



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

SOCIALINIŲ MOKSLŲ KOLEGIJOS  
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS**  
*TARPTAUTINIS VERSLAS IR KOMUNIKACIJA (valstybinis  
kodas – 653N12005)*  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
*OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND COMMUNICATION (state  
code – 653N12005)*  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Tarptautinis verslas ir komunikacija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	653N12005
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Verslas
Studijų programos rūšis	Koleginės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (3), iššęstinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	180
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Tarptautinio verslo profesinis bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2012 vasario 14 d. Nr. SV6-7

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## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>International Trade and Communication</i>
State code	653N12005
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Business
Type of the study programme	College studies
Study cycle	First cycle
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (3), Part-time (4)
Volume of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor in International Business
Date of registration of the study programme	14 February, 2012, No. SV6-7

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1. Background of the evaluation process*

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

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

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team at the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

### *1.2. General*

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI during the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	The curriculum of study programme, 1 <sup>st</sup> semester (2015/2016)
2.	Methodological requirements for preparation of final thesis
3.	The statistics of databases usage

### *1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information*

SMK University of Applied Social Sciences (hereinafter – the SMK) is a non-governmental higher education public Institution established in 1994. The SMK consists of the central office in Klaipeda and a branch in Vilnius. At this moment SMK is one of the biggest non-

governmental universities of applied sciences is Lithuania. There are 2346 students studying in SMK according to data of October, 2014. There are 16 study programmes of first cycle implemented in areas of Social Sciences, Physical Sciences and Arts. Business study field study programmes are the most popular programmes in SMK.

The International Business and Communication (hereinafter – IBC) is a study programme which is implemented by the Marketing and International Business Chair who is responsible for supervision of study quality of the implemented study programmes, carrying out the scientific applied activity as well as announcement and application of its results, preparation of teaching and methodology resources necessary for the implementation of the study programme, organisation of practice of students' professional activity, consulting, progress evaluation, improvement and self-evaluation of the study programme. Work of the Chair is coordinated and controlled by the Deputy Director of the College. The chair coordinates the work of the Study Programme Committee which is responsible for designing the curriculum (i.e. defining study volume in credits, relating course units with Programme learning outcomes, and the planning of average workload necessary for achievement of the foreseen learning outcomes) and for improvement/revision of the study programme.

This study programme has been implemented in Klaipeda since 1st of September 2012. There are 48 students in IBC study programme in 2014/15. The first graduates will finish their studies of IBC study programme in 2015 will finish studied first graduates of IBC study programme.

#### ***1.4. The Review Team***

The review team was assembled in accordance with the *Expert Selection Procedure*, approved by Order No 1-55 of 19 March 2007 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, as amended on 11 November 2011. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2015.

1. Prof. dr. Pandelis Ipsilandis (team leader), Vice President of Technological Education Institute of Larissa and Professor at the Department of Project Management, School of Business and Economics, Greece.
2. Assoc. Prof. Vitor Braga, assoc. prof. at Porto Polytechnic, School of Technology and Management of Felgueiras, Felgueiras, Portugal.
3. Assoc. Prof. David J. Pollard, Reader in Technology Transfer and Enterprise at Leeds Business School, United Kingdom.
4. Assoc. prof. Danutė Rasimavičienė, Dean of the Faculty of Business Management, Vilnius College, Lithuania.
5. Mr. Marius Rimkaitis, Founder and Strategic Planner at No Horror Creative Digital, Lithuania.
6. Ms. Vaida Spūdytė, 2<sup>nd</sup> year master student at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The aims of the programme are well defined, and the learning outcomes are clear. As stated in the SER the aim of the programme is “*to prepare specialists of international business, able to establish and manage an international business company, to initiate and implement business projects, corresponding to company goals consumer needs, to develop systems of internal and external communication which ensure effective communication with business partners and customers in national and international markets*”. The aims of the programme are what one would expect from a professional bachelor degree on International Business and Communication and thus they justify the programme name. Information about the programme and its aims is publicly available widely (e.g. website of SMK, Lithuanian information bulletins, Counselling and guidance system developed by the Ministry of education).

The programme aims are also aligned with the defined learning outcomes. The definition of the learning outcomes (LOs), however, is not completely substantiated by the programme structure, since a number of inconsistencies were identified by the expert team. For example, the learning outcomes often mention the role of economic knowledge and the economic environment, but this is an area that needs better coverage in the study plan (e.g. International Economics; Economic Integration processes; and European Economics), in order to provide students with a better understanding of the general economic environment where international business transactions take place. Other LOs refer to students being able to “*independently and responsibly make strategic business decisions*” but this is not properly supported by courses in managerial decision making, and nonetheless, is too ambitious for first level studies.

According to students who seemed to have a clear idea and information about the programme are satisfied because the “programme delivers what it promises” the programme is unique in this area of the country.

It is, however, important to note, on a positive perspective, that the generic competences of the study plan are very adequate for the level and the topic.

There is a strong relationship with the social partners, who have contributed for the definition of the programme aims and learning outcomes. In addition, the institution has also took into account a number of relative documents (both legal and advisory), in order to structure and develop the programme. These include statistical data (e.g. market analysis based on surveys with employers), strategic and legal documents, both at national and international level.

During the visit it has been clear that, overall, the social partners are satisfied with the programme (including its learning outcomes). Nevertheless, the social partners' expectations include the cultural knowledge and international awareness from the students.

