



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
OF MIDWIFERY
NEW STUDY PROGRAMME
at Klaipeda State College

Expert panel:

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STUDY PROGRAMME DATA

Title of the study programme	Midwifery
Group(s) of study fields	Health Sciences
Study field	Nursing and Midwifery
Type of the study programme	College studies
Study cycle	1st cycle studies
Mode of study and duration (in years)	3,5 (three and a half)
Volume of the study programme in credits	210
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor's degree in health sciences, Midwife

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I. INTRODUCTION

Klaipėdos Valstybinė Kolegija (hereinafter referred to as KVK or the College) is a state higher education institution of the Republic of Lithuania. The College was established in August 2009 and provides college-level higher education. In 2023, 900 students were enrolled in the KVK Faculty of Health Sciences.

The new first-cycle (bachelor) program in Midwifery (hereinafter referred to as the Program), which is planned to be implemented by Klaipėda State College (hereinafter referred to as the College or KVK), was evaluated by a group of experts formed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as SKVC or the Center). The purpose of the external evaluation is to analyze the quality of the Program and provide recommendations for improving the study program.

The group of experts began the external evaluation by examining the Program descriptor and its appendices (hereinafter referred to as the Descriptor). In evaluating the Program, they utilized the laws governing college studies and other normative legal acts, including the following:

- Methodology for the Evaluation of New Study Programs (approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149).
- Descriptor of the Study Field of Nursing and Midwifery (approved by Order No. V-1255 of the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on 9 July 2021).
- Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies (approved by Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on 30 December 2016).
- The letter dated 14 April 2023 from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (No. 10-1697), which approves the College's intention to carry out the first-cycle study program in Midwifery, along with other documents required for the external assessment.

During the evaluation of the Descriptor and its documents, the experts requested an additional document that would outline the Program's subjects/modules in which students meet the EU Directive requirements for midwifery education.

On March 15, 2024, a group of experts visited KVK, where they met with the College administration, the developers of the Program descriptor, the intended teachers of the Program, and social partners interested in the professionals to be trained under the Program. They also visited the material resources that will be used for studies, including classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. At the end of the visit, the College representatives were briefed on the general observations made by the expert group.

On April 2024, the draft of the Report was prepared and submitted to the SKVC which was sent to the Programme promoters for information and comments on factual errors.

The College was invited to correct the Programme within 10 working days. Based on experts' recommendations, improved documents were submitted:

- descriptor of the midwifery study program;
- course (subject) descriptions of the Midwifery program;
- other improvements of the midwifery study program in line with experts' recommendations.

Following the reception of the changes made by the Programme promoters to the Programme Descriptor, the Panel assessed the changes made and added to the report of the Programme evaluation accordingly. The final report was submitted to the SKVC in May 2024.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

- *Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the study programme to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEI's operating in exile conditions).*

KVK applied for a totally new programme - "Midwifery" - at Western Lithuania Region. Only two Lithuanian HEI prepare midwives at this moment - both situated in Kaunas. Due to social - economical reasons, graduates stay working in Kaunas region and Western Lithuania Region already feels a lack of midwives, working both at inpatient and outpatient clinics. To analyse the exact necessity of those specialists, during 2020 a survey was held among different level clinics at Western Lithuania region. The results show that the society of midwives who already work in the field is getting older and the possibilities for young specialists to work autonomously and independently are growing due to changing laws and medical practice norms.

Shortage of midwives is anticipated in 2030 due to ageing and retirement and also due to national legislation that predicts midwife in every gynaecologic community health centre till 2030. Obstetricians are anticipated to focus on complications and care of pathological cases and should be replaced by midwives for physiological pregnancies. Additionally, some of medical tasks will be taken over by nurses and midwives.

During expert group meetings with social partners as future employers, all stated that necessity for additional midwifery study programme is obvious and that they are willing to support and mentor young midwives as autonomous specialists.

The content of the studies was defined based on information from the field of nursing and midwifery, but also other professional fields, research, examples of good practice abroad, and cooperation with social partners. Employer suggestions in the development of the midwifery program resulted in the inclusion of Perinatal

Psychology, and Prenatal Diagnostics and Basic Ultrasound Training topics in the program. The involvement of social partners resulted in the inclusion of more topics related to primary midwifery care.

