



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS STUDIES
at “Utenos kolegija”

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	Transport Business	Transport and Logistics Business
State code	6531LX074	6531LX074
Type of studies	College studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First cycle	First cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years), part-time (4 years)	Full-time (3 years), part-time (4 years)
Credit volume	180	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Business and Public Management	Professional Bachelor of Business and Public Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	20/02/2012	2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No.V-149](#).

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

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by Higher Education Institution (HEI)*; 2) *site visit of the expert panel to the HEI*; 3) *production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel online on 25 April, 2022.

Prof. Dr. Eneken Titov (panel chairperson), *Professor of Management, Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences, Estonia;*

Prof. Dr. Joanna Ejdys, *Head of International Department of Logistics and Service Engineering, Faculty of Engineering Management, Bialystok University of Technology, Poland;*

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rasa Balvočiūtė, *Associate Professor at the Department of Management and Communication, Faculty of Business and Technology, Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania;*

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tomi Solakivi, *Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management and Maritime Business, Department of Marketing and International Business, Turku School of Economics at the University of Turku, Finland;*

Mr. Mantas Jonauskis (social partner), *CEO at “ProBaltic Consulting”, Lithuania;*

Mr. Simonas Radzevičius (student representative), *3rd year student of the first cycle study programme “Economics” at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Utena University of Applied Sciences Equal Opportunities Policy (approved on March 14, 2019)
2.	Additional information (15 April 2022)

1.4. BACKGROUND OF BUSINESS FIELD STUDIES AT “UTENOS KOLEGIJA”

“Utenos kolegija” (hereafter – Utena College, also the College) is the public institution, which was established in 2000 as part of the reorganisation of Utena Medical School of Advanced Vocational Education and Training and Utena Business School of Advanced Vocational Education and Training. In 2021 Utena College successfully passed the external evaluation and was accredited for a maximum period of 7 years. The College is governed by a single-person governing body, the Rector, and collegial governing bodies – the Board and the Academic Board. The Students' Representation represents students' interests. The management structure of the College comprises two main study and research units - the faculties, including 6 departments. Utena College offers 1st cycle studies, with about 1430 students enrolled in part-time and full-time studies. In the 2021/2022 study year, the College provides 21 study programmes in 17 fields of study.

The Department of Business and Public Management is a part of the Faculty of Business and Technology and implements 7 study programmes, from which in the business study field two programmes, Transport Business and Transport and Logistics Business, are running and are assessed during this evaluation. In 2015, the external evaluation of the Transport Business study programme was carried out and the programme was accredited for 6 years. Since 2017, the Transport Business study programme has been assigned to the Business study field, within the group of study fields of Business and Public Management. In 2020-2021 the Transport Business study programme was updated based on the need for specialists and employment opportunities in the Utena region and by focusing more on logistics activities - the programme was renamed as Transport and Logistics Business.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Business study field and first cycle at Utenos kolegija is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	22

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

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

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

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

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

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market

In general, based on provided information in the SER and data collected during online site visit, the study programme *Transport and Logistics Business* (hereafter – TLB), implemented since 1 September 2021, as an updated version of the previous *Transport Business* study programme (hereafter – TB) conforms to the needs of society and the labour market, while reflecting transport and logistics' trends. The study programme aims to train a specialist who can apply in her professional activity the managerial, technological and informational processes of transport and logistics business development, who has the general abilities to adapt to the changing conditions of the environment of the transport and logistics business, as well as to develop a wide range of creative and critical thinking skills, a positive attitude for lifelong learning. After completion of the *Transport Business* study programme, only the *Transport and Logistics Business* study programme will be further implemented.

The programme was updated after close communication with the social partners, while following the changes in needs of the transport and logistics' market. The learning outcomes (LOs) of the programme were updated to include logistics business objectives and competencies and 11 subjects in the field of logistics. The programmes were also updated with subjects related to the use of specialised software for transport and logistics with an emphasis on practical skills development. The transport and logistics trends (e.g. green logistics) are well observed in the curricula of the study programmes.

The transportation and logistics sector labour needs are justified in qualitative and quantitative terms. A special focus of the study programmes reflects the local market needs for specialists and employment opportunities in the Utena region. Utena College provides future managers for public and freight transport companies, logistics and forwarding companies, and freight distribution centres as well as companies involved in storage activities.

The learning outcomes of the study programme were updated following the Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on 14 September 2021, order No. V-1664.

However, learning outcomes could include a more varied theory and practical tools application scenarios, problem based and/or case-based approach relevant to specific business situations. International character of the study programmes could be highlighted with the use of a more forward looking approach addressing future knowledge and skills.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

The mission of the Utena College is general and focusing on preparation of the high-quality specialist to the labour market. Therefore, the TLB study programme is in accordance with the mission, with the aim to provide specialists to the labour market in the field of transport and logistics. The study programme has 15 LOs, but the level of LOs is quite diverse - some LOs are focused on specific skills (e.g. designs optimum freight and passenger transportation routes) and some are enhancing more general competences (e.g. is able to communicate and cooperate...). Study programme level LOs have several problems which do not allow content-rich comparison between LOs and strategy:

- LOs are too detailed and indicate rather a course/subject level, not a study programme level;
- general/transferable skills are not integrated with the specific competences and remain separated from the others;
- some LOs consist of/represent several competences in one sentence (e.g. is able to describe..., explain..., analyse...);
- one LO indicates several levels of the taxonomy in one sentence (eg. identifies..., and is able to apply them...).