The expert team also noticed that social partners are willing to contribute to the development of the programme, however, from those who were invited to the meeting, only one person

has mentioned that is currently involved in a formal committee, and the remaining have contributed with inputs to the programme on an informal basis.

It was clear from the discussions during the meeting with the administration and the SER development team that they recognize the need for continuous development and enhancement of the programme and in that direction they plan to extend the social partners involvement both quantitatively and qualitatively and upgrade the role of the International office. The expert team expects that the college moves on with an action plan for further development of the programme on this basis.

The aims and learning outcomes are generally designed to meet the requirements for a first cycle study programme, according to Dublin Descriptors, the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, and other relative regulations.

Overall, the program's aims and objectives and its learning outcomes meet the requirements of a first cycle academic programme in business studies.

There is a coherent link between the name of the programme, the learning outcomes and the qualifications offered. The learning outcomes are, in certain cases more ambitious than the contents of the programme structure. In particular, the programme does not seem to create the conditions for students to “*integrally apply knowledge of economics, management and other social sciences when solving complex business tasks in the changing international markets*” and “*analyse and assess international business environment, trends of business development when implementing company goals and making strategic decisions on business development*”, which are more suitable for a second level programme, while courses on the economic context and the EU integration are missing.

#### **Strengths:**

- The programme offers courses that are aimed to develop generic competences, which seem to be very useful for the professional development of the students.
- Students seem to be overall satisfied
- Strong interest to support the continuous development of the programme and enhance its international dimension

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Not all learning outcomes are covered by the programme structure and additional courses on the economic environment and European Union (EU) related subjects should be considered for inclusion in the programme.
- There is a relatively low level of internationalisation, which becomes one important limitation to the extent that it does not allow the students to develop the necessary competences and skills expected by the social partners.

## ***2.2. Curriculum design***

The programme is organised in 6 semesters, with an equal distribution of 30 ECTS per semester, amounting to 180 ECTS in total, which meets the legal requirements for a professional Bachelor study programme. The number of ECTS represents the minimum required from the Lithuanian law.

The programme is structured in general course units (concentrated in the first semester), amounting to 18 ECTS and course units of the major field of 138 ECTS. In addition, there are courses related to the professional activity practice (33 ECTS) and a final thesis with 9 ECTS. The programme also includes optional modules allowing students to choose particular subjects of their interest. The general courses are aimed at improving general competencies of the studies.

The study subjects follow a smooth progression in terms of building knowledge and competencies. The sequence of subjects throughout the programme guarantees that the required knowledge for one subject has been taught in previous subjects. Therefore, this ensures that, on a general basis, the subjects are spread evenly, and that they are not repetitive. This analysis is merely based on the structure of the curriculum design, and is not linked to the problems identified with the learning outcomes.

As previously mentioned, there is room for improvements, including module exploring the economic context and how its impacts on international business and EU integration and policies.

The professional practice courses are supervised both internally and externally, with the involvement of social partners through a supervisor of practice in the company, and a practice supervisor at SMK.

The contents and the methods used in the different subjects seem to be adequate for both the depth of the programme and to meet the learning outcomes. The analysis of the different subjects shows coherence in terms of the teaching methods employed and it seems to be appropriate for meeting the learning outcomes.

The curriculum design strategy is based on a number of general course units, which take place in the first semester and course units of the major field representing 138 ECTS. The curriculum also includes courses related to the professional activity practice (33 ECTS), culminating with a final thesis which represents 9 ECTS. The programme also includes optional subjects allowing students to choose particular subjects of their interest. The general courses are aimed at improving general competencies of the students, and are critical for developing the competences and skills required to successfully understand the subsequent subjects.

The fact that this programme has not, at the time of the visit, returned graduates opens an opportunity for assessing, from the students' perspective, the potential of improvements both in what regards the sequence of the subjects and the teaching methodologies employed. However, based on the analysis made of the programme structure and taking into account the learning outcomes, it seems that the different subjects are appropriate to achieve the learning outcomes, in a general perspective. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, there are, at least two programme learning outcomes, that are not covered by the subjects (*“integrally apply knowledge of economics, management and other social sciences when solving complex business tasks in the changing international markets”* and *“analyse and assess international business environment, trends of business development when implementing company goals and making strategic decisions on business development”*).



The fact that the programme offers three types of subjects (those providing general competences; professional activity practice; and final thesis) ensures that, on a general perspective, its scope is sufficient to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes. Nonetheless, despite the fact that, overall the programme structure is aligned with most learning outcomes, there are concerns, previously mentioned, about meeting all the learning outcomes. Therefore there is a need for reviewing subject learning outcomes vis-à-vis programme learning outcomes to make sure that all of the later are achievable.

All the subjects are taught in Lithuanian, apart from the Professional Foreign Language. As students and social partners, also indicated during the visit, increasing the number of courses taught in English would benefit students in an International Business and Communication programme. In addition, the SMK may also improve this position by offering other language courses in order to compliment the students' knowledge on different languages and cultures. The content of the subjects is consistent with the study programme but it lacks up to date references (the great majority of references are before 2010) and the inclusion of articles in professional and scientific journals that address latest developments in the corresponding area would benefit the programme in ensuring that the intended outcomes are achieved.