Expert group agrees that it is very important to prepare young, autonomous midwives with modern evidence based medical knowledge, in order to fulfil the needs and possible future shortage. The prepared programme fulfils indicators in this field – it covers main midwifery competencies, however it is a reply to national needs and is adapted to the Lithuanian vision of employment strategy for midwifery.

- *Evaluation of the conformity of the study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI.*

KVK mission, objectives of activities and strategy are certified and approved by Council since March 28, 2023.

KVK mission is to offer high-quality studies, based on professional practice, applied scientific research and experimental development, also to create conditions for lifelong learning: cooperation with representatives of local communities and authorities, contribute to the region's sustainable development; to build a competent staff by rational use of financial and material resources, developing organisational values; developing personal and community's abilities to engage in creative thinking and meaningful action.

All this mentioned above, aligns with main Midwifery study programme aim submitted in the documents - to prepare a highly-qualified specialist,- and probable outcomes - to be able to apply training and leadership skills in the vocational activities of midwife, be able to individually organise and implement family reproductive healthcare, to assist and support women and their families before labour, during labour and in the post-partum period; to conduct applied research in the field of midwifery enabling individual lifelong learning and development of evidence-based midwifery; to integrate the knowledge of midwifery and nursing, ethics, natural, social sciences, humanities, and other fields in implementing research-and-practice-based care of pregnant women, women in labour, newborns, postpartum women and women with gynaecological issues.

Expert group agrees that prepared study programme complies not only with KVK, but also with Klaipeda city strategic priorities.

- *Evaluation of the compliance of the study programme with legal requirements.*

KVK prepared a study programme “Midwifery” according to “Order on Approval Of The Descriptor Of The Study Field Of Nursing And Midwifery” provided by the Minister Of Education, Science And Sport Of The Republic Of Lithuania.

As it is stated at the Descriptor, study program and outcomes were formulated according several legal acts: Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of

the Council of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System ('the IMI Regulation'), the Law on the Recognition of Regulated Professional Qualifications of the Republic of Lithuania, Law on Nursing Practice and Midwifery Practice of the Republic of Lithuania, Standards and guidelines for quality assurance and Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area, the Framework of the Study Cycle, the General Framework of the Requirements for the implementation of the studies, Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Studies, Lithuanian Medical Standard MN 40:2021 midwife.

After careful evaluation of the prepared study program and after the interviews with future teachers during a visit on March 15, 2024, an expert group strongly suggests going through the EU directive for Midwifery education more thoroughly again and creating an instrument that each student has to fulfil, so that in the end of the study programme it could be verified that every student got all theoretical and practical requirements of the EU directive requirements.

- *Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the study programme.*

The program is logically composed with regard to content and it has a logical timeframe. Learning outcomes are precise and midwifery related, with inclusion of interprofessional collaboration and research. The programme prepares midwives also to conduct applied research in the field of midwifery, enabling individual lifelong learning and development of evidence-based midwifery.

Learning outcomes are well reflected on the subjects and these are well underpinned with literature. Well balanced theory/practical ration/practical work is included and self-study work is made explicit. There is coherency between aims and learning outcomes and structure of the programme, its assessment methods and final competency profile of the graduate.

During the visit on the 15th of March 2024, the social partners were clear that they were willing and able to provide clinical placements for midwifery students and supervision in the practice area.

- *Evaluation of the totality of the study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students.*

The programme is well structured – with balanced theoretical and practical parts of the study. Internships form one third of the overall ECTS point, which is sufficient with regard to EU directive for the field of midwifery.

From the documents enclosed and visiting meetings, experts could conclude that there is 2349 hours of clinical training; 2300 being enough to satisfy the requirements of EU directive. The anticipated students' workload, equivalent to one credit, varies from 26 to 27 hours. The calculation of the workload will be monitored based on various

monitoring and student survey methods. There is a logical and progressive increase in hours of internships over the respective years.

The social partners were willing and eager to provide the upcoming students with clinical placements and will ensure that clinical mentors – midwives will supervise the students during the clinical training. To enable sufficient placements for midwifery students, we recommend that placements for nurses and midwives to be periodised between the study programs.

