



**VILNIAUS VERSLO KOLEGIJOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
VILNIUS BUSINESS COLLEGE**

Members of the Review Panel

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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Vilnius Business College



Bastian Baumann

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the results of an institutional review coordinated by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) within the framework of external quality assurance in the Republic of Lithuania. The purpose of the external review is to evaluate the quality of a higher education institution's performance, to create conditions for its continuous improvement, to foster a culture of quality, and to inform founders, the academic community, and society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. The report is based on evidence provided in the self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution, additional documents and information requested by the Review Panel, data supplied by SKVC, and insights gathered during the site visit, which included meetings with a broad range of stakeholders.

3. The Review Panel was composed of experts appointed in accordance with the Expert Selection Procedure, approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education by Order No. V-149 of 31 December 2019. The panel included the following members:

- 3.1. Prof. h. c. Bastian Baumann, Higher Education Consultant (Germany), panel chair;
- 3.2. Pieter-Jan Van de Velde, Higher Education Consultant (Belgium), panel member-secretary;
- 3.3. Prof. Dr. Lukas Andreas Scherer, Head of the Institute for Organisation and Leadership (Switzerland), panel member- academic;
- 3.4. Prof. Dr. Eneken Titov, professor of Management, Estonian Entrepreneurship Higher Education Institution (Estonia), panel member - academic;
- 3.5. Raminta Stanaitytė-Česnulienė, co-founder and partner of Insynergy4 (Lithuania), panel member-social partner;
- 3.6. Alara Özdarendeli, Bachelor student of Business Administration and Law at Koç University College of Administrative Sciences and Economics (Turkey), panel member-student.

4. Based on the results of the external review, **Vilnius Business College** is given a **positive** evaluation.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment*
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	2
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	2
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

*5 points (excellent): the area is evaluated as outstanding in both the national and international context

4 points (very good): the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings

3 points (good): the area is being developed systematically, without any major shortcomings

2 points (satisfactory): the area meets the minimum requirements, however there are shortcomings that must be addressed

1 point (unsatisfactory): The area does not meet the minimum requirements and shows fundamental shortcomings.

6. **39** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

II.1. Background of the Review

7. The external review was organised by SKVC and conducted by an international Review Panel. It was carried out in accordance with *the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators*, approved by Order No. V-1529 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on 19 December 2019, as well as *the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education*, approved by Order No. V-32 of the Director of SKVC on 9 March 2020.

8. This is a repeated review carried out after an initial negative review of the higher education institution, which resulted in a three years accreditation.

9. The external review consists of the following stages: submission of the self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to SKVC; appointment of the expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; the panel's site visit to the institution; preparation of the external review report; decision-making on the review outcome and accreditation, and subsequent publication; and follow-up activities aimed at improving institutional performance based on the review findings.

10. At the preparatory stage, the Panel received the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with annexes. SKVC also provided supplementary information on the institution, including statistical data on students and staff, financial information, results of ex-post study field and institutional reviews, evaluations of research and development activities, and records of academic ethics violations as reported by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel additionally requested further information, such as action plans, baseline data, action plans and procedures.

11. The site visit was preceded by a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory meetings of the Panel. The Panel visited the college on 20-22 October 2025, where it met with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Following the visit, the Panel met both in person and virtually to finalise its conclusions and recommendations. The review report was completed through correspondence and subsequently submitted to SKVC.

12. The external review focused on four areas defined by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management, Quality Assurance, Studies and Research (Art)**, and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also took into account the recommendations of the previous review in 2022 and the progress visit in 2024.

13. In the institutional review, each evaluation area is assessed on a five-point scale:

- Excellent (5 points): The area is evaluated as outstanding in both the national and international context.
- Very Good (4 points): The area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings.
- Good (3 points): The area is being developed systematically, without major shortcomings.
- Satisfactory (2 points): The area meets the minimum requirements; however, notable shortcomings remain that must be addressed.
- Unsatisfactory (1 point): The area does not meet the minimum requirements and shows fundamental shortcomings.

14. A **positive evaluation** is awarded when none of the evaluation areas receives an unsatisfactory score (1 point). A **negative evaluation** is awarded when at least one evaluation area is assessed as unsatisfactory (1 point).

15. The review report prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to report any errors of fact. The Panel considers these comments and, if necessary, revises the report before submitting it to SKVC.

16. The Panel [received/did not receive] comments from Vilnius Business College and [made/did not make] changes to the report accordingly, based on the substance of the feedback.

17. Once the Panel finalizes the report, it is submitted to the external Commission for the Review of Higher Education Institutions, established by SKVC. Based on the proposal made by the Commission, in accordance with its regulations approved by Order No. V-5 of the Director of SKVC on 8 January 2020, SKVC adopts one of the following decisions:

- 17.1. to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
- 17.2. to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

18. The higher education institution has the right to submit a reasoned complaint to the Appeals Commission established by SKVC.

19. The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

20. Based on the results of the repeated external review, SKVC adopts one of the following accreditation decisions:

- 20.1. **to grant accreditation for seven years** if the institution's performance is evaluated positively;
- 20.2. **to deny accreditation** if the institution receives a negative result in a repeated external review.

21. SKVC publishes the external review decision, together with its conclusions and the accreditation decision, on its website. The higher education institution must also publish the review decision and external review report on its website and maintain it until the next external review.

II.2. Background Information on the Institution

22. Vilnius Business College (VBC) is a private higher education College in Vilnius. The College originated from the Language and Management College founded by Emilija Rastenienė (E. Rastenienė Language and Management College) and was accredited as Vilnius Business College in 2003. In January 2024, following a change of shareholders, the College became part of the Synergetica educational group, which consists of three independent non-state higher education institutions in Lithuania: SMK College of Applied Sciences, Kazimieras Simonavičius University (KSU), and Vilnius Business College. It also has a share in the Malaysia Technology Transformation & Creativity (MTTC) vocational school in Malaysia. Since 24 January 2025, the College has been managed by Director Gabija Skučaitė.

23. The College is an accredited higher education institution entitled to award Professional Bachelor's degrees in the fields of business and public management, informatics and the humanities. In the 2024–2025 academic year the College implemented the following study programmes:

- English for International Communication (English, Lithuanian);
- Logistics Business (Lithuanian);
- Business Management and Marketing (Team Academy method or traditional; English, Lithuanian);
- E-Business (English, Lithuanian);

- Business Development and Entrepreneurship (English);
- Tourism and Events (Lithuanian);
- Media Technologies (Lithuanian);
- Programming and Internet Technologies (English, Lithuanian);
- Game Development (English, Lithuanian).

In 2025-2026, Interactive Media & Technology was renamed into Media Technologies (Lithuanian) and E-business was renamed into International E-Business and Commerce (English and Lithuanian). Two new programmes were created: International Hospitality Management (English) which will replace the Tourism and Events programme and Business Finance & Investment (English and Lithuanian).

Furthermore, Cybersecurity Technologies (English, Lithuanian), Health Technology and Innovation Business (English and Lithuanian – formerly Wellness and Beauty), and Agri-Food Business and Innovation (English and Lithuanian) are mentioned in the SER and on the website, but there is no reference to students numbers in the overview of student intake and total number of students.

24. As of 1 October 2025, 1,064 students were enrolled at VBC. 78 academic staff and researchers (35,22 FTE) were employed.

25. Implementing most of its study programmes in English, Vilnius Business College has entered international markets and has attracted in the academic year 2025-2026 255 students from 25 countries. VBC is engaged in international activities through collaboration with foreign higher education institutions and through the recruitment of international degree students directly. According to the information in the Aikos-database, Business Management and Marketing and Logistics Business are also offered in Russian. As far as the Panel understood, in practice this is, however, not the case anymore.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

III.1. Management

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution’s strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;

1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;

1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

26. Vilnius Business College defines its mission in its self-assessment report as “educating future-ready professionals and leaders capable of creating meaningful impact in advanced industrial fields where human potential, business, and technology converge”. During the site visit, the Panel discussed the exact meaning of the Colleges mission with several stakeholders, and found that there is some lack of shared understanding

of the key elements of the mission. A more detailed elaboration of those key elements would be helpful for the academic community to ensure a consistent translation into the actions of the College.

27. In the *Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030* this mission is developed in more detail. Vilnius Business College is committed to:

- Empowering students by providing not only knowledge and skills but also the ability to independently shape their own learning and career pathways.
- Developing a knowledge and connection ecosystem that integrates studies, applied research, and innovation to create value for the development of individuals, organizations, and society.
- Fostering interdisciplinary competences that enable agile action in a constantly changing global environment.
- Strengthening social responsibility by promoting inclusion, community well-being, a healthy environment, and cultural diversity.

28. In the *Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030* those principles are further developed into five strategic priorities:

- Advanced, Student-Centred Studies Grounded in Applied Research;
- Development of Applied Science Hubs and the Knowledge Exchange Ecosystem;
- Strengthening Internationalization and Building an Intercultural Academic Community;
- Creating a Living Environment for Study and Life Experience;
- Developing a Lifelong Learning Ecosystem and a Horizontal, Continuity-Based Learning Pathway.

29. Overall, the Panel considers that these strategic priorities are in line with the mission of the College, although the mission statement itself does not explicitly refer to the (applied) research ambitions of the College. The College might consider integrating those ambitions into its mission statement, especially taking into account the substantial ambitions the College states in its Strategic plan related to applied research.

30. The College's *Integrated Development Strategy for 2025–2030* is formulated with reference to Lithuanian higher education policy and the provisions of the Law on Science and Studies. In the Self-Assessment Report, the College provides references of the articles of the Law to which it aims to comply with the provision of higher education and the development of (applied) research.

31. In general, the *Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030* is also aligned with the vision of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the principles of the Bologna Process, the goals of the European Education Area (EEA), the Digital Education Action Plan, the Green Transformation Policy and the European Skills Agenda. As a result of the previous Panel's recommendations, the College explicitly referred in the Self-Assessment report to the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, ECTS, diploma supplement, etc. However, there is still a lack of understanding of the consequences of those European policy guidelines, which do not only provide a general vision about international student mobility or transparency about the contents of individual study subjects, but also very specific implementation guidelines. The College does not show convincing evidence that those European frameworks inform the daily practices of the College. To illustrate: as already pointed out by the previous review panels, public information on study subjects is limited to the title and the number of ECTS-credits, while the ECTS User's Guide clearly states that the Course Catalogue should be published on the institution's website, including information on study subjects such the name of lecturer(s), learning outcomes, the mode of delivery, prerequisites and co-requisites, etc. The Panel, therefore, recommends the College to not only align with the 'why' of European policy frameworks, but also to comply with the guidelines on 'how' to implement those policies.

32. The Panel notices that the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030 document does not include an analysis of the current situation, nor any baseline data. Although the College managed to provide baseline data during the site visit of the Panel, the College might benefit from making the baseline situation and the analysis of past performance more explicit in the strategic planning processes, in order to close the PDCA cycle.