The expert team commends the programme for the good practice of linking the final thesis with the students experience during practical placement. This practice should be taken a step further to ensure that final theses being focused on topics relevant to international businesses in order to be consistent with the name of the programme. The thesis regulations currently focus more on the layout and not much into the content and the aims. During the visit, and in line with the final thesis presented, it was found that they are very descriptive and lack depth and analysis.

Although the review team recognises an effort in the application of modern teaching methodologies (given the training provided to the academic staff in terms of pedagogical competences, and some individual initiatives from the side of the teachers), it is also been found that the research capacities of the institution are, to some extent, weak, as more internationally publication of the academic staff are necessary. Therefore, although the programme enjoys of a relatively modern approach to the teaching methodologies, it is not clear that the latest achievements of the science are present, given the lack of a strong research profile of the institution.

The improvement actions reported in the self-assessment report (“*to introduce principles of a balanced development into its activity [...] to complement learning outcomes of studies and revise the content of studies of related course units, when referring to the principles of a responsible and sustainable activity in the economics [...] to improve competences of the SMK lecturers on the issues of a sustainable development, organizing trainings and arranging a club of self-education and interests on the topics of a responsible behaviour and sustainability*”) are important, and should be implemented.

### **Strengths:**

- The curriculum design, overall, meets the legal requirements and it is coherent and in line with the name and the level of studies.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Not enough emphasis in developing English language skills at appropriate level for a programme with international orientation.
- The lack of foundation courses on Economics, economics context and EU-related subjects should be subject of reflection. Benchmark with other programmes would benefit the programme.
- Final theses need to be more focused on international business in order to be consistent with the name of the programme. They are very descriptive and lack depth and analysis. The regulations with this regard focus more on the layout and not much into the content and the aims.
- The subject's literature and reading materials need to include more up to date references and reflect the latest development in research methodologies.

### ***2.3. Teaching staff***

The teaching staff consists of 26 teachers and 5 of them hold a PhD (representing 19% of the total teachers and 15% of the total teaching hours) and 31% of the course units are taught by PhD holders (11 course units out of 36). The academic team shows more than 3 years of pedagogical experience with exception of three teachers (with no practical work experience).

The process for contracting staff follows the legal requirements, based on a competition procedure. The university makes efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and researchers, although the self-evaluation report also refers that one of the weaknesses is the lack of funding for supporting the research activities. The information provided to the expert team (annex of research work in the SER) shows that publications of teaching staff in scientific journals are very scarce. In fact it seems to be no scientific research output at all, over the last three years, a fact that confirms that research is a weak area of the programme. Besides other factors (e.g. for most of the staff engagement with SMK is not their main employment) the absence of formulation of any kind of research strategy was evident, and thus the SMK has to put efforts into develop this practice, and therefore become able to attract more research and external funds. The annual conference organized by the college where staff and students present their work could be evolved into an applied research conference and attract attention of local businesses. However an overall strategy is needed regarding this issue.

The teaching staff team shows skills and education levels that are adequate for teaching the different courses. The team seems to be adequate to ensure that the SMK is able to deliver the learning outcomes, given that the teaching staff includes a significant number of practitioners.

The number of lecturers is adequate to ensure the learning outcome. The fact that the programme has only been offered for the last three years is very relevant regarding this issue. This results in an evolution of the lecturers allocated to the programme, with 14 lecturers in 2012-13; 21 in 2013-14; and 26 in 2014-15. On the other hand, the number of students has also grown, and the ratio lecturer-students was, 0.72; 1.24 and 1.77, respectively.

The staff turnover has been very limited, with little impact on the study programme. This needs, however, to be framed into the time period that the programme has been in place. The recent creation of the programme did not allow a significant turnover of the staff team. However, during the visit it was not possible to collect evidence that a high turnover of the staff is expected. Both in the SER and during the visit it was possible to see an academic team that is able to ensure the programme development.

There is a considerable concern in ensuring that the lecturers develop their professional skills, and this is confirmed through individual professional development plans and by reporting such professional activities. The development of the professional profile of the academic staff seems to prevail over the research requirements, which needs to be framed into the professional nature of the study programme. In addition, the SMK also plays particular attention to pedagogical progress of the lecturers, through a number of pedagogical training actions, which were positively noted by the staff team.

The SER refers to a number of important measures to support the professional development of the academic staff team. There have been efforts to improve the academic staff in order to promote the development of their pedagogical skills, through necessary training. It is important to mention the SMART programme that, according to the SER, is a “*structural department “Smart Learning Centre”, which implements the programmes of pedagogical and subject-specific skills’ improvement and competence development, realises pedagogue training and certification, according to an authentic methodology SMART (SMK Smart Educator Qualification Improvement). It includes training, studies qualification improvement and self-education of all members of the academic community (students, lecturers, and administration)*”. In addition, the SER also mentions the EU funded project Training Teachers of the New Generation at Colleges – a Step towards Modernisation and Real Quality of Studies (Project code No. VP1-2.2-ŠMM-07-K-01-093, which has provided the opportunity to develop the pedagogical skills of the academic staff.