- *Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of the study programme according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes.*

Students are provided with opportunities to individualise their studies from the fourth semester by offering free electives (6 credits) from the list of free electives. They can also choose by themselves the topic for final thesis.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. Proposed study programme is well structured, with the required part of practical training (2300 hours).
2. Study aims, learning outcomes are coherent with the structure of the programme and curriculum design; we conclude that the proposed study programme can achieve internationally defined midwifery competencies.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for the field of study aims, outcomes and content mostly. But we propose the following improvement:

Areas for improvement:

1. We recommend that midwifery is more clearly and explicitly described throughout the curriculum, course content, and research. Even though nursing has a lot related to midwifery, they are separate professions that should be clearly stated throughout the curriculum.
2. KVK has to develop an instrument that each student will be monitored to achieve all EU directive requirements till the end of the study.

The aspect to be improved is not relevant after the correction of the Program made by the College.

2.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

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

The Descriptor of the planned midwifery program at KVK describes an activity in research, however as described in the submitted documentation, the research is especially within the field of nursing.

The study program is built upon the aim to have evidence-based care and applied research conducted in methodological courses within the curriculum. The use of midwifery-related research is not that clear from the documentation. It might be since midwifery program is at this moment not a study program at KVK yet. Midwifery research is an own field within research and has a main role as the core of evidence-based care within midwifery. Midwifery students must therefore get a strong base of evidence-based midwifery knowledge in their education. In such way they will develop strong identity. Applied professional care should have a strong base derived from midwifery evidence-based knowledge.

During the visit to KVK on the 15th of March 2024, it became clear that all teaching is as in the Descriptor planned to be evidence and research based. The general studies as well as common methodology will be taught in common with nursing students. It was also clear that the research within nursing is active and strong. The midwifery thesis written by the students will be done by an experimental method involving the social partners, which sounds interesting and innovative. It is however a bit unclear how the topics are going to be formed, therefore we suggest that the topics of the midwifery thesis should be midwifery related.

- *Evaluation of the link between the content of the study programme and the latest developments in science, art and technology.*

As written in the document, submitted by the College, research, publication, and presentation at academic conferences are a part of the academic activities at KVK. Scientific publications and presentations as well as projects in nursing are well described and show a high level of activity. The fact that the teachers are given resourced working hours for research is strongly supported by expert panel.

Nurses and midwives are related professions, but independent and distinct. Similarly, they have profession-specific research as a foundation. The profession-specific research should be clearly described in the education program. A clarification of evidence-based midwifery and research in the curriculum, course content, and research/projects is therefore proposed by the expert group.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. The applied research and publications within nursing is clearly defined, however midwifery (in terms of research, evidence-based knowledge and practice) is a distinct field.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for this field good, however the following improvement has to be done:

Areas for improvement:

1. It has to be more clearly stated what midwifery thesis' topics are going to be proposed in order to build a strong core of midwifery evidence based knowledge that will re-define midwifery practice when applied.

The aspect to be improved is not relevant after the correction of the Program made by the College.

2.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

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

Student admission to KVK is organised in a centralised system. The admission of students to the College is based on the LAMA BPO (Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions), documents of the Minister of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania which regulate general admission to higher education institutions and the rules of admission of students of KVK approved by the Director of the College.

The Descriptor provides specific information on the admission procedures. After completing general education, students must pass the state matriculation exams in mathematics, Lithuanian language and literature and a free-choice exam in order to apply for a state-funded and non-state-funded study places. It is important to note that this competition score does not apply to applicants who are exempted from the state matriculation examinations due to illness. In addition, applicants may be given additional points on the basis of the basic criteria set out in the admission rules.

The official College website explains the entry score: for all 2024 students applying for state-funded and non-state-funded study places, the 2024 entry score will be announced not later than 1 June 2024. In the midwifery study programme, the highest weighting coefficient (0.4) will be assigned to the Biology matriculation examination, while the weighting coefficients of the other matriculation examinations would be 0.2.

Information on admission rules and minimum requirements are publicly available on the official website of Klaipėda State College in the section for students called „Applicants”.

The experts consider that the student selection and admission process, criteria are clear and appropriate.

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

According to the Programme's authors, on 12 November 2020, the Academic Council of KVK approved the description of the College's procedure for partial crediting of study results, which sets out the procedure for crediting of study results according to the agreed and the unmatched content of studies.

Credit for partial learning outcomes based on the agreed content of the studies is evaluated on the basis of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). These equivalences define the values of the European Credit Transfer System scores, the percentage level of achievement of the objectives of each subject, the approximate equivalent of the national grade and the consequences of the assessment.

