



**STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**  
**CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

---

**MARKETING FIELD OF STUDY**

**SMK HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**Expert panel:**

1. Panel chair: Dr. Kristiina Tõnisson
2. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tomaš Kincl
3. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Giedrius Romeika
4. Student representative: Joana Jasilionytė

**SKVC coordinator:** Daiva Buivydienė

Report prepared in November, 2024  
Report language: English

# CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS .....	3
1.2. REVIEW PANEL .....	4
1.3. SITE VISIT .....	4
1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW .....	5
<b>II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM .....	7
AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS .....	11
AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION .....	13
AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS .....	14
AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT .....	16
AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS .....	19
AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT .....	20
AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS .....	24
AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF .....	25
AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS .....	26
AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES.....	28
AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS .....	29
AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION .....	29
AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS .....	32
<b>V. SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>33</b>

# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal. On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

## **1.2. REVIEW PANEL**

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Dr. Kristiina Tõnisson
2. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tomaš Kincl
3. Academic member: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Giedrius Romeika
4. Student representative: Joana Jasilionytė

## **1.3. SITE VISIT**

The site visit was organised on 17 October 2024 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty;
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER;
- Teaching staff;
- Students;
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

## 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

### Overview of the HEI

SMK Higher Education institutions (hereinafter – SMK) is a non-state higher education institution, operating since 1994. The headquarters of the SMK was established and operates in Klaipėda. Since 1999 the SMK has had its branch in Vilnius and since 2018 – in Kaunas. Currently the SMK is the largest non-state higher education institution in Lithuania. According to the data of 1 October 2023 the SMK has 4230 students from Lithuania and 139 foreign students, who came for full studies, 263 teachers, including 54 with a doctorate degree.

Since its establishment the SMK has had more than 12000 graduates (the first graduates were in 1997). In 2019-2023.4407 graduates were awarded professional bachelor. The SMK implements 23 study programmes in 13 study fields - Informatics; Nursing and Midwifery; Design; Cosmetology; Law; Management; Business; Communication; Finance; Tourism and Recreation; Marketing; Programme Systems; Media Art. 5 study programmes are implemented in English. i.e. International Business, Marketing and Advertising Creation, Programming and Multimedia, General Practice Nursing, Video Creation and Media.

### Overview of the study field

The study field of Marketing and Advertising Creation at SMK College of Applied Sciences is designed to address the growing demand for professionals in the marketing and advertising sectors. With 426 students enrolled as of October 2023—231 in the Vilnius branch, 136 in Kaunas, and 59 in Klaipėda—the program offers a framework for both theoretical and practical learning. The program spans 180 ECTS credits over three years for full-time studies and four years for part-time, with a strong emphasis on practical application through internships (30 ECTS credits) and a final thesis (10 ECTS credits). Since 2022, the program has also been available in English, attracting 57 international students, and it is recognized as one of Lithuania's most popular study fields. Graduates are awarded a Professional Bachelor in Business Management, aligning with the Lithuanian and European Qualifications Framework.

### Previous external evaluations

The previous evaluation by experts of an international external evaluation was conducted in 2021. Following the recommendations of the group of experts, the program was accredited for a period of 3 years. Most of the evaluation areas of the program received a good grades, with the overall score of 20, although *Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum* and *Links between science (art) and studies* were evaluated satisfactory. In the conclusions of the evaluation report, international experts provided 18 recommendations. All recommendations have been taken into account, putting the biggest efforts to react into the recommendations related with the areas evaluated satisfactory.

### Documents and information used in the review.

The following documents and/or information have been provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information were used by the review panel: lecturer's plan-activity report for the academic year and the statistical information regarding material assets acquired during the reference period (2021-2024) for research activities.

## II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

### First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	Marketing and Advertising Creation
State code	6531LX055
Type of study (college/university)	College studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	full-time, 3 years part-time, 4 years
Workload in ECTS	180
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Professional Bachelor's degree in Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Secondary Education
First registration date	March 31, 2011
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	-

### III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the Marketing field of study is given a **positive/negative** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points <sup>1*</sup>
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	4
<b>Total:</b>		<b>24</b>

### IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI
------	---

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

##### 1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

The aim of the MAC SP (*to train Marketing and Advertising specialists, who are able to plan and manage marketing processes in an organization, to initiate and implement marketing projects that meet the needs of an organization and consumers, to organize and implement the processes of creating advertising that complies with the characteristics of target segments, to carry out professional activities in accordance with the principles of creativity and professional ethics*) is justified and supported by comprehensive analysis of the marketing field, supported by national and European strategic documents, market research, and surveys with industry stakeholders. The analysis provided in the SER highlights the importance of marketing competencies, including digital skills, creativity, and adaptability to new technologies, essential for meeting modern market demands. Statistical data on employment trends and salary levels are also provided, underscoring

<sup>1\*</sup>

**1 (unsatisfactory)** - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are substantial shortcomings that hinder the implementation of the programmes in the field.

**2 (satisfactory)** - the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

**3 (good)** - the area is being developed systematically, without any substantial shortcomings.

**4 (very good)** - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings.

**5 (exceptional)** - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

the increasing demand for marketing professionals in Lithuania and internationally. The learning outcomes are in line with the mission of the study programme, although experts consider the number of learning outcomes to be too extensive (12 learning outcomes in total). Some of the learning outcomes (e.g. *able to apply the latest knowledge, theories and concepts of economics, management, communication and other; able to carry out research using suitable qualitative and quantitative research methods; able to systematically and critically analyse and assess one's professional activity, knowledge and experience*) seem too ambitious for a professional bachelor's degree.

The report presents a competitive analysis, outlining how SMK's programme distinguishes itself by incorporating specific competencies in advertising alongside core marketing skills. The Experts panel values SMK's collaboration with employers and social partners to align the programme with industry needs. The alignment of the study programme with the needs of society and/or the labour market was further confirmed during the visit to the institution, where students, graduates, and social partners highlighted the employability of the programme graduates.

Regarding recommendations from the previous evaluation, SMK has implemented several structural improvements. A formalized review process now includes consistent stakeholder engagement, as outlined in the SMK Quality Guide and the Procedure of Feedback Provision. These updates reflect a proactive approach in responding to prior feedback, ensuring continuous alignment with institutional goals, and enhancing programme relevance. The expert panel commends SMK's integration of these recommendations for quality assurance and constant improvement of the study programme.

#### **1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy**

The SER demonstrates that SMK's mission emphasizes lifelong learning, personal development, and professional value creation, aligning well with the evaluated program's competencies. The learning outcomes reflect competencies in planning and managing marketing processes, as well as professional ethics and creativity, which resonate with the mission's focus on developing adaptable and ethically grounded professionals with strong practical skills in various areas of marketing. The visit to SMK confirmed the institution achieved a leap forward in internationalization strategy.