33. The strategic plan provides a broad and accessible framework for the development of the College in the coming years. The strategic priorities are formulated in a relatively broad way. While those priorities are accompanied with nearly 100 quantitative output indicators, the Panel considers that the document lacks clear guidance on the choices which have been and should be made on priority areas the College will invest in. The Panel considers this as a weakness in the strategic planning process of the College. Especially due to the relatively small size and budget of the College, compared to the high ambitions, smart choices will need to be made. The Panel recommends, therefore, that key performance indicators (KPIs) be revised in terms of strategic direction and impact orientation. The Panel notices that the College is very agile and reacts fast on requests from social partners and other stakeholders. While this is a strength, a clear vision on what to do and - even more - on what not to do, is necessary in the opinion of the Panel. This relates to the choices to be made on new and existing study programmes, as well as in the field of applied research. By 2027, the College aims to establish and operationalize at least two new applied science hubs in areas such as FinTech, WellTech, HealthTech, HumanTech, AgriTech, FoodTech, MediaTech and other emerging business-technology fields. The Panel considers that the College would benefit from more specific choices to build research groups of several researchers who together develop specialised expertise in some niche areas in order to achieve the ambitious quantitative targets which are stated in the strategic plan. Such spearhead cluster approach is in the panel's view probably the most resource efficient way to build competitive advantage in the international (applied) research field. Choices may be informed by the available inhouse expertise and the presence of strategic partner organisations.

34. The College prepares Annual financial plans alongside the definition of annual KPIs. While high-level calculations have been made on long-term financial sustainability, the Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030 has not been substantiated explicitly by a long-term financial plan, indicating specific budgets for the strategic developments. While the Panel considers the target value for most KPIs for 2030 justified, it considers that the targets for the academic year 2025-2026 are probably overly ambitious.

35. KPIs at institutional level are translated into KPIs per department and even at individual level for each employee. These individual targets are integrated into individual annual performance plans. Progress is regularly discussed with the employee's line manager. At the end of the year, achievement of KPIs is aggregated into an overview at College level which is discussed in the Strategy Monitoring Committee. The Strategy Implementation Coordination Group holds regular monthly meetings, and management review meetings, where decisions are made regarding the adjustment of objectives, reallocation of resources, or the implementation of new measures. This system seems to function sufficiently well, but there is clear room for improvement. The Panel noticed that the aggregation of data requires a lot of manual work. Furthermore, the Panel noticed that data provided by the College are not always consistent (ambition level for number of research clusters differs from 3 to 5 depending on the document; numbers on student mobility differ depending on the source, baseline data are gathered in another document than the ambition levels for KPIs, some programmes which are mentioned in the Self-Evaluation Report and website do not appear in the overview of student numbers, etc.). The College may consider implementing an IT-solution to integrate the long list of KPIs in an efficient way. This may allow follow-up the achievement of KPIs more in real time. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that – at least on an annual basis - a performance analysis report is produced which provides a comprehensive performance review, as well as an overview of the learnings and

necessary adjustments for the future. Such performance review should be more comprehensive than the public Annual Report and should provide more room for internal self-reflection and stakeholder feedback.

36. To conclude, the Panel considers that the Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030 is in line with the College's mission. While the mission is also in line with the vision behind national and international policy frameworks, a detailed analysis of the more detailed guidelines for the implementation of those policy frameworks is sometimes lacking. The College has implemented a system of KPIs and follows up on their achievement. However, KPIs should be revised regularly in order to sharper define priorities on what to do, and what not to do. Consistent and comprehensive reporting and critical self-reflection on the achievement of set goals may also be helpful for the College to achieve the ambitious targets which have been set in the Integrated Development Strategy.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:

1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;

1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;

1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.

37. In 2024, the institution was acquired by the Synergetica educational group, led by Gabija Skučaitė. The Panel considers that such an integration in a broader educational group offers many opportunities to achieve economies of scale which may be relevant in an ever faster changing higher education area. The panel learned, however, that the leadership of the group and the College wants to keep each institution relatively independent to sustain the different organisational cultures. The Self-Evaluation Report mentions that the affiliation provides opportunities to share intellectual and material resources, use them in a coordinated way, develop joint innovations, and coordinate research and experimental development (R&D) activities. To this end, an inter-institutional R&D management framework has been prepared to ensure effective collaboration among all Synergetica institutions in creating advanced educational products and conducting applied research and several academic staff of other institutions from the group have been recruited. However, the Panel would have expected to see clearer plans for how the consortium could be leveraged and how synergy effects could be created to achieve the strategic goals of the College. The Panel considers that there is a lot of untapped potential within the broader group, while respecting the strategic direction of the group to keep the individual institutional cultures alive. Some areas of collaboration the Panel considers self-evident include deepening the mutual learning on research policies, the commercialization of applied research outcomes and tech transfer, the automation of back-office processes (including quality assurance) and the further development of international relations.

38. At the beginning of 2025, Gabija Skučaitė took up the position of Director of the College. The Panel noticed that this change has led to a new dynamic within the College. However, this change has as a consequence that the shares and the daily management are in the hands of one person. From a governance perspective, the Panel considers that it would be advisable to establish a collective governing body including external stakeholders, which may take accountability for the strategic policies of the College together with the Director. This could create a space for critical long-term reflection on the strategic options of the College. Furthermore, such a body would be well-positioned to approve the budget and evaluate the performance of the Director. Whether such a body must be created at the level of the Vilnius Business College or rather at the level of the Synergetica group, should be discussed internally.

39. The Director has created a management team with two Deputy Directors: the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs and Quality and the Deputy Director for Strategy and Development. This structure has strengthened managerial capacities. Furthermore, the internal process management of Vilnius Business College is grounded in a clear organisational structure. During the reporting period, systematic efforts were undertaken to strengthen staff capacity and managerial competencies, particularly at the senior and middle management levels. New structural units were established – the Centre for Science and Business, the Centre for Study Planning and Information Systems, and the Career Centre – as well as new positions dedicated to project management, educational product development, and research commercialisation. The panel positively values the steps taken to strengthen the management structure. The College applies an approach with distributed responsibility in areas such as quality assurance, human resources management and internal and external communication. This approach depends on conscious implementation by all staff involved. However, gaps may occur because of such distributed responsibility and lack of dedicated professionals with specialised expertise. This became apparent in areas such as human resources management and internal and external communication. One striking example is that four years after the previous panel's recommendations on the publication of quality assurance process results, little progress has been made. Although the self-evaluation report and the staff involved claim that this information is consistently made available on the website, this is still not the case (e.g. late publication of the 2024 annual report, while the most recent information on evaluations by students and alumni dates from 2023).

40. A regular activity planning system has been implemented, encompassing integrated strategic planning, the preparation of annual plans, and monthly plans that are discussed during administration working group sessions. Regular meetings and plan reviews make it possible to monitor their alignment with performance indicators. Each unit prepares semi-annual and annual reports, the analysis of which is aligned with the College's strategic objectives. Daily management practices also play an important role – including regular meetings between the Director and Deputy Directors with staff, monitoring of individual units' activities, and community involvement in the reflection on results.

41. Following the recommendations of the 2022 external evaluation, the College has developed a Risk Management Procedure. The aim of risk management is to identify in a timely manner both external factors (e.g., changes in student enrolment, shifts in education policy, economic fluctuations) and internal factors (e.g., staff turnover, financial flows, changes in personnel), to assess their impact on institutional activities, and to plan appropriate management measures. The procedure is implemented through annual management review meetings and the work of the Strategy Monitoring Council, using a risk register in which potential risks are recorded together with their likelihood, level of impact, and the persons responsible for prevention or mitigation. As part of the preparation of the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030, the College also performed an Environmental Analysis and a Future Scenario Analysis, which drew different scenarios and potential context factors which may incur substantial risks for the College. The Panel values the steps taken to integrate risk management into the management of the College.

42. Stakeholders are represented in different structural bodies of the College. The Academic Council is responsible for shaping policies in studies, research and applied activities, as well as quality assurance. It approves study programmes, establishes the principles of study organization, sets the qualification requirements and criteria for the evaluation of academic staff, and provides recommendations on the improvement of key documents regulating studies and academic activities. The Academic Council consists of 17 members: five teachers, two student representatives, two representatives of other higher education institutions, seven ex-officio members. The Panel values the addition of a second student representative.

43. The College has also established a collegial advisory body – the College Council – which brings together experts from various fields, social partners, and community representatives. The role of the Council is to

provide strategic insights, assess the directions of the College's development, and help ensure that the institution's activities are aligned with the needs of society, the state, and the region. The Panel values the recent creation of this Council to organise structured exchange with social partners.

44. At the level of study programmes, Study Programme Committees shape and evaluate the directions of study programme content. Students, lecturers and social partners participate and are represented in those committees to guarantee stakeholder involvement.

45. More generally, the interests of students at the College are represented by the Student Representation, whose primary purpose is to represent and defend the rights and legitimate interests of the students related to their social situation, well-being, and status both within and outside the College. The Panel learned that the student representation is still separately organized for national and international students. As mentioned further in this report, it is important for the unity of the College that the students in Lithuanian and English taught programmes feel both involved and recognised. While the College might reflect on how to better involve international students in the internal quality assurance of the College, student representatives may consider how to organise in a more united way to represent all students in a balanced way.

46. National social partners provided many examples of their strong relationships with the College and of the very reactive attitude of the College. The College proactively integrates their feedback both within the existing study programmes and at the level of the creation of new study programmes. This is a clear strength of the College. However, as indicated above, the College must ensure that it only integrates those suggestions which are also in line with their own strategy. The Panel considers that there is a substantial risk to invest the limited resources of the College in a fragmented way. At the time of the site visit, social partners were largely limited to national contacts. The Panel encourages the College to develop similar strong relationships with international social partners, especially in some well-chosen spearhead domains, as suggested above.

47. Individual staff members sustain good relationships with individual alumni, but a more structured way to involve alumni in the governance of the College is needed. A more elaborated alumni management would provide additional opportunities for the College. While keeping close informal contact with national alumni is relatively easy, the College should reflect deeply on how to involve international alumni in the future. The Panel understands that only few international students had graduated at the moment of the site visit. In the coming years this number will exponentially grow. Both for those who stay in Lithuania and for those who return home, a clear strategy needs to be developed. While it may be more challenging to stay in touch with alumni who return home after the programme, a well functioning alumni association may become a fundamental building block in the recruitment process of the College.

48. To conclude, the College has invested in the creation of a clear governance structure and distribution of tasks among the staff, including individual and group KPIs. A lot of new procedures, roles and structural units have been recently established. The Panel considers it as a priority for the coming years to regularly review not only the achievement of the defined (mainly) quantitative KPIs, but also the functionality of the system itself. The panel considers that the unity between director and owner and the distributed responsibilities in areas such as human resources management and internal and external communication require additional attention in such a review.