Despite these efforts, the opportunities that mobility programmes offer to the staff development are not exploited. Only two members of staff took the opportunity to teach at a partner university under the ERASMUS scheme, while incoming exchanges happened only in 2012-13 academic year with three lecturers from other EU and non-EU countries giving some lectures at SMK. It is obvious that staff mobility was not addressed so far as a strategic priority for the programme. The academic staff could use such international exchanges for both the development of pedagogical training and for the establishment of networks of further programme development and joint research. The college’s plans to establish an institutional-wide unit to administer all international activities may help in increasing staff and student mobility to levels that one may expect in a programme with international orientation.

The review team has had the opportunity to verify that the concern over the development of pedagogical training is greater than the scientific development of the academic staff. A balance between these two aspects of the learning process needs to be found, as much as a balance between the professional aspect and the scientific need to be ensured. With this regards, the institution shows, in relation to the pedagogical development of staff a certain deficit.

There is a core team that can use English as teaching language but the programme should pay attention in developing English Language skills for all staff so that they can use references and teaching materials in English to the benefit of the study process.

A greater involvement in the scientific activities of the teaching staff is recommended, in order to promote a better balance between the scientific and professional development of the study programme. The improvement actions mentioned in the self-assessment report, should be implemented.

**Strengths:**

- There is a strategy for improving the professional development of the teaching staff (SMART programme) and the institution seems to be good at attracting funds for the training the staff.
- The professional experience of the teaching staff is adequate for the nature of the programme.

**Weaknesses:**

- Teaching staff's language skills and Erasmus mobility are weak and they are important to reflect the international dimension of the programme
- Lack of research strategy. Low incentives for research participation were found in the institution.
- The academic staff shows low level of research and this is an important aspect of their development in order to reflect the state of the art of the theory in the teaching process.
- The participation of the academic staff in international networks of research is weak and needs improvements.

***2.4. Facilities and learning resources***

The SMK premises are, in total, 2,400 m<sup>2</sup>, that provide a pleasant learning environment, which seems to be sufficient to accommodate the 45 ICB existing students. Such premises include spaces for teaching and for other leisure-related activities.

The SER provides a good description of the premises and facilities available for both students and lecturers, and they seem to be adequate for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning processes. However, during the visit, it was possible to observe that the academic staff do not have offices for developing their extra class work. This is an important part for teaching preparation process, programme development, enhanced interaction between students and staff, and allowing greater cooperation within the academic team that can promote joint scientific research. Scientific research work requires offices that provide an adequate environment for individual and/or joint work.

During the visit, the team has been informed about the plans to move to a new building, which will allow considerable improvements in the institution's facilities and that will provide the students with better working conditions.

The absence of offices for the academic staff is a strong limitation for the academic staff development, their engagement with the research processes and also limits their contact with

the students. If offices would be available the conditions would be created for the academic staff to spend more time at the institution, and this would allow a closer interaction with the students and a higher levels of involvement in the institution. However, during the visit, no evidence was found regarding the lack of involvement of the academic staff with the students work.

There seems to be sufficient information-related resources, such as IT and library, which students can access to retrieve relevant material for their learning processes. The data provided in the SER were confirmed during the visit.

However, it was also possible to confirm that the library needs to improve the number and quality of English written titles.

There has been, according to the SER, a significant investment in IT hardware and software as much as other communication related equipment (video conference and interactive whiteboard), which helps students on the learning processes.

Such conditions seem to be sufficient to ensure an adequate environment and conditions favourable to the teaching process.

There is a process particularly designed for the students' practice, which ensures the quality of the practice and ensures that all actors involved in the process are aware of their duties and what the study programme expects from them.

The institution has a procedure to ensure the process of students' practice operates efficiently. Such practices involve the student, the institution and a social partner (that ensures the placement). The placements occur in the companies, where places are available to students. Such placements require students to become familiar with the hosting organisation (company) and a representative of the company is also involved in the placement process and assessment. Students reported no problem with finding a placement and seemed very satisfied with relative provisions. The programme committee reported that they continuously try to update their list of practical placement employees, and the social partners who were present at the meeting stated their willingness to keep accepting students for practical placements.

The review team observed a great interest from social partners to be involved in the students' practical training as much as being involved in the improvement of the process, although it has also been. The programme's Study Committee approves all internship positions and a supervisor is designated for each placement. Students have also the opportunity to choose an international placement under the Erasmus programme. Twenty-two (22) students have taken internship positions in 2014.

During the visit it has been possible to confirm that many relevant hard copies of books were not in the library. The library seemed to be well equipped, with general and basic type books for the main modules of the study programme, but lacking essential reading textbooks in a quantity that is adequate for the number of students enrolled in the programme. However it may be more efficient for students and teachers if more up-to-date and wider range of scientific oriented resources would be introduced and updated periodically.

The access to scientific databases to support the scientific development of the academic staff and to enhance the participation of the students in the research activities (eventually, joint research between students and the academic staff) was found to be very limited. This limits the engagement of the academic staff into scientific activities, and it is critical for developing a strategy based on applied research, where the scientific approach should be the basis of such application to the local reality.

**Strengths:**

- The facilities are adequate for the programme, both in quality and quantity.
- Well organized practical placement procedures.

**Weaknesses:**

- The library needs to ensure that hard copies of the most relevant references are available to the students (mainly the compulsory titles) in adequate number.
- The lack of offices for the academic staff limits their involvement in the institution and does not support the development of a higher involvement in (joint) scientific activities that would result in higher scientific outputs.