Based on the Descriptor of the Study Field of Business studies (point 16), the recommended learning outcomes are for following and not for coping, and must be specified in every particular curriculum. Also, the European Commission or its institutions (Cedefop) recommends to base on national standards (e.g. Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies in Lithuania) and not copy them¹. In addition to the Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies, the College is recommended to study and apply the general principles and best practices of learning outcome based studies and methodology. Although the previous external evaluation committee had suggested reducing the number of LOs, there are still too many of them, despite some changes. Bringing LOs on a more general level, not focusing on specific skills oriented level, but full competence level, the number of LOs can be reduced in a more meaningful way.

The published and still publicly available (on the College's website) Quality Management manual is based on the old (till 2021) strategy and is not updated or changed with the new and valid document.

It is to be noticed that in the previous version of the strategy the digitalization is prioritised. According to the interviews held during the site visit, this priority is reflected in the TLB programme through different ITC skills which students are encouraged to achieve, use of different digital tools during the studies (e.g., specific software) and study organisation (study platforms), teachers use digital tools and possibilities as study methods.

¹ See, for example: Cedefop (2017). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook. Luxembourg: Publications Office, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4156_en.pdf. The latter clearly states (p. 7.1. and 7.2.) that the number of LOs must be as low as possible, and cannot copy recommended LOs, e.g. national standards, that are to be followed but not copied. Also, this document explains how the assessment criteria and LOs should be linked.

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

The structure of the study field programmes comply with the requirements set by the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Descriptor of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies, and the Descriptor of the Business Studies Field (2021). The structure of the study field programmes meets the formal requirements for volume credits and hours (see Table 1). The aims and learning outcomes of the study field programmes align with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework level 6.

Table No. 1. TB and TLB study programmes compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes of College level studies

Criteria	Legal requirements	In the Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	180
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	157
ECTS for studies specified by College or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	37 (TB), 42 (TLB)
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	36
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	9
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	36%
Contact hours	No less than 20% of learning	50.5 (TB), 58.6(TLB)%

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

Study methods and assessment methods are given in the course descriptions. Study methods play a huge role in achieving the LO and indicate the level of taxonomy.

In some cases, the descriptions show some problems in LOs or in congruence with subject or programme:

- some study programme level LOs can be achieved (in the same LO level) just passing one course/subject (e.g. project management, micro and macroeconomics, etc.), which is indicating that study programme LOs are too detailed and are not well generalised into the programme level;
- some courses have far too many LOs (e.g., Electronic Business (20), Final Practice (14), Management fundamentals (8), etc.);
- some study programme level LOs are not directly connected with the course level LOs (e.g., Social Research course have no direct linkage with the study programme level outcomes like 3.4. (organises transport and logistic processes...) and 3.6 (evaluates the opportunities of the transport business and logistics development in international

market)). This also shows that course level LOs are not the most important, when the linkage with the programme level outcomes is indirect and unclear.

According to the SER, the study and assessment methods are varied. The students confirmed during the interview that teachers use different and interactive study and assessment methods. Based on the syllabi, study methods are in coherence with the topics and LOs of the particular subject. Assessment methods are just mentioned and mainly reflect the formal and final assessment, although the students mentioned that some teachers also give them the formative feedback during the course, this seems to be more based on student request and is not the permanent part of the study organisation. In general, assessment methods and study methods are suitable for the first cycle study programme and motivate students to learn.

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

The list of prerequisites of the particular subject is given in the course description. Study programme committee decides the order of the subjects/courses in the study programme. Mostly the prerequisites are in accordance with the content, but in the case of Entrepreneurship practice, the prerequisites (e.g., Business processes, Fundamentals of Management and Entrepreneurship, Management of HR) will be taught after the course itself.

The previous external evaluation committee also recommended integrating the foreign language more into the studies. Although the College has done some improvements (e.g., introduced elective subject Business Communication in Russian, and some foreign lecturers), the integrated language studies mean also other and more effective study methods (e.g., English terminology integrated to the particular theoretical course/topic) and a variety of materials (not only literature, but videos, podcasts, etc.).

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

According to the study plan, students can choose from alternative subjects (one out of two in the 3rd and 6th semesters) and freely select an elective subject (in the 3rd and 5th semesters) from the College's free elective subjects list. It is stated in the SER that students also have the right to study at the College according to an individual study plan ("at the student's reasoned request, an individual study plan is drawn up that meets the student's needs and specifies the arrangement of the modules (subjects) to be studied and the timing of the examinations to be made during the semester", SER, p. 12). However, as it was clarified during the interview with students, there are not many cases in practice. Students seemed to be not sufficiently informed about study individualization procedures and possibility to draw up an individual study plan. Informing and encouraging students to use more possibilities of personalization of studies could contribute to decreasing numbers of student drop-outs.