1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;

1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.

49. The College has defined a broad set of KPIs in its Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030. Part of those KPIs are related to performance data. Input is collected through surveys of students, alumni, academic staff, and social partners. Along with other relevant data, those results are discussed regularly in the Strategy Monitoring Council, the Strategy Implementation Coordination Group will regularly monitor the progress during monthly meetings, and management review meetings will be scheduled to adjust whenever necessary. Although the Panel positively values this approach, there was little evidence of this approach at the time of the site visit. As indicated below, data provided by the College differ across documents. More consistent data gathering and reporting is still needed. Furthermore, the Panel considers that the College should make more meaningful use of such data in its decision making processes.

50. The Panel is aware of the fact that the College is legally expected to conduct its operations in Lithuanian. The Panel, however, signals that the international ambitions of the College requires that communication with and active participation of international staff and students is guaranteed. While the College claims that foreign students and staff will learn Lithuanian and that they may use automatic translation tools to understand information which is available in Lithuanian, such approach is not in line with the College's internationalisation strategy, which claims that students can fully participate in the education process in English. Therefore, the College may need to align its practices to its internationalisation strategy.

51. For performance data on student employment and graduate career monitoring, the College relies on the "Ratings" magazine, which publishes annually comparative rankings of universities and colleges in Lithuania. Higher education institutions have also access to extensive state data, including information from employment and social security agencies. The magazine does not collect standardised data; instead, it interprets various datasets using its own methodology. The Panel, therefore, recommends the College assessing the performance of its graduates on the labour market based on reliable statistical data.

52. The College consistently performs well in those rankings. For the first time more substantial groups of foreign students start to graduate. The College should reflect on how to develop relevant graduate career monitoring for those students. This will require a specific approach. Such data will become more and more relevant as the College builds further on its strategy to recruit students from a broad range of countries.

53. Public information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness is still limited. Reports on student and graduate surveys are only available on the Lithuanian part of the website and date back to 2023. The Annual Activity Report does provide data on student numbers, international mobility, staff, research, infrastructure and community services. The 2024 report was only published on the College's website in September 2025. Although this report provides insight into the activities of the College, those data do not provide explicit links to the ambition levels stated in the strategic plan. The College has the ambition to further develop this Annual Activity Report into a performance report

which shows the progress on the KPIs as developed in the Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030. There was no evidence available on how this ambition will be implemented at the time of the review. The Panel urges the College to provide more and up-to-date information to the public on the performance of its higher education activities and its management effectiveness, both in Lithuanian and English.

54. To conclude, the College has developed a system of multi-annual and annual KPIs, which contain performance indicators. An approach has been designed for regular follow-up and monitoring, but due to the recent development of this approach, little evidence was available at the time of the site visit on the effectivity of this approach. Although the previous review panel already pointed on the need to improve public information, this remains an area for improvement. Taking into account the growing number of foreign students and staff at the College, the importance of internal and public information in English only increased.

1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:

1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;

1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;

1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;

1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;

1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.

55. The College has developed procedures which define the qualification requirements for teaching staff and researchers and for determining the workload of lecturers and researchers. Those procedures provide clear principles for the formation, management and evaluation of academic staff. Whenever additional capacity is needed, this need is discussed with the Director, and if the necessary budget is available, a public call for applications is launched or someone with the right profile is hired directly.

56. As indicated above, the institutional KPIs are translated into departmental and individual targets. Those are integrated into an annual action plan per staff member. In this action plan, the expectations related to education, research and community service are integrated, as well as the ambitions for professional development. The line manager is in charge of discussing the progress on implementation of this plan regularly. Annually a more formal performance review is planned. Due to the current ownership structure, the Director is the only person in the organisation for whom this review process hasn't been implemented, yet. As indicated above, it is advisable to develop a governance structure which allows for an independent review of the Directors performance.

57. In September 2025, the College employed 78 academic staff (35,22 FTE) for 1064 students, so 1 FTE per 30 students. 21 academic staff are employed as Associate Professor, of whom 6 are full-time employed at the College. For this position only recognised researchers with a doctoral degree and at least 3 years of practical work experience related to the field of teaching, and/or three years of teaching at a higher education institution are eligible. The composition of the academic staff shows a conscious strategy to consolidate positions and transform fragmented part-time posts into full-time positions. Such a practice allows for the formation of a more stable core of academic staff. The Panel positively values the trend towards more full time positions, which allows staff to develop teaching, research and community services in a consistent way.

The addition of 7 researchers to the staff is a positive step in order to strengthen the applied research expertise within the College. As the total number of full-time equivalents has remained stable at 35 FTE compared to the previous review, while research capacity has increased, as well as the number of students and the number of study programmes, the Panel recommends to expand the academic teaching staff to be able to cope with the needs of national and international students, taking into account the ambition to develop new study programmes and to offer the majority of them in Lithuanian and English, and both on-site and online. Taking into account the substantial profits in recent years, the Panel considers that there should be room to expand the academic staff.

58. In recent years, the College took first steps to develop its applied research capacity. Research groups were established and academic staff got time to work on research. Also some specific research positions were created. As indicated below, the Panel sees a lot of potential to further develop the research policy in order to use the limited available resources in an efficient way and to optimize chances to achieve the ambitious target of 50 publications in high-impact journals and to develop research which really contributes to the College's study programmes. While the Panel learned from academic staff that the College clearly managed to attract staff with (some) research experience, the College may benefit from adding expertise in research management.

59. In 2024–2025, the College employed 18 administrative and technical staff. The functions of non-academic staff include study administration, international relations, career services, IT maintenance, library services, and facility management. In recent years, particular attention has been given to strengthening the International Relations Office, which enables the College to provide high-quality services to a growing number of international students. While the College considers the current approach to human resource management, where the personnel management function is integrated and ensured through the joint coordination of the Director, Deputy Directors, and the Chief Financial Officer as sufficient, the Panel suggests to consider whether a dedicated HR role would be preferable in a fast-changing and growing organisation.

60. The Panel was surprised to find out that a substantial part of the academic and administrative staff needed translation to be able to fully participate in the external review process. Taking into account that about 30% of the students have a foreign background, as well as a growing number of staff members, and the College has the ambition to provide education and information in both English and Lithuanian and to be able to integrate aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research activities, the Panel considers that it would be relevant for everyone in a management function to have a good working knowledge of both languages. In the view of the Panel this is not only necessary in order to fully serve as line manager for international staff with limited knowledge of Lithuanian, but also to actively participate in international networks to attract new international talent, to be involved in bigger research projects and to follow-up on international developments in higher education and research. Moreover, the Panel considers that everyone who has a front office or communication role within the organisation should have at least a basic working knowledge of both English and Lithuanian for the College to be able to comply with its international ambitions.

61. For each academic staff member, one percent of the staff time is dedicated to professional development. The Panel values positively that professional development is an explicit part of everyone's assignment, but the College may consider to increase this percentage in the future. Academic staff informed the Panel that professional development is part of the annual performance review meetings with their line manager and is integrated in the individual action plan for the next year. Also during informal follow-up meetings during the year, academic staff feels encouraged to come up with needs for professional development. Also administrative staff reported that they get the opportunities to follow training to develop their skills. A Didactics Excellence Centre is being established at the College with the purpose of strengthening lecturers'

didactic competences and fostering continuous pedagogical development. As the development of research within the College is relatively recent, the College may consider to develop a train-the-trainer programme for researchers within the College to share their expertise with the other lecturers.

62. The College's academic and non-academic staff improves their qualifications not only by participating in training and seminars organized by the College but also through other external professional development activities. The 2024–2025 academic year reports of academic staff show that approximately 70–80% of lecturers engaged in professional development activities, including international and national conferences, seminars, and training. The main areas of lecturers' professional development were related to the application of digital tools and artificial intelligence in the study process, project management, marketing, didactics, and the enhancement of psychological well-being. The qualification development of non-academic staff was also consistent – about 60–70% of employees participated in various training aimed at improving digital competences, customer service, labour law, or other professional skills. Part of these training activities was funded by the College and EU funds.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:

1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;

1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;

1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;

1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.

63. The College's financial resource planning system is based on the preparation of annual budget plans. As a private higher education institution, the College seeks to ensure balanced and sustainable budget management. The Director and the Chief Financial Officer are responsible for overseeing financial planning and implementation; they continuously monitor budget execution, assess the efficiency of financial management, and ensure responsible allocation of funds. Strategic budget planning is combined with monthly performance monitoring and semi-annual reports, which make it possible to identify deviations and adjust decisions in a timely manner. This ensures financial management stability and rational use of resources.

64. The management indicated that next to the annual budget, also a multi-annual budget in broad terms has been developed, but this exercise has not been shared with the Panel. Under some KPIs income targets are integrated, but no information is provided on the investment which is required to achieve those ambitions. In line with the recommendation of the previous review panel, the Panel recommends establishing a more explicit connection between the strategic planning and the annual and multi-annual budget.

65. The College presented its annual accounts, showing a strong growth in incomes and profit over the past three years, thanks to the increase in international students and the resulting growth in tuition fees. This has strengthened the financial position of the College substantially. The previous review panel also recommended increasing the diversification of incomes, but the progress in this area is limited. The College still relies mainly on Erasmus+ grants. The College also submitted several research applications. Some small projects have been granted, but if the College wants to grow its research activities in line with the goals as stated in its Integrated Development Strategy 2026-2030, additional efforts will be needed. As indicated

above, the Panel considers that finetuning the research policy and defining more specific priorities will be needed to achieve those goals.

66. The College has implemented some lifelong learning activities (Kursuok.It modules, the HEAD leadership programme, TechSavvy training for companies, courses for civil servants, etc.) which have contributed to the budget with a limited impact. The College's ambition to ensure $\geq 20\%$ of annual revenue from lifelong learning services, is overly ambitious based on the results so far. The Panel learned that the College wants to develop new educational products which may lead to additional income. Although the Panel confirms the relevance of lifelong learning activities for the reputation of the College and to stay in touch with the labour market, the Panel would warn for an overly financial focus on the development of lifelong learning activities. Taking into account the success of the College to attract foreign degree programme students and the need to develop research funding, the Panel considers the latter activities to potentially be better levers for income growth than the development of educational products. Also in the area of income diversification, the Panel recommends to focus on clear priorities rather than a scattered bottom-up approach.