***2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment***

Students are admitted into the programme if they have completed the secondary education in Lithuania or abroad, based on a competition. The information of the process is known and approved by the SMK academic board and director. Such competition is based on a competitive score structure, and the grades are differently weighted: mathematics (40%); history (20%) and one of Geography, Foreign Language, Information Technologies, Biology, or Arts (20%). This information is publicly available and the review team considers these conditions as adequate admission requirements for the programme.

The self-evaluation report provides a complete analysis of the full-time students admitted in the programme. The information shows that the demand for the programme is relatively weak. Out from 110 applicants per year on the average, only 10; 18; and 20 students were admitted in 2012; 2013; and 2014, respectively. The number of students who select the programme as their first priority is also low (14, 24, and 15 during the three years of operation), but a positive sign is that for 2014 the programme managed to admit more students than the number of applicants giving the programme the highest priority.

The expert team suggests that the college should review its admissions policies and developing plans for attracting more students to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Given that this is a professional bachelor degree study programme, there is a significant amount of time devoted to practical activities (40%) and there is time for students' consultation (11%). Students were satisfied about the consultation provided by the lecturers, although (or because that) it does not happen in a systematic way but as a response to specific student demand ("when you ask you get it" was the response of a student). However, given that consultation is indeed a very important element of the study process and it is counted as part of the programme's contact hours, it should be provided in a more organized way.

The practical activities seem to be coherent with the programme objectives and learning outcomes. Students also expressed their satisfaction about other elements of the study process that give a chance to get a better feeling of practice like company visits and team work. An example of introducing role playing exercises in class was reported by a lecturer. The programme has an opportunity to build more on those initiatives developing a strategy regarding the continuous quality improvement of the learning process.

Students, Graduates and Social partner groups emphasized the need of more internationalization in the study process. This valuable feedback from the stakeholders should have already been sought by the programme study committee. Proposed actions such as more English language, English language taught subjects, attraction of international students, and exploitation of Erasmus opportunities will enhance the international dimension of the programme.

There is sufficient information about the students' assessment process in the subject descriptors and it seems to be adequate. Students stated that they receive clear information about the requirements of each subject, during the classes. However, having written exams as the prevailing method of assessment does not help in assessing learning outcomes that are not knowledge oriented. The programme study committee should consider introducing more plurality in methods of assessment that will better link the assessment methods with corresponding learning outcomes, with written exams remaining as a smaller amount of the final grade and promoting other (more active) forms of assessment.

The self-evaluation report refers that students are included in research activities (through the dissemination of the study performance and applied research results and participating on the collection of data), in order to improve their critical thinking and communication abilities, in order to meet the learning outcomes. During the visit no evidence was found regarding this issue. However, and in line with previous aspects of this report, the overall level of scientific research is weak. The review team recognises, however, a very interesting potential in a deeper participation of the students in the scientific research, on a collaborative basis, that would allow research projects of a greater dimension and, if carefully supervised, the data collection could be used for publication in scientific journals. This is an area that needs further improvement in the institution.

There are students' mobility programmes available, both for study and for practice placement. However, the history shows that only two students have been involved in mobility programmes, in 2014-2015, which, according to the self-evaluation report, is due to the lack of funding available. In addition, the programme did not receive any incoming Erasmus students, probably, as a consequence of the limited English language taught courses. Therefore, the students do not benefit from the interaction with international students.

Given the nature of the programme, where the international and the communication dimensions are key areas (and present in the programme name), it is critical to develop this area. The institution needs to make efforts and to develop strategies to increase the internationalisation, overall, but also to create incentives for students to go abroad and to attract incoming students. Although the advantages are clearer on the side of outgoing

students, incoming foreign students are also important for developing the domestic students skills through their interaction.

Students are supported at admission by an induction programme, aiming in their social and academic orientation, and their satisfaction is surveyed by the end of the first semester. In addition, students are also consulted in what regards certain academic issues (e.g. exams, practical activities). Social support is also available for students, as it is the case of granted loans. It was also positively noted that the students may take career courses, which allow them to become more prepared to enter the job market.

In order to support the learning and teaching, the Moodle learning environment is widely used, both by students and teachers.

During the visit, the review team was also informed about how students and social partners are satisfied with the participation of students in the entrepreneurship week, where students are asked to take part on the resolution of real world problems. This is an interesting activity which provides students with soft skills and competences that are critical for their future development.

During the visit, it was possible to observe that there are facilities that promote the social interaction of the students and that are adequate for their academic life.

In order to support smooth academic progression of students, continuous assessment is promoted in all courses, usually equally divided between during the semester evaluation and final evaluation. The interim assessment is also based on feedback provided by lecturers in order to promote the evolution of students regarding the knowledge and generic skills, as expected to meet the learning outcome of the different courses.

The review team considers that the assessment system is clear and adequate. As it was evidenced by students, the information is available and communicated to students through the Moodle platform and also during an induction lecture at the first lecture of each course at the beginning of the semester.

There is a good liaison with social partners (a significant number of them participated in the visit), which contributes to the students' awareness of the job market. During the visit it was possible to observe a considerable satisfaction from the social partners regarding the outcome of the programme, namely, in what concerns the students' performance during their placements. The small number of graduates (9 graduates from the first student intake in 2012 – 4 were interviewed during the visit) limits the conclusions obtained for assessing the extent to which the professional activities of the graduates meet the programme providers' expectations in particular and the performance of the graduates in general. Therefore, the conclusions obtained in the visit should be framed into this condition – the small number of graduates, and only subsequent assessment will provide more robust conclusions.