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

The topics of the final thesis are in accordance with the field of study. Teachers offer the topics, and the social partners do that as well (through the study programme committee).

Based on the field and cycle requirements for the final thesis, some potential problems must be highlighted:

- some topics are quite simple and do not enable to show research skills;
- some theses are in lack of critical analysis skills, given/resulted recommendations are elementary;
- references are old and some theses do not base on foreign sources as minimum requirement should be and is specified in LOs;
- although the College uses eLABa repository to check the possible plagiarism, according to the final theses, the theoretical part or some sections in the theoretical part in some theses are still not correctly referenced (e.g. missing references) and can be taken as plagiarism. The College accepts the similarities up to 30%, which is too low requirement (traditional and recommended rate is up to 10%);
- the theoretical text is not comprehensive - just full referred paragraphs from one source, without linkage between paragraphs or meaningful linking of different sources inside one paragraph.

Based on the uploaded final theses, in many cases the study programme level LOs about critical thinking, analytical skills and research skills are not achieved.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The study programmes meet the local market needs for specialists and employment opportunities in the Utena region.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The implementation of the methodology of the learning outcomes needs to be better supported and improvements are expected.
2. Learning outcomes could include a more varied theory and practical tools application scenarios, problem based and/or case-based approach relevant to specific business situations.
3. International character of the study programmes could be highlighted with the use of a more forward looking approach addressing future knowledge and skills.
4. Students are not well informed about study individualization procedures and possibilities.
5. The quality of the final theses needs to be improved and minimum requirements (LOs) must be followed in the assessment of final theses.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

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

Utena College is active in applied research activities. Since 2018, the College lists participation in 3 research projects and 16 other projects (incl. projects related to regional development). In addition to this, the staff of the College published 13 scientific articles and 2 chapters in monographs, which can be considered modest compared to the number of staff in the College. For participation in scientific activities, the staff of the College held 22 presentations in scientific conferences and participated in 80 national events such as seminars, training, etc. Also, it seems that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an effect on the volumes of publications and seminar presentations, as the number of 2020 and 2021 are lower than in 2019. Emphasis should be put to return the level of publications and presentations to pre-pandemic levels.

According to the SER, the topics of the applied research implemented by the College in the study field of Business studies are listed as follows: innovation, transport business development, competitiveness, the impact of changes in macroeconomic factors on business, market research, consumer behaviour research, research on employee motivation and motivating, peculiarities of intercultural communication, problems of business creation and development, intellectual capital models of enterprises, development and evaluation of entrepreneurial competences, image formation of enterprises and organisations, financial market problems, and the direction of educology in social sciences and analysis (SER, p. 16). From the perspective of the staff, such a wide list of focus areas gives the staff freedom to engage in research activities in various fields. At the same time, considering the limited resources and current limited research volume, the wide selection of focus areas may result in scattered research efforts without possibility of synergy. Therefore, the College might benefit from a more strategic focus on certain selected research areas.

As stated in the SER, according to Article 89 of Utena College Statute, every 5 years teachers may have a year-off from pedagogical work for a maximum of one year to perform research, and for improvement of scientific and pedagogical qualification.“ (SER, p. 37). Unfortunately, no lecturer took this opportunity to strengthen research activities in the observed period (2018-2021).

It is therefore necessary to find ways to motivate teachers to carry out applied research in transport and logistics business implementation, development and market analysis, and to use the results for the development and quality assurance of study programme content. The College has rather small project participation, but sufficient efforts have been made in publishing, participating in conferences, etc.

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

The description of this criterion in the SER is not comprehensive and makes little reference to it. In the description, the SER's authors indicate that the future of the TSL sector companies depends on the scale of implemented innovations, technological solutions and new management systems. However, the report does not specify which innovations, technologies and systems it refers to. The description of the challenges and latest developments in science, art and technology regarding transport and logistics is very general. But during the online site visit both groups of stakeholders (teachers and students) gave examples of such links

between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology. Examples included:

- new technology and product development such as electrical vehicles, new alternative fuels;
- green warehouse design aiming at negative environmental impact reduction at the stage of Logistic centre planning;
- green logistics in the context of CO₂ emission reduction from international perspective;
- Corporate Social Responsibilities conception.

The above-mentioned concepts are included in the curriculum.