67. In order to increase the quality of material resources, the owner of the College bought a new building in Vytenio St. 9, Vilnius, which she rents out to the College. The College rents about 5000 m² of this building to develop all its educational activities. While those activities were still spread over 2 campuses at the time of the site visit, the ambition is to bring all educational activities together at one location in the beginning of 2026. This will allow to consolidate infrastructure previously dispersed across different locations in the city, improve study conditions, and provide opportunities for student accommodation. The Panel considers that the new accommodation provides a lot of opportunities to create an appropriate and attractive study environment for students and staff. The Panel learned also that the other material resources are sufficiently developed for the implementation of the study programmes the College offers. The area designated for the College includes administrative premises, 14 classrooms of varying sizes, halls, dining areas, staff offices and a library with sufficient resources. Another part of the building is dedicated to student social, cultural, educational, co-creation, and residential infrastructure, with 100 rooms adapted for student accommodation. This part will not be managed by the College itself but provides opportunities to build a vivid student life and to offer student accommodation at the campus.

68. **In summary**, the Integrated Development Strategy 2025–2030 is in line with the College's mission. The College has defined a broad set of, mainly quantitative, KPI's. Sharper priorities on what to do, and what not to do, may be helpful for the College to be able to achieve those ambitious targets. The College has created a clear governance structure and has attributed roles and tasks among the structural units and staff members, but the distributed responsibilities approach may not be optimal for human resources management and internal communications. The College's targets have been translated into individual and group KPIs, which are followed up through annual action plans and performance reviews. Planning of professional development is part of this process. Social partners and students are actively involved in the policy making process. As the approach for regular follow-up and monitoring has only been recently implemented, little evidence was available at the time of the site visit on the effectiveness of this approach. Regular reviews of the KPIs, but also of the system itself, will be necessary to guarantee its functionality. The College managed to increase its incomes substantially, and investments in research and new accommodation have been made. More extensive medium-term budgeting and more explicit alignment with the strategic plan, are advisable. Public information remains a weakness and a further increase in language knowledge among the staff is advisable, taking into account the growing number of foreign students and staff at the College.

69. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, however there are shortcomings that must be addressed.

70. Recommendations for the area:

- The College may want to add its research ambition into its Mission statement and to elaborate on the exact understanding of the current key elements of the Mission statement, in order to ensure consistent translation into the actions of the College.
- The Panel recommends the College to not only align with the 'why' of European policy frameworks, but also to comply with the guidelines on 'how' to implement those policies.
- The College may benefit from making the baseline situation and the analysis of past performance more explicit in its strategic planning processes, in order to close the PDCA cycle.
- The College may make its strategic directions more specific and revise its KPIs in terms of strategic direction and impact orientation. Such direction may prevent scarce resources to be used in a fragmented way, both in relation to educational programmes and research. The Panel recommends to attract more research management capacity and to build research groups of a certain critical mass which develop specialised expertise in some niche areas in order to achieve the ambitious quantitative targets which are stated in the strategic plan.
- The Panel recommends the College to finetune its internationalisation strategy, including relating to the availability of internal and public information in English, English proficiency of management and teaching, front-office and communication staff, integration of the international students', alumni and social partners' voice in internal quality assurance processes and the development of an international alumni strategy.
- The Panel, therefore, recommends the College assessing the performance of its graduates on the labour market based on reliable statistical data.
- The Panel recommends that - at least on an annual basis - a performance analysis report is produced which provides a comprehensive performance review based on consistent data gathering, as well as an overview of the learnings and necessary adjustments for the future.
- The College may wish to explore how to further leverage advantages associated with being part of the Synergetica Group
- The College should assess the effectiveness of its system of devolved responsibilities relating to HR, Quality Assurance and Communication.
- The College may wish to establish a collective governing body including external stakeholders, which may take accountability for the strategic policies of the College together with the Director.
- The student representation may consider how to organise in a more united way to represent all students in a balanced way.
- The Panel recommends to involve alumni in a more structured way in the governance of the College.
- The Panel urges the College to provide more and up-to-date information to the public on the performance of its higher education activities and its management effectiveness, both in Lithuanian and English.
- The Panel recommends to expand the academic teaching staff to be able to cope with the needs of national and international students.

III.2. Quality Assurance

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:

2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;

2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;

2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;

2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;

2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;

2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

71. The College has formally approved a two pages document which describes the general principle of its internal quality assurance approach ('Quality Policy'). Furthermore, the College has developed an 'Activity and Study Quality Manual', which provides an overview of the procedures which have been developed within the College. According to the College, both documents are aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and ISO 9004. The Activity and Study Quality Manual is structured according to the standards of ESG Part 1. Following the recommendation by the previous external evaluation panels (2014, 2022 and 2024), the College has developed an analysis of the compliance of its internal processes with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). As the experts indicated during the progress visit in 2024, the College shows general alignment with the ESG. However a deep understanding of the consequences of the compliance with the Bologna process and the tools and guidelines which are part of this process is still lacking. Especially on public information (ESG 1.8), the College continues to lag behind and does not provide detailed information on intended learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to the students nor graduate employment information). The College still limits itself to the titles of the study subjects and number of ECTS credits, without further detailed information. Especially for international students it is important to be able to assess the exact content of study programmes before registration.

72. Not only public information on study programmes is limited. Also public information on the internal quality assurance policies is limited. Only the 2-pages Quality Policy is made publicly available on the institution's website. The more detailed Activity and Study Quality Manual is not publicly available on the College website. Outcomes of the internal quality assurance processes are only reported to students during study programme committees and to the student representation. The most recent information on student and graduate surveys dated back to 2023 at the time of the 2025 review. So, the College only complies partially with the requirements about the public availability of internal quality assurance documents.

73. Every member of the staff is responsible for the qualitative dimension of their activities, and all functions delegated to staff include a quality assurance component. In this way, quality is not merely a separate management procedure but distributed among the full staff. While it is positive that everyone is held

accountable for the quality of their activities, such a distributed responsibility incurs the risk of limited focus on quality assurance, next to all other specific and distributed responsibilities. Furthermore, although every member of staff is responsible for quality assurance in his or her own domain, the Panel noticed that the formal quality assurance processes as described in the documents mentioned above focus strongly on the educational process, and the conditions to guarantee a high-quality learning process. For other areas of work, such as administrative processes and research, the internal quality assurance approach has not been developed systematically, yet. The Panel recommends, therefore, to enlarge the scope of quality assurance to cover all operations of the College, including administration, research, governance and community service.

74. The highest body responsible for ensuring the quality of the study process is the College's Academic Council, in which the management, teaching staff and students are represented. The main function of the Academic Council is to adopt decisions that ensure the quality of the study process. Study Programme Committees, consisting of staff, students, alumni and social partners are in charge of continuous programme improvement, including updating course syllabi annually. The Study Programme Committees receive input from annual student surveys at programme level, as well as surveys on every subject at the end of each semester. The Panel learned that the same surveys are used for on-site and distance learning. The College may consider researching best practices on internal quality assurance for distance learning, as there are substantial differences between the requirements for high quality on site and distance learning. The College management indicates that it faces challenges to increase student participation in surveys. Although this is a challenge for many higher education institutions, the Panel encourages the College to continue its efforts. Systematic communication to all students (and not only student representatives) about the changes which have been made as a consequence of student feedback, generally increases the willingness of students to provide feedback.

75. Input from national social partners is gathered through the Council, participation of social partners in the Study Programme Committees and informal contacts in the framework of final thesis defences, internships and membership of sector associations. As indicated above, social partners are very positive about the level to which their recommendations are taken into account. Several study programmes have been created as a consequence of requests by social partners, such as International Hospitality Management, Business Finance & Investment, Cybersecurity Technologies, and Agri-Food Business and Innovation. As indicated above the Panel commends the College for its responsiveness and flexibility to create new programmes based on market requests. However, the College should stay cautious to make conscious decisions to only establish new programmes which are in line with its strategic plan and research capacities. Furthermore, taking into account the international ambitions of the College, the College may consider to develop a strategy to also include input from international social partners in its internal quality assurance system.

76. External reviews at study programme and institutional level provide external feedback to the College. The College provided SKVC with a first version of the College's Self-Evaluation Report in August 2025. Based on a first screening, SKVC requested the College to provide more information on several criteria in order for the Panel to be able to assess the College. While the updated version of the Self-Evaluation Report contained some more substance on the compliance with the assessment framework, it still lacked substantial self-reflection. Furthermore, the Self-Evaluation Report provided very little information on Strategic choices made by the College. The College did only mention superficially the strategic choices related to the collaboration within the Synergetica group (strong level of independence to sustain the different organisational cultures, choices related to stronger operational collaboration or not, ...). Furthermore, strategic choices related to existing and new study programmes were only presented during the site-visit, while this information was lacking in the Self-Evaluation Report. Based on additional information the Panel learned that some study programmes did not have any student intake during the latest two academic years,

and one of those will be substantially revised due to changing market demand. This kind of information is indispensable in a Self-Evaluation Report. Therefore, the Panel recommends the College to substantiate self-evaluation reports in the future with more evidence, to share not only strengths, but also challenges and to provide insight in the strategic choices made by the College (not only how standards are implemented, but also why those choices are made).

77. As indicated above, the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030 created an explicit, though mainly quantitative, framework for the strategic development of the College for the coming 5 years. Although the College could provide baseline data and staff explained how the results of the previous strategic plan were taken into account in the preparation of the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030, the Panel considers that the College could build more explicitly on results of previous plans and the current situation in its strategic planning. As indicated above, the Panel also recommends the College to be more explicit on its substantive direction as the strategy remains too vague to provide specific guidance on which programmes to create or which specific research expertise to develop. However, based on the additional documents and input received before and during the site visit, the Panel confirms that the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030 forms the basis for the quality assurance cycle of the College, and is translated into strategic plans per department, annual action plans and individual targets for each staff member. Implementation of these objectives will be monitored and aggregated to assess the performance of the whole College. The Panel learned that integration of received input is still mainly processed manually, and it witnessed that provided data weren't always consistent. Overall, due to the recent character of the developed approach, the Panel wasn't able to assess its effectiveness at the time of the site visit.

78. In order to implement the strategy in a structured way, a broad range of internal process descriptions have been designed. An overview of those processes is made available in a Process sequence and integration diagram. The Panel learned that those process descriptions are used as a framework for implementation. The College may consider implementing an IT-tool to develop those process descriptions into workflows per process and to create more explicit links between the individual processes.

79. The College provides a variety of academic support measures for students. In the first line, lecturers provide students with academic support during their courses and during consultation hours, via email, and in the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment. Study Coordinators provide guidance and assistance to students regarding the study process and its organisational procedures. Internship coordinators guide and advise students on issues related to professional practice placements. The College places strong emphasis on organising professional practice placements in companies: the Practice Supervisor, together with the student, identifies a placement relevant to the objectives of the study field. Career planning support for jobs in Lithuania is provided through the involvement of social partners in the study process. The College has a Student Mentors' Club, whose members provide informational, consultative, and engagement support to newly admitted students. The College enables students to receive support provided by the State Study Foundation.