The crediting of partial study results in accordance with the unmatched content of studies is carried out in accordance with the KVK partial study results crediting procedure, which assesses the formal requirements of the study results and their compliance with the subject requirements of the desired study programmes.

The Descriptor specifies that once the content of the studies has been agreed, persons who have studied at another higher education institution or at a foreign higher education institution on the basis of a partial study agreement, an agreement between the College and the foreign higher education institution or on any other legal basis, will be able to credit their study results without any restrictions.

Recognition of competences of persons wishing to continue their studies at a higher education institution shall be approved in accordance with the Procedure for Recognition of Competences Acquired in Formal Education as Part of the Study Programme of KVK. It is important to note that the provisions contained in this description apply only to those persons who have acquired competences as part of a vocational training programme.

In order to ensure the individualisation of studies, the College implements the Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition of Learning Achievements in Non-formal and Informal Learning and Self-learning. These procedures set out the procedures by which individuals with practical work experience, who have acquired knowledge and skills in non-formal learning environments or who have participated in non-formal training programmes, can formalise their non-formal learning outcomes.

- *Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students.*

According to the Programme descriptor and the social support measures listed on the official website of the higher education institution, it can be stated that the social support of KVK includes opportunities for active leisure time and it offers to join various groups, assessing the student's interests, offers participation in activities related to career and science-related competences development, such as "Students' Scientific Society", "Pre-school education pedagogues' club", "Young medical school". In addition, the College provides free individual psychological counselling to help students resolve their difficulties. The place and time of the psychological counselling is agreed individually. It is also important to note that students with special needs have the opportunity to fill in a questionnaire at the beginning of each academic year via the Moodle platform, where they can express their special needs.

Financial support at KVK is provided in several ways in accordance with the Regulations on Granting Scholarships to Students of KVK. Financial incentives are provided to active students with high grades, students who have demonstrated excellence in the fields of art, sports and science. In addition, persons with disabilities studying at the College may be granted targeted support and students with financial difficulties may pay for their studies in instalments. It is important to note that students studying at their own expense and successfully completing the session may be eligible for a state-funded place if one becomes available. The best-performing students may be reimbursed for the actual tuition fees paid or part of them from the state budget.

Academic support is provided to students through appropriate access to the library, study tools and IT applications. Lecturers advise students on various issues that arise for them. There is also a Study and Career Centre for students who want to access career management services.

- *Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling.*

Students receive the personal support they need through regular contact with their mentors. E-communication tools and face-to-face meetings are used to advise students and provide information about their studies. An "Induction Week" is organised to familiarise students with the study process, students' rights and obligations, study documents, the study programme, requirements and information retrieval systems.

At the end of the first semester, a survey of first-year students is carried out in order to determine the effectiveness of the adaptation programme. Student representatives are included in the Study Programme Committee, the Academic Council and the Council of KVK. This ensures the dissemination of information on developments in the field of studies. Career days are organised for students every year to introduce them to career opportunities.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. A wide range of academic and social support for students is reported.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for the field of Student admission and support excellently, therefore no improvement has to be made.

Areas for improvement:

None.

2.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

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

The whole study process is organised in semesters. During the first lecture of each module, lecturer provide students with information of this module aims, outcomes, methods of studying, evaluation forms, material, etc.

The content of the study programme is arranged in structured and logical way - beginning with fundamental lectures, laboratory and simulation practise, fundamental clinical practise and finishing with specific midwife profession related lectures, simulations and final clinical practise during final semesters of study programme. Students are allowed to choose free elective studies (6 ECTS), that are not necessarily related with the Midwife study programme, for example: "Stress and the Basics of Self-Regulation" or "Massage".

Individual assignments are encouraged and organised in team work-based groups. Student clinical practice is held at Health Care Institutions. Klaipeda University Hospital, as the main social partner, has established a mentor programme - trained mentors will support students during their whole clinical practise, will help them to fulfil their practise diaries and will help them to achieve clinical practise requirements.

Evaluation system at Klaipeda State College encourages students to actively participate in the whole study process - not only final examinations are held, but also interim evaluations, individual projects, self - evaluations, etc. The final ten grading system is used. How the final score is achieved depends on the module and is presented during the first lecture of each module. The whole process is regulated based on Klaipeda State College Procedure for Evaluation of the Study Outcome.