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

Utena College has various activities to engage students in research activities. The College publishes a peer-reviewed journal that has an annual special issue dedicated to publishing applied research articles either prepared by students or with student participation. Students are involved in project activities of the College, and have also a possibility to present their research work in scientific-practical conferences. Students are also encouraged to take part in research activities with an incentive system in form of scholarships and acknowledgements from the rector. The college emphasises the practical relevance of the final thesis work. All the final theses are related to practically relevant problems of companies or institutions of the region.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Various ways of engaging students to scientific activities.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Weak evidence of links between the content of studies and the latest development of science and technology based on the subject content.
2. The motivation of teachers to engage in applied research activities should be increased.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

Admission to Utena College is executed according to the legal acts and meets required criteria that are all publicly available on the College's webpage. Based on the interviews, selection and admission criteria are clear to students. Applicants are consulted by Document Admissions

Service, the information can be obtained by e-mail (priemimas@utenos-kolegija.lt), and it is also announced on the College website (www.utenos-kolegija.lt).

Marketing about the admission is praiseworthy because of its wide spectrum (visits to schools, radio, open doors, television, etc.), and also the information can be found in three different languages (Lithuanian, English and Russian). At the same time, in 2019 the study programme was declared unprofitable because of the lack of students, which raises concerns. None internal factors were mentioned to justify these results. However, it is not advisable to blame the external factors but to look also for dependent variables which could be influenced by the HEI.

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

The College claimed that the process for recognition of prior learning is implemented and information about it is available for the parties. Programme manager is responsible for the process and initiates the procedure according to the student's application and involves the teacher of the particular subject if needed. According to the SER, recognition process is a part of the admission procedure, but the Quality Management System Manual (https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/upload/file_manager/Kolegija/Dokumentai/2021/Quality%20Management%20System%20Manual.pdf) does not open or reflect the recognition of prior learning activities, and the documents regulating the recognition/ credit transfer processes (e.g. Description of Utena UAS Non-formal and Informal Way Gained Competences, Related to Higher Education, Evaluation and Recognition Procedure and Partial Studies, Teaching and Learning Outcomes Acknowledgement Procedure, SER section 96) are not mentioned either. Whether the College claims that recognition of prior learning (RPL) pre-decisions are made during the admission process, then student candidates do not have yet the access to the intranet documents, and only one aforementioned RPL regulating document is available publicly (only in Lithuanian) – how then the candidate is informed about the requirements, remains unclear. Although the admission procedure is available in English, the links in it (https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/upload/file_manager/Kolegija/Dokumentai/2021/ADMISSION%20PROCEDURE%20OF%20INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENTS.pdf) for the RPL documents do not work (ref. to point 21: “Learning outcomes are credited by the *University's Credits Transfer Procedure* and/or the *Description of the University's non-formal and informal learning competencies related to higher education assessment and recognition procedure approved by the College's Academic Council.*”)

Nevertheless, during the interview, Lithuanian students confirmed that the information of the recognition of prior learning possibilities is known to them and they understand the procedure and have used it. Concerning especially the part-time students, the recognition of prior work experiences should be also enabled (if a student has already gained the competences during his work experience, he/she needn't learn those again from the scratch).

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Utena College has a system for student mobility, documents and information are available and public. The staff of the International Relations Department consult students on the opportunities to participate in the ERASMUS+ exchange program, prepare documents required for the study exchange and internships in foreign HEIs.

However, in the observed period, the College had only two incoming students from Turkey (during the academic year 2018-2019) and two students (2018) who went on an internship under the Erasmus+ exchange programme. Students stated that they are well informed about the possibilities to participate in academic mobility programs but because full-time jobs lack the opportunity to participate in them. According to the target group profile (working students), more different and varied opportunities for mobility (e.g., short time and group mobility) should be developed and provided.

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

Quality of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to students is good, all key parts and processes are in place. Students had no complaints about the support they are getting. Academic support is provided by the teachers of the subject, the Head of the Department, the Dean, the Chairmen of the Study Programme Committees, the Faculty Practice Supervisor, Career and Communication Department, Study Department, International Relations Department, Project Management Department, the library, etc. The Career and Communication Department provides students with career planning and management support. The scholarship allocation procedure is regulated by the Scholarship Allocation Regulations.

College students can also seek psychological assistance from the College's psychologist. There have been four seminars on psychological health within the last two years.

The students' interests are represented by Student Representation which consists of students elected by the General Students' Meeting (conference). All forms and methods of the student support are available in a detailed description (in Lithuanian) on the Utena College website section under the headline: Students/Students support and services.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

Students get enough information about studies and keep in close touch with lecturers who help them to get information faster and in more understandable form, compared with formal answers (which are also in place). Before the beginning of the academic year, a group tutor (a teacher, working in the Business study field) is appointed for each academic group. S/he is in constant contact with the academic group of students and helps to adapt at Utena College. Students commence their studies with Introduction into Studies. Utena College has the Academic Information System where students can find their subjects, evaluations and other relevant information. All the College documents on issues relevant to the students (Study Regulations, Procedure for Recognition of Learning Outcomes, Regulations of Utena University of Applied Sciences Administration and Student Disputes Commission, etc.) are announced (in Lithuanian) under Students Section ("Studentams") on the College website,

which also contains information from other institutions which is important to students. In addition to individual face-to-face counselling, students are consulted via email, phone, in Moodle, via Skype, including social networks, such as Facebook, etc.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Awareness of possibilities to study and do internships abroad.
2. Admission and selection criteria are well marketed, available publicly and in different languages.
3. The College offers different support services for the students.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low number of students participating in academic mobility programs.
2. Reason for the low admission numbers is claimed to be just occurred by external factors, no internal reasons analysed.
3. Information about the RPL process is not fully available for the student candidates and is not clearly described among the main procedures/processes of the College, and recognition of the former work experiences is not implemented.
4. According to the target group profile (working students), more different and varied opportunities for mobility (e.g. short time and group mobility) should be developed and provided to bring more internationalisation into the studies.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