However, during the discussion with students, alumni and social partners, the experts also observed that, while students and graduates excel in mastering the practical 'how' of specific marketing-related activities, they may lack a deeper understanding of the underlying 'why.' This suggests that the program's strong practical orientation, while valuable, might benefit from a more balanced integration of theoretical frameworks and conceptual knowledge (esp. when strongly echoed in the learning outcomes of the study programme). Such an adjustment could not only enhance students' ability to critically analyse and explain the rationale behind their actions but also align the curriculum more closely with the broader intellectual objectives of higher education.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)**

The programme effectively aligns with the economic and societal needs of Lithuania and the broader labour market. The program's aims and learning outcomes are supported by market research and industry stakeholder input. The program prepares graduates to meet market demands. However, while the program's strengths lie in its focus on practical skills and its collaboration with employers and social partners, experts suggest a stronger theoretical foundation is necessary to balance its practice-oriented curriculum. While the experts acknowledge the progress SMK has made in advancing internationalization and emphasizing the development of practical skills, based on the meetings with students, alumni and social partners revealed that placing greater emphasis on the theoretical foundations underpinning practical competencies could further enhance alignment of SMK mission with the broader role of higher education institutions in society.



1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning, and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes
------	---

## FACTUAL SITUATION

### 1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The structure of the Study Programme meets requirements from the Descriptor of the General Requirements for Study Implementation: The Field course units - 152 credits; Internships of professional activity - 30 credits; Final thesis - 10 credits; Optional credits (or those set by the higher education institution) is 12. The total volume of the Programme in credits is 180, in hours 4800. Program aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the Descriptor of The Study Field of Marketing.

### 1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

The SER outlines the alignment between the learning aims, outcomes, and chosen teaching and assessment methods within the Marketing and Advertising Creation study programme. The report emphasizes that the study programme utilizes diverse, student-centred teaching methods like case studies, team projects, and creative problem-solving exercises to facilitate an interactive learning environment. The main axis of developed abilities comprises analytical and critical thinking and creativity. SMK applies its own experiential teaching methodology based on attention payment to the education of students as young professionals. However, during the meeting, the respondents did not present original methodologies used only in the SMK. Well-known and widely applied methods and examples of good practice, such as the "Flipped Classroom", a lot of attention to practical tasks presented by partners, and problem-based learning were mentioned. Assessment is based on a cumulative approach, incorporating interim assessments and final exams tailored to measure specific competencies according to Bloom's taxonomy. This approach ensures a comprehensive student knowledge and skills evaluation, culminating in a final thesis defence. A vital strength of the programme is its practical component, which includes guest lectures, company visits, and a majority of instructors with substantial business experience relevant to their courses.

Although students indicated that they had sufficient feedback on reaching learning objectives, the experts during the learning system demonstration concluded that the institution has an opportunity for improvement in the overall assessment of learning success (data analytics) or early detection of learning failures. Although the requirements within each course appear to be detailed and clearly articulated, there needs to be more explicit rubrics for detailed assessment.

### 1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

Considering the practical focus of the degree program, the curriculum is balanced in a mix of general and specific courses focused on specific marketing areas. General course units represent about 10 % of the study plan, whereas specific units account for almost two-thirds.

The institution regularly evaluates the development of the labour market and the demand of social partners. The curriculum is continuously adjusted according to external requirements and feedback (optional courses). The list of optional course units is approved by the Order of the SMK Director every academic year, taking into account the latest changes in the labour market and student needs, revealed during qualitative and quantitative meetings with students and social partners. During the meeting, sufficient evidence was collected that the program's improvement is actively being cooperated with social partners and students.

Experts appreciate that the institution reflected the recommendations of the previous evaluation and incorporated areas such as artificial intelligence or machine learning into the curriculum. Nevertheless, these changes are not reflected comprehensively in the entire curriculum; they only

take the form of limited courses added to the study plan. At the same time, the meeting with stakeholder groups revealed that several tools used in teaching these subjects are only available in freely available versions, which may contain only some available features. Here, too, it is under consideration whether curriculum development should be more systematic and part of strategic decision-making at the level of the entire program. The distribution of credits across semesters is balanced, assisting in maintaining a consistent study workload. During consultations (on-site and online), students can seek support and feedback to achieve the study programme's goals.

During the visit, the students appreciated the participation of practitioners and company experts in the teaching, although some would appreciate even more social partners and practical lessons. Some also indicated a need for more attention paid to free-riding in the managing and evaluating group tasks (which are common), as well as room for improvement in managing cultural differences between students (with an increasing share of students from other countries with different cultural norms).

A visit to the institution and interviews with students and social partners confirmed that student internships are an integral part of the curriculum and are given attention by the institution. This includes both the choice of partner companies where students carry out their internships and the monitoring of the progress of the internships and their subsequent evaluation.

#### **1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured**

To personalize their study preferences, students can choose from optional courses. The list of optional course units is approved by the Order of the SMK Director every academic year, taking into account the latest changes in the labour market and student needs, revealed during qualitative and quantitative meetings with students and social partners. Experts appreciate that the institution considered the recommendations from the previous evaluation and prepared optional courses in the field of entrepreneurship and the international environment. Nevertheless, social partners suggest including more subjects oriented to Marketing Data Analytics. During the visit, students confirmed that opportunities to personalize their studies are sufficient.

#### **1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle**

The procedures and regulations underlying the final thesis preparation, writing and defence are formulated and explicitly mentioned. These documents regulate the activities and functions of thesis supervisors, Head of Study Programme, reviewers, thesis defence committee members, and students. Social partners and alumni regularly participate in the final defence committees and boards. According to the SER, most students' final theses demonstrate good and very good achieved learning outcomes – the average evaluation of the final thesis in Marketing Study Field is approximately 8.4 (good). The final Thesis preparation process is organized according to the SMK General Requirements for Final Theses ( a schematized process of preparation also presented at SER). On the other hand, there are differences in the average evaluation of final theses between branches, which is a disparity that needs further attention.

From the process described in SER, the Head of the study programme has a considerable workload with the provision of final theses (meeting with students every month, organizing courses and training sessions to support the writing of final theses). The defended theses are mostly practically oriented, corresponding to the study programme aims and learning objectives. Only limited reflections of the marketing theoretical background and foundations can be seen from the theses presented. Experts suggest considering the formulation of thesis assignments in a way that better facilitates the application of theoretical frameworks to address the practical problems these works aim to solve. This approach could strengthen the connection between theoretical foundations and the practical skills students acquire during their studies. It could also enable more effective utilization of insights gained from courses focused on research methodology or working with academic literature.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)**

The Marketing and Advertising Creation program at SMK College of Applied Sciences aligns well with national and European standards, offering a structured 180 ECTS curriculum that integrates field-specific courses, internships, and a final thesis. The program emphasizes experiential learning, creativity, and practical skills through diverse teaching methods and collaborations with social partners, although the integration of advanced tools like AI remains limited. Final theses are generally strong (average score of 8.4) but show disparities across branches and limited theoretical depth. While students value practitioners and company experts' engagement and study personalization options, concerns include reliance on freely available tools, heavy workloads for program heads, and gaps in systematic curriculum development. Greater focus on theoretical underpinnings and advanced analytics would strengthen the program's academic rigor and sustainability. While the thesis process is well-structured and emphasizes practical outcomes, again, the theoretical grounding of student projects remains limited. Greater attention to systematically integrating theoretical concepts and enhancing the evaluation framework for group tasks could strengthen the programme's academic rigor and coherence.

## AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 1</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>			X		

## COMMENDATIONS

1. SMK has demonstrated responsiveness to prior evaluations by integrating modern topics such as artificial intelligence and machine learning into the curriculum and expanding options for elective courses to better align with industry trends.
2. Student internships are well-integrated into the curriculum, offering valuable practical experience and fostering employability. The institution actively collaborates with partner companies and monitors internship outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings:

1. Increase the emphasis on theoretical knowledge throughout the curriculum, particularly in courses and final theses, to balance the practice-oriented approach and align more closely with higher education standards.
2. Address inconsistencies in curriculum implementation, such as uneven incorporation of modern topics like AI and machine learning and ensure systematic integration across all courses.
3. Mitigate Group Work Challenges: introduce clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to address issues like free-riding in group projects and to better manage cultural differences among students, ensuring fair and effective collaboration.

For further improvement

1. **Expand Access to Advanced Tools:** provide students and faculty with access to fully functional versions of advanced tools for teaching modern topics like data analytics and AI, addressing the limitations of free versions currently in use.
2. **Increase Support for Internships:** allocate additional resources to manage and evaluate internships, reducing reliance on a small number of individuals and mitigating risks associated with growing student numbers.
3. **Boost Student Engagement with Research:** Improve the effectiveness of courses supporting thesis writing, ensuring students gain deeper insights into scientific research methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

## AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research
------	--

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

According to SER, strengthening of scientific activity is one of colleges strategic fields for 2021-2025. Provided results of scientific activities demonstrates positive tendencies. Number of collected points for scientific publications (after the annual research review made by Lithuanian Research Council) increased from 4 in 2020 to 119.02 points (6th place among Lithuanian colleges) in 2021 and 198.72 points (5th place) in 2022.

According to SER in the period 2023, SMK teachers individually and/or with co-authors have produced 4 publications in Web of Science; 1 in Scopus; 19 in other international databases; 12 in other peer-reviewed journals. 3 scientific studies and parts thereof. 20 artistic works have been published by SMK teachers.

In 2022 SMK teachers individually and/or with co-authors prepared 3 publications in Scopus database, 1 article in the publications of Conference reports in Web of Science database, 34 scientific works of teachers were ascribed as reports published in publications of other international databases. In 2022, there were 8 articles, 3 studies and 1 monograph published in other reviewed scientific publications.

2021 Web of Science database published 2 articles, there were 22 articles published in other international database publications, 7 articles published in other peer-reviewed scientific publications, 32 theses were submitted, 2 scientific studies were written and 5 theatre, design and film works by SMK teachers were published as works of art.

Since 2021 College itself has annually organised an international scientific conference "Societal Interactions: Rethinking Modern Issues". A peer-reviewed scientific journal founded in 2009 "Business and Law Current Affairs", 2021 became the property of College. College is an active organiser of applied conferences, forums, science popularisation events. In the period of 2021-2024, College prepared and implemented 34 projects, including 4 SRED projects, 20 national projects, 2 partner projects, and 8 international projects. It can be assumed that precisely these actions and initiatives of the College contributed to the observed growth of scientific production.

#### 2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

According to the SER, teachers actively encourage students during lectures and when carrying out independent or practical work tasks to use the databases subscribed by the College, in this way to access the latest and the most relevant scientific and methodical literature. In the descriptions of course units, teachers give the latest scientific literature in the Lithuanian and English languages dedicated to course learning. This actual situation was confirmed during the interview by both academic staff and students, providing examples of the latest scientific literature used in the study subjects, both theoretical and good practice elements from the teaching/study process. The College actively participates in the activities of professional and pedagogical associations and pays great attention to communication and cooperation with social partners in the implementation of practical-applied activities. And the results of this activity were confirmed by the examples presented by the students and teachers during the meetings with them.

#### 2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

The theoretical basis for participating in scientific activities is provided to students through course units "Theoretical Research Methodology", "Empirical Research Methodology". Since 2021 the College has organised the International Student Scientific-Practical Conference "Future Creators", where students can present the results of their carried-out research (on the basis of final thesis or other works, carried out in the study process).

From 2022 students can publish scientific articles prepared on the basis of the conference together with their supervisors in the magazine "Business and Law Current Affairs". Students are actively encouraged for participation in various national and international projects, events mostly dedicated to practical implementation of skills and knowledge. The conversation with the students during the meeting shows that they are aware of these opportunities and those interested are using them.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

SMK has a comprehensive system of promotion for research activities, with which the academic staff is well acquainted. 24.49 percent of SMK publications (24 out of the 98) have a direct or partial connection with the field of Marketing. The situation is stated by the abundant participation of teachers in the "home" conference or publication in the journal owned by the College. Most of the activities are focused on practical activities, the application of skills and knowledge in practical solutions. An half (2 out of 4) R&D project has relation with the field of marketing.

## AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

## COMMENDATIONS

1. SMK, in the initial (first) stage, adequately coped with the changes related to the increased requirements for scientific activities, ensured a sufficient quantitative growth of scientific production.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Acquiring a scientific journal and encouraging academic staff to publish in it is a possible way to start, but in the future, after acquiring the relevant competences and becoming stronger, it is recommended to avoid publishing in a "Home Journal" because it can hinder the development of academic staff and the development of scientific activities in the College.
2. In addition to applied research, it is recommended not to ignore and strengthen scientific research activities.
3. Encourage faculty to incorporate their research findings into classroom activities, enhancing the connection between theory and practice. Develop collaborative research opportunities

with alumni and social partners to create impactful projects that benefit both academia and industry.



## AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1.	Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes
------	---

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

Admission to the Programme is organised in accordance with the set of regulation documents of the Republic of Lithuania, listed at SER. The minimum admission requirements and structure of a competitive score by study fields are announced by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. Assessment of motivation for studies (motivational interview) is implemented for the entrants to the College (from 2019). Additional points are given to an entrant for winning in Olympiads and competitions and for other specific achievements (values of achievement criterion are updated and presented yearly in admission rules). Admission to the Programme is implemented only in state non-funded (paid) study places. The numbers of admitted students (2020-2023) differ when comparing all three study places (the smallest in the Klaipėda department, the largest in Vilnius), but the annual admission numbers in the same department vary within the weighted average, consistently. The average score of admitted students ranges from 4.32 (2022 in the Kaunas branch) to 5.54 (2022 in the Klaipėda branch). The lowest score of admitted students is 1.56 (Klaipėda branch in 2023) and 1.64 (Kaunas branch in 2021). It should be noted that according to the formal requirements, from 2023 the minimum competition score for non-state-funded places was set at 2.0. The above fact about the minimum score in the Klaipėda branch raises questions about how the College complies with the formal requirements. It should be noted that the highest minimum scores are recorded in the admission of the Program taught in English in the Vilnius branch (in 2021 and 2022). Since students who have graduated from schools both in Lithuania and abroad are admitted to study in the English-language program, experts cannot state that the system of recognition of qualifications obtained in foreign countries is radically different from the Lithuanian one (and because of this, the admission scores are much better). Moreover, Recognition of periods of studies and qualifications acquired abroad procedures are aligned with the relevant legal acts and requirements of the Republic of Lithuania.

