy of Internationalisation, systematically to improve international cooperation. The College is organising language proficiency assessment courses for teachers to enable wider international cooperation. According to the SER (pg. 34) academic staff is invited to participate in the Erasmus+ programme twice a year, following specific selection procedures. Mobility participants receive a grant to cover travel and subsistence expenses, and staff is paid an average salary during the secondment.

The number of incoming teachers has increased significantly despite Covid-19 pandemic. Based on SER over the three-year period, the percentage of teachers who travelled for teaching or learning purposes ranged from 21% to 53%. The programme currently has 40 permanent and reliable academic mobility partners from 12 countries. The development of international cooperation has been systematic.

The expert panel group concludes that the conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility are adequate and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The conditions and systematic nature of competence development of teachers are described in the KVK Staff Qualification Development Procedure. In-service training drives academic staff to nurture their competences in line with KVK's strategy and mission. The need for the development of teachers' competences is based on the organisation's objectives, student feedback and the teacher's performance. When planning activities for the academic year, the staff plan competence development activities and this is reported annually and discussed with the Head of Department at the next annual interview.

During the site visit it was reported that multi-professional/interdisciplinary teaching is not custom to study courses. Interdisciplinary teaching practices are not yet in a self-evident role in teaching which it should have. Interdisciplinary learning combined into the studies offers students a good and safe opportunity to practice and learn their skills and competencies for working in a real interprofessional environment as well as allowing teaching staff to lead by example. Based on SER and site visit a shift towards the bio-psychosocial paradigm has been considered, however there is still a need for further development.

The expert panel group concludes that the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff are adequate and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. The number, qualifications, and expertise (practitioners) of the teaching staff ensure good quality of physiotherapy education.
2. Systematic improvement of international cooperation.

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

1. Absence of interdisciplinary learning.

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

#### ***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***

Theoretical lectures are held in 5 lecture theatres in one location; and physiotherapy practical training takes place at the Physiotherapy Practical Learning Base in a separate location. These facilities include 5 practical learning laboratories to teach students practical skills: Massage and Physiotherapy classrooms, General Functional Diagnostics and Pre-Clinical Studies laboratories, and a Physiotherapy room.

The facilities and learning resources for theoretical lectures are adequate for the size of the groups in one time. For the practical classes, the area observed is just enough for a group of 12 students. Having larger classes would render the space restricted. Accessibility to the facilities currently involves only stairs. This may hinder accessibility for persons with mobility constraints.

The pandemic situation sped up the acquisition of equipment needed for distance learning. Training and consultation on remote applications is organised by KVK. A good number of databases are available for students and staff members. After earlier evaluation a good number of electrotherapy devices have been acquired.

The expert panel group concludes that the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process are adequate and merits a positive evaluation.

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

The SER (pg. 43) reports that the need for fixed and short-term assets for studies is formulated in discussion with the teachers, considering the needs expressed by the students. A priority list of purchases is drawn up, discussed in the Department, approved and used as a basis for drawing up the annual procurement plan and expenditure plan.

The practical training laboratories of the Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy study programmes are constantly being updated and equipped with innovative equipment. This was corroborated during the site visit.

The expert panel group concludes that the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies are adequate and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. Planning for the upgrading of resources considers the needs of the students.

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

1. The premises are not accessible for disabled, or wheelchair bound persons.

## **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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

From the information provided in the SER (pp.46-47), KVK has implemented, maintains, and continuously improves the Quality Management System (QMS), in accordance with the legal acts regulating KVK's activities. It is noticeable that the internal self-evaluation system works in the Institution. The Dean is in responsible for the system and its feedback. There are various processes, procedures of internal quality assurance that include the involvement of the stakeholders. The Head of the Department and the Head of the Study Programme Committee (SPC) systematically monitor the effectiveness of studies in the field of study: process measurement indicators are analysed, the level of achievement of objectives is analysed (at least twice a year), and the characteristics of the learning outcomes are monitored and measured (monitored continuously, analysis is carried out twice a year).