Learning to become an independent midwife is a lifelong learning process. The competencies are gained in education by theory and practice from colleagues and partners. For a midwifery student, colleagues and future colleagues include not only fellow students in their study group but also midwifery students at other universities and midwives working in clinical settings. Enabling cooperation between students during their studies is a start to collegiality in future working life. Cooperation between midwifery education programs is not only fruitful for the students but also for the teachers as they can develop their own competence and learning processes, content, and implementation of competence learning through cooperation. National cooperation is recommended and getting international contacts already during the studies and between programs, especially those following the same EU directives, is a strength of the program.

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

Klaipeda State College has adapted their environment for students with various disabilities - movement impairment, hearing impairment, etc.

Students with special needs are gathered at the beginning of the study process to evaluate what exact support is necessary. Klaipeda State College encourages students to participate in Governmental funding programs for additional scholarships. College provides psychological help, organises individual meetings with lecturers, and can adapt study programme according to individual needs.

Being able to perform independent midwifery work does not mean working alone. The midwife has a broad cooperation network both within and across professions. As a student, the learning environment should be safe and respectful where the student learns the future competence and profession under supervision. The documents submitted by KVK show that students receive support and guidance from the program leaders and the college management.

Simulation training is an obvious part of the studies and allows training and growth of the professional identity. The cooperation project with the supervisors in the field of practice described in the Descriptor hopefully supports students' studies and identity development. Also, the multi-professional cooperation during the education between the different education programs initiates further multi-professional cooperation in the clinical context and future working life.

Cooperation between national midwifery education programs is not only fruitful for the students but also for the teachers as they can develop their own competence and learning processes, content, and implementation of competence learning through cooperation. National cooperation is recommended and getting international contacts already during the studies and between programs, especially those following the same EU directives, can strengthen the program.

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

Students, attending Klaipeda State College, sign a study agreement and a Declaration of Academic Integrity. Also, College has established and integrated the Code of Academic Ethics, according to which meetings between department heads, curators and students are held in order to discuss the policy and the implementation of Academic integrity principles.

KVK has a non - discriminative and tolerance policy and all academic community members encountering violations of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, can submit a written complaint to the chair of Commission of Academic Ethics.

From the documents submitted by KVK and at the visit to the College on the 15th of April, 2024, the cooperation project with the supervisors in the clinical setting was presented. Experts see that this kind of project will support students' studies and identity development. The multi-professional cooperation in education between the education programs initiates further multi-professional cooperation in the clinical context and can provide competencies for working life.

- *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.*

Klaipeda State College has a clear examination appeal system, according to "Procedure for Appeal Submission and Examination". Students who are not satisfied with the final grade, the evaluation process or other reasons, can appeal to the dean or the deputy director, the deadlines are also specified in the documents.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. Study programme has the potential to develop autonomous midwives, however strong collaboration with clinical mentors is needed in order to apply evidence based knowledge in the practice.
2. Social partners support new study programme and are prepared to be involved in the practical training of the students, they state to employ the graduates.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for this field very well; we have proposed only long-term recommendations (at the end of this document).

Areas for improvement:

None

2.5. TEACHING STAFF

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

- *Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a study programme at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes.*

As provided in the submitted documentation, the institution has 24 lectures from the field of Nursing and Midwifery, however looking at the basic (undergraduate education), the list of staff did not reveal any midwives. It is crucial that midwifery students are taught by midwives, since professional identity and belonging is also formed within the curriculum. Since midwifery is a separate profession from nursing, a strong core of midwifery teacher is needed to raise autonomous and independent midwifery graduates.

During the visit at KVK that was performed on the 15th of March 2024, it became obvious that the problem was in translation of the staff list (instead of midwifery, the term obstetrics was used). Course will be led by a midwife and she (with other colleagues) is also involved in theoretical teaching of midwifery subjects.

Due to national standards for teaching staff in colleges (level of education and professional title), there is a limited number of midwives who can hold the position of a teacher. They might have basic midwifery education and had gained afterwards MSc and PhD in other disciplines (for example nursing), since MSc and PhD in midwifery is not possible to achieve in Lithuania yet. Therefore the study programme is developed multi-disciplinary; since there is not enough midwifery teachers, other professionals teach subjects like (for example) Perinatal psychology, Biochemistry, Anthropology etc., which is (at current situation) a reasonable and sensible solution that can even promote interprofessional cooperation. Teachers have sufficient didactic experience, collaborate and publish internationally and are involved in scientific work. They are

numerous enough to achieve learning outcomes of the proposed curriculum. However, for the future, it is recommended that midwifery teachers' core grows stronger and separates from the related fields of nursing and obstetrics.