#### 3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

According to the SER, recognition of periods of studies and qualifications acquired abroad in the SMK is implemented in accordance with the Republic of Lithuania Law on Science and Studies. College has an approved "Description of the Procedure of Recognition of the Competencies Acquired in a Manner of a Formal Education, as part of a Study Programme, for Persons, who Want to Continue Studies in the SMK", prepared in accordance with Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. The Description is applied for persons, who have acquired or who have been acknowledged at least level 4 qualification in accordance with the Description of Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and admitted to the first-cycle or integrated studies. According to the SER In 2020-2024 learning outcomes are credited to 720 students. Also in 2020-2024, learning outcomes were also credited to all students who participated in the Erasmus+ programme for periods of study/internship, in accordance with the credits foreseen and acquired under the tripartite Learning Agreement as well as the submitted learning (academic) certificate. After receiving the answers during the meeting from the representatives of the College administration and after getting acquainted with the results of accounting documents, it can be concluded that the procedures of recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning are properly regulated and properly implemented.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)



Based on the analysis of the submitted documents and data, it can be concluded that the process of student selection and admission is formally compatible with the learning aims and outcomes of the field studies. Attention should be drawn to the relatively very low minimum admission scores, which should call for increased attention of SMK to properly manage this situation (control the number of dropouts, ensure the necessary competent quality of graduates, balanced study process).

3.2.	There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress
------	--

## FACTUAL SITUATION

### 3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

According to the SER in 2020-2024, 20 students of Marketing Study Field participated in Erasmus+ programme: 17 students went for studies and 3 students - for internship. In order to develop the mobility of outgoing students, College organises “Erasmus+ weeks”. Since 2020 College offers students an optional course unit in English “Global Career Awareness”. The course is taught to joint groups of Lithuanian and foreign students and the teacher is a foreigner. According to the College, the integration of this course unit aims to encourage students to be more actively involved in Erasmus+ programme, to develop global competences, the English language knowledge, and intercultural competences of students. Needed to note that Colleges Strategic Activity Plan (2021-2025) includes increasing the dimension of internationality at home. The Erasmus+ exchange programme brought 15 students from abroad for part-time studies in the field of marketing in the period under analysis, from higher education institutions such as Universidad Europea del Atlántico, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Algebra University College, Southeastern European University and others.

The expert panel received concrete evidence from the meeting with the students that they have all the opportunities to participate in academic mobility programs and that they receive detailed information about the available options. Additionally, students who had already participated were happy with their experience.

### 3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

Academic support is provided to students in several areas, including counselling on general study and academic issues. Throughout the academic year, 1-2 times per semester, staff from the Department of Studies meet with seniors in their groups to introduce them to the latest information related to their studies, discuss attendance and progress problems, and resolve any issues that arise. Once a month, the Head of Study Programs in each city meets with their supervised students to discuss the most important study-related issues. Teachers also consult with students when they are working on practical or independent tasks, as well as preparing for interim tests and examinations. These consultations are organized according to an approved schedule made for each month and take place in various formats, including individual meetings and online sessions.

Financial support for students is provided through scholarships awarded by social partners and the SMK. Outstanding students may also receive incentives or scholarships from social partners or municipalities for exceptional academic achievements, contributions to scientific research, or public activity. Every semester, the most progressive and active students at the SMK can receive study scholarships. These scholarships assess not only students' academic progress but also their social, organizational, and creative involvement, participation in various extracurricular initiatives and

projects, and achievements in sports. Scholarships can range from 20% to 50% of the study cost. During the evaluation period, seven students in the program received study scholarships. The SMK also offers additional discounts on tuition for family members of current students and graduates, providing a 10% discount, as well as a 30% discount for individuals pursuing a second degree at SMK. During the evaluation period, two students from the Marketing Study Field benefited from these tuition fee concessions.

Social support is provided to students through the State Studies Foundation, which the college participates in as part of the national Lithuanian Student Social Support system. Psychological support for students is organized in two ways: a) personal consultations with psychologists and b) open lectures and seminars on psychological topics.

Personal support at the college is implemented through a mentorship program (student-to-student). The purpose of this program is to assist first-year students in adapting to and socializing within their new academic environment. It aims to help them understand and navigate the changes they encounter, fully develop their general competencies, and enhance both their academic and personal achievements. Personal support activities include annual events organized by the college, such as freshman camps like “SMK GO,” “SMK FEST’18,” “I’m already a STUDENT,” and “It’s GOOD here!”

The expert panel received concrete evidence from the meeting with the students that Lithuanian students are well-informed about the various support tools available to them. However, during the discussion, it was noted that international students have a different experience. They are less integrated into the community and receive less support and information about where to seek help. Students also expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in leisure activities after classes.

### **3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient**

Main information channels for the spread of information on studies are the Colleges website [www.smk.lt](http://www.smk.lt), virtual learning system E-learning (Moodle) and student information system Classter. In order to evaluate the efficiency of the consultations and the provision of information of studies, College implements surveys (quantitative) on the feedback of students. Also, according to the College, qualitative meetings are held with each group of students, during which they are not only asked about the content and quality of the taught course units, but also about whether there is enough information about the organisation of the study process, clarity of processes, adequacy of academic and other consultations. These meetings are organised as an “Q and A session”.

The expert panel received concrete evidence from the meeting with the students that they are satisfied with the information platforms available to them. Additionally, students have frequent meetings with the study program lead and other administrative staff, who help them when they encounter issues related to study processes.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)**

Students are well-acquainted with the opportunities to participate in academic mobility programs and understand the types of support they can receive from the college. The college needs to pay more attention to international students and make an effort to integrate them into the community. Overall, Lithuanian students are satisfied with the opportunities provided by the college and receive all necessary information when they ask the administrative staff.

## AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 3</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

2. Students are motivated to participate in short-term and long-term academic mobility programs.
3. Students can easily and quickly get help when they encounter problems with their studies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### For further improvement

1. Particular attention should be paid to the relatively low minimum acceptance scores. It is recommended that the College closely monitor the results of these students in order to provide the necessary support in a timely and appropriate manner, as well as to constantly improve the processes intended for such students to "catch up" the course averages.
1. Strengthen the integration of foreign students by providing them with more detailed information and actively involving them in the academic community through additional measures.
2. Encourage the establishment of student organizations and clubs by providing financial assistance, creating favourable conditions, and sharing information about opportunities and activities available to students after classes.
3. Build more partnerships with global organizations to increase internship and mobility options for international and domestic students.