The teaching and learning process is in line with key educational documents and is well formalised. As stated in SER, teachers use both traditional and non-traditional teaching and learning methods: analyses of problem-based situations and case studies, discussions, role-plays, situation simulation (p. 28). Seeking to strengthen students applied research skills, it is advised to include the preparation of project work and applied research (or part of applied research) in the learning of such study subjects as “Logistics”, “Management of Human Resources”, “Organisation of Freight and Passenger Transportation”, “Supply Chain Management”. While doing research or working on a project, students would engage more with studies through the search for information, cooperation with project or research partners and discussing various alternatives of problem-solving, etc.

According to SER (p. 35), Utena College provides equal opportunities of choice and accessibility for all individuals who are willing and able to study. Electronic Learning Centre takes care of the digitization and accessibility of study information, documents used in the study process and study material to the students and lecturers. The majority of the electronic

study courses are fully tailored (applied) for students' independent and individual studies of the subject and are available in VLE Moodle. All prepared e-study courses are fully adapted for students' self-study and individual studies.

Internships enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, but it is recommended to strengthen the cooperation between the teacher responsible for the internship and internship supervisor at the company. SER states that "Students are visited at the internship places by the Faculty Practice Supervisor and the Teacher, responsible for the internship, in order to control the internship progress as needed, to help the student achieve the internship goals, to consult him / her on the internship issues, to communicate with the institution employee, mentoring the student during the internship" (p. 29). However, only one representative of the internship companies confirmed that their company provides opportunities to attend, consult and evaluate students for the internship supervisors of the College. However, this interaction is very important for setting the internship's tasks, adapting to the internship's place and individual needs of the intern, as well as for the assessment of skills gained during the internship.

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

As stated in the SER, Utena College material resources are tailor-applied to the individual needs of the students with disabilities, and targeted benefits and social scholarships are provided to the students with special needs and social vulnerability (139 SER, p. 35).

However, the examples (provided in paragraph 137 of the SER) how students with social sensitivities or special needs are included in the study process are not convincing and not appropriate enough to confirm the regular and individually oriented support and tailor-applied approach. Students with special needs need more varied support to achieve intended learning outcomes – both general (social skills, written communication, teamwork, etc.) and specialty oriented.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

As stated in the SER, students' progress monitoring is performed systematically: twice a year the analysis of students' progress is conducted, progress summaries (indicating students' average progress) are periodically formed, and students have access to them. College indicates that "underperforming students are considered at the Department and the reasons for their underachievement are being explained" (SER, p. 31). However, it is necessary to help students use the received feedback and advise them how to eliminate academic debts and plan further study progress. SER also indicates that "students who have failed the exams or failed to defend the project work are provided with conditions to liquidate academic debts and to get consulted additionally by the teachers". In the SER and during the site-visit, experts felt the lack of evidence of ways how students are encouraged to self-assess their study progress.

The increasing number of drop-outs caused by personal reasons might reflect the lack of attention to identifying the real reasons for this phenomenon and foreseeing measures to counter it. In the Utena College remarks submitted in response to the draft report, it was stated that Utena College Study Regulations allow students to have assessments remotely and to choose an alternative mode of study (e.g. to study remotely). Also, the panel was informed that currently there are 6 students in Business field study programmes who study remotely. However, the panel is of the opinion that the College should continue to look for more ways to enrich the study personalization experience and strengthen the feedback from and to students, which could contribute to countering the number of drop-outs, e.g. by activating informational and other support for students experiencing difficulties in studies.

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

Utena College follows standard procedure to monitor employment and career of the graduates based on the data of Lithuanian Higher Education Information System (KVIS), Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA), Employment Service, and also on the results of the students' survey performed by the Career and Communication Department. Employability and survey results are made public on the College website and in the College activity reports. Most recent data provided to the expert panel confirm a good level of employment of the graduates of the study field. Over 65% of Transport Business graduates had been employed 12 months after the end of their studies, excluding self-employed persons or those who had gone abroad to work.

The evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field could be further improved through more informal involvement of Alumni, as well as social partners, on a regular basis.

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

The principles of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination are implemented at Utena College according to HEI's Code of Academic Ethics, Student Internal Order Regulations, Provisions of Academic Ethics Committee Activity, and the Policy of Equal Opportunities. The Academic Ethics Committee is responsible for the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

Every student signs the Declaration of Integrity which obliges them to comply with the provisions of the College's Code of Academic Ethics. In cases of possible breaches of academic ethics, a student may apply to the Academic Ethics Committee submitting written requests to investigate specific potential cases. During the analysed period, no cases of violation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination related to the behaviour of students studying or teachers working in the Business study field were recorded (SER, p. 32).