The discussions during the site visit helped to corroborate this. Programme leaders confirmed that social partners were involved in non-formal ways. On their part the social partners reported that meetings were organised, yet these were irregular and took place every few years. It would be beneficial for social partners to be engaged in a more active and regular manner.

The expert panel group concludes that the internal quality assurance system of the studies is effective within the methodology described.

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

The SER (pg. 45) reports that at programme level, annual surveys of students, teachers, graduates and employers are conducted and analysed, and problems identified are addressed promptly. In the case that a specific issue is identified, attempts are made to resolve this quickly. The development of the curriculum is ensured by the participation of social partners in the PT curriculum committee. This together with on-going feedback and recommendations from academic staff and students serve to improve the curriculum in view of labour market needs.

There is a good feedback from social partners and students about their influence on changes in the program.

The expert panel group concludes that the involvement of stakeholders in internal quality assurance is good and merits a positive evaluation.

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

Data on the study process, student enrolment, teacher certification, scientific application, experimental and consultancy activities of teachers and students, the change in the number of students and the reasons for attrition is collected by the Department, the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Science and other centralised units of KVK. This data is analysed with a view to improve programme delivery. The SER reports on pg. 47 that as a result of this the studies programme outcomes, content and staff qualifications were updated in 2018, the focus was more on strategic partnerships and cooperation in 2019, and in 2020 the quality assurance of studies was focused on the improvement of the study process, the adaptation of the study methods and evaluation methods to distance learning in response to the case of the Covid-19 situation.

Analysis and evaluation of this information ensures the effective functioning of the quality management system.

Information on the results is publicised in the first instance internally to the teachers and administrators, when it is discussed, and later to students and social partners via formal and informal settings. This information is not made available on the website of KVK. Neither is it possible to obtain a copy of the results/findings. It would be more transparent if this information would be made easier for external stakeholders to access.

The expert panel group concludes that the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes is sufficient and merits a positive evaluation.

#### *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*

Students' satisfaction with the quality of studies in the physiotherapy at KVK is investigated and evaluated at the level of the subject of study, using a mobile survey application developed by KVK Quality Centre, and also at the level of the programme with the Quality of Studies Questionnaire. It is reported (SER pg. 48) that student satisfaction is most strongly linked to appropriate teaching strategies that motivate students' learning and independent study and academic interests. Areas where the quality of studies is improving year on year, areas for improvement, and the students' relationship with their tutors is also collected.

There is good feedback from social partners and students about influence on changes in the program. Student's opinions are taken into consideration from surveys and personal comments.

The expert panel group concludes that the opinion of the physiotherapy students about the quality of the studies at the HEI is adequate and merits a positive evaluation.

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

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

1. The collection, analysis and evaluation of information ensures the effective functioning of the quality management system, its continuous improvement and the improvement of its performance.
2. Publicity of the programme to the community and social stakeholders is systematic.
3. There are various processes, procedures of internal quality assurance that include the involvement of the stakeholders.

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

1. There should be more transparent and precise information about feedback from surveys including the actions taken for the improvement processes and outcomes.

## IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

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

If, according to the expert panel, there are no such exceptional characteristics demonstrated by the HEI in this particular study field, this section should be skipped / left empty.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Revise the curriculum to be clear and module specific rather than subject specific.</li> <li>b) Include studies in Older Persons.</li> <li>c) A larger, and more varied option of subjects should be made available in physiotherapy specific subjects.</li> <li>d) Link the curriculum to international benchmarks and consider the Framework for Physiotherapist Education of World Physiotherapy as a standard.</li> </ul>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Integrate research activities for both the academic staff and for the students.</li> <li>b) The physiotherapy academic staff need to expand their research experience and integrate this in the content of studies.</li> </ul>
Student admission and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Address the phenomenon of admitting students with extremely low admission scores, such students may be provided additional classes or study-units to catch up to the study process.</li> </ul>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Further cooperation with the social partners should be encouraged to create more physiotherapy positions as well as to increase employment opportunities in the social environment.</li> <li>b) Reflect upon the student drop-out and put in place an action plan to deal with this phenomenon.</li> </ul>
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The programme physiotherapist teachers should be members of the Lithuanian physiotherapy association as this would add value to the programme by means of sharing and collaboration on a national level.</li> <li>b) Interdisciplinary teaching practices should be integrated as a part of the study programme.</li> <li>c) Promote international collaboration (in any form) across a wider group of teachers</li> </ul>
Learning facilities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ensure appropriate accessibility for vulnerable groups especially wheelchair users.</li> </ul>
Study quality management and public information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) There should be more transparent and precise information about feedback from surveys including the actions taken for the improvement processes and outcomes.</li> </ul>