## **AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

<b>4.1.</b>	<b>Students are prepared for independent professional activity</b>
-------------	--

### **FACTUAL SITUATION**

#### **4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes**

According to the SER, SMK implements various student-centred teaching methods to achieve intended learning outcomes. While the visit to the institution confirmed a strong orientation on students and their progress (confirmed by teachers, alumni, social partners, and students), the respondents could not reflect on the mentioned unique experiential teaching methods available at SMK.

Still, there is a rigorous procedure for the evaluation of the teaching and learning process. At the start of each semester, SMK lecturers coordinate the distribution of classroom and independent workload, schedule interim and final tests, and ensure interdisciplinary alignment to avoid content duplication. Each lecturer develops a Course Unit Assessment System outlining test formats, assessment methods, criteria, and independent work tasks.

According to SMK regulations, learning outcomes are assessed continuously through interim tests, with the final grade reflecting both interim and final assessments. SMK utilizes an online learning platform (Moodle). This enables students to choose alternative forms of learning and allows an alternative approach to the teaching materials, as well as whether they prefer synchronous/asynchronous or on-site/online teaching methods.

The Experts panel concludes that the educational process at SMK allows and supports addressing needs of students, enabling them to achieve intended learning outcomes.

#### **4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.**

According to the SER, SMK participated in the State Studies Foundation project in 2014, during which they received training in various subjects to improve the accessibility of studies. Also, during the visit, in the discussion, administrative staff and lecturers shared that they frequently have opportunities to participate in courses where they learn how to support students with various special needs and adapt studies for those students.

Based on the SER, SMK took part in the project "Increasing Study Accessibility" and acquired equipment for students with special needs. This equipment included items such as the alternative computer mouse Traxxsys Roller II (3 units), a specialized table, push tables (2 units), pull-out adjustable-angle keyboard trays, a stationary image magnifier (Topaz XL HD 24), a mobile staircase climber with an extra battery (Liftkar PT Uni 130), and text magnifying software (SuperNova Magnifier), among others. Furthermore, students with disabilities or temporary health conditions can have their studies individualized. SMK are also planning to acquire additional equipment in the future (such as Jaws 14 for Windows, Bellman Audio Domino Pro FM system, etc.) for students with special needs. The expert panel received concrete evidence during the facility visit that the college has provided essential tools for students with special needs. However, the college must continue its efforts to improve accessibility, particularly for students with visual impairments. This includes adding

classroom numbers in Braille and providing additional equipment in the library to enable visually impaired students to access library resources.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)**

SMK demonstrates a strong commitment to student-centred learning and accessibility for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs. The institution employs diverse teaching methods and a suitable assessment system, using tools like Moodle to provide flexible, alternative learning formats. However, despite the emphasis on experiential teaching methods, respondents could not identify unique approaches exclusive to SMK, indicating a potential gap between stated methods and their implementation.

SMK has made significant strides in improving accessibility and acquiring specialized equipment for students with special needs. Individualized study plans and regular staff training further support inclusivity. However, areas for improvement remain, particularly for students with visual impairments. Additional resources, such as Braille classroom indicators and enhanced library tools, would ensure more comprehensive access.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity
------	---

## **FACTUAL SITUATION**

### **4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic**

According to the SER, the monitoring of students' study progress is carried out at different levels. The academic divisions of SMK systematically monitor student progress and provide assistance across several areas: the Departments of Studies (responsible for study administration, progress tracking, student surveys, and achievement monitoring), Heads of Study Programmes (manage study planning, organize monthly meetings, and conduct deeper progress reviews), Lecturers (monitor student performance and offer support based on grades), and Students (who are encouraged to take responsibility for their progress). Additionally, monitoring involves tracking attendance, interim tests, and assessments multiple times per semester, alongside scheduled consultations for academic support.

As is stated in the SER, SMK lecturers provide feedback to students through both lectures and Heads of Study Programmes. Lecturers give feedback during lectures and consultations about students' study work or completed tasks (assessments). The feedback is provided in two ways: verbally and in written form through the E-learning system (Moodle). SMK stated that, through the E-learning system, 78 out of 80 marketing professors provided systematic feedback in the 2023-2024 academic year. Additionally, Heads of Study Programmes monitor students' progress, which relates to student achievements during examination sessions and the obtained assessments, offering solutions to those with academic difficulties to improve overall study quality.

The expert panel received concrete evidence during discussions with different groups that SMK systematically monitors student progress and that students receive effective feedback from lecturers about their study assignments, as well as from the heads of study programs regarding changes and other important information for students.

### **4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored**

Graduate employability and career monitoring is carried out in accordance with the 2022 the updated Graduate Career Monitoring Program, which stipulates that SMK contacts graduates 6 and 36 months after graduation. Main data collection instrument is a questionnaire survey within it information is collected about the evaluation of their competences in the context of the labour market, their employability and career goals.

Also, College uses “Education Management Information System” - a platform which cumulates data on the demographic, social and employment conditions of the country’s residents, relating the conditions with the acquired education. According to the SER, during the analysed period 259 graduates finished Programme studies (144 in Vilnius Branch, 79 in Kaunas Branch, 36 in Klaipėda Department) and according to Education Management Information System data approximately 60% (108 graduates) are successfully employed.

College states that it provides opportunities for students and graduates to develop their career management skills by organising a range of common activities like meetings, seminars, conferences and workshops. Graduates are also invited to share their knowledge and experience with students during introductory lectures, to participate in lectures as invited teachers and also involved in study quality assurance and its improvement as social stakeholders, through participation in decision making, management processes of the College. During the meetings with the students and graduates’ experts panel witnessed that the involvement of students and graduates in various formats is taking place regularly in various formats.

#### 4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

The SMK provisions and procedures of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are regulated in the following documents: the SMK Code of Academic Ethics; the SMK Regulation of Academic Ethics Commission; the SMK Descriptor of the Order of Assessing Learning Outcomes; the SMK Order of Implementing Examination Session in a Remote Mode; the SMK Descriptor of the Order of Preparing, Defending and Storing Final Theses; Descriptor of the Order of Equal Opportunities Policy and its Implementation; the SMK Descriptor of the Order of the Prevention of Psychological Violence and Mobbing; Regulation of the Appeals Commission; Dispute Solving Provisions. The SMK Code of Academic Ethics is published in [www.smk.lt](http://www.smk.lt) website and E-learning system. During the introductory weeks, SMK students are familiarized with the practical rules and procedures related to academic integrity and ethics. Additionally, most of the documents are also available online.

The self-evaluation report outlines SMK’s efforts to promote academic integrity, ethics, tolerance, and non-discrimination through various initiatives and policies. As mentioned before, students are introduced to these concepts during introductory weeks, and violations such as plagiarism, cheating, or falsifying results are addressed. Students also participate in events, workshops, and discussions on these topics, including the 2020 “Transparency Workshop” held in collaboration with “Transparency International,” and an academic integrity workshop hosted with Klaipėda’s public library. Research on corruption and plagiarism was conducted, and roundtable discussions with public figures were organized to raise awareness. SMK reports that from 2021 to 2023, over 400 students participated in various academic integrity workshops. Final theses are checked for plagiarism through systems like OXSICO and EPAS.