80. For first year students, the College organises an Orientation week during which students are informed about all aspects of the College's activities. The College also takes care of the psychological and emotional well-being of its students during their studies. All first-year students are required to take a psychology course, which focuses on self-awareness, interpersonal communication, and practical activities and the Study Centre provides individual support where needed. However, some students mentioned during the site visit that they are not always adequately and timely informed about practical aspects of the study organisation. Furthermore, some students indicated that they consider the responsiveness of the College management in case of issues raised sometimes low.

81. International students indicate they feel welcome. Before arrival, they receive a student handbook which provides some practical information on how to get settled in Vilnius. During the Welcome week, specific attention is paid to local customs and rules. Police are invited to share essential information for residents in Lithuania. The International Student Committee of the Student Union regularly organises activities for international students and offers opportunities to mingle with national students.

82. Based on the interviews, the Panel considers that the support for academic and non-academic staff is developed sufficiently. They hold regular meetings with their line manager and may discuss any need for support. Heads of departments perform a mentoring role by helping new lecturers become familiar with institutional processes. Introductory consultations are organised for newly recruited lecturers, during which aspects of study planning, teaching, and assessment are discussed. For newly recruited non-academic staff members, an instruction training is organised to familiarise them with the College's activities, job functions, and responsibilities. In addition, each new employee is assigned a mentor who supports their integration into the team, introduces them to organisational processes, and ensures a smooth adaptation period.

83. Overall, the Panel considers that internal communication could be further improved. Internal communication is a distributed responsibility, and therefore is not always implemented in a systematic way. Internal communication often depends on line managers sharing information with their staff. Slack is used as an internal communication tool but the use of this communication channel could be streamlined further. The panel recommends developing an explicit internal communication policy. As indicated above, the Panel considers that the College should guarantee that its internal communication approaches are aligned with its ambition to attract and actively involve international staff.

84. The College has developed an Academic integrity process which regulates the assurance of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination within the College. The principles of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are set out in the College's General and Academic Code of Ethics. Oversight of the General and Academic Code of Ethics and the examination of academic ethics violations within the College are carried out by a collegial body – the Academic Ethics Committee. The prevention of academic ethics violations is ensured through the use of diverse forms of student achievement assessment and the continuous renewal of examination tasks. Randomly selected assignments are checked using text-matching software, and discussions are organised after task completion. Particular attention is paid to ensuring the originality of students' final theses: students are required to confirm the authenticity of their work, and theses are checked centrally in the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABa) information system as well as in other public sources. The College has developed a Non-Discrimination Policy. The previous Panel recommended to perform an analysis of current needs and the definition of targeted actions for improvement in this area. The College did not provide any information on the implementation of this recommendation, which therefore, remains valid. The General and Academic Code of Ethics and the Non-Discrimination Policy are publicly available on the College's website. Students are also introduced to these documents during introductory lectures, information sessions with the staff of the Studies Department and Heads of Departments, and the essential provisions of these regulations are included in study contracts.

85. College students are also granted the possibility to appeal, in accordance with the Appeals Procedure approved by the Academic Council. Appeals may concern both satisfactory and unsatisfactory final assessments of a studied subject/module, the procedures of assessment during the semester, or violations of the regulations governing the final (qualification) examination/thesis/project defence and/or assessment. Appeals are submitted to the College Director, while the final decision regarding the acceptance or rejection of an appeal is made by the Appeals Committee, established in accordance with the approved procedure. From 2022 to 2025, one case related to violations of examination procedures and academic integrity provisions was recorded and reviewed at the College, which was not upheld by the Appeals Commission. In

the same period, no complaints or cases concerning breaches of academic integrity were submitted to the College's Academic Ethics Committee for review.

86. In order to ensure academic integrity and the ethical use of artificial intelligence tools, the College has developed Regulations on the Use of Artificial Intelligence, which establish clear principles for the application of these tools in the context of studies and research activities. The regulations define the cases in which artificial intelligence may be used, set out the limits of responsibility, and provide preventive measures to avoid plagiarism and the unlawful appropriation of content.

87. Overall, the Panel considers the provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified in sufficient detail. The panel did not receive any information which would indicate non-compliance with those procedures.

88. On 22–24 November 2022, an external evaluation of the College was carried out. On 18 November 2024 a follow-up visit took place which reiterated a substantial number of recommendations made by the original Panel. The previous and current management have taken action in a number of areas in line with the recommendations and suggestions. Several new processes and procedures have been established and new positions and departments have been created in order to respond to the recommendations. The College invests in new accommodation, has hired new staff and has started to invest in research capacity. However, as indicated throughout this report, most of the recommendations which were reiterated in 2024 haven't been fully implemented by the College. While the Panel considers it the autonomy of the College to decide which recommendations are relevant to its activities, it does expect the College to explicitly substantiate why it didn't (fully) implement such recommendations.

89. **In summary**, the Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030 forms the basis for implementation and monitoring, and KPIs are translated into individual and group targets. This provides a framework for everyone in the organisation, but due to its recent character, the Panel couldn't assess its effectiveness at the time of the site visit. Regular review of those KPIs is needed. Furthermore, the College has approved additional internal quality assurance processes and procedures. Those processes are linked explicitly to European frameworks. However, public information remains limited. Internal quality assurance processes focus nearly exclusively on the educational processes, and only with a focus on the Lithuanian context. National social partners and alumni are formally and informally involved in internal quality assurance, but no steps have been taken, yet, to broaden the scope of internal quality assurance processes beyond the educational processes (research, communication or evaluation of the QA system itself) and to align those with the growing internationalisation of the College. Furthermore, the College should work further on a quality culture which includes more explicit self-reflection to move from a formally written and documented system to a broadly understood and lived QA-culture which systematically covers all operations of the College, including administration, research, governance and community service. Such a quality culture should also reflect in the self-evaluation report and the follow-up of previous external evaluations. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive sufficient support and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified.

90. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given two points.

91. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends enlarging the scope of quality assurance to cover all operations of the college, including administration, research, governance and community service.

- The Panel recommends the College making sure that it fully complies with ESG Standard 1.8 on public information.
- The Panel recommends the College providing more systematic reporting to students on how their feedback is taken into account.
- The College may assess whether its generic internal quality assurance processes are fit-for-purpose for its distance learning activities.
- The Panel recommends to involve international alumni and social partners systematically in its internal quality assurance system.
- The Panel recommends substantiating self-evaluation reports in the future with more evidence, sharing not only strengths, but also challenges and providing insight in the strategic choices made by the College.
- The College may consider implementing an IT-tool to develop those process descriptions into workflows per process and to create more explicit links between the individual processes.
- The Panel recommends developing an explicit internal communication policy.

III.3. Studies and Research (Art)

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:

3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;

3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;

3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);

3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.

92. The College has focused on professional higher education since its establishment. Currently, the College defines its mission as educating future-ready professionals and leaders capable of creating meaningful impact in advanced industrial fields where human potential, business development, and technological innovation converge. In 2025-2026 the College offered 11 bachelor's programmes in the fields of Language Studies, Business, Informatics and Tourism and Recreation. Those programmes are largely in line with the College's mission to "educate future-ready professionals and leaders capable of creating meaningful impact in advanced industrial fields where human potential, business, and technology converge". The College continuously updates and adapts its study programmes to requests of social partners and needs of society. The College's study activities are also in line with its strategic aims to "become a visible and recognised applied higher education institution internationally, with its activities grounded in openness, co-creation, and advanced partnerships within the European Higher Education Area" and also to "develop a student-centred, experience-based learning ecosystem, integrating studies, applied research, innovation, and business relations."

93. The College identifies in its quality policy some characteristics of future-ready professionals, such as individual originality, problem-solving skills, a pragmatic approach, self-confidence and self-respect and professional communication skills for diverse cultural and interpersonal environments. However, based on its discussions with different stakeholders, the Panel noticed that there is no unified understanding of the

concept of future-ready professionals. The Panel also notices a gap between those College-wide objectives and the design of learning outcomes for individual study programmes. As far as the Panel understood from discussions with different stakeholders, the ambition to train future-ready professionals is generally shared among all stakeholders, but a more explicit operationalisation process to define how this common skillset translates into the individual learning outcomes of all study programmes is lacking.

94. In the academic year 2025-2026 no new students were admitted to the English for International Communication programme. During the site visit the Panel learned that the College aims to transfer this programme from the Language studies to Social Sciences, and to focus more on international communication instead of language studies as it expects that this focus will be more attractive for students. This reorientation allows to align this programme more with the other programmes taught at the College.

95. Throughout all discussions and evidence, it is clear that the study programmes of the College are strongly oriented towards practical application and relevance for the labour market. Employers confirm that graduates from the different programmes the College offers are ready for the labour market. Teaching staff and students provided examples on the integration of insights from practice through the involvement of part-time teachers who are active in the professional field at the same time and through the regular invitation of guest lecturers. Furthermore, the teaching staff uses activating teaching methods and focuses on problem-solving and practical applicability. Feedback from social partners, e.g. on the use of Excel and PowerBI or public speaking, finds its way into study programmes. Also students and alumni indicate that the practice oriented education is a major strength of the College. They refer to hands-on tasks and skills teaching for the students, learning through experience, practice-oriented methodologies, e.g. team academy, internships and final thesis work in collaboration with business. At the same time, this approach is associated with some risks, including the potential lack of pedagogical and didactical skills among practitioners-teachers, as well as the rapid obsolescence of specific skills.

96. As indicated above, stakeholders praise the college for its flexibility and ability to take into requests from the labour market, both relating to the establishment of new programmes and to updates of existing programmes. This adaptability is clearly visible from the number of new programmes which have been created and changes in existing programmes which have been reported. However, the College does not have clear criteria for closing a programme when it is not successful or relevant anymore.

97. The College mentions “Fostering interdisciplinary competences that enable agile action in a constantly changing global environment” as one of the central ambitions in its Strategic Development Plan 2025-2030. The Panel was, therefore, surprised to learn that there are nearly no activities where students from different study programmes collaborate on project work within the formal study context. Exchange is often limited to non-formal activities. The only example provided by the College of structural exchange between students from both language streams is the fact that in the study Programme for business and information technology, ensuring that at least one course per semester is taught in a foreign language (English), combining local and international students into joint student groups. Different stakeholders indicated they would appreciate positively the introduction of more interdisciplinary project work bringing students from different study fields together. The panel, therefore, reconfirms the recommendation of the previous review panel.

98. Since 2021, the College has introduced distance studies, providing people with a job or Lithuanians living abroad the opportunity to study in a flexible setting. Over the past years, the number of students enrolled in distance studies increased up to 27% of all students in the academic year 2024-2025. The Panel learned that the College pays attention to the legal requirement for distance students to receive at least 10% of their training in offline mode, which is one of the conditions described in the Regulation on the organisation of distance studies. To guarantee the quality of course content delivered online, an internal accreditation

system for study courses (modules) is implemented. 56 course modules were prepared and accredited for distance teaching. Six classrooms have been equipped for hybrid teaching, including four computer labs, enabling the effective delivery of blended learning. Students welcome the possibility of distance studies. Distance studies combine recorded material with interactive online sessions. Based on feedback of students and teaching staff, the Panel concludes that the way courses are delivered in the online and on-site tracks is quite similar. The College might consider whether further differentiation may be helpful to further increase the effectiveness of the provision of distance learning studies.