It is to be mentioned that the College's Code of Academic Ethics is available on the website only in Lithuanian language. At the same time, Utena College Equal Opportunities Policy, approved on 14 March 2019, can be found only on the Utena College intranet and it is

accessible to Utena College employers via their accounts. It is advisable to include all these documents in English under the Academic Ethics section on the website.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

For submission and examination of appeals Utena College has a Procedure for Appeal Submission, Investigation and Decision-making. The possibility to make a complaint and appeal applies to all stages of the student's education process. Each student may submit a complaint or an appeal in the situations when (s)he:

- does not agree with the procedure and/or assessment of the examination, final or qualifying examination, final thesis defence;
- does not agree with the decision concerning the crediting of learning outcomes;
- does not agree with the decision with regard to the assessment of formal requirements.

During the evaluation period, there were no cases of complaints and appeals regarding the study process within the field of study.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Policy to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination at Utena College is well documented by the Code of Academic Ethics, Student Internal Order Regulations, Provisions of Academic Ethics Committee Activity, Policy of Equal Opportunities.
2. Utena College monitors employment and career of the graduates and makes the results publicly available.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There are no existing examples of the personalisation of the studies for the socially vulnerable or disabled students, to prove the announced formal processes and principles.
2. Main documents ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination policy existing at Utena College should be made publicly available in language versions that enable all stakeholders to be aware of them.
3. Students have little participation in the study survey, so it can be said that the feedback from students is insufficient to improve their studies.
4. The cooperation between the internship supervisors and the representatives of the internship companies in consulting and assessing the practical abilities of the students is not always close enough to achieve the goals of the internship.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

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

The formal qualifications of the Utena College teaching staff exceed the formal requirements. All of the lecturers working in the Business study field study programmes have a Master's degree or equivalent, and 7 out of 17 lecturers teaching in TB programme have a PhD. In addition to academic degrees, teachers of core and compulsory subjects have at least three years of relevant practical experience. 74% of the teachers currently working at the College have at least B2 level language skills in a foreign language, either Russian or English. For teachers that do not have language skills required to B2 level, the College organises courses of the English language for B1, A2 and A1 levels.

The College also has an onboarding system for newly recruited teachers. They are interviewed by the Dean, a Faculty specialist and the Head of the Department to ensure they have needed professional, methodological and didactic skills. Further, new teaching staff is appointed a supervising teacher with pedagogical background. Teachers who do not have any pedagogical education and pedagogical experience are encouraged to acquire pedagogical competencies. The performance of teachers is monitored by regularly interviewing the staff and students.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility

Academic mobility is included in the strategy of the Utena College in the form of Internationalisation Development Strategy. The conditions of academic mobility are included in the Procedure for the Participation of Utena College Employees in Erasmus+ Programme, and specific measures given in the Utena College Strategic Activity Plans. Academic mobility is promoted by setting participation in the Erasmus+ programme as a criteria for certification of teachers. Annually, a handful of teachers from Utena College participate in both the Erasmus+ mobility for study visits and mobility for teaching programs. Lecturers from abroad also deliver lectures to Utena College students under Erasmus+ programme.

In addition to study visits and teaching mobility within the Erasmus+ program, the teaching staff also participates in international projects. During the last years, these have been individual projects, one between 2017 and 2019 and one between 2019 and 2021. The academic mobility could be strengthened by expanding it beyond the Erasmus+ program, as well as by more active participation in international projects.

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

According to the SER and the interviews, Utena College provides teachers with good opportunities to participate in professional development courses, seminars and other events of professional and pedagogical development. Also, the teachers are regularly (every 5 years) provided the possibility to have a year off from pedagogical work to focus on research or to take part in internships to develop their professional competence.

Also, the possibilities for teachers to participate in Erasmus+ program to visit partner organisations abroad can be seen as an indication of good conditions for competence

improvement. Further, according to the SER, numerous teachers (around 10 annually) are regularly engaged in developing their professional and teaching competences.

In addition, the College does have an established way of planning for competence development, as the qualification improvement is included in the Faculty Activity Programme, following the guidelines of the Strategic Activity Plan. In the Strategic Activity Plan, funds for professional and pedagogical development of the teaching staff are allocated.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The college has an organised process for teacher qualification development.
2. Teachers' academic mobility is emphasised on the strategic level.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Participation on international projects is limited, wider participation would improve the qualification of staff.
2. The academic mobility could be strengthened by expanding it beyond the Erasmus+ program or other sources.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

The physical, informational, and financial resources of the field studies provide sufficient basis to ensure an effective learning process. To this end, specific software, simulation tools are acquired and used in the learning process. Study content is digitised and provided in the Moodle environment. Most of the learning during COVID-19 took place online, with the good support offered by the College.