These principles apply to SMK staff as well, with over 100 teachers and administrators attending training sessions on academic ethics and integrity, including the use of artificial intelligence in academia. Additionally, SMK has established policies promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and AI usage, ensuring the development of digital competencies for all community members.



Between 2020 and 2024, 12 lecturers reported student violations of academic integrity during the preparation of independent works and final theses, as per the SMK Code of Academic Ethics. The Academic Ethics Commission identified 7 student violations and also reviewed 5 cases involving administrative staff, confirming 2 breaches of academic integrity. In response to each violation, preventive actions were taken, including organizing additional seminars for the academic community and reintroducing the SMK Code of Academic Ethics to reinforce ethical standards.

The expert panel received concrete evidence during the visit that SMK has implemented various policies to ensure academic integrity and that those policies are effective, and all academic community is using them. Also, SMK promotes academic integrity values through different seminars, workshops and other format to the academic community

#### **4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective**

The SMK has formalized the process for handling appeals and complaints regarding the study process, which is regulated by the "Regulations of the Appeals Commission" and "Provisions of the Dispute Solving Commission." The Appeals Commission oversees the process of filing and reviewing appeals related to procedural violations during exams, final assessments, and admission rules. The Appeals Commission consists of the Head of the Branch, the Head of the Study Programme, a representative of the student body, and a lecturer from the study programme who did not participate in the assessment of the course unit for which the appeal was filed. Students must first attempt to resolve issues with academic administration before filing a formal appeal. Appeals must be submitted within 24 hours of the issue, and during the analyzed period, **20** appeals were received, with **5** leading to changes in final assessments. The Dispute Solving Commission handles issues related to learning conditions, study payments, disciplinary actions, and other aspects of the study process. **6** disputes were raised, with **3** resolved in favor of the students. Both commissions' procedures are explained to students during introductory lectures, and relevant documents are available on the SMK website and E-learning system.

The expert panel received concrete evidence during discussions with students that they are well-informed about the process for submitting appeals and complaints, and that the system is clear and suitable. However, experts notice that in these processes for submitting and processing appeals and complaints, there is a lack of student association's input to help and support students in these processes.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)**

The SMK demonstrates a systematic approach to monitoring student progress and graduate employability. The institution tracks student progress through multiple levels, using tools like Moodle for feedback and continuous assessments, while engaging heads of study programs and lecturers in monitoring and support. Graduate employability is tracked via the updated Career Monitoring Program and national data platforms, with 60% of graduates successfully employed. Career development activities, such as seminars and alumni engagement, enhance employability outcomes. SMK promotes academic integrity through comprehensive policies and tools like plagiarism detection systems. Additionally, the institution has a formalized appeals process. While these efforts highlight SMK's commitment to quality and inclusivity, greater focus on leveraging graduate data for strategic improvements and expanding digital and career-specific tools could enhance overall outcomes.

## AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 4</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>			X		

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Lecturers and administration not only systematically track student progress but also effectively provide feedback. In general, it can be noted that the college enhances a culture of effective feedback among the members of the academic community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### For further improvement

1. The college must persist in enhancing accessibility for students with special needs, particularly those with visual impairments.
2. Introduce a system for better tracking and reporting of programme performance, alumni outcomes, and partnership activities. This could enhance decision-making and provide data-driven insights for continuous improvement.
3. Develop formal policies and provide training for both students and staff to better manage cultural differences in group work and classroom interactions. Introduce workshops or facilitated discussions to build intercultural competence and reduce potential tensions.



## AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes
------	---

### FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

The structure of teachers implementing the Programme meets the formal requirements outlined the General Requirements for Study Implementation, which indicates that more than half teachers of the Study Programme must have at least 3 years of practical work experience in the area of the taught course unit (according to provided data there is 90 percent in Programme case) and at least 10 percent of the volume of the course units in college first cycle study Programmes must be taught by scientists, who have a doctor degree and carry out research on a corresponding field of science (for College/ Programme, it's more than 20 percent). The characteristics of the teaching staff teaching subjects in the field of study (marketing) (practical experience in the field of Marketing, length of experience (both practical and academic) exceed the minimum formal requirements. When evaluating the quantitative ratio of students and academic staff, it should be noted that it differs somewhat in different departments of the College (the largest in Vilnius, the smallest in Klaipėda), it shows different trends during the evaluation period (decrease in Vilnius from 9.3 to 7.3, increase in Kaunas from 3.3 to 5.5 and remains stable in Klaipėda (2.8-2.6). Despite the difference in trends and differences between departments, it can be stated that the relationship between students and academic staff is acceptable.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The teachers who participated in the meeting demonstrated the appropriate motivation to perform their duties and improve (students confirmed this during the meeting), provided examples of subject and pedagogical competence. It is possible to state that qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes.

5.2.	Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated
------	---

### FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

SMK actively supports academic mobility for its teaching staff, recognizing its critical role in fostering professional development and cross-cultural exchange. Between 2020 and 2024, 24 teaching mobilities were carried out, with over 50% involving faculty from the Marketing Study Field. These mobilities spanned 10 countries, enabled through partnerships with 12–15 regular academic collaborators. Mobility opportunities have allowed teachers to gain insights into diverse pedagogical practices and enhance their academic networks.

To further incentivize mobility, SMK provides financial and logistical support, alongside recognition mechanisms that highlight successful participation. These initiatives encourage teachers to explore mobility opportunities while sharing the positive outcomes with peers. Moreover, mobility experiences have contributed to enhancing teaching methods within the institution, particularly by introducing global best practices into classroom instruction. For instance, collaborations facilitated through these mobilities have influenced curriculum updates and encouraged the adoption of innovative approaches like flipped classrooms and experiential learning.

Additionally, while mobility opportunities are widely available, aligning these mobilities more strategically with institutional goals could significantly enhance their impact. For example, greater emphasis could be placed during the mobilities on integrating emerging technologies into teaching practices, such as leveraging AI tools like ChatGPT, which are already available to staff, or adopting experiential learning methods, such as flipped classrooms and experience-oriented research. Teachers could also benefit from structured training on publishing and applying advanced analytical methods, as suggested by collaboration with institutions like the University of Madrid. These steps would ensure mobility programs not only broaden individual perspectives but also directly contribute to improving educational outcomes and aligning with industry demands.

### 5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

SMK ensures professional development opportunities for its teaching staff through various programs, mentoring initiatives, and tailored development plans. At the start of every academic year, the Head of Academic Activities evaluates staff competencies, requiring teachers to present their planned development portfolios. This process enables the institution to address evolving needs, both at individual and institutional levels. Monthly training sessions are a cornerstone of SMK's development strategy, covering diverse topics ranging from teaching methodologies to integrating artificial intelligence in academia. For instance, training from the University of Madrid has strengthened faculty expertise in publishing research in international journals.

Mentoring among colleagues serves as an essential component of professional growth, enabling less experienced teachers to learn from their senior peers. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in international conferences, sharing insights gained from collaborations. Annual feedback forms, completed by teachers, further refine training programs by identifying specific areas requiring attention. The institution has demonstrated responsiveness to these inputs, incorporating requested training topics and allocating resources to address faculty needs.