It is important to note, however, that despite many placements take place in companies with international operations, during the visit, an examination to the final theses has shown that the students' final works are, very often, not related to international business. This is a very important aspect of the programme that needs to be improved. Students need to develop skills in terms of international business, and therefore, in order to complete their education, the final theses need to be based on topics associated to international business.



**Strengths:**

- The provision of career courses to students.
- Field visits and Entrepreneurship week (with real world problem solving)
- A variety of learning activities and teaching methodologies, such as role playing.
- Intense use of Moodle.

**Weaknesses:**

- Lack of control of the students' attendance.
- The use of consultation hours cannot be used on the calculation ECTS methodology, and thus, the ECTS of the different courses need to be revised.
- Although the companies involved in the internship have international operations, students topics were not international business related.
- Low participation in mobility programmes.
- The link between the assessment and the learning outcomes needs improvements.

**2.6. Programme management**

The institution has implemented a Quality Assurance System (hereafter – QAS) with the participation of the whole academic community, in order to ensure the quality of the teaching activities. The QAS covers the participation of different groups within the institution in different activities, allowing a more efficient implementation and monitoring of the activities related to the programme. Therefore, many of the activities are distributed through a wide number of people, with a clear definition of each group's roles and duties. The QAS processes are supported by an IT system and a designated Quality Management Representative is responsible for the functioning of the QAS, monitoring, management and accountability of processes, internal communications and improvement of its effectiveness.

As stated in the SER, the QAS has procedures that include *“the assessment of the implementation of the main study programmes, regular inspections, monitoring, analyses and improvement procedures that ensure proper collection, analysis and use of information and its use for efficient management of the study programmes”*.

The various aspects of the study programme are assessed, annually, by the different stakeholders (lecturers, students, graduates, employers, placement providers). During the meetings with the different teams the expert team had a chance to verify that all stakeholders are aware of the QAS and participate in the assessment procedures. Samples of analyses reports regarding student satisfaction about the courses of the programme were provided in the SER. However, it has not been possible to collect evidence of the results of such analysis, for other aspects of the programme (e.g. graduates, practical placements, etc.) mainly because the program has only recently completed a full cycle of operations with only 9 graduates in 2015.

The programme is very new and it is going through the processes of internal and external evaluation for the first time. Although the formal programme assessment processes are applied for the first time, various improvement initiatives were discussed, proposed and implemented by the programme study committee following the feedback from various stakeholder (teachers, students and social partners) according to the QAS procedures for annual programme reviews.

A complete list of the improvements made during the years 2012 – 2014 was provided to the expert team which includes changes made in programme's aims and learning outcomes, structure of the curriculum, and programme administration, etc. Although in some cases, these have been a consequence of changes in the Lithuanian law concerning Higher education, several changes were initiated internally within the programme. As more graduates are able to provide additional feedback, it is expected that, in the immediate future, SMK will have the opportunity to further review the program.

The programme cooperates with several businesses, organizations and institutes. This cooperation facilitates the attraction of lecturers-practitioners for the programme and supervisors for the student's practical work. The interaction between social partner's and the programme provides continuous feedback from the side of social partners. The social partners reported, during the visit, that they were informally involved in the programme development, through consultation. As it was evident during the discussions of the expert team with the social partners, they are willing and can contribute more to the programme, in several ways (e.g. providing business cases, lectures, joint R&D projects and academic consulting). Although, formally, the programme study committee includes stakeholder representation, the programme management should exploit the potential of a dynamic social partner group and strengthen the links with the business community in more formal ways.

The processes associated to the development of the programme, internally, seem to be well defined, effective and efficient, operating within the framework of a certified QAS. The assessment of the programme should not be focused, mainly on the internal processes and it should, also, include aspects related to the external image of the programme. In that respect, the review team has concluded that a strategy for increasing the demand of the programme needs to be thought and put in place, so that the programme increases the number of students. Nonetheless, during the visit, it was possible to observe the students' satisfaction with the programme and the surveys also support this aspect.

#### **Strengths:**

- The existence of a Quality Assurance System
- An appropriate programme management seems to be in place and developing

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Despite the involvement of the social partners in the programme, their participation is, mainly, informal. This is a weakness to the extent that social partners need to be more included in formal groups within the institution.

- The group of social partners shows little diversity as, in line with the visit, group of the social partners the review team had contact with, was very homogeneous. Such diversity is very important to deliver quality to the programme and to the institution, in general.
- A strategy to develop the demand of the programme is required.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The programme needs to improve its internationalisation dimension in order to better reflect the programme name and respond to social partners' expectations. Such improvement needs to take place at different levels: the students and teaching staff language skills; the increased involvement of teachers and students in international mobility programmes; and the topics of the theses.
2. A review of the programme structure is need in order to include courses on economic context and EU related subjects, which are critical areas for a study programme in the field of international business.
3. The teaching staff needs to develop in terms of the English language skills and to be more active in research, with particular regards to applied research.
4. Although there is a good number of social partners, they should be more involved in the design of the curriculum (on a more structured approach), since a number of opportunities arise from such involvement both for the study process (e.g. contributing with case studies as inputs for the teaching activities and assessment.) and the development of the programme.
5. The research activities need to improve with a higher participation of the students and efforts should be made in order to improve the publication levels of the teaching staff. This may be able on a collaborative basis with the students, introducing them to the research activities.
6. The ECTS workload of the subjects needs to be reviewed so that it takes into account contact hours but not ad-hoc student consultation hours.
7. The process associated to the final theses need to be a matter of reflection. The regulation of the theses need to focus more on the core, rather than just on the layout, and efforts need to be made to incorporate, on a mandatory basis, a topic on international business and communication, in order to be aligned with the name of the programme.