Utena College provides accommodation services for students. Students can stay in three student homes, located at 18 Maironio Str., 9 Aukštaičių Str., 73 Aušros Str. in Utena. The internal procedure for the allocation of places in student homes and for the residents of student homes is regulated by *Student Home Regulations* established by the College.

Overall, all interviewed persons were generally satisfied with the quantity and quality of the study resources. The stakeholders, including graduates and students, are regularly surveyed for proposals regarding improvement of learning infrastructure and equipment that led to some tangible changes, like relocation of the library, or improvement of students' rest areas etc.

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

Based on the information provided in the SER, the College's resources are sufficient for implementation of the field studies. It is also expected to increase the use of existing infrastructure and equipment for practical training of students through close co-operation with employers. The College further plans investments into software. Although there are reasonable plans for the further investments, a more comprehensive investment plan to support the College's strategy could be developed.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process, including students with disabilities.
2. Up to date library resources, access to databases.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is no comprehensive investment plan to show further investment needs to support the achievement of the College' strategy.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

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

As stated in the SER (p. 42), the internal quality assurance system at Utena College is based on:

- ISO 9001 quality management standard;
- EFQM excellence model;
- The European Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines (ESG).

The implementation of the Study Quality Management System is coordinated by a collegial institution – the Study Quality Committee. The Committee prepares and updates questionnaires for the opinion of students, graduates, employers and managers of companies, summarises the results of the surveys, and disseminates the results of the surveys within the College community (it should be mentioned that the website link to survey results, mentioned in SER, p. 42 - <https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/kolegija/kokybe/kokybes-komitetas> - is not working).

One important element of the internal quality assurance system is the evaluation of teachers and subjects by students. Teacher's evaluation is carried out using an electronic survey form available on the Moodle platform. The criteria for teacher's evaluation include in particular: evaluation of teaching methods, conditions for the implementation of the learning process, evaluation of the level of satisfaction, evaluation of the quality of teaching materials. Students are informed by teachers about the possibility of their evaluation and are familiar with the

evaluation tool. However, the extent of student participation in evaluation is low. The students indicated that they often forget about the assessment after the completion of the course.

There is no formal system developed at the College to reward teachers who are highly evaluated by students, but they receive praise from their supervisors and the Dean of the Faculty. The results of teacher's evaluation are taken into account during teachers attestation. A procedure for dealing with negative evaluations and a procedure for rewarding teachers highly evaluated by students should be defined.

The management and decision-making of Business study field programmes is carried out individually by the orders of the Director, the Dean of the Faculty and collegially by the resolutions of the Department, Dean's office, Directorate, Faculty Council, Academic Council, Council, the Utena College's Study Quality Committee, TB/TLB study programme committee decisions. The Department of Business and Public Management, TB / TLB study programme committee and the Faculty Council are directly responsible for the quality assurance of the Business study field programmes, compliance with modern market needs, scientific achievements and constant updating.

The following tools are used for quality assurance purposes:

- meetings of the teachers of the department, during which relevant study issues are discussed, exam tasks are coordinated and approved, student progress is considered, and study quality proposals are submitted to improve organisation - at least twice a semester;
- supervising the implementation of the study programmes, performing internal evaluation, updating and improving the quality of the study programmes by the Study Program Committee (SPC).

The representation of the SPC is diverse and includes representatives from all stakeholder groups (such as lecturers with experience in pedagogical and scientific work, representatives of social partners and representatives of students). At the end of the academic year, SPC prepares a progress report on the quality assurance of the study programme, which discusses the study programme improvements performed during the academic year and the results achieved. Progress reports are presented and discussed in the Study Quality Committee and approved by the decision of the Faculty Council after considering the results of the analysis.

However, the description of the quality assurance system does not fully guarantee that results will be monitored and corrective actions taken. For example, the low number of students participating in surveys should be analysed and actions should be taken to increase student involvement in the survey process. It is important to remember that a lack of comments is not always a proof of a high level of service.

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

The stakeholders (students, companies) are well represented and exert some influence as stakeholders contributing to curriculum development, programme improvement and other

processes that influence quality of the programme. A good provided example relates to inclusion of logistics subjects based on the needs and recommendations of social partners. Students are engaged into the internal quality assurance system as a member of different authorities such as: The Study Quality Committee and Study Program Committee, and have a possibility to indicate their needs or complaints regarding the study content and process. Some improvements could be introduced, like more regular meetings with social partners, boosting measures for better participatory rate of the students in the feedback system, wider accessibility of the quality monitoring results.

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

Information on the study programmes is published on the College website, in the section “Studies”. Information on study programmes is provided by groups of study fields.