Despite the comprehensive nature of its development programs, there is room for improvement in fully equipping teachers with effective tools and training. While SMK provides staff access to advanced resources like paid versions of AI platforms such as ChatGPT, the reliance on public demo versions for classroom activities highlights an opportunity to enhance technological integration. Expanding training sessions to include hands-on workshops on utilizing AI tools and emerging technologies could empower teachers to adopt innovative strategies, such as flipped classrooms and experience-oriented research. Additionally, targeted training on advanced analytics and publishing would help teachers stay current with technological advancements and effectively integrate these tools into their pedagogical practices, ultimately improving student outcomes and adapting to modern educational demands.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

SMK demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing academic mobility and professional development for its teaching staff. The mobility opportunities and structured training initiatives equip teachers with international perspectives and advanced pedagogical skills. However, there are areas for improvement, including expanding partnerships with English-speaking institutions, ensuring equitable access to paid technological tools, and integrating more advanced technologies like AI into training programs. A more strategic approach to aligning development initiatives with institutional goals and market needs would further enhance SMK's efforts in maintaining a competitive edge.

## AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 5	Unsatisfactory - 1	Satisfactory - 2	Good - 3	Very good - 4	Exceptional - 5
--------	-----------------------	---------------------	----------	------------------	--------------------

	Does not meet the requirements	Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>			X		

## COMMENDATIONS

1. The programme has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering academic mobility and international cooperation.
2. SMK integrates experiential learning methods, including flipped classrooms and gamifications.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address shortcomings

1. Broaden access to paid versions of advanced tools, such as AI platforms, and integrate them systematically across the curriculum to improve technological competencies.
2. Establish partnerships with more English-speaking and globally reputed institutions to provide diverse mobility opportunities for both staff and students.
3. Establish clearer development/ research targets for faculty and incentivize publication in high-impact journals to strengthen the institution's research profile.

### For further improvement

1. Dare and submit publications not only to the "Home Journal" and participate more extensively in other conferences not only organized by the College.
2. After properly finding out the motivational factors of the academic staff, it is necessary to modify the SMK promotion system accordingly so that it actually increases the amount of the highest level scientific production.

## AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes
------	---

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

The college operates in three cities, so it has three material bases, all of which are properly equipped with the necessary equipment. This statement is substantiated by the data provided by the College on the characteristics of the managed premises, lists of computer, software and special equipment. It is noted that according to the SER students also have the opportunity to use the infrastructure of social partners during outgoing lectures. College subscribes 3 e-book collections: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost); eBook Collection (EBSCOhost); eBook Open Access (OA) Collection. According to experts, there are enough books (all the more considering the synergy with the physical book collection accumulated by the College) directly related to the Marketing field and the Programme in these collections. College subscribes to databases of scientific journals (EBSCO Publishing (19486 title journals) Emerald Management eJournals Collection (175 title journals) Taylor & Francis (1989 title journals)), whose collections contain enough magazines for the Marketing field. It should be noted that, if necessary, the College's social partners have made it possible for students and teachers to use the resources managed by them.

#### 6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

Management of the College material resources is implemented in accordance with the SMK Statute, strategic planning documents, and orders of the Director. The process of updating resources necessary for implementing the Field studies is carried out taking into account the number of newly admitted students, the suggestions of lecturers of the Field studies provided in annual self-evaluations, and the latest changes in art and technologies in the national and international markets.

It should be noted that study resources necessary for the field studies are planned to cooperate closely with lecturers (filling out a Report on a Lecturer Activity after Teaching a Course Unit) and students (during surveys and meetings with the Heads of the Programme).

According to the SER, Within the last three years College has allocated funds for: Computer equipment – EUR 262351; Software – EUR 48001; Hardware and laboratory equipment for studies – EUR 135828; Hybrid teaching equipment – EUR 36118; Furniture – EUR 230666; Subscriptions – EUR 17756; Member fees, subscriptions of subscribed databases – EUR 51678.

After getting acquainted with the resource planning and management system and evaluating the monetary funds allocated for improving and maintaining the infrastructure, it can be concluded that these activities are carried out properly in the College.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

A visit to the Vilnius branch and familiarization with the material base, additionally provided information, feedback (from students and social partners) fully substantiated the statement that College facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process. Additionally provided documents and figures allows to state that there is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

## AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 6</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Modern, relatively new facilities.
2. Information resources are managed systematically, consistently optimizing them.

## AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information
------	--

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

SMK has established an internal quality assurance system aligned with its Quality Guide to ensure regular monitoring and improvement of academic and administrative processes. This system includes monthly meetings with student cohorts, surveys, and feedback from students, teachers, and social partners. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to evaluate programme effectiveness, such as tracking study progress, student engagement, and academic performance through systematic assessments.

The internal quality review process for study programmes involves a cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement. New study programmes are developed based on a needs analysis, including feedback from social partners, industry trends, and student surveys, ensuring alignment with labour market demands. Experts panel's meetings with various groups (social partners, graduates, students, teachers,) also confirmed their involvement in the quality review process.

Operating programmes undergo regular review, with changes made in response to identified gaps or evolving requirements. For example, based on feedback from social partners, SMK recently introduced courses on personal sales and analytics to address specific industry needs. Quality assurance for study programmes is maintained through regular updates to the curriculum, involvement of external stakeholders in thesis committees, and periodic reviews to align learning outcomes with institutional and program goals.

The focus on academic ethics and integrity has become increasingly relevant, particularly with the integration of AI in teaching and learning. Regular updates to the Quality Guide address emerging challenges and adapting to technological advancements. Additionally, teachers are required to submit semesterly reports detailing their achievements, which are reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

While the system is in place, some areas could be improved. A notable emphasis is placed on academic ethics and integrity, particularly with the growing use of AI in education. Updates to the Quality Guide incorporate measures to address ethical challenges posed by these technologies. However, the system relies heavily on public versions of AI tools, highlighting a gap in providing premium technological resources for enhanced teaching and learning. Additionally, while the system tracks student progress effectively, further investment in data analytics for identifying at-risk students and improving learning outcomes would enhance its impact.

#### 7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

SMK actively involves stakeholders, including students, alumni, and social partners, in its quality assurance processes. Monthly meetings with students provide a platform for discussing their experiences and incorporating their feedback. Students have highlighted examples of how their input has led to changes, such as adjustments in grading systems and the inclusion of more practical assignments.

Social partners play a crucial role in SMK's quality assurance processes, contributing to various stages of program development, delivery, and review. Representing a diverse range of industries, including marketing, management, technology, and retail, SMK collaborates with 12–15 regular partners based in Vilnius and beyond. During the meeting with the social partners, the expert panel witnessed that these partnerships involve prominent companies that provide insights and additional input so that the curriculum remains relevant to current industry needs. Social partners also participate in final thesis committees, career fairs, introductory lectures, and consultations, offering expertise and feedback that help shape the curriculum.