Clinical mentors for the midwifery students will be midwives in clinical settings. Clinical mentors have rich professional experiences. Social partners confirmed their involvement in the practical training of midwifery students; in general, there is a strong and obvious support from social partners for the establishment of midwifery study. It is recommended that the College prepares students' diaries for them to record gathered procedures that are prescribed by EU directive for the field of midwifery. College staff also need to inform clinical mentors what are the EU requirements for practical training of midwifery students, so that they will be able to offer them necessary educational opportunities.

- *Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff.*

As written in the documents, submitted by the College, teachers' qualification improvement is ensured, following the national document, issued by the Minister of Education, science and Sport. Management of the college financially supports teacher's development, enabling them to join courses, workshops and lectures that provide them with additional knowledge. Participation on especially international) professional events, publishing and research activities are also strongly supported.

Competence improvement cycle of staff is a good example of quality monitoring, where plans for annual individual development are being made on the basis of lecturer view, students' evaluation and the needs of the institution.

Clinical mentors have rich practical professional experience and College prepared for them special training programme (duration 48 hours), however they need to be supported in gaining evidence based midwifery practices, so that students will not face theory practice gap in the future, where evidence based knowledge would be lectured, while practical experiences will not follow the updates in the profession. Since practical training is an important part of midwifery study; clinical mentors should also be supported in gaining new knowledge and competencies.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. Multidisciplinary teachers' team is numerous enough and sufficiently didactically skilled to achieve study outcomes of the proposed curriculum, however in the future (as a long-term goal) - more midwives need to be included in the theoretical part of the study programme.
2. Clinical midwives who will be mentoring midwifery students in the clinical settings have rich professional experience to adequately train midwifery students; college staff has to inform them about EU requirements for practical training in the field of midwifery.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for this field very good; we have proposed only long-term recommendations (at the end of this document).

Areas for improvement:

None

2.6. FACILITIES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

- *Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the study programme to ensure an effective learning process.*

The link between theory and clinical work needs to provide a smooth transition for the students, gaining practical skills in simulation rooms. Simulations are planned from the 1st year of the study (starting with basic skills), throughout the 4th year (where advanced skills are taught). In the simulation centre teachers have support, by a member of staff who received additional knowledge in using all the simulators. We believe that in this way, provided simulations will be of high quality. Simulation practices are used only for bridging the theory and clinical settings, they are not replacing clinical hours, prescribed by the EU directive.

The skills of the midwifery students are developed at practical training laboratories using modern medical equipment. Simulation training involves simulating real-life situations of taking care of patients in hospital settings. Procedure simulations enable students to create various clinical situations in a safe environment and develop students' practical skills in finding solutions to various scenarios with no harm to the patient. The equipment, measures, and their purpose for skills and simulation training is well underpinned, well explained and adequate for the purposes of midwifery education and to meet the learning outcomes. The equipment we have seen at the college provides sufficient opportunities to prepare students for the clinical training. In the discussions with the teachers and the coordinator for the simulation center at KVK we understood that the teachers who are acting as facilitators in the simulation center are constantly developing their own skills and teaching methodology within the simulation as a didactical tool.

According to assessment of the expert group the College has a sufficient number of places for students' clinical training. In the conversation with social partners the wish for a midwifery study programme was expressed very clearly and they also confirmed their preparedness to be involved in the practical part of the study programme. The mentoring program that has already been used for nursing students for supervising students in the practice, was to our information planned to be used also for the midwifery students. We see this as an excellent way of doing collaboration between theory and practice and will benefit the students learning.

The students of the study programme also use the well-equipped library, innovative laboratory and computer equipment. For the research and statistical analysis, they can use eg. SPSS. The internet access is provided to the students and different databases are available for them to search for the relevant professional resources, with e-books sources included. Books from the field of midwifery, neonatology, obstetrics and nursing are also available as hard copies in sufficient amounts.

The facilities are adapted also for impaired students (including simulation laboratory for simulations). We concluded that facilities and resources available are adequate.