## VI. SUMMARY

The expert panel reviewed all the documents submitted as part the evaluation process of the Rehabilitation Study Field, Physiotherapy Study Programme, 1st cycle of studies (3 years) at Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija, leading to a Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences, professional qualification of Physiotherapist, including the self-evaluation report. An onsite, in-person visit was held on the 10th of November 2022. The members of the panel were immensely grateful for the warm welcome, and for the openness and honesty of all the participants, and for addressing all the questions.

The task of the expert panel was to read the papers submitted, especially the Self Evaluation Report, and to connect the evidence, to get a better understanding of the work that is done within the physiotherapy study programme at the Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija. The preparation of the self-evaluation report was important and helpful.

The aim of the Physiotherapy study programme at Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija is to train highly qualified physiotherapy specialists who can provide personal health care services to clients of different ages, either independently or as part of a team of rehabilitation specialists, including the assessment of functional and physical conditions, treatment with movement and physical factors, prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The general overall impression of the study programme is positive and is based on the feedback received from all those involved in the meetings, including the program leaders, staff/teachers, students, alumni, and social partners. The expert panel was collectively disappointed that despite being capable of speaking and conversing in English, attendees to the meeting chose not to speak in English.

The expert panel finds that the programme conforms to the general needs and expectations of society, especially in the region of Klaipėda, and that there is a strong link to society. However, the programme is very poorly linked to a wider international market and internationalisation is not viewed as an essential contribution to the quality of the programme. Whilst this may serve the purpose of the programme on a local level, the external panel notes that it is limiting for the graduates.

The study aims, outcome and content of the physiotherapy study programme meet the needs of the Lithuanian labour market, and specifically appear to address the local context of the region. The learning outcomes are not written in a manner that is universally understood, and this places the graduates at a disadvantage when seeking the recognition of their qualifications in a foreign jurisdiction. The programme is also not structured in a modular format and attention must be given to remain contemporary.

The link between studies and science on a research level was seriously hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and this is understandable. However, the external panel perceived a general apathy towards research.

Student admission and support processes demonstrate academic flexibility with implemented and well-established support systems for the students. The low admission score requirement for studying on state non-funded places does not appear to reap benefit.

The College demonstrates a very strong social responsibility particularly in the manner it addressed vulnerable students. Ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs seems to be a priority for the College community and the external panel was impressed by this.

The teaching staff levels are adequate and a majority of the academic members in the programme have a physiotherapy education background. These teachers are not members of the national physiotherapy association which would be beneficial for national and international exposure.

The facilities and learning resources for theoretical lectures are adequate for small numbers of students. Despite a very positive approach towards the inclusion of vulnerable groups, access remains problematic especially for wheelchair users.

The procedures for quality management are implemented, and the conditions created to ensure evaluation by including stakeholders actively is noted, however more needs to be done to formalise the process in terms of transparency.

This final report reflects the findings of the expert panel and offer recommendations to continue evolving. This is fundamental. Quality assurance as a process is irrelevant without quality enhancement, at all stages. Quality assurance demands that a system of recognised procedures to establish standards, as well as means of reaching these standards, be in place. But not taking deliberate action to continually improve education programmes, and practices, would render quality assurance an orphan. This is important especially in the context of the recommendations that are made, and that need to be addressed in a timely manner.

These are a few of the key strengths that we wish to highlight:

Strengths of the program:

- Ethos engrained in social responsibility.
- Good emphasis on social inclusion.
- Number of qualified teachers with a physiotherapy background ensures good outcomes for physiotherapist education.

**Expert panel chairperson signature:**

**Dr. John Xerri de Caro**