Their contributions have had a measurable impact. For instance, based on their recommendations, SMK introduced courses on personal sales and strengthened the focus on analytics to address specific industry demands. One notable example of their involvement includes a social partner suggesting a thesis topic related to AI-driven customer behaviour analysis, which was subsequently developed into a capstone project. Additionally, after thesis defences, there are structured discussions between committee members and social partners to identify potential improvements for future academic cycles.

Annual surveys conducted with social partners provide also feedback, and more informal consultations during career events and collaborative projects ensure ongoing alignment. This feedback loop ensures that graduates are equipped with in-demand skills, enhancing their employability. Social partners have noted that SMK graduates are not only highly skilled but also bring creativity and fresh perspectives, with one company even describing its experience of learning from a former student hired directly after graduation.

However, there is room for improvement in fostering more structured involvement from alumni and expanding the feedback loop to include broader international perspectives. Additionally, while the inclusion of social partners is commendable, greater transparency in how their suggestions are prioritized and implemented could further enhance the program's credibility and responsiveness.

#### 7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

SMK ensures transparency regarding its programs, evaluation processes, and outcomes through detailed documentation and public disclosures. Information on programs is accessible via the institution's website and e-learning platforms, where students can find course descriptions, learning outcomes, and evaluation criteria.



Following the 2021 external evaluation, which resulted in a 3-year accreditation, SMK implemented significant changes, including the integration of advanced courses like AI and analytics. These updates were informed by structured feedback from social partners and market studies, demonstrating the institution's commitment to continuous improvement. SMK's Career Monitoring Program further tracks graduate employability, with surveys conducted 6 and 36 months post-graduation to assess alignment with labour market needs.

While SMK has made progress in addressing previous evaluation recommendations, challenges persist in achieving comprehensive integration of emerging trends. One notable area requiring attention is the variation in thesis quality across branches, which highlights inconsistencies in the implementation of academic standards. For example, while social partners are actively involved in providing thesis topics and participating in defense committees, ensuring uniform evaluation criteria and mentoring support across all branches remains a priority. Efforts to improve thesis quality have included engaging external stakeholders in the evaluation process, incorporating their feedback, and aligning thesis topics more closely with real-world industry needs. However, additional measures, such as providing more robust training for thesis supervisors and standardizing assessment rubrics, could further bridge these disparities.

#### **7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed**

To enhance the study quality at SMK, student feedback is regularly collected across all study programs, including Marketing. The process involves both qualitative meetings and quantitative surveys. According to survey results, students in the Marketing Study Field express satisfaction with their studies, rating their overall satisfaction at 4.2 out of 5. Qualitative feedback reveals that Vilnius students appreciate the business-like communication and effective study methods that enhance their understanding. Students in Kaunas value the practical applicability of course materials and clarity in assessment criteria. Meanwhile, Klaipėda students highlight the relevance of study materials and the timely assessment of independent work and interim tests. During discussions with students, experts received confirmation that students are satisfied with their studies and did not mention any critical points regarding changes that should be made.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)**

SMK has established an internal quality assurance system guided by its Quality Guide, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. Regular updates address emerging challenges, such as integrating AI in teaching, with a strong focus on ethics and integrity. Monthly meetings, systematic assessments, and semesterly teacher reports ensure adaptability and alignment with student needs. However, reliance on public AI tools and limited investment in advanced technologies highlight areas for improvement, as does the need for more sophisticated data analytics to support at-risk students and improve learning outcomes.

Stakeholder involvement is a key strength of SMK's quality assurance framework. Students, alumni, and social partners actively contribute to program updates, such as curriculum changes and grading adjustments, ensuring alignment with labour market needs. SMK also demonstrates transparency by making program details and outcomes publicly accessible through its platforms. While improvements like AI-focused courses reflect responsiveness to feedback, challenges such as disparities in thesis quality across branches and insufficient communication of enhancements remain. Expanding alumni engagement, increasing transparency in stakeholder input, and addressing branch-specific disparities would strengthen SMK's internal quality assurance processes and overall program coherence.

## AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

<b>AREA 7</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. SMK has established a comprehensive internal quality assurance framework, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, ensuring continuous monitoring and adaptation to emerging trends.
2. The programme involves well its social partners in final thesis evaluation, curriculum updates, career fairs, etc.
3. The program has responded to the feedback of its stakeholders by integrating emerging fields like artificial intelligence and personal sales into the curriculum, reflecting its adaptability to market trends. SMK has implemented also significant changes following external evaluations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### For further improvement

1. Invest in premium AI tools and advanced digital resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences, reducing reliance on public demo versions.
2. Address disparities in thesis quality and other outcomes between branches by implementing consistent quality assurance practices and standards institution-wide.
3. Create structured mechanisms for alumni involvement in quality assurance, including participation in curriculum reviews, mentoring programs, and industry feedback loops. Improve communication strategies to ensure that all stakeholders, including students and social partners, are aware of program improvements and updates.
4. Address the unique challenges and needs of each branch, ensuring that resources, teaching methods, and student support are tailored to local contexts while maintaining institutional consistency.



## V. SUMMARY

The review panel commends SMK for its well-structured internal quality assurance system, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure regular monitoring and continuous improvement. The institution demonstrates a strong commitment to stakeholder engagement, involving students, alumni, and social partners in decision-making processes. Their feedback has contributed significantly to program enhancements, such as the inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI) and personal sales in the curriculum, reflecting SMK's responsiveness to evolving market demands. Transparency is a notable strength, with program details, external evaluation reports, and improvement updates readily accessible via various platforms.

The teaching staff is qualified and supported by opportunities for academic mobility and professional development. International collaborations and mobility programs have enriched teaching methodologies. SMK's facilities and resources are commendable, with continuous investment in infrastructure. Efforts to improve accessibility for students with special needs, such as acquiring specialized equipment and implementing individualized study plans, reflect the institution's commitment to inclusivity. Additionally, SMK's emphasis on student-centred learning, flexible formats, and systematic feedback mechanisms ensures students' academic and personal needs are effectively addressed.

Despite these strengths, some areas require improvement. The reliance on public versions of AI tools limits the effective integration of advanced technologies into teaching and learning. Disparities in final thesis quality across branches highlight the need for standardized quality assurance practices and additional support for thesis supervisors. Alumni engagement, while present, could be expanded to include structured involvement in curriculum reviews and mentorship programs. Moreover, efforts to better integrate international students into the academic community, including more targeted support and engagement opportunities, would foster a more inclusive learning environment.

The review panel also identifies opportunities for broader strategic alignment in quality assurance processes. Expanding partnerships with globally reputed institutions and incorporating international perspectives into program development would enhance SMK's competitiveness. While the inclusion of stakeholder feedback is evident, greater transparency in how this feedback is prioritized and implemented would further strengthen the institution's responsiveness.

The panel extends its appreciation to SMK for preparing a comprehensive and insightful self-evaluation report, facilitating an effective site visit, and engaging in meaningful discussions with the review panel. These efforts reflect the institution's dedication to openness and to the needs of its academic community and the labour market.