#### **IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE (GOOD PRACTICE)**

1. The institution enjoys of a pleasant environment, with a great involvement of all partners. There is a good organization, and the institution has shown the potential to improve the programme. The social partners participate closely with the institution, and if their involvement becomes more formal the institution may benefit, even more, from their inputs.
2. It is important to note the efforts made towards the pedagogical development of the academic staff team, which lead to positive impacts on the teaching methodologies. This has also been demonstrated by the ability to gain external funding for such initiatives.

#### **V. SUMMARY**

The programme has well defined aims and clear learning outcomes which overall justify the name of the programme and are compatible with those of similar programmes. The satisfaction and positive position about the programme expressed by both students and social partners, along with the fact that this is the only programme in this scientific area in the region provides a solid bases for the future development of the programme. Since the programme is rather new, there is plenty of room for further improvements, especially in enhancing the content in certain areas (e.g. international economics, EU integration, etc.) and aligning the subject learning outcomes with the programme learning outcomes to make sure that the later are achievable.

The programme aims in preparing graduates to function in an international business environment. Thus the first priority of the programme is to create the proper multicultural international learning environment for students so that this overarching objective can be achieved. Several improvements are expected in this direction. They may include: more language course, as well as teaching some of the subject in English, increase the involvement of exchanged or invited lecturers in teaching, enhance the international mobility of lecturers and students, and develop the means (e.g. offering subjects in English language) to attract exchange students to study at SMK and interact with IBC students. Along the same lines, the practical placements and the final thesis two well organized study process should have a definite orientation towards international business. The recent upgrade of the role of the International Office is certainly a move in the right direction.

The mix of academics and practitioners in the roster of the teaching staff supports well the orientation of the programme. Despite the fact that almost all of the teaching staff works on a part-time basis at SMK, students were satisfied with the support they receive from the teaching staff and teachers cared about the development of the programme. SMK provides enough opportunities for the development of the staff, however attention must be paid in developing a research strategy that fits the character of the college and device incentives for the staff to be involved in research and seek international research partners, as this will also create more opportunities for students and the further development of the programme.

The programme is delivered at the premises of SMK which provide a pleasant environment, with sufficient space and IT facilities that support the learning process. However a combined effort is needed from the teachers to update the teaching materials listed in the subject descriptions and the library to ensure that hard copies of the most relevant references are available to the students (mainly the compulsory titles) in adequate number.

The programme has a clear management structure with a Quality Assurance System in place, the procedures of which are known to all stakeholders. The organization of the practical placements and final thesis is operating well with the involvement of social partners in both processes. Social partners in fact consist a very dynamic external element that has not been fully exploited by the programme. Having in place the proper tools to provide feedback and making both teachers and social partners more actively involved, the chair and the study programme committee can establish a plan for the continuous improvement and development of the programme.

## VI. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *International Trade and Communication* (state code – 653N12005) at University of Applied Social Sciences is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	2
6.	Programme management	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>16</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Dr. Pandelis Ipsilandis
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Assoc. Prof. Vitor Braga
	Assoc. Prof. David J. Pollard
	Assoc. Prof. Danutė Rasimavičienė
	Mr. Marius Rimkaitis
	Ms. Vaida Spūdytė

**SOCIALINIŲ MOKSLŲ KOLEGIJOS PIRMOSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ  
PROGRAMOS TARPTAUTINIS VERSLAS IR KOMUNIKACIJA (VALSTYBINIS  
KODAS – 653N12005) 2015-12-02 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-  
322 IŠRAŠAS**

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**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Socialinių mokslų kolegijos studijų programa *Tarptautinis verslas ir komunikacija* (valstybinis kodas – 653N12005) vertinama **teigiamai**.

<b>Eil. Nr.</b>	<b>Vertinimo sritis</b>	<b>Srities įvertinimas, balais*</b>
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	3
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>16</b>

\* 1 – Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 – Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 – Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 – Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

&lt;...&gt;

**IV. SANTRAUKA**

Studijų programos tikslai – aiškiai apibrėžti, studijų rezultatai – aiškūs, tad visa tai pateisina studijų programos pavadinimą ir dera su panašių studijų programų tikslais bei studijų rezultatais. Studentų ir socialinių partnerių pasitenkinimas, teigiamas nusiteikimas programos atžvilgiu ir faktas, kad ši programa yra vienintelė tokios mokslinės srities programa visame regione, suteikia tvirtą pagrindą tolesnei jos plėtrai. Kadangi programa gana nauja, turima apsčiai erdvės jai tobulinti, ypač tam tikrų sričių turiniui stiprinti (pvz., tarptautinė ekonomika, ES integracija ir pan.), ir dalykų studijų rezultatams suderinti su programos studijų rezultatais, siekiant užtikrinti jų pasiekiamumą.