- *Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the study programme.*

The needs are discussed with teachers, considering students' needs and wearing out of the equipment. Teachers and programme developers reported that every year funding is dedicated to update resources (new manikins, books or access to databases). In the past year a major sum was devoted for buying the equipment especially useful for midwifery studies and in the next year a purchase of midwifery books is planned.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. College has sufficient resources to prepare midwifery students with regard to practical skills before entering clinical settings. Expert panel praises that they have a technician (person who is highly qualified to prepare simulations for teachers and students) that will support simulation experiences.
2. Students can access the library and its services such as databanks, e-books, laboratories, and computers for self-study and research.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for the field of Facilities and learning resources excellently, therefore no improvement has to be made.

Areas for improvement:

None

2.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY

The evaluation area is analysed according to the following indicators:

- *Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies.*

KVK ensures the quality of the studies by conducting the processes of internal and external quality assessment, preparation and implementation of the improvement plan, continuous monitoring. Additionally a Management of the Study Process (planning, organising, implementation, monitoring) is in line. Quality assurance goals are implemented by their annual evaluation and analysis of the study process (progress, student attrition, and satisfaction). The results of the feedback and studies are analysed by the head of the department and the committee of the study programme – they also analyse the data, find improvement opportunities and decide on the measures to be integrated into the improvement of the study programme or the study process.

The validity of the study outcome will be evaluated by the Committee of the Study Programme after the graduation of one generation of students. Competence improvement cycle of staff (as described in the documents provided) is a good example of quality monitoring.

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

Student achievements are regarded as the outcome and are based on clear and objective criteria. The student evaluation system helps to formulate and monitor the progress and assess the level of the study outcome achieved, exchange feedback with the students and create opportunities for the improvement of the study programme.

There are annual student, lecturer, graduate, and employer surveys regarding the study programme, and their results are analysed to determine specific issues to be solved, which are tackled immediately or involve an introduction of additional measures to be included into the planning of the department. In all cases, survey participants receive feedback both after the surveys and after the application of the measures, monitoring the improvement of the student satisfaction with the study quality and the efficiency of the measures adapted on the annual basis.

Social partners take part in the study programme improvement process directly by giving suggestions on competencies, which should be acquired by students of the Nursing and Midwifery field of studies.

Main distinctive features of the area:

1. Quality assurance protocols are well established and already performed in other fields of studies in KVK.

Expert panel concludes that the proposed Midwifery study programme fulfils the required Indicators for the field of Study quality management and publicity, therefore no improvement has to be made.

Areas for improvement:

None

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that the higher education institution have to take into account within 10 working days of the receipt of the draft report.

1. We recommend that midwifery is more clearly and explicitly described throughout the curriculum, course content, and research. Even though nursing has a lot related to midwifery, they are separate professions that should be clearly stated throughout the curriculum.

KVK submitted an updated structure of the Program within 10 working days. The recommendation has been implemented.

Other recommendations:

1. KVK has to develop an instrument that each student will be monitored in order to achieve all EU directive requirements till the end of the study.

The recommendation has been implemented.

2. It has to be more clearly stated what midwifery thesis' topics are going to be proposed in order to build a strong core of midwifery evidence based knowledge that will re-define midwifery practice when applied.

***KVK submitted an updated structure of the Program within 10 working days.
The recommendation has been implemented.***

3. We recommend that the midwifery program to collaborate with other midwifery education within the country and internationally. The midwife students from KVK will be colleagues with the midwife students from other educations in Lithuania and abroad. The collaboration between the upcoming colleagues can strengthen the midwifery identity and the midwife profession.

4. We recommend that in the long term College management help midwifery teachers' core to grow more numerous and stronger and needs to support professional development of the midwifery teachers in their own field (MSc and PhD in midwifery). They need to be supportive for midwifery study programme to later on evolve as an entity on its own; separately from nursing and obstetrics.

5. For the future we recommend developers of the programme to connect more tightly to social partners and provide them with exact information what EU requirements students need to fulfil in clinical settings, so that clinical mentors will provide midwifery students with suitable educational situations in order to get practical skills and competencies needed.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The first cycle study programme Midwifery at Klaipėda State College is given positive/negative evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1	Study aims, outcomes and content	4
2	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3	Student admission and support	5
4	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5	Teaching staff	4
6	Learning facilities and resources	5
7	Study quality management and public information	5
	Total:	31

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of 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.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Associate professor dr. Ana Polona Mivšek
(signature)