99. In line with its strategic aim “to expand applied research”, the College has started to develop its own applied research activities in recent years. The College developed a ‘Description of qualification requirements for teaching staff and researchers and a Procedure for determining the workload of lecturers and researchers’. For every member of the academic staff clear arrangements are made on the time available for applied research and the expected outcomes related to commissioned and applied research. By doing so, the College made clear progress compared to the previous evaluation in 2022. Additionally, the College recruited the additional seven researchers in the 2024–2025 academic year. Of these, two Senior Researchers, four of Associate Researchers, and one doctoral student.

100. As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, research is structured along four research clusters:

- The Teaching Innovation Group brought together researchers in education and management, focusing on issues of learning digitalisation, project-based learning, and lifelong learning.
- The Business Research Group consolidated researchers in economics, marketing, and logistics, who carried out commissioned applied projects, analysed business model innovations (e.g., the INOPAY project), and explored market development trends.
- The Informatics Research Group united researchers in programming, cybersecurity, and fintech, working on human–technology interaction, artificial intelligence solutions for higher education, and the application of financial technologies.
- The Humanities Research Group included researchers in foreign languages and communication, focusing on international business communication and linguistic expression.

101. Research expertise is mainly concentrated in the Business and Informatics Research Group. The Teaching Innovation group relies on 1 full-time Associate Professor and a 0,25 FTE senior researcher, while the Humanities Research Group relies for its research expertise on a 0,06 and a 0,10 FTE Associate Professor and a 0,23 FTE Senior Lecturer. This limited research capacity, leads to limited research outcomes. Based on the data of the Lithuanian Research Council, the College received 22 points for its research outcomes for 2024 which the Panel considers to be very limited, also compared to other Lithuanian Colleges (scores ranging between 0 and 495,11). The College managed to increase its research output slightly for the Business and Management field which provides some basis for this study area to be supported by own research, but output remains very low for Informatics and absent (in 2024) for Language studies.

102. In its Integrated Development Strategy 2025-2030, the College states the following KPIs related to applied research, such as:

- To attract at least EUR 3 million for research activities from diverse sources (national, EU, private, and foundations) by 2030.
- To increase the share of state funding for research activities by at least 20% annually.
- To ensure that at least 30% of research hub activities are financed through partnerships with business or the public sector.
- To produce at least 100 scientific outputs by 2030, of which at least 50 are published in high-impact journals (Web of Science, Scopus, Q1–Q2).

- To develop at least five new practical solutions annually (prototypes, technologies, methodologies) and to establish at least one spin-off company by 2030.
- To establish and operationalize a business ideas accelerator by 2027.

103. The Panel recognises that the College has created some fundamental conditions for the development of its own research capacity. However, the Panel considers that additional efforts will be needed if the College wants to achieve the above stated ambitions by 2030. Although the College managed to increase its research output over the past 3 years, the efforts mainly resulted in publications in its own peer-reviewed journal Applied Business: Issues & Solutions and are produced by a limited number of staff. The Panel found little evidence that most teaching staff perform applied research within the defined priority research areas. At the time of the site-visit the College did not have any Scopus or Web of Science publication. The College, however, reported that 6 articles had been accepted for a Scopus journal, but are awaiting publication. Furthermore, the College did not manage to increase its commissioned research substantially since 2022. While during the site visit social partners showed a lot of interest to contribute to study programmes of the College, interest in commissioned research was substantially lower. The College may need to better understand which areas of expertise are relevant in order to commercialise its research competences and capacity.

104. The College was successful in attracting some project grants. The College received 45.000 euro as part of the AI for All: Tapping into Deep Tech Through a Diverse Training Program” under the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative and received some Erasmus+ programme (educational exchange) grants. The College hasn’t obtained any project grants from the Horizon Europe programme or the Lithuanian National Research Council, yet, although the corresponding goal is set and several applications have been submitted.

105. Students and teaching staff also provided examples on how the study process is based on empirical and evidence-based research results, which are integrated into the study content through case analyses, practical assignments, problem-based learning, and discussions. In this way, students are introduced to scientific insights, trends, and real-world models for solving business and information technology problems. Some examples were given of their own research by the teaching staff, but most of this scientific knowledge is based on research from other researchers. Some teaching staff perform research at other higher education or research institutions. Although this research is not performed as part of their affiliation with the College, they use this research where relevant to underpin their educational activities at the College. So, the Panel considers that there clearly are first examples of research projects informing the study content within different study programmes, but the Panel recommends to increase research efforts and systematic integration of research findings into the study contents of all subjects taught in the College.

106. The College actively fosters a culture of collaboration between lecturers and students in the field of applied research. Lecturers are encouraged to initiate applied research projects together with students. The results of such research are disseminated at the annual student scientific-practical conferences organised by the College, which provide a platform not only for presenting research to a wider audience but also for developing academic communication, public speaking, and critical evaluation skills. Furthermore, students are invited to participate in research projects and commissioned assignments with social partners, while the topics of final theses are aligned with their study field and priority research directions.

107. The College has developed a Commercialisation strategy, which includes – next to commissioned research – also the ambition to develop its own research into products and services. The Panel learned that an international student already received support from the staff to set-up his own business, while the College’s ambition is to further develop such guidance to its own students and staff, as well as to external start-ups. The College aims to establish an own business accelerator on the campus and to expand its

knowledge on commercialisation of research outcomes. In line with the suggestions above, the Panel values such ambitions, but suggests making sure that the College makes clear strategic choices and develops spearhead research and education expertise areas. Such a context will create more opportunities for IP development and commercialization opportunities than a scattered approach focusing on short term output.

108. The recognition of secondary education qualifications obtained abroad by applicants is carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) upon their request. The College assures that all foreign students who were accepted to degree programmes have received such recognition by SKVC before the matriculation. However, the Panel was not able to verify this claim. In order to ensure a faster admission process for international students, in June 2025 Vilnius Business College (VBC) submitted an application to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania for the right to perform the academic recognition of foreign qualifications at the institutional level. This request was pending at the time of the site visit.

109. The recognition of prior studies is carried out in accordance with the College's Procedure for the Recognition of Study Results. This Recognition Procedure establishes the principles and procedures for the recognition at the College of study results achieved at Lithuanian or foreign institutions. According to this procedure, only formally confirmed study results obtained in Lithuanian or foreign education institutions during partial or full-time studies may be recognised. It is applicable for credits acquired under an international exchange programme and for the recognition of prior studies. Applicants to VBC who have previously studied at other Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions and possess a diploma or academic transcript may request recognition of their achieved study results if these correspond to parts of the content of a specific VBC study programme. No more than 75% of the volume of the intended study programme may be achieved through recognition of prior studies. In 2024-2025 11 students got study results recognised through this procedure.

110. Furthermore, the College has a Procedure for the Assessment and Recognition of Learning Outcomes Acquired through Non-Formal and Informal Learning. This Procedure applies to individuals who have completed secondary education, have at least three years of work experience, and wish their knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal means - such as work experience, voluntary activities, courses, internships, or self-directed learning - to be formally assessed and recognised as study results. The assessment procedure at VBC is organised through a mixed-method model, with the portfolio method serving as the primary tool for assessing learning outcomes, supplemented by additional evidence-collection methods (such as interviews, examinations, tests, project preparation and presentation, etc.). During the reporting period, no applications for the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning were submitted. Based on discussions on this topic during several interviews during the site-visit, the Panel considers that the absence of applications may be caused by the lack of knowledge of this procedure among students and staff.

3.2. Internationalisation of studies, research (art):

3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);

3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

111. The College's strategy on internationalisation is based on Strategic Priority 3 (Strengthening Internationalization and Building an Intercultural Academic Community) in its Strategic Development Plan 2026-2030. The College has the clear ambition to increase the number of international degree students. By 2030 the College wants at least half of its students to have a foreign background. The Panel discussed with several stakeholder groups the reasons for this internationalisation strategy. Next to the pragmatic approach to attracting international students as a way to replace the reducing number of national students (as a consequence of demographic changes in Lithuania), stakeholders provided varying answers on the reasons behind the internationalisation of the College. Therefore, the Panel considers that the College may benefit from a more explicit strategy which clearly explains the choices made in relation to internationalisation, starting from the 'Why'. Why does the College want to attract foreign students? Is it merely a commercial strategy for the business success of the College? Is it a way to provide Lithuanian students an international study environment at home and to develop intercultural competences? Does the College want to contribute to the acquisition of foreign labour force for employers? Or to attract international talent for specific spearhead clusters among start-ups or other companies? Or does the College aim to contribute to the economic development of the international students' home countries? Does the College want to develop joint courses or research partnerships? Clear choices on the strategy will inform operational choices to be made, on which stakeholders to involve in decision making, on the College's acquisition and alumni policy on contents to be developed in the study programmes and research priorities to be set.

112. In recent years, the College has invested in the acquisition of foreign degree students. 9 programmes are taught in English and the International Relations Office has been further developed. The College's first priority lies in the increase of international degree students. As the following graph shows, those efforts were successful with an increase in the number of incoming degree students from 89 in 2022 to 259 in 2024 from 25 different countries. The Panel learned that Nigeria and Cameroon count for nearly half of the foreign degree students. Ukraine, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco and India are also important markets for the College. The Panel learned that the College aims to diversify the countries of origin of the incoming students to achieve a more diverse student population. The Panel encourages the College to indeed do so, to avoid the risks concerning the establishment of nation-based subgroups and conflicts with the national immigration policy.

113. As indicated above, transparent information about the study programmes for potential applicants is important. However, the College still limits itself to the titles of the study subjects and number of ECTS credits, without further detailed information. Especially for international degree and exchange students it is important to be able to assess the exact content of study programmes before application to study at the College.

114. The Panel learned that internal processes for the selection and intake of international students have been optimised over the past years. The combination of formal recognition by SKVC and intake interviews with all applicants leads to a performing selection process. Foreign students praise the effectiveness of the process. The fact that drop-out of foreign students is limited confirms that the selection process is functional. An orientation week at the beginning of each academic year is organised by international student mentors together with the Student Council to make sure international students feel welcome and integrated in the College. Student housing on the campus provides international students with the opportunity to organise all their activities around the campus.

115. The English taught degree programmes are also accessible for national students who aim to immerse themselves in an international study environment. Those students welcome this possibility to study in an international environment in their home country. As the College highly values an international learning context, it is surprising that the number of formal learning activities where students from the English taught

programmes on the one hand and the Lithuanian taught programmes are brought together is rather low. As indicated above, the College takes some initiatives to create exchange within study programmes between national and international students. However, students and teachers indicated during the site visit that it would be beneficial to organise more formal exchange between the different language streams of the same study programme. Furthermore, the Panel noted that some national students who study in Lithuanian sometimes feel that they receive less attention than international students and that they are given lower priority. However, it is important to the College that Lithuanian students also feel recognised.