Programa siekiama parengti absolventus veikti tarptautinio verslo aplinkoje. Taigi pirmasis studijų programos uždavinys – sukurti tinkamą daugiakultūrę tarptautinę mokymosi aplinką studentams, kad šis visapusiškas tikslas galėtų būti pasiektas. Šia linkme reikėtų kai kurių patobulinimų: daugiau kalbų kursų, kai kurių dalykų dėstymo anglų kalba, pagal mainų programą atvykstančių arba kviestinių dėstytojų skaičiaus didinimo, dėstytojų ir studentų tarptautinio judumo didinimo, priemonių, skirtų studentams į SMK pritraukti pagal mainų programas ir sąveikai su tarptautinio verslo ir komunikacijos (TVK) studentais kurti (pvz.,



angliškai dėstomų dalykų siūlymas). Be to, praktika ir baigiamasis darbas – du gerai organizuoti studijų procesai – turi būti aiškiai orientuoti į tarptautinį verslą. Neseniai išaugęs Tarptautinių ryšių skyriaus vaidmuo neabejotinai yra žingsnis tinkama kryptimi.

Kaip matyti iš dėstytojų sąrašo, personalą sudaro ir akademikai, ir praktikai – tai atitinka studijų programos orientaciją. Nepaisant to, kad beveik visi SMK dėstytojai dirba ne visu etatu, studentai patenkinti jų teikiama pagalba, o patys dėstytojai rūpinasi programa. SMK personalui suteikiama pakankamai galimybių kelti kvalifikaciją, tačiau būtina atkreipti dėmesį, kad būtų pravartu sukurti į su kolegijos pobūdžiu derančią mokslinių tyrimų strategiją, sugalvoti iniciatyvų, kaip į mokslo tyrimus įtraukti darbuotojus, ir ieškoti tarptautinių tyrimų partnerių – visi šie elementai sukurtų daugiau galimybių studentams ir prisidėtų prie tolesnės programos plėtros.

Studijų programa dėstoma SMK patalpose, kurių aplinka maloniai nuteikia, pakanka erdvės, yra studijų procesui reikalinga IT infrastruktūra. Tačiau bendromis dėstytojų pastangomis reikia atnaujinti dalykų aprašuose išvardytą ir bibliotekoje esančią mokomąją literatūrą ir užtikrinti, kad bibliotekoje studentams būtų prieinama pakankamas skaičius pačių aktualiausių spaudinių (daugiausia – privalomųjų dalykų literatūros).

Programos vadybos struktūra – aiški, kokybės užtikrinimo sistema veikia tinkamai, procedūros žinomos visiems socialiniams dalininkams. Praktika ir baigiamasis darbas organizuojami deramai, abiejuose procesuose aktyviai dalyvauja socialiniai partneriai. Iš tikrųjų socialiniai partneriai yra itin dinamiškas išorinis elementas, kuris studijų programoje dar ne iki galo išnaudojamas. Turėdami tinkamas grįžtamojo ryšio gavimo priemones ir skatindamas aktyvesnį dėstytojų bei socialinių partnerių dalyvavimą, pirmininkas ir studijų programos komitetas galėtų sukurti nuolatinio programos tobulinimo ir plėtros planą.

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### **III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

1. Reikia didinti studijų programos tarptautiškumą, kad būtų pateisinamas programos pavadinimas ir atliepiami socialinių partnerių lūkesčiai. Patobulinimai reikalingi keliose srityse: studentų ir dėstytojų kalbos įgūdžiai, dėstytojų ir studentų dalyvavimo tarptautinėse judumo programose didinimas, baigiamųjų darbų temos.
2. Reikia persvarstyti programos struktūrą ir įtraukti ekonomikos kursų bei su ES susijusių dalykų – šios temos būtinos tarptautinio verslo srities studijų programai.
3. Dėstytojams reikia tobulinti anglų kalbos žinias ir aktyviau dalyvauti moksliniuose tyrimuose, ypač taikomuosiuose.
4. Nors socialinių partnerių gana daug, juos reikėtų labiau įtraukti į studijų gerinimo procesą (reikia aiškesnės struktūros), nes dalyvavimas studijų procese (pvz., prisidedant prie atvejo tyrimų – tai būtų indėlis į dėstymą ir vertinimą) ir programos tobulinimo veikloje suteikia daug galimybių.

5. Reikia pagerinti mokslinių tyrimų veiklą, skatinti joje aktyviau dalyvauti studentus. Rekomenduojama stengtis didinti dėstytojų publikavimosi lygį. Galbūt tai galima daryti bendradarbiaujant su studentais ir supažindinant juos su mokslinių tyrimų veikla.
6. Reikia persvarstyti dalykams tenkančių kreditų skaičių, kad būtų skaičiuojamos tik kontaktinės, o ne pagal poreikį teikiamų studentų konsultacijų valandos.
7. Būtina persvarstyti baigiamųjų darbų rengimo ir vertinimo procesą. Baigiamųjų darbų reglamentavimas turėtų būti labiau sutelktas į esmę, o ne vien į išdėstymą, taip pat reikia stengtis privalomai įtraukti tarptautinio verslo ir komunikacijos temą, kad pasiteisintų studijų programos pavadinimas.

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Paslaugos teikėjas patvirtina, jog yra susipažinęs su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)