The scale and types of tools used for dissemination of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes are very broad and varied. The media used (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter) are adapted to the specifics of the target groups. Speaking about the future improvement plans, there are some good practical measures for disseminating information about studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes included in the [Action Plan for the Improvement of Utena College Activities based on the Recommendations of Institutional Review](#) (approved on 15 March 2022), for example:

- publication of the reports of the external evaluation of the study programmes on the website of Utena College;
- questionnaires of teachers, other employees, students, graduates and employers conducted by the Study Quality Committee, and the Faculty organised discussions about the adequacy of information about the activities of Utena College;
- periodical analyses made by the Career and Communication Department on the effectiveness of social networks - the size of the audience reached, the comments, the shares and the information provided in the media.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

Based on the information provided during the online interviews, only 23-24% of students participate in study quality surveys in general (average in College) because, as also students stated, “we usually just forget”. But when they are reminded, they fill it willingly. HEI should find motivating tools and ways to remind them about it. Nonetheless, lecturers often ask students about the study process informally but it is not reflected in formal forms.

On the other hand, the decreasing number of students is a sign of internal problems and also possible students' dissatisfaction at the HEI. Demographic problems and lower number of graduates from secondary schools impact students' numbers in general and not only in this particular HEI, but at the same time the number of international students and older students is increasing. Although the competition with the other HEIs is intense, there are possibilities

to find and use the strengths of the College to make it more competitive and attractive for potential students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The internal quality management system takes into account varied and internationally recognised quality management systems such as: ISO 9001 quality management standard, the EFQM excellence model and the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines (ESG).

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The description of the internal quality assurance system is not supported by sufficient evidence.
2. Low student involvement in teachers' evaluation process, and a lack of a system for rewarding and sanctioning performance of teachers' assessment by students.
3. Low number of students who participate in surveys. The indicated high level of student satisfaction with their studies applies only to a relatively small group of students participating in the survey and does not reflect the satisfaction of the whole student's community.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<p>The implementation of the methodology of the learning outcomes need to be better supported and improvements are expected.</p> <p>The international character of the study programmes could be highlighted with the use of a more forward looking approach addressing future knowledge and skills.</p>
Links between science (art) and studies	<p>The link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology should be more strengthened in the study subject content.</p>
Student admission and support	<p>Behind the low admission numbers caused just by external factors, also the internal reasons must be analysed and taken into consideration in improving the inner processes to increase the admission.</p> <p>According to the target group profile (working students), more different and varied opportunities for the mobility (e.g., short time and group mobility) should be developed and provided to bring more internationalisation into the studies.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<p>Ensure that integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination policy documents existing at Utena College are publicly available in language versions that enable all stakeholders to be aware of them.</p> <p>Build an organisational culture that promotes a learning-from-mistakes approach, and build awareness that a lack of negative feedback is not always a sign of high quality.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>Teachers' wider participation in international projects would improve the qualification of staff. The academic mobility could be strengthened by expanding it beyond the Erasmus+ programme or other sources.</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>Develop a comprehensive investment plan to show further investment needs to support the achievement of the College's strategy.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<p>Low number of students participating in surveys should be analysed and actions should be taken to increase students' involvement in the survey process and have trustworthy results</p>

	<p>about the whole student population in the College.</p> <p>Implement practical solutions to increase student involvement in the teachers' evaluation process.</p> <p>Implementation of solutions enabling rewarding and sanctioning for teachers' performance in student assessment.</p>
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VI. SUMMARY

The Business study field in Utena College consists of just one study programme (the second will be closed after the graduation of all admitted students), but seems to be important for the College in general and offers good possibilities for the staff and stakeholders to collaborate and contribute to regional development. The close collaboration and involvement of social partners is worthy of recognition and further developments as well as the focusing for the present needs of the labour market in the study programme development. The academic staff of this study field is motivated and enjoys the versatile possibilities to participate in mobility, applied research activities and in other different professional development activities offered by the College.

The valuable match between the content of the studies of the business studies field and the latest developments of science and technology is proved by the several new initiatives in study programmes with the new and modern subjects, highlighted in the academic research and valued by the market parties as well as the students.

Nevertheless, College needs to pay attention to some possible and existing challenges which already affect and will affect the College's success in the future. The decreasing number of the students shows an urgency to deal with the internal processes improvements and indicates the need for the changes in traditional processes and mindset. First of all, the quality assurance processes must be reconsidered and the quality loop should be closed by a meaningful collection and implementation of stakeholders' feedback in development and improvements as well as taking steps to involve students more in the evaluation process of teachers and subjects. The expert panel is sure that the College is able to build an organisational culture that promotes a learning-from-mistakes approach, and building awareness that a lack of negative feedback is not always a sign of high quality, but may be just a sign of non-interest or missing involvement of the parties.

Secondly, although since the previous evaluation the College has made some improvements in the learning outcome formulation, the deeper analysis still reveals some general problems and misunderstandings in the implementation of the methodology of the learning-outcome based studies. Implementation of the proper methodology of the learning outcome based studies needs to be better supported by the College and experts, and improvements in the wording and applying of the study programme and subject level outcomes are highly expected, as well as more coherence between the learning outcomes and study and assessment methods is needed. The lack of the understanding of the proper learning outcomes based methodology seems to also reflect the quality of the studies by, for example, the poor quality of the final theses, and low use of more practical applications related to the business cases, etc.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Eneken Titov