116. The College also invests in international exchange programmes under the Erasmus+ programme, which provide opportunities for both students and faculty to gain intercultural experience. The Panel learned that the College prioritises short term mobility as part of Blended Intensive Programmes, which combine physical and virtual periods. The participation in Blended Intensive Programmes increased from 3 to 29 between 2022 and 2025. According to the Panel, it is important to clearly define the role and objectives of both student and staff mobility - particularly short-term mobility - within its internationalisation strategy, ensuring these experiences are purposefully integrated into studies and contribute to the development of students' competences and teachers' professional growth. The Panel learned that the participation in long term study exchanges only slightly increased from 5 to 8 between 2022 and 2024 and international internships even decreased from 8 to 5. While short term mobility may ignite the spark to immerse into other cultures, similarly as the exchange with foreign students during the study programme at their own campus, longer stays in another country allow for real immersion in another culture. The Panel, therefore, encourages the College to put more emphasis on longer term student mobility.

117. While internationalisation is important to the College, none of its internationalisation KPIs are directly connected with the studies and research area. In practice, the internationalisation at home, therefore, seems to be mainly limited to the exchange with international students and recruitment of foreign faculty members, while there is no evidence of systematic international research collaboration between the College research staff and researchers from partner institutions abroad. At the time of the site visit, the College employed nine foreign lecturers (11.3% of the total academic staff), compared to only one back in 2022. The Panel positively values this diversification of the staff, but sees room for improvement in relation to systematic integration of aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research activities. Furthermore, as indicated above the Panel suggests to make sure that international staff may fully participate in the College and in its quality assurance. Their experience is very relevant for the further development of the internationalisation of the College.

118. As indicated above, local stakeholders have a strong say in the development of new study programmes. International stakeholders are much less involved in the strategy and quality assurance of the College. In order for the College to further develop its international ambitions, the Panel recommends to develop a dedicated approach to include input from international stakeholders in its decision-making processes and to reflect on how to build a strong network of international alumni which not only contributes to the acquisition policy of the College, but also to its internal quality assurance.

119. **In summary**, the College provides a range of professional bachelor's degrees to national and an increasing number of international students. Stakeholders highly value the study programmes' practical orientation and their continuous adaptation to recent labour market needs. Study programmes take into account some research results and students are regularly invited to perform joint research activities with teaching staff. The College has created first and necessary conditions to build its own (applied) research capacity, but output is still limited. A more targeted strategy with a limited number of spearhead clusters may lead to a successful combination of applied research together with social partners in the regional context with high level specialised research which meets the requirements of international high-impact journals. In

order to achieve this, substantial investment will be required. Furthermore, the College successfully increased the number of international degree students and staff. However, the College may benefit from a more explicit internationalisation strategy to inform operational decisions. Long term exchange programmes lag behind and some aspects of the College organisations may need to be further adapted to ensure the full integration of international students into the College. The College integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies, but this could be formalised. Also work needs to be done to systematically establish international collaboration on research activities.

120. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given two points.

121. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends operationalising more explicitly how the ambition to train future-ready professionals translates into a common skillset and into the individual learning outcomes of all study programmes is lacking.
- The College may consider to integrate more interdisciplinary project work into the different study programmes, bringing students from different study fields together.
- The College may consider whether more differentiation between on-site and online delivery may be helpful to further increase the effectiveness of the provision of distance learning studies.
- The Panel recommends to increase research efforts and a more systematic integration of research findings into the study contents of all subjects taught in the College.
- The College may define priorities on which areas of its research expertise are relevant to underpin its Bachelor's programmes, and which may be relevant to commercialise research competences and capacity.
- The Panel recommends communicating the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Acquired through Non-Formal and Informal Learning recognition of competences procedure better among students and staff.
- The College may benefit from a more explicit strategy which clearly explains the choices made in relation to internationalisation.
- The Panel recommends the College publishing full ECTS-information on its individual study subjects in English and Lithuanian.
- The Panel recommends organising more formal exchange between the different language streams of the same study programme.
- The Panel recommends to clearly define the role and objectives of both student and staff mobility - particularly short-term mobility - within the College's internationalisation strategy, ensuring these experiences are purposefully integrated into studies and contribute to the development of students' competences and teachers' professional growth.
- The College may integrate aspects of internationalisation more explicitly into the content of studies and research activities.
- The Panel recommends developing a dedicated approach to include input from international students, staff and stakeholders in its decision-making processes and to reflect on how to build a strong network of international alumni which not only contributes to the acquisition policy of the College, but also to its internal quality assurance.

III.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:

4.1.1. *The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;*

4.1.2. *The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

122. Based on the discussions with stakeholders, the Panel learned that the College has strong connections among business leaders in the Vilnius region. Social partners are represented in the Study Programme Committees and the Council of the College and have a strong connection with the leadership of the College. Furthermore, social partners teach as part-time or guest lecturer, participate in thesis defence committees and provide internships to the students of the College. Additionally, academic staff are actively engaged in associations, professional organisations, expert councils, and social projects. Those contacts provide input on the needs of the regional and national labour market in a formal and informal manner. The Panel considers this close relations to a selection of social partners as an important strength for the College.

123. In its Self-Evaluation Report the College identifies the following key areas of societal and regional impact which it wants to create:

- To expand learning opportunities for diverse social groups – lifelong learning initiatives are implemented to foster inclusion of various social groups into the educational process.
- Knowledge-based economic development and impact on business – applied research and services for companies are designed to enhance knowledge exchange processes and foster a knowledge-driven society.
- Promotion of youth entrepreneurship – with a particular focus on small enterprises and the start-up ecosystem, students are actively involved in projects simulating real business situations.
- To foster sustainability and environmental awareness – through study content and project activities, principles of the circular economy, ecological initiatives, and digitalisation are promoted.
- To strengthen cultural dialogue and to enhance Lithuania's visibility – by attracting international students, strengthening partnerships, and expanding academic mobility, the College aims to contribute to the visibility and competitiveness of the region.

124. Several social partners indicated that they actively sought collaboration with the College in order to develop new study programmes to respond to specific needs in the labour market. Such contacts lay the basis for most of the changes in existing programmes and creation of new study programmes which were developed by the College in recent years. The College analyses requests by social partners and analyses market potential for such new programmes and if suitable starts preparing new programmes or reorienting existing programmes. As mentioned above, the Panel considers that it is important to make sure that new programmes are in line with the own strategic ambitions of the College. New programmes should be in line with the strategic development of (applied) research.

125. The College has recently managed to attract more foreign students and aims to further increase the number of international students in the coming years. The College indicated during the site visit that it sees potential for foreign students to find internship positions and to stay in Lithuania permanently upon graduation. Some social partners indicated that they are indeed interested to recruit foreign alumni of the College. However, the College hasn't performed a more systematic analysis of the labour market potential

for its foreign students to find internship positions and for its foreign graduates to find a job, in Lithuania and abroad. The Panel recommends performing such analysis.

126. As indicated above, an important ambition of the College is to contribute to society through commissioned research and joint research projects with businesses from the region. In recent years, the College participated in two applied research projects: INOPAY (in the field of financial technologies) and MISCANTHUS (in the field of biomass and bioenergy innovations). However, no new projects have been approved in this area since 2022.

127. The College aims to disseminate research results into the broader society. It participates in national science weeks, educational projects, and knowledge dissemination through regional media channels to increase its public visibility and to strengthen its ties with society. Furthermore, it organised in recent years an annual international student scientific conference “Agents of Impact”, and the scientific-practical conference “Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities”. Moreover, students of the Business study field collaborate each semester with 5–10 companies through commissioned project work. The College aims to deliver tangible value to companies, which receive new ideas and solutions. This model is particularly relevant for SMEs in the Vilnius region, which often lack internal innovation resources. In the Informatics study field students may perform commissioned work as part of their bachelor’s thesis.

128. The College aims to strengthen financial support for socially vulnerable groups (such as tuition fee reductions for students with disabilities, orphans or students without guardians, and those from low-income families; one-off targeted support measures). Through these measures the College aims to allow students from vulnerable social groups to continue their studies without the risk of interruption due to financial reasons.

129. The College pays attention to the education and empowerment of children and youth as part of its societal impact. In June 2023, the College organised together with Junior Achievement Lithuania and the MJJ Foundation, a three-day camp “Future Visionaries”, which brought together 22 school students from 10 different cities. Furthermore, College staff and students occasionally participate in dissemination activities such as entrepreneurship and leadership training sessions for high schools involving 109 pupils or in a “Business Day”, where students conduct workshops for high school seniors.

130. The College also aims to integrate sustainability and environmental principles into its operations and study content. By doing so, it aims to contribute actively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students are not only active participants in environmental activities but are also encouraged to apply sustainability principles in their business ideas—from using recyclable materials to developing digital innovations that reduce resource waste. The Panel recognises the importance of such contribution to society. It encourages the College to further integrate sustainability aspects in its activities and to communicate more explicitly on those topics.

131. Furthermore, the College strengthens cultural dialogue and Lithuania’s visibility by attracting international students to the College. As indicated above, the College has made strong progress over the last years, increasing the number of international students and through participation in short term international mobility activities. The Panel clearly recognises the value of the growing interaction with international students for the regional and national ecosystem in Lithuania. Considering the international ambitions of the College, the Panel considers that it is important for the College to also take into account the needs of international students and international labour markets. The Panel noticed that the network of social partners is largely limited to regional and national social partners. The College might wish to build stronger

networks among international social partners. As indicated before, returning international alumni might provide access to such networks.

132. The College aims to monitor, analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of its activities on national and regional development. The College claims that its “impact on the region is not perceived merely as the sum of individual initiatives, but as a form of collective meaning-making that emerges when activities of different scales – from student initiatives to inter-institutional and community projects – are integrated into a shared field of impact. To ensure that this whole is not merely a symbolic construct but becomes a tangible outcome, the College has developed an impact measurement system”. The Panel confirms that the College monitors, analyses and evaluates the effectiveness of its measures on national and regional development. The Panel appreciates the ambition of the College to not merely assess outputs, but also impact. However, the Panel notes that the reported indicators in the Self-Evaluation Report are currently primarily focused on inputs and outputs, while the development of a more systematic outcome and impact measurement is still in progress. The College does measure outputs at the level of the institution (cooperation networks and partnerships), programme level (number of newly established life-long learning programmes) and individual level (publication output or participation in international mobility programmes). The main impact indicator at individual level which the College puts forward in its Self-Evaluation Report and Annual Reports is based on the work done by the "Ratings" magazine, according to which the College's alumni are the leaders in the employers' assessment among the private Lithuanian colleges. According to the latest results of "Ratings 2024", the College's language alumni earn the most 12 months after graduation (EUR 1,524).

133. If the College wants to go beyond outcome measurement, it may consider to use an internationally recognised impact methodology to achieve its aim to develop a substantiated impact measurement system (e.g. Theory of Change, Social Return On Investment, ...). Such a framework may include, e.g., the use a validated methodology to measure whether students have developed intercultural competences and have changed their attitudes towards interculturality as a consequence of participation in an English language study programme or international mobility, to measure whether employers who provided an apprenticeship to international students hire more international staff compared to those who did only work with national students or to analyse whether SMEs implement innovations suggested by students through commissioned projects. The basis for an impact framework is a substantiated strategy which not only defines quantitative progress, but also qualitative changes which the College wants to make happen. In this context, the Panel refers to recommendations which are mentioned above related to the need to refine the strategy of the College as a necessary condition for the further development of an impact assessment.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;

4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;

4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.

134. As indicated above, the College systematically collaborates with social partners. It uses these regular contacts to identify needs of society and the labour market based on inputs from social partners, national education policy directions (such as the Digital Education Action Plan and the Green Transformation Agenda) and on regional socio-economic data. The College notes a particularly strong demand for the development of digital, managerial, language, and entrepreneurial skills.

135. The College seeks to create an attractive and open package of lifelong learning services that addresses both individual learning needs and national priorities. For this purpose, the College has published its lifelong learning activities on the national platform Kursuok.lt, which operates as a “one-stop-shop” for adult education. In 2024, the College offered 11 lifelong learning programmes, including “Effective Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools”, “Project Management: From Idea to Implementation”, “E-Business ABC” and “English for Professional Communication”. An important direction in the College’s lifelong learning activities is the development of general and professional competences, which provides opportunities both for upgrading existing knowledge and for reskilling. The College has offered foreign language courses, including the international English language placement test (Oxford Online Placement Test), as well as Lithuanian language courses for the Ukrainian community.

136. In 2023, the College, together with its partners, established the Tech Savvy IT Academy, a programme designed to strengthen employees’ digital literacy competences. These programmes are targeted at businesses seeking to enhance the skills of their technological specialists and explore digitalization opportunities for their sectors, companies, or products. The program covers such topics as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity, financial technologies, blockchain, and more, and is delivered fully online by technology experts based in Lithuania and abroad. The College has recently expanded its offer of AI-related short courses, adapting to the needs of the labour market.

137. Next to more initiating courses, the College has also developed a specialized training programme for executives and business representatives. In 2023, the College launched the iHEAD Executive Acceleration Program – a four-month training program designed for newly appointed middle managers and team leaders. Its objective is to equip participants with a comprehensive set of managerial skills necessary for faster adaptation and effective performance in their new roles. iHEAD focuses on three key dimensions of mid-level management: managing the team, the organization, and oneself. The Panel encourages the College to continue developing in this direction. Such lifelong learning courses may provide the ideal context to showcase (applied) research results and to create new collaboration opportunities for applied and commissioned research.

138. Overall, the College has proven some track record relating to lifelong learning, providing courses which are relevant to the broader society and to the labour market. Where needed, contents are updated in order to stay aligned with developing needs of employers and employees. Based on feedback from alumni and social partners, the Panel considers that external communication about the lifelong learning offer of the College may be improved to get better known among its target audiences.

139. Guided by the 2021–2025 strategic documents and the 2025–2030 Integrated Development Strategy, the College plans to expand its portfolio of vocational training and micro-credentials. At the time of the review visit, those plans still had to be materialised. The Panel encourages the College to take into account the learnings of other higher education institutions in relation to the design, implementation and quality assurance of such micro-credentials as such programmes have specific characteristics and need specific approaches to be successful.

140. While lifelong learning activities are implemented and demonstrate responsiveness to stakeholder needs, the mechanisms for systematic needs analysis and impact monitoring requires further development and the College, therefore, did not fully implement the suggestions made by the previous review Panel. The College may consider to formalise learning objectives for all its lifelong learning activities as a basis for quality assessment.

141. **In summary**, the College has a strong network of social partners, which provide relevant input on the (potential) impact on the regional and national labour market and society. Through its pro-active approach, the College responds well to recent developments and needs of the labour market. In doing so, the main focus lies on the continuous development of degree programmes which deliver graduates which are ready to take an active role in society and on the labour market. Social partners are positive about the skills and competences alumni have acquired. The College contributes to intercultural learning through its focus on attracting international students. Such international focus may, however, also require a more proactive exchange with international stakeholders. While the College measures relevant output indicators, it may further develop its intended focus on impact measurement. Furthermore, the College has developed an offer of relevant lifelong learning programmes. More external communication and further development of the quality assurance of those programmes may further increase the impact of such programmes. Overall, despite the need to strengthen the systematic monitoring and impact evaluation of certain activities (particularly in lifelong learning), the Panel concludes that the College demonstrates a consistent and purposeful engagement in regional and national development.

142. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major shortcomings and is given three points.

143. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The Panel recommends performing a more systematic analysis of the labour market potential for the College's foreign students to find internship positions and for its foreign graduates to find a job, in Lithuania and abroad.
- The College may wish to build stronger networks among international social partners.
- The College may further develop and implement its framework for needs analysis, outcome measurement and impact evaluation, particularly in lifelong learning activities, ensuring alignment with the institution's strategic objectives.
- The Panel recommends improving external communication about the lifelong learning offer of the College to get better known among its target audiences.
- The Panel encourages the College to take into account the learnings of other higher education institutions in relation to the design, implementation and quality assurance of micro-credentials as such programmes have specific characteristics and need specific approaches to be successful.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel has provided the following recommendations:

IV.I. Management

1. The College may want to add its research ambition into its Mission statement and to elaborate on the exact understanding of the current key elements of the Mission statement, in order to ensure consistent translation into the actions of the College.
2. The Panel recommends the College to not only align with the 'why' of European policy frameworks, but also to comply with the guidelines on 'how' to implement those policies.
3. The College may benefit from making the baseline situation and the analysis of past performance more explicit in its strategic planning processes, in order to close the PDCA cycle.
4. The College may make its strategic directions more specific and revise its KPIs in terms of strategic direction and impact orientation. Such direction may prevent scarce resources to be used in a fragmented way, both in relation to educational programmes and research. The Panel recommends to attract more research management capacity and to build research groups of a certain critical mass which develop specialised expertise in some niche areas in order to achieve the ambitious quantitative targets which are stated in the strategic plan.
5. The Panel recommends the College to finetune its internationalisation strategy, including relating to the availability of internal and public information in English, English proficiency of management and teaching, front-office and communication staff, integration of the international students', alumni and social partners' voice in internal quality assurance processes and the development of an international alumni strategy.
6. The Panel, therefore, recommends the College assessing the performance of its graduates on the labour market based on reliable statistical data.
7. The Panel recommends that – at least on an annual basis - a performance analysis report is produced which provides a comprehensive performance review based on consistent data gathering, as well as an overview of the learnings and necessary adjustments for the future.
8. The College may wish to explore how to further leverage advantages associated with being part of the Synergetica Group
9. The College should assess the effectiveness of its system of devolved responsibilities relating to HR, Quality Assurance and Communication.
10. The College may wish to establish a collective governing body including external stakeholders, which may take accountability for the strategic policies of the College together with the Director.
11. The student representation may consider how to organise in a more united way to represent all students in a balanced way.
12. The Panel recommends to involve alumni in a more structured way in the governance of the College.
13. The Panel urges the College to provide more and up-to-date information to the public on the performance of its higher education activities and its management effectiveness, both in Lithuanian and English.
14. The Panel recommends to expand the academic teaching staff to be able to cope with the needs of national and international students.

IV.II. Quality Assurance

1. The Panel recommends enlarging the scope of quality assurance to cover all operations of the college, including administration, research, governance and community service.
2. The Panel recommends the College making sure that it fully complies with ESG Standard 1.8 on public information.
3. The Panel recommends the College providing more systematic reporting to students on how their feedback is taken into account.
4. The College may assess whether its generic internal quality assurance processes are fit-for-purpose for its distance learning activities.
5. The Panel recommends to involve international alumni and social partners systematically in its internal quality assurance system.
6. The Panel recommends substantiating self-evaluation reports in the future with more evidence, sharing not only strengths, but also challenges and providing insight in the strategic choices made by the College.
7. The College may consider implementing an IT-tool to develop those process descriptions into workflows per process and to create more explicit links between the individual processes.
8. The Panel recommends developing an explicit internal communication policy.

IV.III. Studies and Research (Art)

1. The Panel recommends operationalising more explicitly how the ambition to train future-ready professionals translates into a common skillset and into the individual learning outcomes of all study programmes is lacking.
2. The College may consider to integrate more interdisciplinary project work into the different study programmes, bringing students from different study fields together.
3. The College may consider whether more differentiation between on-site and online delivery may be helpful to further increase the effectiveness of the provision of distance learning studies.
4. The Panel recommends to increase research efforts and a more systematic integration of research findings into the study contents of all subjects taught in the College.
5. The College may define priorities on which areas of its research expertise are relevant to underpin its Bachelor's programmes, and which may be relevant to commercialise research competences and capacity.
6. The Panel recommends communicating the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Acquired through Non-Formal and Informal Learning recognition of competences procedure better among students and staff.
7. The College may benefit from a more explicit strategy which clearly explains the choices made in relation to internationalisation.
8. The Panel recommends the College publishing full ECTS-information on its individual study subjects in English and Lithuanian.
9. The Panel recommends organising more formal exchange between the different language streams of the same study programme.
10. The Panel recommends to clearly define the role and objectives of both student and staff mobility - particularly short-term mobility - within the College's internationalisation strategy, ensuring these experiences are purposefully integrated into studies and contribute to the development of students' competences and teachers' professional growth.

11. The College may integrate aspects of internationalisation more explicitly into the content of studies and research activities.
12. The Panel recommends developing a dedicated approach to include input from international students, staff and stakeholders in its decision-making processes and to reflect on how to build a strong network of international alumni which not only contributes to the acquisition policy of the College, but also to its internal quality assurance.

IV.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

1. The Panel recommends performing a more systematic analysis of the labour market potential for the College's foreign students to find internship positions and for its foreign graduates to find a job, in Lithuania and abroad.
2. The College may wish to build stronger networks among international social partners.
3. The College may further develop and implement its framework for needs analysis, outcome measurement and impact evaluation, particularly in lifelong learning activities, ensuring alignment with the institution's strategic objectives.
4. The Panel recommends improving external communication about the lifelong learning offer of the College to get better known among its target audiences.
5. The Panel encourages the College to take into account the learnings of other higher education institutions in relation to the design, implementation and quality assurance of micro-credentials as such programmes have specific characteristics and need specific approaches to be successful.

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